

Peebles & District Community Council

Chairman's Report

April 2024

1.0 Tweeddale Area Partnership (TAP)

The last meeting was on Tuesday 19/03/24. Michael Marshall attended for PCC.

2.0 Street Pastors

Following the tragedy last month, the writer believes that Street Pastors conducted an additional patrol and is presently awaiting feedback.

3.0 Flood Risk Advisory Group

The writer has noted a flow of communications on Whatsapp, but has not at the time of writing been able to digest progress.

4.0 Meetings Attended this Month.

05.03.24	Pre-meeting meeting
03.04.24	Councillor Tatler
04.04.24	Councillor Pirone
	Pre-meeting meeting

5.0 Scottish Borders Community Council Network (SBCCN).

Nothing further to report.

6.0 Road Maintenance

We note that one of the main issues raised during our recent survey of Peebles residents was the potholes and state of the roads. The East High Street from the Eastgate along Innerleithen Road up to the petrol station and the Edinburgh Road are just two examples amongst hundreds throughout our area. It is likely, that a great deal of work has been scheduled now that we are approaching the onset of better weather. Let us hope so. However, this section of the report will stand monthly until real improvement has been seen.

7.0 Equality Impact Assessment

We have had a response to the questions previously raised by PCC relating to this subject and it appears that there is no overall person responsible for the oversight of equality and that individual managers are individually responsible. This is likely to mean that there are no internal processes to audit compliance, provide internal training or make sure that SBC are in compliance with their legal obligations. We do know that in relation to the new Peebles High School build, an assessment was only completed after a lengthy battle when it should have been completed early in the design process. Evidence suggests to us that there appeared little or no

Peebles & District Community Council

Chairman's Report

April 2024

comprehension in the SBC education department of what and EIA entailed. There is the appearance of a knowledge gap. The writer will consider this and write to the SBC CEO in an advisory form.

8.0 Chambers Institution Lift

Following some clarification from Councillor Marshall Douglas on the current position, we received the following and other feedback.

"I'm disappointed to learn the parts haven't yet been ordered and it's been at least 4 weeks maybe longer, since the fault was reported. The lack of access to the library for those with disabilities; parents with prams and toddler and people with disabilities should be made a priority by Live Borders. Can this be escalated"?

Consequently, the writer has emailed SBC director John Curry to endorse the comments and to see if this can be speeded up.

9.0 Private Eye Article - £10M support contract

Following a query to councillors following the March meeting the following was received from councillor Marshall Douglas. The writer considers that a copy of the response to PE would be useful.

Councillors have been briefed by our chief executive and assured that the article is factually incorrect and without foundation. The council will be responding directly to Private Eye stating that John Curry was not involved in the process and had no conflict of interest in the matter.

10.0 Placemaking

The consultants, New Practice, are forging ahead with their work and will be providing a short briefing at the April meeting.

11.0 Camper Vans and Parking in General

We note that one of the main issues raised during our recent survey of Peebles residents was the shortage of appropriate parking.

The text below is copied directly from the March Chairman's report. However, the writer has now had two separate meetings with councillors Tatler and Pirone and suggested that we need a working party to take a full overview of these issues, to see if we can come up with improvements, if not an actual complete solution.

[Recent initiatives from the police in the High Street certainly seem to have had a positive effect and produced more parking spaces as traffic is forced to move on.](#)

Peebles & District Community Council

Chairman's Report

April 2024

Parking is easier and the writer would expect that this would have a small positive effect in income for the High Street shops.

In relation to the existing car parks, there is no change, in that on some days the Eastgate/Edinburgh Road and Greenside car parks are full. These issues have been discussed in depth by the parking working group which has now wound up. However, the problems will not go away and as more development takes places parking will get worse.

This month we received the following from a member of the public:

Hi, a friend with a motorhome recently wanted to visit Peebles for the weekend, and was surprised to learn there is nowhere that they can park overnight now since both camping/caravan parks closed to campervans/motorhomes? I know there's mixed opinions of such things, but generally there's a great group of folks that like to travel the country and find places to park up and eat and enjoy the local area. Pubs often do offerings where 'park on our car park' if you have one meal with us - and don't offer toilet/grey waste facilities but enjoy increased footfall. Are there any plans/opportunities to promote folks allowing camping overnight? I know in Biggar, the primary school car park has maybe 10 - 15 free campers there at the weekends, and they use the local toilets (pay to enter) but also spend a lot of money in the shops/bars/restaurants. Some places are trying to introduce 'aires' like they have in France and Germany and now the NC500 are looking at doing similar to encourage folks to camp responsibly in controlled areas rather than 'wild camp'. And provide water/ litter disposal facilities. Just a thought. Thanks. Jan

Internal team communications produced the following:

This is an interesting question and one that we would do well to have a policy on across the Borders, not just in Peebles.

Fife, for example, have designated spaces in most of their car parks, including some right on the coast, for overnight stays. A charge of £10 per night is collected via the parking machines and is no doubt policed in the usual way.

Kingsmeadows Car Park recently painted out two motorhome spaces in the middle section but of course this is a free car park so no ability to collect fees is available. Hay Lodge is the same and I don't think an option exists within the published parking charges at East Station Car Park, though I have seen motorhomes t parked overnight in all three. Indeed, I recently spoke to a couple who had driven from Fort William in their small camper to attend a show at the Eastgate Theatre. They intended to sleep overnight in the East Station Car Park and drive home the following day having spent money on tickets for the show, preshow drinks and a meal and possibly breakfast the next morning.

Returning to the free car parks in Peebles I saw in another post recently that signs are still displayed at a Kingsmeadows stating no overnight parking, despite there being painted spaces for motorhomes. I haven't checked to see if there is or is not a sign. Of course, we recently developed a new parking policy for Peebles but as far as I know it didn't include any reference to motorhome parking. Personally, I can't see what harm campers or motorhomes are doing by stopping overnight in any of our car parks as long as they are not causing an obstruction. As you say in your note, chances are they will spend money locally and spread the word about what a great place Peebles is to have a stopover. If fees were introduced like those in Fife it would create another small income

Peebles & District Community Council

Chairman's Report

April 2024

stream. SBC could assist by adding grey water disposal facilities on the outside of all their public loos, as already exist for example on Arran. This would discourage irresponsible dumping down street drains, etc. I have also seen such facilities with a pay by card facility in the Highlands, so again an income stream could be developed.

The writer suggests that a councillor takes ownership of this issue, and we try and find a solution. The texts in blue provide a good foundation to move forward on. Certainly, the town should be as tourist friendly as we can make it. Camper vans are widely used, particularly amongst foreign tourists and a lack of facilities drives them away. Further, we have noted instances of camper vans parking where grey water and worse has been dumped, once in Kingsmeadows car park and at the Sware.

Peter Maudsley
Chair
Peebles and District Community Council