

Peebles & District Community Council

Chairman's Report – March 2025

1.0 Tweeddale Area Partnership

In the last report your Chair identified that he does have a perception that SBC has improved in its interface with the communities, but that it had a long way to go. Sadly, so far as TAP goes, this appears to be taking a step backwards. Placing a moratorium on further grants this financial year and not running the balance forward into the next, weakens the TAP a little. However, the proposal to take a new approach whereby a reduced level of Council funding for the TAP will be used to bring in match funding from other sources to support local priorities and projects, will more seriously weaken it.

Malcolm Bruce commented as follows: “Speaking as someone who has applied for funding from many sources over the years, sometimes successfully, sometimes not so much, I think this is perhaps an oversimplified proposal. I can see many groups seeking funding from outside sources available on the expectation that match funding will then be available from Community Funds only to find it isn't for whatever reason. This would leave groups working twice as hard to find a match funder from another source which not all funders want to be potentially placing the project in jeopardy. I get that money is tight, but I am not sure if this is the best way to share it around. I think I would prefer to know how much is available as Community funding and make it available as full grants. Once it is gone, it is gone.

We all know how difficult it is for PCC to attract a full and effective team. Your Chair's contacts with other CCs shows that it is at least as difficult if not more so for them. As it stands, Scotland has arguably the worst local democratic deficit in Europe. Regionalisation and the demise of real “**local**” authorities, such as a Town council have exacerbated this, as has the erosion of community council finances, with only one grant increase of 10% in 15 years. Also, changes in society that reduce for want of a better expression, neighbourliness also has a negative effect. This at a time, when the Scottish Government wish to see communities take more responsibility individually and also to participate in budgeting. Community councils must be strengthened if they are to step up to the mark and they must have a strong voice if they are to be heard. Individually, we have little say and thus a body such as the SBCCN (Scottish Borders Community Councils Network) is a necessity. Such a body doesn't just pop up like a mushroom, it requires management and a development plan. There is only one mechanism that has any chance of making it work and that is by using the Area Partnerships as a foundation and this requires a strong Area Partnership helping to pull together stronger CCs. Five years ago, Area Partnerships appeared to be failing and then we did see an improvement after the last council elections. However, the new proposal will weaken the TAP and consequently make it almost impossible to resurrect the SBCCN or indeed help to make a local Tweeddale working group.

The next meeting of the TAP is 25 March 2025 in the Burgh Hall.

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2.0 Baptist Church Hall – Cleland Site

At the time of writing, no new information received by the writer.

3.0 Meetings Attended This Month

13.02.25	PCC Meeting
05.03.25	Meeting booked with Fraser Morrison (Eastgate). He wasn't there, although it was confirmed that it was in his diary!
06.03.25	Pre-meeting meeting
13.03.25	Meeting Clovenfords & District Chair PCC Meeting
22.03.25	Meeting on Place Planning/Town Action Plan/Windfarms
26.03.25	Meeting on windfarms

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

Only four CCs appear to be engaging in this SBC initiative out of the Tweeddale Area. There is a meeting with one community council as above.

There is no update on the SBCCN.

5.0 Tweeddale Area Flood Advisory Group

No change

6.0 Planning Issues

A letter has gone to the SBC CEO and a response that was considered positive has been received.

7.0 Old school House

A letter has gone to the SBC CEO and a response that was considered positive has been received. Our letter was based on research conducted by Malcolm Bruce and a meeting with some relations of the last known owner. Malcolm has continued his research which may have now identified current owners/owner, and this information has been shared with SBC. Hopefully, this may now kick start a process which has been stagnating for far too long

Peter Maudsley
Chair
Peebles and District Community Council