

# Community Council of the

# Royal Burgh of Peebles and District

Minutes of the 307th Meeting of the Community Council which was held on Thursday 8 June 2023 at 7.30pm in the Burgh Chambers, Peebles. The meeting was recorded for the purposes of Minuting and Reporting.

**Present:** C Forsyth, F Richardson, G MacDonald, G Mackie (Vice Chairman and Treasurer), G Ramsay, J Crawley, J Wilson, P Maudsley (Chairman), S Watson, Cllr Begg, Cllr Small

**In attendance**: M Davey of the Peeblesshire News, J Aitken of Scawd Law Windfarm, PC V Carsley from Police Scotland, M Piper of Destination Tweed, T Compton of Peebles High School New Building Group.

Members of the Public: M Stevenson, M Pearson.

**Apologies**: A Mackenzie, A Snoddy (Secretary), H Young, J Mitchell, J Shearer, M Bruce, S Coe, S Hamilton, Cllr Douglas, Cllr Pirone, Cllr Tatler.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting would be recorded for the purposes of minute taking and reporting.

Presentation: Scawd Law Wind Farm

Julie Aitken, Senior Project Manager at Fred Olsen Renewables attended to give an update on Scawd Windfarm, following up from September 2021. The Minutes from the previous presentation had been circulated.

Scawd Law sits 4km north of Walkerburn, northeast of Innerleithen. The project has been on their books for 2-3 years and the planning application went into SBC last year for eight turbines. This is doing the rounds for various consultees who are looking at their surveys and they are looking at all the feedback. This includes community councils, and the PCC is invited to put forward their views.

Objections so far are from SEPA in relation to private water supplies; they want more information which has been given to them. Other objections are from the National Air Traffic Services who monitor aeroplanes and the impact on their radars. There have been concerns raised from RSPB regarding eagles, so they are looking at that. They are currently waiting for Nature Scot to come back to them regarding landscape and ornithology. There is a Ministry of Defence objection about low flying, but they can put lights on the turbines. The Eskdalemuire seismological recording station have also objected, and they are looking at that with the Ministry of Defence.

The SBC planning committee cannot look at their application until October, because of workload. Meantime they are responding to the statutory consultees.

The project comes with a community benefit fund of £5,000 per megawatt. They will draw a 10k buffer around the site and consult with community councils within that as to how to deal with the fund. At the latest meeting it was suggested the main beneficiaries should be Walkerburn and Innerleithen. That would be one-third each. The rest is still under discussion. The communities can decide what they spend it on. Two

communities have discussed shared ownership. They are happy to discuss this further with Peebles if they are interested.

Chair: asked for questions:

J Wilson asked what the proposed start date is? J Aitken said she was not sure; it might go to public enquiry. The date of the grid connection will give an indication. They have been told by Scottish Power and the National Grid that no one would be doing anything until 2030 because of upgrades.

Cllr Begg asked about plugging into the grid and the issues that might arise from that. J Aitken said they had applied for the grid application last year. It is likely the grid connection will go into Galashiels or into a substation north of Galashiels, but they need to wait and see. Cllr Begg asked about timing for this and difficulty accessing the grid? J Aitken said there shouldn't be a problem, it's the timing that's the issue. If the substation takes longer to build then they will run into problems because their consent only runs for 5 years, although it can be extended.

The Chair asked about grid capacity because of the other two windfarms. The Chair has concerns about the visibility of the multiple windfarms (Cloich, Scawd and Leithenwater). J Aitken said there are photo montages in the applications and that they only include existing and approved sites.

**Open forum:** M Stevenson is a resident near Victoria Park and had intended to raise the issue of the lighting plans for Victoria Park. There had been a recent article in the Peeblesshire News where Cllr Tatler had been quoted as saying he had spoken to the residents, and they wanted lighting in this area of the park. M Stevenson had a copy of the plans with her and said there are ten houses on the plans and she had managed to speak to seven of the ten houses and none of them knew anything about the proposed lighting plans. There is a Victoria Park Group which had been led by M Pearson, but no one has stepped in to take over the lead. There was a meeting in November that Cllr Tatler attended. C Forsyth from PCC had also attended the meeting in November and said that there were not many people there, C Forsyth said at the meeting there had been suggestions for low level lighting put forward. M Stevenson said, since then, the first thing anyone knew about the lighting in the park was in the article in the Peebleshire News.

