



Info and documents available online at:

<https://livenewcastleton.com/community-services/newcastleton-and-district-community-council>

Present: Barbara Elborn (sec) Jim Lewis (chair), Rob Irwin, Barry Hawkins, Shane Mitchinson, SBC Councillors Annette Smart, Jane Cox,

Apologies: Keith Brough, Chris Ruddock, SBC Councillor Watson McAteer, PC Allan Patterson, Hayley Wilson.

Welcome: 8members of the public

1) **Declarations of Interest:** none declared

2) **Police Report**

a) Hawick & Hermitage Dec report avail for review on web site

Feedback received from PC Patterson highlighted how the CCTV has really helped; Two jobs with suspicious vehicles in village. CCTV tracked both vehicles which were traced, owners spoken to, everything was OK, but this is valuable in getting the word out that the village is well covered with cameras.

b) **Local Report: January**

- Call regarding a suspect vehicle driver acting suspiciously in the village. CCTV checked, vehicle identified, and vehicle identified, owner contacted and spoken to, all was in order.
- Call regarding possible fraudulent banking transaction. Caller was helped to contact appropriate services, this turned out to be a banking protocol error and bank were held responsible.
- Call regarding neighbour issues. Both parties spoken to and matter resolved amicably.
- Call regarding possible person walking around Frank Coutts Court area during evening. Incident checked out nothing suspect found, no further calls to date.
- Call regarding suspicious vehicle and male apparently checking out Council yard. Vehicle traced through village CCTV and owner who had a plant hire business based in NE England contacted, he was made aware of the CCTV in village and asked why they had been in area, all was in order.
- Call regarding an abandoned vehicle, this vehicle had previously been left in South Hermitage Street when owner was spoken to, it has now been moved into side street DVLA contacted and asked for uplift.

FEBRUARY

- Incident of vandalism at Whitrope Sidings. Fire at Flatt Farm, Fire attended no need for Police.

CC commented that investment in CCTV continues to be worthwhile delivering valuable feedback; provided intelligence gathering used by police; operating as preventative measures when the community reports unusual activity; acted as a reassurance for many and provided learning for other communities to adopt.

Much of this success is down to the CC having a valuable committed GDPR officer who is diligent in his appraisal when assessing issues. The CCTV is only as good as the information that is gleaned from it, and that is down to Keith Brough's efforts who acts as the lead on behalf of the CC. He was not present to be acknowledge personally but members recognise his contribution on making this a success to date and thank him for his continued efforts to keep the community safe.

SBC advised of consultation on the provision of CCTV for main town centres and requests feedback from Newcastleton and Selkirk, the only public space community managed CCTV in the Borders. KB proposed to respond. NDCC would seek financial recompense if other schemes were supported by SBC to ensure ongoing maintenance and costs were covered as this is currently being met by businesses/volunteers.

3) **Work within the Community – apologies from Haley Wilson SBC**

Suggestions for works; sign washing, remove the old signs, wash the seats? strimming?

Previously grass cutting required use of equipment locally which was not possible as users were not members of the community groups insured to use them; the CC asked, 'why SBC couldn't provide kit to the teams to enable a wider repertoire of tasks to be completed reducing the burden on paid SBC staff particularly given the foreseen budget cuts going forward.'

4) **Minutes** of the last meeting: Jan 2024 were accepted. Proposed by RI, seconded by BH.

5) **Matters arising:**

- a) **Douglas Square build outs completed:** Community feedback road narrowing signage needed on north and south approaches; lorries parking south of the build outs obscuring them from traffic approaching from the south but this has been expected; need to provide more visible reflectors on the bollards on approach; review registered as Jan 2024 for 12 months.
- b) **Riverside lighting** – ownership still unclear.
- c) **Bus timetable/community consultation scheme:** Roundtable convened with SBC/Telfords/worker users to review situation given recent impacts to the service to Carlisle; proposal to remove the 9am service replace with a direct 7:29am service/arriving 8:15am. This satisfied workers but not shoppers; concerns ref users needing to access Carlisle unable to do this and return to the village to collect children; current process school drop off, 9am bus/return in time for school collection. This would remove that option. Recognition that the service to Hawick was poorly used except the school buses; Taxi service proposed as a trial using Share Prosperity Funding; concerns raised about the period of trial, tracking usage, proposals post the trial if it fails and or if its successful to continue to provide a taxi service; fear that by Mar 2025 the community would not have connection to Hawick.
- d) **Notice of welfare stopping health transport** The Welfare Group attended, advised of the formal closing of the welfare transport scheme after 56years. This was run by volunteers who were now not available to transport those who attended hospital or health appointments and were unable to use family members or public transport. Challenges post covid had impacted the service coupled with the new process of retrospectively claiming the expenses which did not match the costs incurred. Given that these funds are ringfenced for Newcastleton transport what facility exists to transfer this to support the taxi service to provide the health support for local visits? This will be requested of SBC.

The Community Council acknowledged the huge contribution the group and its volunteers had made to support the vulnerable over the many years of operation in the community. The personal service and dedication of the group would be much missed. The CC passed on their thanks on behalf of the many users who had cause to use the service in the past. There is recognition that post covid there has been a significant decline in volunteers, (calculated as over 65% in the voluntary sector) which is widely reflected in many groups everywhere.

