

# Peebles & District Community Council

## Chairman's Report

September 2023

### 1.0 General

- 1.1 PCC was ccd in on an email by Cheryl Scougal on school transport on the back road from Cardrona and how changes were affecting her children. This writer agrees that the hazard appears unacceptable. We know that councillors are taking this up on her behalf and the writer considers that we should support this.
- 1.2 Burgh Hall acoustics. The writer suggests we emphasise the urgency of addressing this ASAP with the trustees.
- 1.3 Construction of cycle trail in Venlaw Wood – We have had reports that this appears to be unapproved and possibly dangerous as it crosses several walking trails. Perhaps our councillors could take this up with the appropriate department in SBC?

### 2.0 Tweeddale Area Partnership

- 3.0 The last meeting was on 22/08/23 in Eddleston Village Hall. With the following discussed and decided.

#### 3.1.1 Sergeant James Harrison Police Scotland

Sergeant Harrison of the Community Policing Team gave an insight into his role within the community, the priorities for policing in Tweeddale and the role of the police in community engagement. Discussions centred around anti-social behaviour, capacity of police officers and how best to report an incident in your community.

#### 3.1.2 Youth Voice and Participation

Round table discussions were held focusing on the idea of increasing youth voice and participation at future area partnerships within Tweeddale.

#### 3.1.3 Destination Tweed

Grieg Gibson SBC project manager for Environment and Infrastructure provided an update on the Destination Tweed project. Grieg welcomed ideas from those in attendance on how to best engage and consult with the community on future project plans.

#### 3.1.4 Flood Management (See 10.)

Colin Kerr from Walkerburn Community Council spoke of the tragic events that had taken place during the recent flooding in Walkerburn. It was suggested and approved that a working group for Flood Management within Tweeddale would be taken forward.

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### **3.1.5 Funding**

The following groups were recommended not to fund.

- Conservation Without Borders- £7,500- to create a documentary of the flight of ospreys across the Tweed valley to be shown to schools across the Scottish Borders
- Oor Space Youthy- £6,723.90- to support with rent and staffing costs
- Dyslexic Collective- £2,500- to purchase books for school children with dyslexia

Support will be offered to all groups to gather further information and to rework a resubmitted application if appropriate.

This leaves a balance of; £53,938.77 –

### **3.1.6 Peebles Parking Working Group**

Counsellor Robin Tatler gave an update on the discussions around parking in Peebles and the detail provided in the interim report. 5 out of the 6 recommendations were passed with the last recommendation of a change to the charges at East Station car park being put to an online vote through Citizen Space. A final decision will be made at the next Tweeddale Area Partnership on the 31<sup>st</sup> October.

### **3.1.7 Place making**

Chair of the Tweeddale Place Making Working Group Crick Carleton gave an update on the progress of the Tweeddale communities in their efforts to develop Place Making. Concerns around the sustainability of community groups were also raised and whether there needs to be more support from SBC and partners.

## **4.0 Street Pastors**

Another patrol was conducted on 11 August and was again considered successful. There is a meeting of Peebles Churches on 11 September and hopefully this meeting will lead to a positive decision to support the Street Pastors initiative. Another patrol is scheduled for Saturday 09 September.

## **5.0 Peebles in Bloom**

The team will report. However, acoustics apart, this was an undoubted success and our team of Gill, Anne and Fiona deserve a great vote of thanks. There was a significant workload, but the result is well worth it.

## **6.0 Scottish Borders Community Council Network (SBCCN)**

Nothing new.

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### 7.0 Royal Burgh of Peebles – Possible Anniversary Project.

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 900<sup>th</sup> 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 burgi 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”.*

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 900<sup>th</sup> 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:

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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.

### Chairman's comments

- Let us say that it could be targeted at early September 2024. This would give 12 months for organisation. However, there is an argument for events spread across the year from April/May which was the time of the coronation.
- It could be really good.
- It could be good fun.
- However, the workload would put Peebles in Bloom in the shade! This could be made easier by
  - Peebles groups working together.
  - A grant from SOSE to employ a coordinator and administrator.
  - The one project being made into sections.
    - Burgh Hall
      - Made a focal point.
      - Acoustics resolved.
      - Serious display materials. Perhaps some borrowed from the museum of Scotland.
    - Dressing the town
    - Museum display

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- Advertising campaign
- Improved tourist facilities
- Perhaps it should be linked to the riding of the Marches in some way.
- Etc.

### **8.0 Eastgate Theatre**

We are all concerned by the recent news from the Eastgate Theatre. The writer attempted to provide some mediation between some members of the community and the present and past chairmen of the Eastgate. Some members of the public also called an ad hoc public meeting which John Crawley attended on our behalf. John reported that it was not a particularly good meeting and he left at the break. The converse of this, is that the scheduled Friends of the Eastgate meeting that was held just two weeks later was a productive meeting and calls for support for the board were met with approbation.