The Chair said that the Cllrs who should be involved with this were not in attendance this evening. The Chair said he would set up a meeting with M Stevenson and Cllr Tatler that he would also attend. M Stevenson wanted the record to state that the residents have not been consulted. The Chair said that this can be put to Cllr Tatler, but that planning consent is not needed for this. Morag Stevenson said that there are a range of views but many don't want full height streetlights - low level or nothing would be better. Other Scottish councils use ground level solar lights that would seem like a much better option if there really is a need for lights.

S Watson said that this was another example of a lack of communication from SBC and that it happens regularly and needs to be addressed. The Chair agreed but said that SBC are aware of their need to improve communication and are trying, but clearly it has not worked here. C Forsyth should also be invited to attend the meeting.

**Complaint:** Recently, a post has been made making a complaint against an individual member of the community council. We would like to emphasise that regardless of the nature of a complaint, that social media is neither a reasonable nor appropriate means of doing so. For any complaint of a non-criminal nature, it should be made directly to the community council via our email address (secretary@ccrbpeebles.co.uk). For any complaint of a criminal or potentially criminal nature, the only appropriate report is to Police Scotland. A

community council has neither the skills nor resources to act under these circumstances. Where a complaint is made on social media, there will be no response from the community council.

The Secretary, Anne Snoddy, had given her apologies because she has been nominated as a community champion and was at the Scottish Parliament attending a reception.

Approval of the Minutes of 11 May 2023: C Forsyth proposed, and G Mackie seconded.

#### Matters arising from the Minutes

**Gravel island**: A Snoddy contacted SBC who said it wasn't their responsibility and then she contacted SEPA who said it was nothing to do with them. The various bodies are trying to find out if it is owned by Crown Estate. It is getting bigger and is affecting river flow. It needs tidying up. A Snoddy will update fully.

Borders buses: A new timetable for the X62 has now been issued with more buses on the half hour.

**Police Report**: The report has been circulated by M Bruce. The multi-ward report had come out that afternoon so not many members had seen it.

The Chair said he had been disappointed to read that the School Brae Hub had been vandalised to the tune of around £1,000. He had also heard reports that a young girl had been assaulted by other young girls. Across Tweeddale a number of assaults were reported which is concerning. It is also disappointing that the police have given notice to remove support from the Beltane Festival. There had been an article in the Peeblesshire News and a response from L Turnbull had been circulated. This is proposed to be the PCC's point of view and the Chair will be writing to the Cllrs to carry forward same to the authorities.

J Wilson said she endorsed the letter and believes we should add to it. She was not in support of targeting our local Cllrs as this was an issue for all the towns. We need to make the clear point around safety, and this needed to go to the police through Cllr Pirone. Cllr Begg said that the Cllrs will engage with Police Scotland as it is a Scottish Government issue and to lobby our Members of Parliament.

PC V Carsley joined the meeting. The Chair welcomed PC Carsley and thanked her for attending. He then asked her about the long list of assaults in the multi-ward report. PC Carsley said that the police get assault reports from all over the Borders and they do focus on ones involving children which account for a large percentage, but the Borders is generally relatively safe. An assault creates a report and then it is reported to the authorities. Action is dependent upon the ages. PC Carsley had spoken to Serena Moody the Youth Engagement Officer. There are over 1400 students at PHS, and the problem group is around only 8 and is really a very small percentage. There is no quick fix to the incidents of ASB and vandalism. The Chair said he was particularly concerned to hear about a young girl assaulted by other girls. PC Carsley could not comment but there is video evidence and all perpetrators have been identified, charged, and reported.

C Forsyth said there are young people banging on pensioners' doors near Victoria Park, one person is being targeted and they have CCTV. PC Carsley said they have identified this group. This young person is part of a wider group on both the school and police's radar. They have spoken to this person. They have been taking statements from victims to show to the children so they can hear the impact of their actions, and they will be charged if there is appropriate evidence. Again, they are looking at preventing these incidents with S Moody. As part of a preventative measure for the hot spot areas, e.g. Tweed Green and School Brae the police are going to be setting up some mobile CCTV units.

