



**Community Council
of the
Royal Burgh of Peebles and District**

**Minute of the 285th Monthly Meeting of the Community Council of the
Royal Burgh of Peebles and District held by Zoom on Thursday 8th July
2021**

Present: L.Turnbull, A.Snoddy, L.Marriott-Dowding, S.Hamilton, G.Mackie, P.Maudsley, A.Mackenzie, J.Shearer, G.Ramsay, J.Crawley, L.Hayworth, M.Bruce, C.Forsyth, Cllr Tatler, Cllr Anderson, Cllr Small, S.Montgomery.

Members of the public: Elisa Mackie, Lyndale Bale

Borders Buses: Sarah-Jane Parker, Customer Services manager

Presentation by Sarah-Jane Parker of Borders Buses.

The Chairman said that concerns had been raised, and a petition submitted, by local residents in relation to the X62 bus service between Peebles and Edinburgh. Services had become curtailed during the pandemic but now that restrictions were easing it had been hoped that evening bus services could revert to the pre-pandemic timetable. However currently the last bus from Peebles to Edinburgh leaves at 18.11 and arrives in Waterloo Place, Edinburgh at 19.18; the last bus from Waterloo Place, Edinburgh leaves at 19.55 and arrives in Peebles at 21.05. This has been causing difficulties for people who work, for example, in hospitality in Peebles, or Edinburgh, or anywhere along the route, and who depend on public transport.

Ms Parker explained that the X62 bus service is not subsidised and so must be commercially viable. Borders Buses monitor numbers closely and depend on feedback from the public. Although the petition in Peebles has been signed by over 100 people, that is not reflected in the number of emails or phone calls received by Borders Buses. However it is hoped that later services can be added from the beginning of August, with the last bus leaving Peebles for Edinburgh about 8.45 and then leaving Edinburgh about 10.30pm. L.Turnbull asked if this would be for a trial period but Ms Parker explained that Borders Buses prefer not to run trials, i.e. to cause people to become dependent on a particular service only for it to be withdrawn later. With regard to the 30 minute service throughout the day Ms Parker said that there continues to be a demand for that from shoppers, workers and people with medical appointments. Borders Buses will be conducting a Customer Service Survey shortly and will be able to assess from that where demand lies.

L.Turnbull also asked when Borders Buses planned to return to Edinburgh Bus Station? Borders Buses are currently arriving in and departing from Waterloo Place in Edinburgh where there are no facilities. Ms Parker said Borders Buses are still registered to use the Bus Station and they hope to resume using it just as soon as social distancing measures are lifted. L.Hayworth wondered if, when the bid to run bus services was submitted to SBC, the 'package' of subsidised/commercially viable routes is considered as a whole? L.Turnbull said that public transport comes within the remit of the Tweeddale Area Partnership Localities Plan especially as Peebles is the major town in Tweeddale. Cllr Tatler said the X62 route has never been subsidised because it has been commercially successful, nor

does he think it ever would be subsidised. L.Turnbull said he accepted that would normally be the case, but that we are in extraordinary times and if a subsidy is required to maintain the service perhaps the Council should consider that.

Cllr Anderson said bus services across the country had been kept afloat during the pandemic due to funding from the Scottish Government. She pointed out that Borders Buses had had to make 500 changes to their routes during the past year as circumstances changed due to the pandemic, and she thanked Borders Buses for all their efforts. She said it was important that bus companies remained viable as subsidies are gradually withdrawn so must keep an eye on usage. Cllr Anderson also highlighted the problem of recruitment. Borders Buses have been affected by a reduction in the number of drivers due to employees leaving following the furlough scheme, Brexit, Covid and the suspension of DVLA driving tests (which it is hoped will restart in September). She added that Christine Grahame MSP has been in touch with the Minister to see how recruitment in the industry can be promoted. She reiterated that people should contact Borders Buses directly to request the services they would like to see, because that information is all fed back to Borders Buses Head Office.

