



Community Council
of the
Royal Burgh of Peebles and District

**Minutes of the 284th Meeting of the Community Council
held on Thursday 10th June 2021 via Zoom.**

Present: L.Turnbull, A.Snoddy, G.Mackie, L.Hayworth, M.Bruce, S.Watson, G.Ramsay, J.Shearer, C.Forsyth, A.Mackenzie, S.Hamilton, O.Olesheva, P.Maudsley, E. Rae, , Cllr R.Tatler, Cllr S.Haslam, Cllr S.Bell, Cllr E.Small

Members of the public: H.Scott (Peeblesshire News, K.Linge

SBC Officer: P.Frankland

SUStrans representative: J.Cunningham

Presentations by Paul Frankland of SBC and J.Cunningham of SUStrans about possible alterations to the raised part of the riverside walk behind Haylodge Health Centre. Mr Frankland suggested building ramps at either end thus preserving most of the trees at the water's edge. Mr Cunningham proposed creating a path along the side of the river, which would necessitate removing the trees but he thought they were probably coming to the end of their natural lifespan anyway. The Chairman thanked them both for their contributions. He said it is important to consult the people of Peebles about the matter and asked Mr Frankland to forward his presentation slides to the PCC Secretary. Cllr Tatler also thanked the two men as well as A.Mackenzie and Peebles Callants for being so persistent with this issue.

Apologies for Absence: S.Rae, L.Marriott-Dowding, J.Crawley, S.Montgomery, and Cllr Anderson

Minutes of the previous meeting: approved by M.Bruce and seconded by P.Maudsley

Matters arising:

Children's Cemetery A.Mackenzie reported that the Children's Cemetery Group who initiated the project would like to come to the next Community Council meeting to speak with us and show us the maquette of the proposed sculpture by Aegir Mclvor.

Adopt a Phone Box J.Mitchell circulated an email recently to say the matter is ongoing.

Places of Interest Noticeboard M.Bruce reported that progress is being made by I.Thorburn and A.Mackenzie.

Use of Chemical Weedkillers The Chairman welcomed K.Linge who has done some research into the matter on our behalf. He invited her to expand on her report which had been circulated to Community Councillors. Mrs Linge said she would like to be able to demonstrate how we could keep our parks looking nice and weed free without the use of glyphosate. The use of Foamstream is being trialled In Balerno near Edinburgh. Mrs Linge would be happy to contact the manufacturers of Foamstream and invite them to come along and demonstrate the efficacy of their product. The Chairman said he

suspects Foamstream is very expensive but because it is very useful for cleaning park equipment as well as killing weeds he wondered if SBC would consider using Peebles as a pilot area? Cllr Haslam reported that she attended the recent Pesticide Free Scotland meeting together with Cllr Anderson and Mrs Linge. There is going to be a 'Pesticide Free Peebles' group created. Cllr Haslam will inform the Sustainability Committee at SBC that Peebles would be happy to be part of a pilot scheme. Cllr Tatler said that the same chemical (glyphosate) is used on the roads and pavements as well but that work is finished for this year. He is 100% supportive of looking into alternative methods of weed control as are Neighbourhood Services, Parks and Environmental Services.

A.Snoddy confirmed that the discussion is about weed control and not about whether or not grass should be cut in public spaces.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Linge for all her work on this matter and confirmed that the Community Council is very supportive.

O.Olesheva asked about commercial companies in the area who may be using chemical weedkillers. Cllr Haslam said the Sustainability Committee will be working with landlords, SBHA and Eildon Housing Associations, and factors of estates. Whereas this discussion has been about killing weeds the Pesticide Free Peebles Group is also looking at re-wilding projects.

Police Report: (circulated prior to the meeting) M.Bruce said it is worth remembering that this is a low crime area. Serious crimes are all in single figures. Since the pandemic there have been far fewer instances of groups entering the area to steal bicycles and cars. He has endeavoured, through a Freedom of Information request, to get the statistics behind 101 call waiting times. Unfortunately they could not be presented in the format we required. He said that police officers, following up 101 calls, are frustrated if they do not have the phone number of the informant. Everyone should ensure that the facility to withhold your number is not switched on when making 101 calls.

