

# **Peebles & District Community Council**

## **Chairman's Report - July 2024**

### **1.0 Lennox Lovell-Henderson**

Lennox has resigned from the PCC as he moves on to his next stage in life at university. He is off to Dundee University in September to study law. He is hoping to eventually go off and do something in children's rights and young people in conflict with the law, with the hope to become a youth justice Lawyer. We wish him all the very best.

### **2.0 Hustings**

The hustings appeared to be a great success. We filled the Burgh Hall and the acoustics appeared to be OK. The candidates were well behaved, and the audience generally listened with only a very minimum of interference. We thank the candidates for appearing, Father Tony Lappin for taking the chair, and those of our own team who were able to attend.

### **3.0 Peebles Town Action Plan (Place Planning)**

The consultants have produced a first draft of the place plan/town action plan, and it is under review by Crick Carleton and the place planning team. There appears to be a great deal of editing required before the team will be happy with it. Your Chair has indicated that a sign off by the PCC is not possible without the endorsement of our PCC team.

### **4.0 NHS – Community Hospitals Review**

No change

### **5.0 Tweeddale Area Partnership**

No activity to report

### **6.0 Baptist Church Hall – Cleland Site**

The workshop on 24 June was apparently cancelled, although the writer was not informed of this. We are hosting a presentation on Thursday 11/07/24 at our next meeting.

### **7.0 Meetings Attended This Month**

17.06.24	Place making meeting
19.06.24	Place making meeting
24.06.24	Volunteers presentation @ the Eastgate Parliamentary election hustings
28.06.24	Place making meeting
02.07.24	Pre-meeting meeting

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04.07.24     Iain Gibson

### **8.0 Working party on non-financial support to community councils**

No change – SBC are apparently working on it.

### **9.0 Peebles Youth**

No change

### **10.0 From SBC (email)**

SBC is investing over £4 million in Play Areas and Outdoor Community Spaces over a seven-year period. The intention is to improve community wellbeing and enhance outdoor activity for children and young people inclusive of all levels of ability. SBC currently has 187 play parks ranging from smaller local areas of play to destination play parks. A programme of investment has been developed based on previous improvements to play areas and community spaces to provide children and young people with meaningful play opportunities. To help ensure this is achieved, play areas will include items that are accessible for all such as wheelchair roundabouts, trampolines, ramped multi plays, basket swings and play panels.

Activity is already underway to develop play areas in various sites across the Scottish Borders. The play area in Broughton has been highlighted to receive a £76k investment. This survey is to find out what improvements people would like to see in this park.

The online consultation is being run alongside a consultation which has taken place with the Primary and Nursery children at Broughton Primary School. The survey will go live from 3rd July 2024 until 3rd August 2024. The survey can be accessed by using the QR code below or by using the following link <https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/customer-communities/broughton-play-park-consultation>

Your Chair is not convinced that this is the best use of funds. Youth groups throughout the Borders receive intermittent funding and need more long-term support. Generally, it is agreed that support to young people help to reduce ASB and this may be a better use for at least some of the £4M quoted?

### **11.0 TweedLove**

PCC Received the following from Neil Dalgleish of Hillside Outside / TweedLove on 21 June. The reply from your Chair follows on and also a consideration of the wider issues.

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Dear Community Councillors,

We have a few questions and issues to raise regarding last weekend's TweedLove Festival.

1. Would CC member Scott Watson like to explain why, last Sunday morning, he asked one of our volunteers why he was 'working for the enemy?' It is unacceptable that a member of the community council should openly use this language. And if this is his opinion, he should be asked to stand down from the Community Council.

TweedLove is a locally organised event which has brought many jobs and £millions to the area since 2010. It was born of this community, and its staff and volunteers are also members of this community. The festival is now an important part of the local events calendar, providing jobs and year-round destination marketing. TweedLove and those associated with it are not the enemy, and to suggest we are is unacceptable - particularly for anyone holding any kind of community office here.

Everyone knows that cycle tourism has provided by far the biggest economic growth in recent years and TweedLove was the first organisation to seriously champion it. Members of the CC don't have to like bikes, but they should certainly be supportive of projects which benefit the area so significantly.

Scott Watson's comments are ill-judged and his position most likely untenable.

2. We've been informed that the Community Council, or member/s of the CC, have approached the High Street Traders Association to find out if/how traders were affected by TweedLove festival.

Since this action appears directly related to our event, can you please tell us;

- a. what is the rationale behind this?
- b. will you be doing the same thing after the Beltane weekend, and if not, why not?

3. Members of our team, both staff and volunteers, have been verbally abused by members of the public at the event, or online afterwards. The latter caused many comments to be removed and closed down on several posts. There are clearly people in this community who wish to cause division and ill-will and seem keen to create an 'us and them' mentality.