L.Turnbull thanked Ms Parker, and said he would consider how the Community Council can encourage local residents to contact the company directly. Cllr Tatler added that even more importantly the Community Council should look at ways of encouraging residents to use local buses: they are safe and they are environmentally friendly. Ms Parker said that if anyone wants to get in touch with comments or queries then her email address is info@bordersbuses.co.uk

Apologies for absence: Elizabeth Rae, Scott Rae, Cllr Bell, Cllr Haslam

Minutes of the previous meeting: approved by Peter Maudsley, seconded by Chris Forsyth

Matters Arising

Children's Cemetery: Elisa Mackie attended the meeting to represent the group of people working towards the creation of a memorial tree in the Children's Cemetery. She hopes that scale drawings will be available for us to see at the next Community Council meeting. The estimated cost of the memorial tree is £35,000, £5,000 of which will be met by the McIvors who will make the memorial. Ms Mackie said that there have been offers to help with fundraising and that grants will also be sought. A.Mackenzie, who has been working closely with the group, said it will be important to canvas the views of the people of Peebles, perhaps when the scale drawings are produced and then again when the maquette is made. M.Bruce recommended that the group contact Lorna McCullough of the Bridge Volunteer Centre about fundraising: she knows many sources of grants and funds and is very experienced at completing application forms.

Use of Pesticides: Kim Linge had been investigating ways of reducing the use of chemical weedkillers in our public spaces on behalf of the Community Council. Her report had been circulated prior to this meeting (which she was unable to attend). L.Turnbull supports her suggestion that we invite Craig Blackie to a future Community Council meeting to discuss alternative methods of controlling weeds. Cllr Anderson confirmed all the weed control had been completed for this year but said it is important to have a plan in place for next year. She and Cllr Haslam had attended a meeting in June with Craig Blackie of SBC's Pesticide Action Network. It was decided at that meeting that it would be a good idea to have an 'audit' of areas and establish which method of control would be appropriate for which space.

Police Report: It had been circulated prior to the meeting. The incidents reported are very much the same, month to month.

Anti-social behaviour: M.Bruce has had his regular monthly conversation with Sergeant Granger. They are aware that incidents of anti-social behaviour will probably increase over the next 4 to 6 weeks because young people are on holiday from school. The Community Council has received an email from Historic Environment Scotland expressing concern about anti-social behaviour in the grounds of the Cross Kirk. M.Bruce expressed his disappointment because that area should be treated with respect. He has also written back to HES explaining what efforts PCC are making to reduce anti-social behaviour in Peebles.

Recently M.Bruce and S.Hamilton went out one evening with Dave Hodson of Peeblesshire Youth Trust. They had a useful conversation with some youths in Whitestone Park. Those youths blamed younger age groups – 14 and 15 year olds - for causing anti-social problems. The youths also explained that what they want is a place to ‘hang out’, far away from areas of population, so they would not disturb anyone. M.Bruce reflected on the many options available for young people in times past which no longer exist. He and S.Hamilton hope to repeat the exercise in 2 or 3 weeks time.

Cllr Tatler is pleased that there is more reporting of incidents. That helps to direct the resources of the Community Action Team. He also said that, speaking on behalf of all elected Councillors, he is supportive of trying to find a safe place for young people to gather.

S.Hamilton said the young people do not like the fact that members of the public may be intimidated by their behaviour. She wondered if perhaps a semi-permanent structure located somewhere quiet and out of the way could be a solution? M.Bruce thinks the ideal solution might be a redundant classroom unit. However obtaining planning permission could be a stumbling block which would have to be overcome. Cllr Tatler said he would take on the issue and report back at our next meeting.

S.Hamilton said it was suggested to the young people that they might like to speak at a future Community Council meeting and they had responded that they would. She also added that it was explained to them that if premises of some sort was found then they would have to police it themselves – if it was ruined then it would not be replaced. She agreed with Cllr Tatler that a good wifi connection would be important too.

L.Turnbull thanked them both and looks forward to another report next month.

Chairman’s Report:

The path behind Haylodge Health Centre. Two options were presented at last month’s meeting of ways to eliminate the ‘hump’ on the north side of the riverside path. However Jeremy Cunningham had contacted L.Turnbull after the meeting to say that the option of the lower of the two paths was based on a plan made 11 years ago. He thinks it is important to conduct an up-to-date survey of the trees along the water’s edge to see if that option remains viable. The survey will cost money but he is confident that funding will be available. After that we can hold a consultation with local residents, hopefully in early September.