Anti-social behaviour: M.Bruce has been working with S.Hamilton and speaking to D.Hodson (Peeblesshire Youth Trust) to look at ways of improving the situation. He does not believe we can 'police' our way out of anti-social behaviour. We need to have an active dialogue with the young people, and efforts are underway to do that over the next couple of months. The Chairman thanked M.Bruce and S.Hamilton for their efforts. He said that while we live in a low crime area the behaviour of some young people is affecting the quality of life of some local residents, especially those who live in the centre of the town. He said that issue of response times to the 101 service is a national problem. The Chairman and M. Bruce will consider how this particular issue could be taken forward.

Chairman's Report:

SBC's consultation about the 20mph trial. The closing date for comments has been extended till 4th July 2021. Opinions were evenly split on the Community Council so we could not submit a unified response but all Community Councillors are encouraged to send in individual responses.

Spaces for People The results of the consultation have been circulated and show a that a clear majority do not want cycle lanes in the town. The proposal to put cycle lanes in the High Street and the Eastgate has been withdrawn but cycle lanes are still planned for Kingsmeadows Road and Innerleithen Road. Why? Cllr Haslam said that there are more drivers in Peebles than cyclists, and that the drivers did not want cycle lanes but the cyclists did. The 6 Tweeddale Councillors decided there was a large

enough number of cyclists to justify cycle lanes on those two roads which are quite wide and have no parking. Cllr Tatler said he was not at that meeting but nevertheless agreed with the decision. Cllr Bell said he responded to the consultation as both a driver and a cyclist and fully supported the decision to trial cycle lanes along the 2 roads. The Chairman said that if safety of cyclists is the issue then there are better alternative routes. However the Spaces for People fund should not be used to create these other routes. He feels that in this instance these particular funds are being misused.

E.Rae noted that there are already advisory cycle lanes on Kingsmeadows Road. There will be no continuation of lanes for cyclists coming from the east once they reach the roundabout at the BP garage. SBC had resolved to install a new crossing in the Eastgate anyway, and that they are going to move the taxi rank which the Community Council has had under discussion for a long time.

G.Mackie asked what the criteria are for determining the success of the trial, and said it was important that the criteria are set at the start. He asked if funds will be available to remove the cycle lanes if the trial is deemed not to have been a success? Cllr Haslam said the trial is to establish whether people feel more comfortable about active travel with cycle lanes in place. She will find out how that will be evaluated. If the trial is deemed not to have been a success then funds will be drawn down to eliminate the cycle lanes. She emphasised that these will be *advisory* cycle lanes.

S.Watson asked why SBC had held a consultation when they are not abiding by the result? Furthermore more money needs to be spent on repairing potholes – he gave Kingsmeadows Road as an example - which makes life difficult for cyclists. Cllr Bell agreed that potholes and ‘gully buckets’ along that stretch do make cycling and driving difficult. The SBC Councillors had to take a view about the trialling of cycle lanes and took the results of the consultation into consideration. S.Watson asked whether people will take part in future consultations if they know their views will not be considered? Cllr Bell replied that the views submitted to this consultation were taken into account, citing the decision not to put cycle lanes along the Eastgate and High Street.

Cllr Tatler said that lining on roads across Peebles will be attended to between July and November.

A.Snoddy asked for clarification whether the trial would last for 6 months or 12 months? Cllr Haslam said she would find out and let her know. A.Snoddy also asked when we would receive a copy of the comments submitted to the consultation (PCC have only received the raw data). Again Cllr Haslam said she would find out.

The Chairman concluded the discussion by expressing his concerns that residents might be less inclined to take part in future consultations if they feel their views will not be considered. Cllr Haslam replied that the Councillors ‘drilled down’ into the data and that the views expressed were taken into consideration.

Chambers Institution A motion was passed at the recent full SBC Council meeting that the Chief Executive and SBC Officers should look at the benefits, or otherwise, of having community representation on the Board of Trustees of the Institution. The Chairman, with others, has compiled a letter citing the benefits of community representation and the legal position. It has been submitted to the Chief Executive and Cllr Chapman in the hope it may be useful. P.Maudsley said Peebles Civic Society have also written to the Chief Executive with their views. None of the elected Councillors (who are on the Board of Trustees) present have seen that letter. Cllr Haslam said an officer will prepare a report and that letter will be included. P.Maudsley said the Civic Society have written twice and received one reply. He said for SBC to issue a reply without showing the correspondence to the Trustees is crazy.