What can/will the CC do to discourage this abuse and division?

4. Does the CC agree that all important events should be treated equally? And if not, again, why not?

The main negative outputs of TweedLove were some minor, quickly repaired damage to Tweed Green, and some uncorroborated (at this point) reports of poor parking.

To give some context: In the first few days of the Beltane, we've had all kinds of parking both sides of Kingsmeadows Road, Police called to several incidents, at least one

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arrest, drunken violence on the High Street, four shop windows smashed, lots of sick on the pavements, extensive underage drinking and copious horse manure on streets and paths. On Saturday most of the High St shops won't be able to trade at all and no-one will be able to park pretty much anywhere around the centre of town. The High Street will likely be a shabby scene of desolation after the parade has finished, for the rest of the day.

TweedLove supports the Beltane, I've been enjoying it since I moved here when I was seven (no I'm not a proper gutterbluid), but we are asking for fair treatment now.

I understand that some members of the CC and the town don't understand what TweedLove is or the lifestyle it represents, but it's not OK to target us in an unbalanced way.

By all means scrutinise but do it equally and sensibly. The Beltane is good for the town, but so is TweedLove. Certain members of the CC should examine their values and ponder if they prioritise the welfare of the whole community, or just their own prejudices.

Kind regards,

Neil Dalgleish

Your chair responded with the following

Dear Neil

### **TweedLove Points for the Community Council (21.06.24)**

I am addressing your email in two halves. The first being the allegation relating to Scott Watson, which we have considered under the Scottish Borders Council Complaints Procedure. The second being the additional questions that you have raised.

In relation to the first item, Mr. Watson does not deny making the comment, which he considered to be made as a private person to another person with whom he was well acquainted. The comment was considered to be "tongue in cheek". However, he does recognise in retrospect that as a member of the community council, the comment was inappropriate and has apologised to me as Chair. As he was not acting on behalf of the community council at the time, then I consider this to be the end of the matter. If you are not in agreement with this result, you can request that an independent community council be brought in to investigate and make a judgement.

In terms of how any individual on the community council has a view on any subject, this is for them individually. The community council has never been against TweedLove. Indeed, meeting minutes demonstrate strong support for the event. In the past, PCC raised one question and that was: "Should the event contribute to the

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Common Good fund for the use of Tweed Green"? That question still stands as SBC are slow decision makers.

Relating to your point 2). The community council has not approached the High Street Retailers Association. We have the association Chair and one other as associate members of the community council. We have some feedback that may indicate a slowing in business in one sector during the three days of the event. However, this needs to be researched for accuracy.

Relating to your point 3). Abuse, verbal, online or otherwise is never justified and online is often badly misinformed. The community council and others have been subject to similar substantial misinformed abuse in the past and therefore we can sympathise. However, this demonstrates clearly that there are two conflicting viewpoints.

Relating to point 4). Does the CC agree that all important events should be treated equally? And if not, again, why not? On like for like events of course we agree. However, there is no comparison between Beltane and TweedLove. The former is a century old festival of local legend, history and tradition. It is run totally by volunteers and is completely uncommercial. The organisers take no living from it. TweedLove is modern, highly commercial and pays a small number an income as well as recruiting volunteer staff. The Beltane festival is loved by a great majority of people, by your own admission there are those who are not so enamoured with TweedLove. How large this group is unknown.

A community council is a legal entity set up by a local authority to represent their local area, to consult with local residents and to pass on the public's views to their local authority. That is why we asked the Common Good Committee to debate whether the use of Tweed green should be charged for. This had never previously been considered by the trustees. We did not try to pre-empt their decision and we still await it. We have had a great deal of concern expressed relating to TweedLove this month and yes, some support too. Our responsibility is to try and make sense of it, to find out what the weight of public opinion is and then relay this to SBC.

Questions have been raised by the public and the PCC cannot ignore them. Our committee members have their own individual views, which in a democracy they are freely allowed to express. They represent many different parts of the community and together collect public views and feed this back to the whole community council. If necessary, we will try and collect more evidence to support one side or the other of any argument.

Peter Maudsley  
Chair  
Peebles and District Community Council

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### **Considerations of the wider issues**

The email from Mr. Dalgleish was received following an article which appeared in Peeblesshire news. The article related to concerns raised by members of the public about damage to Tweed Green. None of the members of the public concerned were members of the PCC. Your Chair was quoted as saying that where a member of the public raised an issue with us, then it was our duty to consider it. This is true, we have a duty to support the public; where they are correct and where there is a majority view. In essence we are neutral until we have determined the direction to take. Determining the right direction is not always easy and this is the case here.

We do have some history which commenced when a letter was published in January 2023 in Peeblesshire News. This letter took issue with the PCC asking the Common Good trustees to debate whether a charge to TweedLove for the use of Tweed green would be appropriate. Several members of the public had raised this question with PCC and as the trustees had never up to this time debated the point, the question was considered appropriate. At the time of writing, the issue rests with SBC and is still unresolved.