Cycle lanes in Innerleithen Road. Disappointment has been expressed by Community Councillors that the trial will last for 12 months instead of the 6 months indicated on the consultation papers. Whether or not that coloured respondents’ opinions is difficult to know.

Tweeddale Area Partnership (TAP). A number of community grants were awarded at the meeting. He thought that different standards seemed to be applied to different applications. However TAP has agreed to bring in new rules to govern the allocation of grants so hopefully that will rule out anomalies in the future. He wrote to the TAP Chairman, Cllr Tatler, after the meeting and received what he thought was an unsatisfactory reply. He wrote again but has not received a response. His concern is

that if SBC Officers and SBC Councillors are not seen to be listening to the community then people will stop participating.

Chambers Institution Trust (CIT) L.Turnbull said that he is still waiting for the SBC report regarding community representation on the Board of Trustees. He wondered if the Trustees had seen the correspondence between the Chief Executive and Peebles Civic Society? Cllr Tatler and Cllr Anderson said they had not. Cllr Anderson said that it was agreed at the Council meeting of 27th May that the Chief Executive would come back with that report but perhaps holidays etc have delayed that. She would not expect to see the correspondence till the next meeting of the CIT on 18th August. P.Maudsley commented that Peebles Civic Society had sent 2 letters to the Chief Executive and received two replies, and he was surprised that those replies had been sent without the knowledge of the Trustees. Surely they should be part of the decision making process? Cllr Anderson suggested that Peebles Civic Society could copy in the Trustees if they so wished, but she would not expect to see the correspondence between the Society and the Chief Executive before the next CIT meeting.

SBC Councillor Reports

Councillor Tatler:

He has asked if SBC would adopt the informal path between Violet Bank and the Cuddy. He has been advised that it is extremely unlikely but awaits final confirmation. That does not preclude any community group making improvements to the path subject to the landowner's permission.

Another large recycling bin will be installed on Tweed Green.

There has been a walking meeting of the newly formed Victoria Park Management Group. There were about a dozen people there including C.Forsyth representing the Community Council, John Falla representing Bonnie Peebles Plus, and Craig Blackie representing SBC. Mike Pearson will be Chairman of the Group which will meet regularly and put together a Management Plan with the aim of achieving Green Flag Status for the park.

Regarding the recent Tweeddale Area Partnership meeting, Cllr Tatler had not appreciated L.Turnbull's more recent email required a reply but he will do so now. He said that although the TAP meeting had not been well attended he thought that participants were very engaged especially with the Place Planning process. There will be a special TAP meeting next week to approve the process for the recruitment of members to the new Assessment Panel (which will decide on the allocation of the Community Fund).

Tweeddale Access panel have conducted an audit of the town and identified areas where improvements could be made to improve accessibility. They have submitted a list of those improvements to be considered under the Small Scheme Fund. L.Turnbull said PCC has received a request for dropped kerbs in the Dalatho area. A.Snoddy will forward it to Cllr Tatler.

The Peebles Parking Group, which is a sub-committee of TAP, met yesterday for the first time after a long break. L.Hayworth had attended the meeting on behalf of Peebles Community Trust, and Peter Maudsley represented PCC. L.Hayworth and Cllr Tatler confirmed that there will continue to be flexibility in the way Peebles controls its own parking charges. P.Maudsley read out a letter he had circulated to Community Councillors confirming the decisions of that meeting, and pointing out that there is £45,000 in the 'parking fees pot'. He added that he believes that has now risen to £65,000. Cllr Tatler is awaiting clarification on how that money can be spent.

Councillor Anderson:

She was part of the group which decided on the new rules for allocating the Community Fund and she hopes it will be a more transparent process.

There was a recent meeting for Community Councils, mainly on the west side of Tweeddale, about how to respond to the many applications to plant woodlands, she and will forward the meeting notes to PCC.

A draft 'Climate Change route map' was agreed at the last Council meeting. Everything the Council does, and how it affects emissions, will be looked at. The route map was referred back to the Sustainability Development Committee so they can get into the detail of some of the ideas. There was also a good meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee where child poverty across the region was discussed.

