

Peebles & District Community Council

Chairman's Report

October 2023

1.0 General

Nothing currently.

2.0 Tweeddale Area Partnership

The next meeting is on 31 October at 19:00, probably in the Walkerburn Village Hall.

3.0 Street Pastors

The writer believes that there has been progress, and a letter is expected soon.

4.0 Scottish Borders Community Council Network (SBCCN)

Nothing new.

5.0 Royal Burgh of Peebles – Possible Anniversary Project (**Recap from September meeting**).

The writer was invited to a meeting, on Sunday 03 September to discuss this subject. The Callants and Guildry were represented. Apparently, there are plans across Scotland to celebrate the 900th anniversary of King David's accession to the throne. It is suggested that we do likewise.

The proposal is predicated on this accession of King David 1 to the throne in 1124 and then the first mention of a Royal Burgh in Peebles in 1152. However, our Royal Burgh existed some years before the 1152 date and the concluding remarks in a letter from Richard Orum, Professor of Medieval and Environmental History at the University of Stirling to Murray Wilson says:

“So, at the end of this rather convoluted discussion, we are left with no absolute clarity on when Peebles went through the transition into burgh and shire administrative centre, but it is likely to have been earlier rather than later. Yes, the award of payment to Kelso from the firmus burghi in 1152 gives us an end date for the transition period but, as you say, this is a reference to an already established burgh. David's presence there in the mid-1120s could give us an indication of when the process started - but it could indeed have been earlier still. Hedged round with caveats, early years of his reign and, more likely than not, given the evidence of the Inquest, for its likely status there is a strong probability that Peebles owes its burgh status to David's occasional residence there and as an old Cumbrian royal manorial centre, he might have started planning a burgh there before his accession in 1124”.

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Murray Wilson believes that this is an opportunity to promote Peebles in a very big way and his minute of the meeting provides a reasonable starting point for discussion.

It was good to informally put this issue on the table yesterday. It's my opinion that if managed correctly this 900th anniversary of the foundation of Peebles as a Royal Burgh could be a major opportunity to.

- Raise the profile of Peebles as a destination for tourism and business, not only in Scotland and the UK, but internationally.
- To raise awareness of the history of the Royal Burgh, especially amongst the younger generation.
- Bring people to Peebles to join in the celebrations, bringing significant commercial benefit to the town.

However, as I think we all agreed, it will be hard work, requiring significant organisation and the time and energy of as many people and groups as possible. I think we agreed yesterday that the next steps will be that the initiative:

1. Be taken back to our respective groups/organisations for discussion and comment.
2. Be presented at the next PCC meeting on Thursday the 14th of September.
3. Councillors will be informed and asked to support this initiative.
4. The Lord-Lieutenant for Tweeddale (Professor **Sir Hew Strachan**, who is currently professor of international relations at the University of St Andrews) will be consulted.

Please find attached the communication I had with **Professor Richard Oram**, the author of "*David: The King who made Scotland*". This is acknowledged to be the definitive biography of King David 1st. He is at present professor of medieval history at the University of Stirling and an honorary lecturer in history at the University of Aberdeen.

Most towns will be celebrating David's 900th, but Peebles is unique in the list of Royal Burghs as it is also the 900th anniversary of our Royal Burgh status. (only Tain is older (1066)). Of the Scottish Borders, the only Royal Burgh still extant is Peebles, so Peebles should be the only town in Scotland to have the right to the double celebration, Royal Burgh and Coronation. Aberdeen has a charter from 1124, but it's not clear if this is a "Royal Burgh" charter or just trading rights.

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6.0 Eastgate Theatre

At the September meeting, Councillor Julie Pirone, as an outgoing Director of the Eastgate Theatre provided an update on the latest news from that quarter. Following publication of the meeting minutes, a member of the Eastgate Theatre, but not a Director, Steve Dube, contacted this writer to raise a concern that our minutes were not wholly accurate of the events as he knew them. Councillor Pirone identifying the Eastgate Partnership as having written to the Eastgate Theatre Board. We have subsequently reviewed the recording and the full transcript of the relevant material is as follows.