Cllr Small said that although the CAT team have regular meetings, the age of the young people is a challenge. PC Carsley said that it's not that the police can't deal with under 18s, but the process is that when a minor

comes to their attention they put in early intervention and for the majority that works. Thereafter a justice warning is delivered by youth justice officers and after that the Children's Reporter may become involved.

The Chair said that Tweeddale Area Partnership is to meet on 13 June and it is understood that PC Carsley will be in attendance. One of the big issues to be discussed is the police withdrawing from events such as the Beltane and it is something that will be picked by the PCC. PC Carsley spoke to Sgt Bird who said that there is a meeting to be held with the Community Inspector and the Local Area Commander. They do not intend to withdraw all police but the expectation is that these events need to be marshalled and stewarded more by the organisers. Chair: said another question is should the CAT team be replaced by a bobby on beat? This is a continuing debate. The reports coming back around the Peebles Youth Voice are very positive. However, the Chair believes that more needs to be done and support should not be ad hoc but done on a properly funded basis going forward and some consideration should be given from SBC to put in a multi-year budget across the Borders. After all, teenagers make up a large percentage of the population.

M Stevenson said that there is ASB in Cleland Avenue and referring to what she said earlier the lighting that she is referring to is on the other side of the park. Lighting might solve the issue near Cleland Avenue, but not where it is currently planned for. The Chair said that there is a perceived problem with ASB and vandalism in Victoria Park. PC Carsley said that the ASB and vandalism tends to focus around the playpark area during school hours. There are fights and littering but lighting is not going to solve that because it happens mostly during the day. It is difficult to say when vandalism happens overnight as when something is reported it could be days or hours since the incident. Cllr Begg said there had been issues raised around vandalism to the community gardens.

J Crawley asked if the Police were actively monitoring speed limit, that is using speed guns? PC Carsley said no, but the CAT team is out in specific areas and Speedwatch groups being set up. J Crawley said that even with 20mph limits the drivers are inconsistent. The Chair said that the average speeds reported were skewed because someone turning on or off a road would only be travelling at a slow speed, but there is an acknowledged lack of resource to deal with speeding drivers and that it is not an efficient use of police on a road where only a handful of drivers seriously ignore the speed limit.

#### Cllr reports

**Clir Small** has been busy with planning. Eddleston School has closed and the children have moved into Peebles schools. He has been looking at more affordable properties for younger couples. The multi-use path is opening on 17 June. The Source of the Tweed group involved with the path at the Hydro will be coming in to give a presentation. The formal opening of the path will be in Eddleston, on Station Road at 11.15am. It will involve a ribbon cutting.

**Clir Douglas** is unable to attend, and had sent in the following report:

# Tweeddale Area Partnership / Police to be in attendance

The next meeting of the Tweeddale Area Partnership is due to be held in the recently restored Burgh Hall in Peebles on Tuesday 13th June at 7 pm. There is a packed agenda including items on ecology along the Tweed (Bugs Life), the planned Mountain Bike Innovation Centre at Innerleithen, Update on Youth Provision across Tweeddale, Place Making, Neighbourhood Fund Allocations.

In advance of the meeting on 13 June, PC Vivienne Carsley has confirmed that she will be in attendance and has requested information on anything specific the group wishes to discuss around policing. [NOTE – Police did not attend the TAP]

### Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries Boundaries

Scotland is undertaking it's second review of Scottish Parliamentary boundaries. The proposed changes for Tweeddale are significant in that it is proposed to swap Midlothian South for parts of Clydesdale and incorporate Tweeddale into a new constituency stretching from Lanark to Lauder, to be called Clyde Valley and Tweeddale. The supposed rationale behind the move is to even up voter numbers in each constituency to allow for population changes. The proposals however bear little relationship with community or local government links and identity. The consultation is open until the 17th of June on <a href="https://boundaries.scot/">https://boundaries.scot/</a>

## Anti Social Behaviour - Underage drinking

Licensing officers have confirmed that they are in the process of visiting licensed premises to remind licensees of their responsibilities relating to under age drinking. The matter has also been raised at the recent meeting of the Police CAT oversight group and CAT officers have been tasked to add this issue to their current work schedule. SBC have issued information on social media that it is a criminal offence to buy alcohol for anyone under 18, which is punishable by a fine of up to £5,000 or 3 months in prison (or both).