Cllr Small:

He has spoken with SBC Enforcement Officers about concerns regarding Venlaw Castle. They have visited the site, picked up on a few anomalies, and have required the developer to submit a retrospective planning application where appropriate.

Cllr Small thinks it would be good if Peebles accessed the parking funds and used them to, for example, open more public toilets.

Treasurer's Report Circulated prior to the meeting. Donald Swanson will audit the annual accounts, and then they can be submitted to SBC with our grant application. The accounts will be submitted for approval at our next AGM.

Planning Report Circulated prior to the meeting.

A member of the public has emailed PCC about cars parked in March Street which makes it very difficult to exit safely onto that road from Dovecot Road. Subject to everyone's approval P.Maudsley will pass on those concerns to SBC.

J.Crawley asked if it was likely that the developers at Venlaw Castle would get retrospective permission to leave rubble in the field? P.Maudsley said he had written to SBC on behalf of PCC to say the field should be returned to its original state. It is now a matter for Planning Enforcement.

Cllr Tatler spoke about concerns about speeding at the junction of Caledonian Road/Edderston Road/South Parks. Together with Cllr Bell, and Philippa Gilhooley and Karen McGrath of SBC Roads Department, they monitored vehicles travelling towards the mini roundabout from all 3 directions for nearly an hour and found no evidence of speeding. He noted that the road markings have been improved since he first asked that was done. Ms Gilhooley will instruct Neighbourhood Services to look at the vegetation on the south side of the junction and they may request that the owner cuts it back to improve sight lines. They will also install a sign on South Parks advising there is a mini roundabout ahead, even though this is not a legal requirement. Cllr Tatler added that there is no record of any accidents occurring in that vicinity for at least 20 years. P.Maudsley said the safest solution would be to make a crossing at the west end of Caledonian Road. Cllr Tatler will ask P.Gilhooley if that would be possible.

A.Snoddy asked P.Maudsley to copy her in to his letter to SBC about parking in March Street, so she can pass it on to the member of the public who raised concerns.

Peebles Community Trust Report circulated prior to the meeting.

Any Other Business

Peebles in Bloom: A.Snoddy said an item would appear in the next day's edition of the Peeblesshire News, inviting nominations for the Secret Garden category. There has also been a request put out over social media.

Wheely bins: L.Turnbull reported that the difficulties encountered by users of mobility scooters when wheely bins are on the pavements happens mainly on bin days and it is difficult to know what can be done about that. The issue of dropped kerbs was discussed earlier (under Cllr Tatler's report).

Library Opening Hours: the Community Council has received concerns that Peebles Library is not yet open, and that when it does it will be for very limited opening times. L.Turnbull asked why this is the case. Cllr Tatler replied that all Borders Libraries will be operating limited hours and directed us to the Live Borders website for an explanation. He suspects it will be because of health and safety, cleaning and perhaps staffing issues. L.Turnbull said that a great many of our library users do not have the means to make online bookings. L.Hayworth commented that the phrasing used in the public communication put out by Live Borders was that it was to 'form part of an assessment of the demand for libraries'. In a recent Council report it was stated that Peebles Library had the highest, or second highest, usage across the Borders. If accessibility is restricted then how can demand be properly assessed? M.Bruce said that there is a perception in Peebles that Live Borders are trying to run themselves down. The Drill Hall (Community Centre) has not re-opened, the library has not re-opened, and other services have not re-commenced. Sixty thousand folk can go to Wembley (Football Stadium) and yet we cannot get a book. Cllr Tatler suggested we invite Euan Jackson of Live Borders to come along to one of our meetings to answer our questions. L.Turnbull asked the Secretary to send out an invitation.

Peebles Baptist Church: They hope to recommence the construction work in the Autumn. This is a long project and will proceed as and when funds are available. More reports will be posted by them on social media when appropriate.

Poppy Appeal: They have asked for some assistance with their fundraising. O.Olesheva has helped in the past and offered her services again. She will let us know if they require any further support.

Public Service Delivery: O.Olesheva will watch a recording of a seminar on Public Service Delivery and report back to us in due course.