Councillor Reports

Councillor Tatler: The new play area in Victoria Park has been completed and plans for the skatepark well underway. A Victoria Park Management Group is being set up with a view to eventually gaining Green Flag Status. He invited C.Forsyth as a Community Council representative to join the group. There will be a walking meeting in the park to look at issues and put together a management plan. The steps from Springhill Road into Victoria Park are in poor condition and may well be condemned. SBC engineers will look at improving the access at that point.

The Tweeddale Area Partnership meeting is on Tuesday 15th June and will hear back from the Working Group which was set up to look at how best to distribute the Community Fund. The Build Back a Better Borders Fund is now open for applications. C.Forsyth thanked Cllr Haslam and Cllr Tatler for arranging for 'No Parking' signs to be erected in the park. L.Hayworth suggested that J.Mitchell might like to join the Victoria Park management Group and A.Snoddy agreed to ask her.

Councillor Bell: The SBC Executive has decided to standardise parking charges and times across the Borders to be implemented in 6 months time. Kingmeadows and Neidpath car parks in Peebles will remain free to use, and charging for parking in the Eastgate car park will continue to be on Saturdays only. Parking charges in Peebles will double. Cllr Bell would have preferred the decision about parking charges to have been made at a local level. The long delayed Peebles Parking Review will still go ahead but with a limited remit.

The Chairman was disappointed that the parking charges will not be set locally nor form part of the Parking Review. Cllr Tatler said he would speak about the Parking Review at next week's Area Partnership meeting. Cllr Haslam pointed out that the parking fees go into a Parking Fund to support the community. The Eastgate Theatre benefitted from that last year. P.Maudsley said that if parking charges in Peebles are to double from 20p to 40p (for 4 hours) *and* there will be standardisation across the Borders then parking charges in some towns will have to reduce.

The 3 Tweeddale East Councillors have received letters from Primary schoolchildren expressing concern about red squirrels. There are 2.5 million grey squirrels but only 140,000 red squirrels in Scotland. The children are going to investigate the number of red squirrels in this area.

Councillor Small: The road north of Eddleston between Shiplaw and Waterheads will be closed between 9.30am and 4.30pm from 5th to the 9th July, and again from 12th to 14th July, for resurfacing. A detour will be in place. A lot of potholes in Peebles are due to get fixed in the near future.

Councillor Haslam sent the list of roadworks due to take place in Peebles over the next year and also SBC's Performance Review to the PCC Secretary for circulation. The amount of waste sent by SBC to landfill is now 0.09%; the rest is all recycled. The online consultation about the new High School is now open and Cllr Haslam would encourage everyone to have a look at it. She sits on the board of Edinburgh City Regions Deal. They are currently looking at changes to the layout of the Sheriffhall roundabout to ease traffic flow. This will go to public enquiry in the next couple of years, with a proposed date of completion of 2027. People of Peebles may want to get involved in that consultation because it affects the commute into Edinburgh.

She is aware of a spike in casework as we come out of the pandemic and would encourage anyone who needs support to get in touch.

Treasurer's Report: The report was circulated prior to the meeting and there were no questions. In order to receive our annual grant we all have to agree to abide by SBC's Code of Conduct which was also circulated prior to the meeting. Everyone agreed.

Planning Report: The report was circulated prior to the meeting. S.Watson commented that the contractor at Venlaw Castle has carried out major works without consent. Furthermore he has learned from an SBC Officer that the contractor has done this before. Is there anything that can be done? Cllr Small said this is a matter for the Planning Enforcement Team. Unfortunately the team has not been allowed out onto sites during the pandemic. He said these concerns should be reported. P.Maudsley said SBC are aware of the transgressions – are there no bye-laws or national laws to fine the contractor? Cllr Small said he would find out. The Chairman asked Cllr Small to go to the Principal Officers in the Planning Department and ask the Enforcement Officers, with some urgency, to look at this case.

Peebles Community Trust: The report was circulated prior to the meeting. M.Bruce said that since then Moorbrook Textiles have lodged an appeal against Scottish Ministers' decision to award PCT a Right to Buy the March Street Mill site. The Secretary asked how often Moorbrook Textiles could appeal and M.Bruce responded that he thinks it is as often as they want.

