

CRAILING, ECKFORD AND NISBET COMMUNITY COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT BY THE CHAIR

JUNE 3 2024

Introduction

This will be the last Annual Report from the present Community Council as it completes its three-year cycle at this Meeting tonight. It will be replaced by a newly elected Council which will begin its work later this month.

This report will focus on the work that the Community Council has undertaken, much of it ongoing, during the year from May 2023 to May 2024.

This is a small Council – 9 members when all the vacancies are filled. We couldn't achieve all that we do without the help of many volunteers who take on specific tasks to support the Community.

Ongoing tasks

The Community Council has overall responsibility for several initiatives which have been in place for a number of years.

The Community Council Website, which provides regular updates on issues and events in our communities, and is the main way that we communicate with the public in our area. Many thanks to Sheila Campbell who operates the website on our behalf.

Oil Purchase Scheme. This continues to run very successfully and has resulted in considerable savings for those involved. Our thanks go to Jane Vickers for operating this scheme.

Defibrillators. We have four defibrillators in our villages. Each is checked on a weekly basis by a local volunteer. Overall responsibility is taken by Malcolm McGregor. Our thanks to all these people who help to keep this important resource in operation

Resilience There are groups of volunteers in each community who are prepared to offer help and support in emergencies and in times of difficulty. The degree of organisation into Resilience Groups varies, but each community has an identified individual who acts as co-ordinator. We never know when these groups will be needed, but it is comforting to know that there are people who are prepared to offer their help.

Paths The Jubilee Path, initiated by the Community Council, links our communities. It is popular with walkers. Parts of it require strimming and clearing from time to time. Thanks to volunteers, the path is maintained in good order. A proposal to link this path with the President's Ride in Nisbet is still ongoing.

Grants The Council makes an annual grant available to each settlement to purchase bedding and other plants and to improve our street furniture.

Jedburgh Callant's Festival The Community Council holds a short Ceremony each year at Crailing to welcome the Callant and to present him with a Quaich

Remembrance In November, Councillors are present at Remembrance ceremonies in Crailing and Eckford.

Community Council Admin

The ever-increasing use of e-mail and other social media has, if anything, increased the workload of office bearers. During the year we reviewed our IT provision and how we used it to best meet our needs. The whole question proved to be more complex than we expected and the decision was taken to delay decisions until the new Council was in place. In the meantime, Sheila Campbell has agreed to continue in her role as website and communications administrator. She files all correspondence and documentation and autoforwards incoming correspondence to the appropriate Council member. This has lifted a considerable load from the Chair.

The Chair produced information briefings throughout the year which are circulated to the local community via the website.

Each community Councillor on the new council will have a dedicated e-mail address for Community Council business. This will offer greater security to Councillors and, at the same time keep Community Council business in an easily accessible format.

During the year the Council requested that Lothian Hall investigate the purchase of a digital projector to enhance presentation of Council business. There is already a projector in Eckford Hall.

Despite the IT, we feel that it is still important to contact the wider community by leaflet when items of particular importance crop up. This was done twice over the past year. Firstly, to update contact information, explain what the Community Council does and to appeal for new members and volunteers. Secondly, to issue nomination forms in advance of the election of the new Community Council. Though it is hard to be certain if this produced any response, it is good to know that every household in our Community Council area was given the relevant information.

To help Community Councillors understand some of the terms and abbreviations used regularly by Scottish Borders Council (SBC) and other organisations, a glossary of terms was produced. This is currently being updated for use by the new Council.

Work has started on compiling an asset register to make it clear what the Community Council holds. We also have a regularly updated list of short and long term projects, arising from the Community Consultation in 2022, and progress towards addressing them, and a list of actions and decisions taken by the Council together with outcomes. Outstanding issues will be transferred to the new Council

Liaison with SBC

We are fortunate to be well supported by our three SBC Councillors, Sandy Scott, Scott Hamilton and Pam Brown until her resignation and we look forward to welcoming John Bathgate to our meetings in future. Council Officers and the Bridge staff are unfailingly patient and helpful when we contact them and we greatly appreciate their support. Over the year we have attended meetings with

them in relation to Resilience, Planning, Place Planning and the Cheviot Area Partnership and responded to consultation activities.

Planning Matters.

During the year we have considered one forestry and five planning applications, some on more than one occasion. A number have raised quite difficult issues and the response from the Council has required careful consideration

Community Council in Action.

Concern was expressed about visibility and traffic speed at the Crailing junction with the A698. All the agreed actions had now taken place, with the exception of the erection of signs. SBC have assured the Council that these have now been ordered.

Concern was expressed about the boundaries of the 20MPH speed limit in Nisbet and a request was made to extend this slightly. The response from SBC was that this was not possible. The next step is to submit a petition.

Concern was expressed about the speed of farm traffic through the villages, and damage to verges, at particular times of the year. Agreed that the CC Chair will contact the farmer concerned to raise the issues and possible solutions.

There were discussions about possible amendments to the Council boundary at Ulston and Bonjedward. These are at present unresolved.

The four defibrillators are due for replacement in 2026. After extensive discussions about how this could be funded it was decided to seek sponsorship from local individuals and businesses. This is still at an early stage, but has already achieved some success

The Council has had a standing agenda item for Kalemouth Bridge since its closure to vehicles and has noted with concern its deteriorating condition. A public meeting was held in Eckford Village Hall in September 2023 to discuss the matter. Two officers from SBC attended the Meeting and gave a presentation. Concern was expressed that the Council appeared to have decided that the bridge would not be reopened to vehicles and the load on it would be restricted. The wooden decking would be replaced but little more. Cost and engineering considerations were the determining factor. Following discussions, the Council decided to support the work of a Friends of Kalemouth Bridge Group, independent of the Council. The Group held a successful initial meeting in Eckford Village Hall in May 2024. In the meantime, the Council agreed a number of actions to support the Ormiston residents to secure their road access in times of bad weather.

Changes in Membership

At our last AGM a new Treasurer took up her post. We were not successful in filling the post of Secretary.

During the year there were two resignations, both for personal reasons, Hugh Wilson from Nisbet and Myra Hope from Crailing after more than 25 years' service.

At our January Meeting our Chair, Dinah Faulds stood down and was replaced by an Acting Chair.

At the time for nominations for the new Council Dinah and Carol Spalton indicated that they did not wish to stand again. Over the last year therefore the Council has lost more than half of its members.

Godfrey Spalton came to one meeting to take the minutes to help Dinah out. That was more than two years ago. The work he did subsequently in taking minutes and preparing follow-up documents was enormous. He too is stepping down tonight from a post that he never actually had.

May I take this opportunity to thank those who have stepped down. Each, in their own way have given extensive service to the Council in resources, in talent and especially in time.

Together with the work of our volunteers, it is this sort of commitment, that keep our communities alive and vibrant.

Community Council Elections.

During 2023/24 SBC introduced a revised scheme for Community Councils. This requires us to hold an election for the whole Council every three years. This took place in May of this year. There are nine spaces on our Community Council. We had six nominations. There was no need for an election but we had sufficient nominations for the Council to continue. It may be possible to co-opt two further Councillors to help share the workload.

The consequences of the Council going into abeyance – which would have happened had we not received at least five nominations –, as the foregoing report will testify, do not bear thinking about.

The new Council will meet for the first time later this month. They will undoubtedly have their own views on how things should progress, but they will have a sound basis for their work from what has been achieved by this Council.

We wish them well in their work.