Haylodge Health Centre: We have received correspondence from a group who are concerned on behalf of elderly residents that the current appointment system at Haylodge Health Centre is not good enough. They have written to the Health Centre with their concerns but were not satisfied with the reply. They are now considering writing to the Health Board and wondered if PCC would support them? G.Mackie supports that request. M.Bruce would like more detail and more evidence of the concerns. J.Crawley said that from his experience of being Housing Manager for retirement apartments until very recently it was almost impossible for the elderly people he knew to communicate with the Health Centre, never mind get appointments. Not only did the booking system go online but it seemed to change week by week as the pandemic proceeded. Some residents did not have a mobile phone, never mind a computer. They were being disenfranchised. If they phoned the Centre the phone would just ring and ring. Sometimes they had to make a physical journey up to the surgery to make an appointment. C.Forsyth pointed out that disabled people can encounter difficulties using the online system too. L.Hayworth suggested we invite the Practice Manager to one of our meetings to answer questions. L.Turnbull asked the Secretary to issue an invitation. Cllr Anderson said that she and Cllr Tatler are Trustees of Peebles Charitable Trust which has funding to support elderly people. If there is any way that the Trustees could support the elderly and disabled overcome difficulties with the booking system then they would be happy to do so. Cllr Tatler said that if the Practice Manager cannot come along we could instead ask for more detail about the procedures for booking appointments.

Scawd Law Windfarm: M.Bruce has agreed to represent PC on the Scawd Law Community Liaison Group.

AGM: We have not held an AGM since 2019 due to the pandemic. We have decided to hold one in November. The closing date for nominations for Community Councillors will be 21st September. If we have more nominations than there are vacancies then there will be an election on Tuesday 26th October. The Returning Officers will be Cllr Tatler and Cllr Anderson. The Community Councillors who were last elected in 2018 and therefore require to stand for re-election this year – if they would like to – are A.Mackenzie, L.Hayworth, J.Shearer, J.Crawley, and G.Ramsay. The Community Councillors who *would* have stood for re-election last year had life been normal are L.Turnbull and S.Watson. Three Community Councillors who were co-opted last year and can now stand for election to become full members are M.Bruce, S.Hamilton and A.Snoddy. The Secretary will send out nomination forms to these 10 people in the next few days.

Lee Marriott-Dowding: L.Turnbull explained that Lee will be moving away from Peebles. L.Turnbull thanked her for her service as Minute Secretary – not an easy task, but one she did very well. Lee said she had enjoyed her time, which had gone quickly, and that she will be sorry to leave.

‘Round the Table’:

J.Crawley asked if the food trailer which is in the Edinburgh Road car park on market days (Thursdays) has authority to be there? Cllr Tatler replied that it has the correct license for various sites around Peebles.

A.Mackenzie has spoken with a couple of the taxi drivers who have expressed appreciation for the change in the taxi rank. He has heard that SBC plan to test the newer headstones for stability in Peebles Cemetery, having tested the older ones previously. Whilst we are appreciative of the resurfacing of the A702 north of Eddleston businesses have been badly affected, notably the Horseshoe Inn and the Scots Pine. The fault has been in the signage which wrongly indicated that part of the road was closed. In addition, could the road work not have been done at night to save the long diversions? Lastly the delay on the traffic lights in Peebles High Street has become quite significant. Cllr Tatler will contact Diane Munro at SBC about gravestone testing – the elected Councillors have not been notified about this. He will ask Philippa Gilhooley about the timing of the traffic lights in the High Street and at Neidpath Corner. Cllr Anderson responded to A.Mackenzie’s concerns about the road closure: it had not been practical to operate a convoy system while the roadworks took place, other than for buses. Cllr Anderson has contacted SBC to get compensation for the businesses which were adversely affected by the roadworks.

J.Shearer was dismayed at the lack of good signage for the diversion around the roadworks.

G.Ramsay has received complaints from a member of the public about taxis parking at the bus stop. He contacted SBC and the matter is in hand.

L.Marriott-Dowding reported 8 weeks ago that the steps are crumbling at Kingsmeadows car park. Cllr Tatler will mention that to Neil Pringle of SBC

Cllr Tatler said there are roadworks just past Kailzie on the back road. There require to be bridge repairs so the road will be closed for longer than was first planned.

The next meeting will be on Thursday 12th August by Zoom