The writer understands that there have been some rather unfortunate comments made and yes, some nastiness expressed. Regardless of the circumstances we should always remember that the directors of the Eastgate, the directors of the Community Trust and many others are unpaid volunteers and have work and family commitments just like everyone else. The Eastgate Theatre directors have legal responsibilities and accountabilities that go with them. They work for the community for nothing, and they do not deserve to be denigrated. There are never enough volunteer directors, and the range of skills required is not always available. The Eastgate and the PCT cannot set a salary and advertise for directors with those requisite skills thought to be required, it doesn't work that way. If any person in the community thinks that they can do better, then they should come forward and donate their skills and free time.

We all want to know the facts. However, it is not as simple as that, this writer has no idea of all the facts and neither does anyone else other than the directors themselves and common-sense dictates that they cannot share everything with us as some things are always legally sensitive and some always commercially sensitive.

This writer proposes that PCC give the Eastgate Theatre directors our vote of confidence and that the community give them the space needed to do their unpaid work.

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### **9.0 Parking**

A meeting was held between members of the Peebles Parking group and around a dozen members of the new Trader's Association. It was a positive meeting and agreed on a way forward. Councillors can inform of progress. The writer suggested strongly that the Traders should have a seat on the community council, and this was received positively. This would be a very useful step forward. A later conversation confirmed the intention for a representative to join PCC.

### **10.0 Flood risk**

Colin Kerr from Walkerburn and District Community Council has copied us with the following.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

After the floods in December 2022 on the River Tweed and the subsequent death of a local resident. I thought it necessary for more decisive action when floods are imminent.

During the last SBC Tweeddale Area Partnership Meeting I was asked by the Chair to set up a Tweeddale Working Group to look yet again at the effects of River Tweed flooding on local communities and consider possible prevention/mitigation measures. I am, therefore, writing to you to seek help in identifying possible members for such a group.

We need representatives from all those communities in danger from increasing flood incidents; people who know and understand the river; people who are involved in resilience work within their communities; and most importantly people who are willing to speak their minds to our elected councillors and to SBC officials.

I understand that many of you are already frustrated by endless requests for information which never seem to lead to any action, but I feel that if we can together produce a report on flooding in Tweeddale which is evidence based and includes proposals for a way forward to provide mitigation we might just stand a chance to make our voices heard with the Council Leader and senior management. We all know that SBC spending is tightly controlled centrally and there is unlikely to be much room for flood defence investment but perhaps we can make sure that any money available is spent wisely and that community, SBC and Police action is appropriately targeted.

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My aim would be to hold a first meeting at which we could agree our Terms of Reference and allocate tasks to individuals. We would then scatter back to our communities to do some work and only meet when we had completed tasks to agree the next steps. I do not want the Working Group to be another 'talking shop' so the emphasis will be on members gathering information and views in their local community to inform the eventual report.

I ask now that you take some time to consider any individual in your community who could contribute to the work of the Group and that you then make an approach to them and ask permission to pass their contact details to me.

I would like to get this Group up and running quickly so I would appreciate replies by Monday 18th September – even if it is only a negative reply.

In Walkerburn, we have watched funding being wasted by poor engineering works, we have watched aghast as outsiders arrive who know nothing about the behaviour of our section of the river which is still hugely distorted by Victorian and early 20th century works to divert water to the Mill. I know that many other communities are having similar experiences. Let's try to get together a report which sets a positive way forward.

I look forward to hearing from you by 18th September. Please email me if you have any questions.

### **Chairman's comments**

The only thing worse for a homeowner than a flood is a serious fire, and we know that some areas of our town are at risk and indeed have been inundated more than once. Whatever we can do to assist in reducing this risk and helping residents when affected. The writer has:

- Replied to Walkerburn CC to indicate support for this initiative.
- Written to a representative of residents of the affected properties in the Walkershaugh area to see if they will volunteer a person to represent the PCC.
- Written to Paul spence of the Peebles resilience group, proposing that they and PCC work together under his lead on this initiative. Paul has replied and hopefully we can create a stronger voice for the community at risk.

### **11.0 Meetings Attended this Month.**

01/08/23	Pre-meeting meeting
02/08/23	Chambers Institution meeting
03/08/23	Recruitment meeting

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04/08/23	Informal Eastgate meeting
06/08/23	Peebles in Bloom judging
07/08/23	formal Eastgate meeting
08/08/23	Meeting with Robin Tatler @ Victoria Park Centre
10/08/23	PCC meeting
12/08/23	meeting on policing and PHS with MSP Craig Hoy and MP David Mundell
14/08/23	Meeting with Garry Rennie over PiB
15/08/23	Open meeting on Rosetta Road development
17/08/23	Missed opening of Bonnyrigg water works. Too busy. Evening PiB
22/08/23	Tweeddale Area Partnership
23/08/23	CIT business Group and then Common Good
29/08/23	Community conversation drop in at PHS
30/08/23	Parking meeting
31/08/23	Friends of the Eastgate meeting
03/09/23	King David project meeting
07/08/23	Pre-meeting meeting

### 12.0 Any other Business – Common Good

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



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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]

Peter Maudsley  
Chair  
Peebles and District Community Council