"You will all be aware with what is happening at the Eastgate Theatre. So, very briefly because I am not going to say very much, the current board has resigned because they received notification from the Eastgate Partnership which is a group that was set up in August to challenge the board on the survival of the theatre. They have sent documentation to the board saying they wished for some board members to be removed and other people within that partnership group to join the board. The partnership can do that because they are based via members so if you are a friend of the Eastgate you may also be a member of the Eastgate if you ticked the boxes. You need 5% of the membership to change the board and then there should also be an AGM in November. Because of the way business was conducted, the whole board decided to resign at that time and four members of the partnership have been passed over onto the board and they will deal with the Companies House because I'm presuming, they will have to elect a chair. The current Director who was helping the current board to turn business around has also resigned because she believed she was employed by the current board but her work that she has done – and it is a very good piece of work - will pass on to the new board and it will be up to them to take that forward. There may well be a slight issue on the loan that was agreed at SBC last month because the terms of agreement the current board if you like could not meet because it would not be in place to accept it and therefore the new board will have to have negotiations or agreements with SBC. I believe at that time it will come to a full council meeting rather than any private business if any kind of loan was to go ahead. It is a very sad state of affairs and I am happy to speak to anyone in private if you want any further information "

The member of the public also expressed a desire to address the October meeting and provided a copy of the notification from the members to the original Board of Directors. The Eastgate Partnership is not mentioned in this letter. Without going into detail, the letter commences with

"We, the members of Eastgate Theatre (Peebles) Ltd listed below, wish to express our extreme concern about the major financial and operational issues that appear to have developed at the theatre over the last six months".

Other, than the inclusion of the term "Eastgate Partnership", in the minuted statement, the writer's understanding is that, essentially, both positions are similar.

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In relation to the request to address the community council at this next meeting, the core group of officers has considered this. The request has been declined for the following reasons.

- The request was not made by a Director of the Eastgate Theatre. If anyone was to have addressed us it should have been the Chair of the Board, or at least a Director.
- However, notwithstanding this, we consider that the community council is not the correct forum for either, the past or present directors to debate the facts as they perceive them. The correct place is at the forthcoming AGM of the Eastgate members.

7.0 Parking

Update required on the recent survey.

8.0 Flood risk

Nothing new currently. However, after the previous flooding we wrote to Councillors' strongly suggesting that more sandbags be provided for Peebles and that a new store be provided near Walkershaugh. At the time of writing the writer is not aware of any additional provision. The current flooding events in the central belt and north remind us that it is only a question of time before we are affected again. We appear to have been lucky on this occasion. Sandbags should be provided now, before these homes are once again inundated.

9.0 Meetings Attended this Month.

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| 26/09/23 | Hydro entrance crossing meeting. Chambers Institution Beneficiaries meeting. |
| 29/09/23 | Chambers Institution management meeting. |
| 04/10/23 | Borders Community Action |
| 05/10/23 | Pre-meeting meeting |

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10.0 Any other Business – Common Good (**Recap from September meeting**).

In relation to the below. This writer has similar concerns. The question is not that there should or should not be charging necessarily. The issue appears that trustees are often unaware of the bookings that SBC have taken for common good land or indeed that they have been given the chance to discuss them. In the September minutes Councillor Tatler stated.

Cllr Tatler confirmed there were no charges levied for either as it was considered that the town benefitted from the event.

The impression being given that the trustees have discussed this. The member of the public who raised the original query has been unable to find any record of this being debated and has requested that this be raised.

The writer received the following from a member of the public.

To Chairman of Peebles Community Council

I write to raise concerns regarding the use of Tweedgreen and Haylodge Park by UCI during the recent cycling championships held at Glentress. To be clear, this email is not intended to denigrate the event but more to raise the issue as to why this clearly commercial event was not charged for the use of common good land. Having checked the minutes of common good meetings going back to the beginning of last year I can find no mention of the use of these facilities by UCI nor of any charges that might be levied.

For the sake of fairness and equity, much has been said about the use of Tweedgreen recently by other commercial companies and whether they should pay for the privilege. It seems strange that given the level of public concern over the use of these facilities by companies that there would seem to have been no discussion at all regarding UCI use of the land. This appears to be another example of Trustees not taking active control of these important public resources.

This was a major international event with a multimillion-pound budget which has been widely discussed in national media. Given that UCI has paid landowners for the use of their land across Scotland it seems incongruous that here in Peebles where there was an opportunity to make a modest charge for the benefit of the town, it was missed. Responsibility for this must lie with our Trustees of the common good who should ensure that our assets are properly managed. The use of these key public spaces is too important to be left only to SBC officials; Trustees ought to be actively engaged in the management of common good assets.

I would [like] this issue raised at the next meeting of the community council.

[Name and address provided]

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Peter Maudsley
Chair
Peebles and District Community Council