- e) **Bins:** one in place/poorly erected and needed to be rehung properly. Second still to be placed.
- f) **Holm Bridge upgrade status** – only the south side received any remedial works, yet the hessian remains on the bridge which was due to be removed in Dec. The other side still requires work with damage particularly relating to places near the steps where water cumulates in flood times.
- g) **Horse signage** – maps provided evidence of need and signage will be provided. Paid for from small scheme. Phase 1 approved and will be actioned From April 1st, phase 2 north end of village, phase 3 Etleton cemetery roadside not possible as main carriageway is deemed as straight so not needed as advised by SBC roads.

- h) **Playpark consultation update:** SBC notified the plan to provide the playpark in 2024-25 was postponed due to lack of capacity by the contractor and a 'delay' in the community consultation. Clarity was requested as elected members had not been party to any decision. Subsequent meetings have resolved the issue with the contractor now requested to increase capacity to fit the play parks to SBCs timetable. The playpark would be completed this year albeit later than originally envisage. Timing tbc but it was expected to commence Aug once children returned to school with clearance of the site preparing for new installs in Sep, with completion shortly afterwards. BE thanked SBC for reconsidering the issued given the significance of the park to the children who had little else to do locally.

Discussion also covered the significance of the Wigtown Flyer (train) and its importance to the site – mentioned by all the consultation groups including grandparents, for many users this is the only train the children get to experience. This was taken on board and every effort will be made to ensure that the new Wigtown Flyer (or appropriately named) will be included in the scheme. The CC undertook to review the heritage of the train and provide this detail to the parks team so all understood its value culturally to the community.

Lastly, the meeting concluded with a request to seek SBC to now move forward on the design and outputs so that the park layout/content could be shared with all groups and agreed as a priority to avoid any further delays in the park program.

- i) **Flood Group role/corrs/actions** – clarity of the role of the group was requested to avoid duplication of effort. Chairs of CC, NDCT and flood group would meet to discuss this. It was explained that NDCT's role was that of land custodian and it had no influence on flood proposals in the village. Efforts were being undertaken by them on the development of Holm Hill to mitigate flood where possible but this did not require any actions on behalf of the flood group. It was acknowledged that 'expertise' was centred at the CC; and this was the appropriate place to drive any actions forward, but actions were only taken following guidance received from SBC in respect of any mitigation measures; the CC would not act without SBC involvement given the potential of a localise issue impacting residents elsewhere. It was hoped SBC would meet with CC on Feb 22nd (not confirmed) to review the feedback from recent flood events. Attendees would be informed in due course.
- j) **Ettleton & Castleton Cemetery paths status** roundtable meeting of relevant parties to be convened to discuss steps necessary to solve the access issues and drainage at both locations. CC to confirm with SBC.

6) **Planning**

- a) **Pines Burn Wind Farm community benefit fund update/transport issues** – CC attended meeting with developer, MSP, SBC and the other 7 CC's to discuss the impact of the development. Minutes of the meeting detailing the outcome would be circulated in due course.
- b) **Teviothead/Muirhall** - Grant offer received; no action taken due to capacity
- c) **Coulter sike woodland planting** - FLS requesting formal comments; approved plans on the public portal
- d) **SBC Stakeholder meeting 5-7pm 29th Feb** clarity sought for blended meeting to accommodate more attendees.
- e) **Installation of water mains cabinets/sewage connections 40 South Hermitage Street** – no issues

7) **Consultations/correspondence**

- a) Democracy Matters Consultation open until Feb 28th
- b) Community Council Scheme update
- c) Draft Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) and Delivery Plan for the Scottish Borders consultation closes Mar 8th
- d) Environmental Management from SRUC/The University of Edinburgh; investigating whether Scottish population's understanding and perception of the Scottish rainforest impacts the conservation of this special habitat.

8) **Public forum/Community issues**

a) **Community Grant Fund update**

- SBC portal still a disgrace, no actions taken on improvements to make the application process easier for users, this was first report by the CC over 3 years ago. Serious impact on level of applications, SBC need consider this in the context of the outstanding funds, actions needed to be taken by CGI to address this as a priority to support the new funding stream.
- Discussion held between 4 CC's and SBC to review scheme. Outcomes: keep the current split of sums between pot A/pot B. Share of allocation to be revisited once the size of the pot was known but preference would be to level this equally to all and not uplift Hawick and Burnfoot given that that had access to significantly wider funders than the rural communities.
- Refusal to support employed roles to be dropped, this was in effect unrestricted funding and could be used to support key roles needed locally. Funding for capital sums was more easily achieved. This currently penalised the rural communities how less of a volunteer pot to seek help from and significantly less resources than other communities.
- The role of elected Cllrs having the final say – it was either a community led, managed and run grant or it wasn't. It could not be a halfway house.

b) **Potholes** – long list of local potholes provided, all encouraged to register on SBC portal so that actions would be taken.

c) **Forest Land Scotland – Newcastleton Forest Visitor Masterplan Concept** consultation program announced. Hosted in Buccleuch House for 3 days, Feb 29, Mar 1st and 2nd. FLS staff will be present. All encouraged to attend and feedback; views are sought on walks and trails in the forest and how FLS might upgrade these to multiuser making them more accessible for all.

9) **Date of next meeting March 12th, 7pm in village hall**