It is important to note that PCC has always been supportive of the TweedLove festival, and this is echoed in numerous PCC meeting minutes. However, we would be abrogating our duty if we ignored approaches from the public on any subject, and we have been approached by many persons in relation to the last TweedLove festival. The difficulty for PCC is to arrive at a balanced view that can then be promulgated to councillors and SBC. This has not been made any easier by the conflation of TweedLove with the Beltane festival.

### **Comments made by the Public (not necessarily agreed by PCC)**

- **Traffic management**
  - Particularly the proliferation of camper vans
  - Congestion in car parks
  - Overspill into roads
  - Inconsiderate parking
  - Use of disabled spaces by non-disabled drivers
  - Parking over driveways and driveway entrances
  - Tourist buses unable to find parking
  - Cyclists cycling on pavements
- **Size**
  - The event has grown larger each year – “it’s simply grown too large an event to hold in the middle of an already small and congested town”.
- **Noise**
  - “The noise from the event is quite something”. Professional stages and music/PA systems are now used at high volumes”.

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- Generators
- Films shown with high volume
- **TweedLove / Beltane**
  - One is a community festival run exclusively by volunteers. Normally running at a loss, and reliant on fund raising and the generosity of patrons, dating back 127 years.
  - One is a private company, making money for the directors and employees (7x in last statement to Companies House). Their parent company Hillside Outside Ltd is 12 years old, showing capital and reserves of £xxx,xxx in last financial year.
  - We would welcome someone from the CC asking their opinion on local businesses during Beltane week.
  - I would also like to know how much TL paid for the council to try to repair Tweed green
  - Tweed Green needed to recover, and the damage was not TL fault. If anything, it was the fault of the council allowing a commercial organisation to run an event prior to the Beltane Festival without a contingency plan
  - The Beltane festival also takes flak from people who don't want to participate and would rather criticise.
  - Several communications on damage to Tweed Green.
  - I would like to know how much TL paid the council to repair Tweed green to get it ready for the Friday. You may recall a few years back Haylodge was chewed up after the Agri show and the Agri Society paid £15K plus for repairs.
- **Economic benefits**
  - Cycle tourism is indeed an industry that can bring benefit to the town. So how sad it is when TL uses caterers from outside the Peebles area to provide for its self-contained village. Where is the profit then? Cafes and fast food only benefit.
  - I have still to see any tangible evidence that the economy benefits by the amount they say.
  - The retailers support tweed love but don't necessarily feel it brings any extra footfall or business to the town over the weekend.
  - Only the hospitality members felt it had a negative effect on their trade that weekend due to the independent drink or food stalls etc on tweed green.
  - We found trade to be very similar to the previous years on that same weekend.
  - We did have some customers complaining about how difficult it was to park but we don't feel the town was quieter due to that.
  - The main negative from the business owners was the lack of respect of the bikers, cycling along footpaths etc.
- **Antisocial behaviour**
  - To be fair Mr Dalgliesh has a point and some sections of the Community have little to be proud of regarding their behaviour

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during Beltane Week, but they will be dealt with according to the Law, whereas Tweedlove can only be heard in the Court of Public Opinion

- I like Tweedlove. I enjoy all things biking. I admire Hillside Outside for developing such a fantastic event, but there must be a better way forward than sniping at each other.
- Numerous deposits of human excrement and toilet paper found around the Gytes Leisure Centre and Beltane shed on Sunday evening/Monday morning.
- Broken windows, sick, etc were all on Wednesday evening – also a night when the Scotland football team were playing, and the pubs were packed inside! The arrest was following a complaint about a neighbour from someone found to be the subject of an arrest warrant. This person was therefore arrested - Wednesday afternoon - No connection to Beltane.

### **Conclusions**

This writer considers that the damage to Tweed Green was not as great as had been originally feared and that the swift work by SBC did help to ameliorate it.

The feedback noted has been received from multiple sources in writing and additionally in many conversations. After considerable thought, your Chair has concluded that the PCC does not have the resources to adequately assess this subject to the degree necessary. There is a substantial perception demonstrating concern and correspondingly there is a strong perception of support for the event. The PCC core group at the monthly pre-meeting meeting concluded that there are only two questions to be answered

1. The methodology of the current mechanism for charging for the use of a common good asset, the parks, appears flawed. An ice cream vendor may be charged, and then conversely other commercial enterprises may not be. SBC took an action 18 months ago to resolve this question and it is still outstanding.
2. Members of the public have raised the question: “Has TweedLove become too large to be held in its present location?”

Where do we, the PCC stand on this issue?

Peter Maudsley  
Chair  
Peebles and District Community Council