

Peebles & District Community Council

Chairman's Report – August 2025

1.0 Tweeddale Area Partnership

Unfortunately, the cancelled meeting with SBC CEO meant that this subject could not be debated and with the passage of time this has now probably become a lost cause. However, for the record, a report was issued by the Director – Resilient Communities on Area Partnerships dated 14 December 2023. Section 1.8 states

It is proposed that, building on the engagement carried out by SCDC [Scottish Community Development Centre], the public consultation and what is working well elsewhere, officers explore further a model whereby Area Partnerships are moved out-with the Council's Scheme of Administration to become unincorporated bodies – becoming community led with membership decided by the community

This does not identify a possible need to abolish the Area Partnerships. It states that SBC should learn from best practice elsewhere. Section 1.6 states

There are a wide variety of arrangements across Scotland, and many other local authorities, in a similar way to Scottish Borders Council, have used organisations such as SCDC to carry out discussions with communities in order to develop action plans for specific areas. In particular, **East Lothian is seen as an exemplar of community led Area Partnerships.**

Your chair has discussed the merits of the East Lothian Model with SBC going back a number of years. These discussions echoed section 1.6. and the question must arise: If East Lothian is an exemplar, then why was it not pursued?

Section 1.2 tells us how important community is to SBC. If it was that important, we would have more involvement and not less and this report would have formed a basis to build on. Section 1.2

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 was created to strengthen community empowerment, engagement and participation, and how this can be supported and embedded within communities. Scottish Borders Council welcomed the introduction of the Act and the ethos behind it, anticipating that it would provide a strong legislative basis which could be built on to achieve the Council's vision of stronger, empowered and sustainable communities able to participate in public decision making and shaping their communities.

2.0 Illegal Vapes and Tobacco

Our police continue to keep this in mind. However, the system appears to be inadequate, both with the resourcing of police, the resourcing of trading standards, and the apparently weak legislative tools at their disposal. A wealth

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of evidence, mostly coming from England demonstrates that the problem is often related to organised crime, therefore being of a serious nature and obviously of a nature that demands to be taken seriously. Reports nationwide demonstrate that the outlets selling the illegal products – at a significant loss to the exchequer – re-open almost immediately after a successful raid. In effect, laughing at the system and more importantly putting our youth at risk.

3.0 Meetings Attended Since June

12.06.25	PCC Meeting
13.06.25	Fiona Dalglish (Handover of Town Team)
27.06.25	Meeting on wind
02.07.25	PCC pre-meeting meeting
08.07.25	Iain Gibson
19.07.25	Peebles in Bloom walkabout
28.07.25	Debby Gillet SBHA
29.07.25	Robin Tatler (Chambers Institution) Fiona Dalglish (Town Team)
05.08.25	PCC pre-meeting-meeting
11.08.25	Miller Malloy (Chair of Sport Tweeddale)
12.08.25	Windfarm meeting Live Borders roadshow
14.08.25	PCC meeting

4.0 Working party on non-financial support to community councils and the working party on the Community Councils Network.

Again, no update from SBC on the working group on the SBCCN. This has almost certainly died! The last communication being the issue of a meeting note in November 2023.

Regarding the working party on non-financial support, SBC have been in touch to note that a meeting may take place at the end of August. This process was initiated in May 2024 after which communities began to collate information to discuss with SBC, a process that at the most would have taken two months or two cycles of community council meetings. The proposed meeting will be 15 months after the project was initiated if it takes place. Unsurprisingly, people have stopped communicating, including my deputy.

The writer has discovered a report of 05 September 2024 on the SBC website on the subject of the SBCCN which identifies in section 1.3

[A review of the non-financial support provided to community councils is currently underway. This will include a review of SBCCN.](#)

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As we can see, not entirely reflecting reality. The two processes being entirely unconnected so far as community councils are concerned. Section 4.2 states

In May 2024, SBC's Executive Committee **agreed the establishment of a working group to undertake a review of non-financial support to community councils. At this meeting it was proposed, and agreed, that the review of SBCCN would be included as part of this work.** The working group is in the process of being established and will include community council representatives from each locality as well as Scottish Borders Councillors and appropriate officers. **Information is currently being collected from community councils** which will be collated, alongside that already gathered about the types of non-financial support required, views on the role of SBCCN and whether that role is being fulfilled effectively.

As noted, so far as the community councils are concerned, they are two separate projects and the SBCCN one has frozen. The statement that information is currently being collected is entirely incorrect as SBC at the time of writing have collected no feedback from CCs. Whatever the reason for the lack of progress it has the effect of disengaging the community and then allows SBC to state incorrectly that communities have little or no interest.

5.0 Place Making – Town Action Plan

Following the meeting your Chair called of the Town Team, Fiona Dalgleish volunteered to step forward and take over the leadership. A handover meeting was held and subsequently Fiona held a meeting with Sam Coe, Michael Marshall and I to explore how Crick Carelton's legacy could be progressed. Unfortunately, Fiona's workload at the foodbank has increased due to the passing of a key member of her team and she feels that she will not be able to do justice to the Town Team, at least for the next few months. Sam has signified that he would like to see Fiona continue and this is also the position of your Chair. Volunteers in whatever organisation they volunteer can only do so much.

6.0 Live Borders

At both the June and July meetings, our position on Live Borders was unanimously unchanged in that members considered the published consultants report to be seriously flawed and again that the consultation questionnaire likewise appeared biased and not fit for purpose. We also identified that despite Live Borders taking on additional responsibilities such as the Great Tapestry of Scotland, they had seen their funding substantially cut in real terms. Other community councils with which we have been in touch hold similar views

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7.0 Meeting with SBC CEO

The cancelled meeting scheduled between SBC's CEO and your Chair has been reconvened for 26 August. To recap on the subjects for discussion. They are.

- The Old School House on Tweed Green. At this time, this is still a good example of how SBC and a community can work together for mutual benefit.
- Planning issues and concerns relating to the work of the Planning Committee
- Area Partnerships
- Live Borders
- Engagement
 - There are 7 national standards on community engagement
 - **Communication** – we will communicate clearly and regularly with the people, organisations and the communities affected by the engagement.
 - **Methods** – we will use methods that are fit for purpose
 - **Working together** – We will work effectively together to achieve the aims of the engagement
 - **Planning** – There is a clear purpose for the engagement which is based upon a shared understanding of the community needs and ambitions
 - **Support** – We will identify and overcome any barriers to participation
 - **Inclusion** – We will identify and involve the people that are affected by the focus of the engagement
 - **Impact** – We will assess the impact of the engagement and use what has been learned to improve our future community engagement.

Peter Maudsley
Chair
Peebles and District Community Council