#### **Licensing Survey**

Scottish Borders Licensing Board which I chair, will be reassessing our Alcohol Licensing Policy Statement over the next few months. The policy will apply for the next 5 years. The Local Licensing Forum has a role in identifying issues and providing advice to the Licensing Board, and is conducting a survey so that communities can have an input into the process. The survey is open until 16th July.

Cllr Pirone: Speedwatch is progressing. Priorsford Primary School is recruiting for a new head teacher and the Deputy Head Teacher will take the reins meanwhile. Peebles Youth Voice, she is continuing to work with M Bruce. Chambers Institution there is work continuing on a business plan for the Burgh Hall. ABS summit. Cllr Pirone is looking to bring the police together to bring sustainable action and she will report back. Community Council budget; the Chair reminded everyone that he had written to the Chief Executive and had received a reply and he will take a look. There may be other grants available as the budget is closed for this year. The Chair has made an application for some funding to cover Peebles in Bloom. Potholes on Kingsmeadows Road: there is a spreadsheet that has been sent from SBC setting out the works for the future. The back road from Cardrona has been done and it's a good job. The Chair also mentioned a form which allows you to put in your funding requirements a team at SBC will match them to the grant you should apply for.

Cllr Small pointed out that the work on the A72 is starting which is going to include road closures.

**Clir Begg**: The Tweeddale Councillors attended a useful meeting regarding the flooding with key members local residents affected from Tweed Avenue. He'd attended the volunteer fair and the Independent Retailers weekend. He done some walk arounds and had more planned. He implored everyone to use Borders Buses and to encourage everyone they knew to use them. Small businesses are challenged, and we should support them where we can. Surgeries will restart in September.

J Crawley said he agreed that we should support our vibrant High Street. He thought that we often demonise motorists when it comes to parking charges. To charge for parking gives the impression we want to get money out of them. He believed it gave motorists a good feeling if parking is free.

The Chair thanked Cllr Begg and said it is important that the local residents are being listened to in respect of the flooding issues.

**Treasurer's report.** Copies of the report have been circulated. The only thing to mention is the Coronation event. We received £500 from SBC, most of which was spent paying for the Eastgate venue. The quote was under £500 however there was no mention that this did not include VAT so when the invoice came in it was around £580. However, the Eastgate has since revised it so that the bill, including VAT, has come in at just under £500 which was very generous of them. The Chair said we had a second account for ecological projects. There was money in it, received from Venlaw Wood Protection Society. We received £1,000, £500 of which was used for wildflowers and bat boxes. We still have £500, and the Chair asked for ideas how to spend it.

Chairman's report. The holistic transport review, the Chair has a meeting scheduled with John Currie and Crick Carleton on 27 June. It's acknowledged by all parties that all issues touch upon a whole stream of things. The Chair had attended a recent meeting with Hannah Lacon and Kenny Harrow from SBC and Crick Carleton, from that meeting it was decided it would be a good idea to sit with the six Councillors to look at the bigger picture and propose a way forward. Once the Chair has got something to report he will come back.

The Volunteers Fair went well and on balance it was worthwhile.

G MacDonald said that she did not think that the public in Peebles understand the budgets between Police Scotland and CAT and how the public are paying twice. The Chair said, basically, it's double taxation. Police Scotland is funded through taxation in the national sense, and then it was agreed that there is a need for extra police locally and this is funded by SBC via local taxation and this seems wrong. The cost to us locally for the CAT team is around £560,000 per year.

Town maintenance. The Chair and Cllr Begg were part of a walk around and he suggests Tweeddale East does the same thing. There have been several concerns coming in by email. The wall on the south side of the Tweed is vandalised. The Kingsmeadows car park is not in good condition, and this was discussed at Common Good some time ago and is going to be remeasured and repainted. Fence next to steps in Haylodge now collapsing.

Peebles in Bloom. There has been a great deal happening and lot of actions taken. G Macdonald will follow up on this later.

SBC have asked us to consider to be important requirements for our public toilets. Views on public toilets from all members, please email the Chair.

The Post Office in Kingsmeadows has closed permanently.