Any Other Business

Peebles High School Consultation: S.Hamilton attended the online consultation on behalf of the Community Council. The construction of the new building will be treated as an educational project for the pupils. It will be built on the rugby pitch and there will be minimal disruption to school life as it proceeds. The layout internally will be more fluid than a traditional school building, and teachers will move around classes rather than the pupils. There will be a 3G rugby pitch. It is being described as a 'community campus' because it will be used by clubs, sports events and other activities. There is no intention to house the public library, health centre or any other community facility in it. It is hoped it will be built by 2024 or 2025. The Chairman asked about the capacity of the school? S.Hamilton responded that the birth rate is expected to remain fairly static despite proposed housing in the Local Development Plan. M.Bruce asked what is planned for the existing Victorian building at Peebles High School? S.Hamilton said that while it is being retained there is no decision yet what it may be used for.

Peebles in Bloom 2021: A.Snoddy said the 'blocks' of gardens would shortly be distributed to Community Councillors. They should walk round their 'block' towards the end of July and nominate any special gardens. If anyone has any questions or problems then contact either A.Snoddy or L.Marriott-Dowding.

Opening of Peebles Library: The Chairman questioned why Live Borders has not yet opened museums and libraries when we are in Level 1 and the John Buchan Museum has been opened? Cllr Bell said SBC and Live Borders (LB) have come to an understanding about the phased re-opening of these facilities to protect staff, because some LB staff are furloughed

and because others are involved in the vaccination programme. Peebles Library will re-open on 16th August.

X62 Bus Service: The Chairman said that Simon Ritchie has done a lot of work to get Borders Buses to improve their service to Edinburgh, especially the evening service. He has organised a petition which has got over 130 signatures and yet Borders Buses say there is not enough demand. One or two of the Community Councillors spoke of personal experiences which have arisen because of the lack of evening buses. Cllr Bell said Cllr Anderson has spoken with Borders Buses and raised Simon's concerns. He advises people to contact Borders Buses individually because they say that they have had very few calls from the public. There are practical issues: due to Covid and Brexit there is a shortage of staff available. The company say that whereas they usually make 2 service changes in a year they have had to make 500 changes in 15 months due to the pandemic. They are aware that the Festival will be coming and hopes to review the situation again at that time. Cllr Bell re-emphasised that anyone with concerns should contact Borders Buses directly. It was agreed that the Secretary would write a letter to Borders Buses in support of Simon Ritchie's request for a better evening service, and to invite Sharon Morrison of Borders Buses to our next Community Council meeting.

Peebles Baptist Church Building: the Secretary has received a query from an administrator of the Peebles W4 Facebook page about the construction of the new Baptist Church building by Victoria Park. We knew that the building work was proceeding as and when the church had funds. The concern from the administrator was that the departure of the minister Ian Gray may have caused a lack of impetus in the project. The Secretary will find out who in the church to write to. L.Hayworth commented that Ian Gray did a huge amount of good in the community and that should be passed on to the congregation by the Community Council.

Street names: G.Mackie wondered if the street names proposed by the Community Council over the past year or so were used? The Chairman said the name (Neidpath Place and others) for the new Persimmon houses at South Parks were being used but was unsure of naming of the new cul-de-sac in Glensax Road.

J.Shearer raised two matters of concern: 1. Overflowing bins on Tweed Green. Are there any plans to replace these bins with larger ones? 2. The walk down to the Cuddy through Violet bank. Would it possible to improve the path or install benches? The Chairman pointed out that it is an informal path. Cllr Haslam said the bins are being emptied regularly. Bigger bins are unattractive but perhaps SBC could look at putting out some recycling bins. Cllr Tatler will ask the Neighbourhood Services Team. He will also ask if SBC would adopt the path referred to but thinks it is unlikely.

O.Olesheva is concerned that Haylodge Health Centre is requiring patients to complete E-forms online before getting a consultation and wondered how elderly people fare? Community Councillors presume that such people will be able to make appointments in the

normal way. The Chairman suggests that anyone concerned should write to the Health Centre.

C.Forsyth raised concerns about cherry trees overhanging Kingsmeadows Road, and inconsiderate parking in Springhill Road. The Chairman confirmed that he had given the complainants the correct advice (to report online to SBC, and contact the Police, respectively).

The next meeting will be held at 7pm on Thursday 8th July 2021