**Peebles in Bloom:** G Macdonald is leading on this project. Please note for your diaries that the presentation evening is on 17 August in the Burgh Hall. Everyone should attend and bring a raffle prize. S Watson and G Ramsay will make the teas and coffees and do the washing up. All four judges are now locked in. Pentland plants will donate some plants. Gary Rennie is going to be MC. Can everyone please email G Macdonald the block they were allocated last year by 7 July? Also, please identify business premises with floral displays and let G Macdonald know. J Wilson said she had lots of positive feedback about the sunflower competition for the children, but someone had pointed out that sunflowers will not flower by 17 August. G Macdonald will have a think about a workaround.

### **Planning**

Anyone interested in the Leithenwater Windfarm should have a look on the SBC planning portal because it is very interesting. A new planning application for Rosetta holiday park has been submitted which looks good for the town, but the immediate area will have difficulty coping with the extra traffic. We can express our concern re traffic but should be supportive.

G Ramsay pointed out that previously planning permission was denied because there is need for another bridge. The Chair said that was for houses, not lodges. G Ramsay said, it will have the same impact on traffic. G Macdonald said it will be good for Peebles, employing local people.

#### **Peebles High School New Build:**

Tristan Compton had come to update the Community Council and his notes are below:

Updated plans were published in late April confirming the significant reduction to the number of open plan classrooms and some further revisions to the hall layout. We were also expecting to see the Equalities Impact Assessment and the revised Acoustics report at that stage, but these were not published.

Parent Council have, in the last fortnight, met with the project manager and the Headteacher, to discuss a number of queries, requested design tweaks, and to discuss plans for ongoing engagement with the project team.

Some queries have either been resolved or are in progress with an expected resolution as a result, but some concerns remain, key being:

- Hall/Stage layout, especially in relation to doors and fire exits.
- Programme of ongoing engagement no commitment to regular ongoing engagement or partnership working from the project team.

The Chair said at this point he was disappointed to hear that SBC has not been engaging as was promised.

- Lack of EQIA and Acoustics reports.

S Watson said that not having these was again SBC riding roughshod over everything. T Compton said that he's been told that they know what they're doing because they've done this before. He has been to see Jedburgh High School and heard all the feedback about the acoustics and the open plan layout. They simply say they know what they're doing and don't need to consult. The current firm of architects has only done Jedburgh. So only one High School. J Wilson wants to know where the "lessons learned" document is. SBC have built other schools, some of them better than others.

The Chair said everyone was told from the start that the school would be better when it is finished than it is now. It does not now sound accurate, nor true. If the Parent Council and the PCC had not put pressure on, the school would be as designed originally, and the changes not made.

J Wilson said that we need to acknowledge the staff who will have to make it work. We need to hear their voices too.

T Compton continued:

- Project timeline. Latest is that the PE Block completion is delayed from April until August 2023. Construction on the main building is now only expected to start in August 2023, with completion in late 2025, and demolition in 2026. This slippage comes on top of delays to the originally proposed plan for delivery in 2023, later revised to Summer 2024, and then to April 2025. Combined with a near doubling of the PE block extension schedule, it calls into question the project team and builder's ability to deliver the new school to any sort of schedule.

The impact of this is felt most by the current pupils. A student starting S1 in the months immediately before the fire, will not see any of their schooling take place in the new building. This brings me to my final point that

the current building is in increasingly poor condition. Not only the mould due to leaking roofs, and the ceilings that have collapsed, but the general decorative condition is very shabby. A team of volunteers was formed, with a view to taking on some redecoration and general tidying of the building but have been thwarted due to procedural hurdles blamed on health and safety requirements, preventing them from making any practical progress.

I therefore have 3 requests tonight:

To our SBC councillors:

- 1. Will you reaffirm your commitment to deliver the new building in time for the start of the 2025 Academic year in August, and ensure the project is tracked and managed to achieve this, no ifs or buts?
- 2. Will you instruct council officers to remove or resolve the red tape urgently to allow volunteers to complete simple cosmetic works in the school over the coming summer holidays?

To the Peebles community, via their community council and any other bodies represented here tonight:

1. Will you bolster our Parent volunteers, by volunteering to help with the redecoration and simple works needed? We would also be keen to have the support of skilled persons (e.g., Men's Shed groups or similar), assuming of course that SBC allows us to do the work?

G Macdonald suggested speaking to Bonnie Peebles Plus? The Chair said that the Parent Council would have to speak to John Falla.

T Crompton asked the Cllrs for their commitment.

Cllr Begg said the timeline has been a standing item. He is aware of the project slippage and is watching. He's had assurances. Cllr Begg cannot get involved with the operational side and will ask Cllr Small to take it on.

Cllr Small said he is keen to move it on and will do his utmost to ensure it goes smoothly.

**Peebles Community Trust**. Everyone has seen M Bruce's report. They have received a good grant from the Scottish Government towards the installation of the heating system in the School Brae Hub, but they are still about £30,000 short of cash. Over and above that they still need circa £2m.

**Parking group**: S Watson said they had meeting where they discussed the surveys. One part was the moving of the bus stop. That is not happening at the moment and will be reviewed at a later date.

The Chair said that there would be no need to move the bus stop if it wasn't for the puffin crossing. The discussion around parking charges has two sides. One is the recommendation to charge, the other from some shopkeepers is not to charge. This polarises the community but we need a decision.

J Crawley said that this is a unique selling point for Peebles: free parking. If we charge, visitors will park and then move on. They need to have a longer stay to benefit more shops. The Chair considered Cllr Tatler's argument was sound in that the car park needed a flow of traffic which should increase buyers on the High Street. Charging would help this.

**Town Bus Service:** G Macdonald and C Forsyth went to the town bus meeting and G Macdonald again suggested that all councillors go for a ride on the town bus please as this was the best way to understand the buses. There are some questionnaires that need to be returned by the end of June to Toby's art gallery shop. It is interesting to note that pre covid there was standing room only, but post covid they are not being used. This is because the timetables have changed 3 times and there are only 4 services. Passengers don't know

when the next bus is. They are looking at paper timetables and these can be published in the Peebles Life. They are hoping for 200 replies. There was a letter written by a local parent who suggested putting buses on that would coincide with the morning and afternoon school runs. Particularly for young people travelling from the town boundaries. This would have a positive impact on the traffic, and parking, too if young people were getting the bus rather than hitching a lift with parents. The buses could also be timetabled for young people attending after school clubs. It is still proving tricky to get the bus passes. The library does not do it, nor does the post office. The contact centre in the High Street will assist. M Stevenson pointed out that there is no direct bus to BGH anymore. It stopped during covid and has not returned. The Chair asked for that to be raised.

New cemetery. Chair has been in touch with SBC, and they are still thinking about it.

**Swimming pool:** Should be open mid-August.

**Additional 20 mph measures**. There is an email from SBC that has gone to everyone. Please feedback to the Chair.

**Destination Tweed:** Marina Piper, who is the Destination Tweed Project Manager was in attendance to talk about the Destination Tweed project. This is a £20m project intended to turn the River Tweed into an attraction capable of competing with major cities. Destination Tweed is part of the wider Borderlands Growth Deal for southern Scotland and northern England. It would see the creation of a trail from Moffat to Berwick-upon-Tweed which the aim to bring 375,000 visitors a year to the area. Although Marina is still to present to us at a future meeting she needed our agreement for the phase joining the new Peebles Hydro path across Innerleithen Road and down to the river via Whitestone Park, including a pedestrian crossing. The Chair had previously had a site meeting with Marina and supported the proposal. They are focusing on Sustrans funded work at the moment, which is time limited. They want an offroad route which is safe for families. SBC has done a costs and safety appraisal. Their preferred option is to use the Peebles Hydro entrance (the Hydro is the landowner). They will put an active travel route to the east side of the Hydro entrance where there is plenty of space. Innerleithen road is a very busy road with a narrow pavement. They want to get people off the road as much as possible. They can put in a crossing, break a gap in the wall and put in an offroad path on the sloped area. It won't impact the playing fields. M Piper is consulting directly with the adjacent neighbours. There were no objections to the proposals

J Wilson said we needed to agree the Equal Opportunities Policy, her feeling was that it was more of a statement than a policy. G Mackie said if we adopt it the policy becomes part of the constitution. The Chair asked if everyone was happy to adopt it? Yes.

The Chairman apologised that the meeting had run late and thanked everyone for their time.

The meeting ended at 9.14pm.

The next meeting will be on Thursday 13 July 2023 at 7pm in Burgh Hall, Peebles.