



NEWCASTLETON
COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Newcastleton & District Community Council
Tuesday, March 13th, 2024 at 7pm
Minutes of Ordinary Meeting

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, Keith Brough, Chris Ruddock

Apologies: SBC Councillors Watson McAteer, Annette Smart, Jane Cox, PC Allan Patterson

Welcome: 5 members of the public

1) Apologies

Apologies received from Cllrs. There were no declarations of interest received from members.

2) Police Report - Hawick & Hermitage monthly reports for Jan & Feb available for review online

3) Minutes of last meeting February 24 - proposed by BH seconded by RI

4) New members – nominees forms on web site with constitution and code of conduct.

5) Matters arising:

a) Bus timetable update:

Revised program outlined for route to Carlilse – given issues raised and to accommodate all needs it was recommended to return to the original ‘connection’ services at Canonbie with SBC providing live service feeds to keep users informed. There were concerns regarding the time this would take to install, D&G planning rather SBC. In the event of an issue Telfords had undertaken to divert a route to collect if this was needed but this was subject to confirmation.

Route to Hawick was considered more problematic particularly for transporting users to health appointments and onwards to BGH. Concerns expressed about ongoing delays to any changes being implemented increased the current cost base/reducing the period of a granted program trail and still no ‘exit’ strategy provided in the event the new proposed taxi services failing to work as expected. Members of the public raised issues about not being consulted when the proposal was conveyed to other agencies. Real issues about accessibility and needing to consider relocating if this failed citing the priority to reinstate the railway which would overcome all these issues.

CC would raise concerns again with elected members and officials to seek a meaningful solution:

- seek detail on the proposed timing plan to implement the changes.
- understand how the assessments measure was being considered to review the services; real concern this would not address social impact and only be considered in a factual and financial manner.
- Understand how the taxi-bus could be requested via SBC given that their customer service desk closed at 4pm and requests needed to be made by 5pm for the following day
- Impact of depopulation on the community over the longer term particularly impacting young families and the most vulnerable.

- b) **Bins** - 1st bin still not hung correctly, 2nd bin not appeared, request for the missing bin in playpark to be replaced (lost in flood) at Union St/Riverside corner
- c) **Holm Bridge upgrade status** – whilst contractors had removed the sacking no further repair work had been undertaken. Members would provide Cllrs with images which clearly show the decay happening in the grouting resulting in displacement of the stones which are being ‘rattled’ by the heavy usage of HGVs crossing to extractions.
- d) **Speeding vehicles** – CCTV celebrates its 2nd birthday in April. KB provided a summary report of logged incidents:
 - i. 32 speeding complaints – 8 in the past month
 - ii. Branded vehicles/company vans – letters to companies sent with support evidence of speeding and referrals to police, police then forward official warning notice. Most cases the company is apologetic and undertakes to inform the driver taking relevant actions. Repeated offences are declining.
 - iii. Follow up evidence provided to support police to act resulted in 12 criminal investigations. CC members of the public present all agreed that the CCTV had delivered its expectations and more; the community was very aware that they could seek help from the CC if they had a concern and that this reassured many.

The CC would continue to seek funds to fill in the sight gaps and was grateful for the generosity of the host businesses and members of the public who continued to pay for the operational costs of the service.

- e) **Ettleton & Castleton Cemetery paths status** - no update provided on Castleton but SBC has developed a solution for Ettleton which now needed to be shared with the landowners. It was hoped this would happen in as a priority so that remedial works could commence in the Spring.
- f) **Potholes** – remained on agenda for Cllr feedback given previous issues. CC and public reported positive improvements on areas of main concern which was good news. The CC continues to encourage the public to report concerns online to SBC who will take action if they are kept informed. <https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/xfp/form/660>
- g) **Unpaid work within Community update** – insurances were in place to cover workers to undertake tasks locally using their equipment. CC would follow up with them to request actions as previously reported.
- h) **Flood Group update** – minutes on village web site. Precise report provided at meeting.

6) PLANNING:

- a) **SBC planning feedback** - presentation on web site
- b) **SBC Flood Stakeholder meeting Feedback**
 - Bund not yet tested; localised flooding Dec/Jan 2024 caused by run off from Charley sike
 - Issues with the gulley/drainage at the low point – SBC to investigate channels to be cleared
 - Scottish Water – pipe extension, why didn’t it get finished?
 - Wider opportunity to expand natural Nature Based Solutions being investigated by NDCT, which will be quickest way to leverage capital for flood improvements; wider network of leaky dams – large more impactful, working with landowners to encourage this as part of riparian planting.
 - Revisit old suggestions to create nature ponding capacity using Lakes and create community attraction as part of this.
- c) **Pines Burn Wind Farm community benefit fund update** - Minutes avail on web site, blade deliveries delayed by weather, CBF draft being prepared for CC circulation by end of month, Revised offer being drafted for EK to review as per the outcome of the meeting.

- d) **Teviothead/Muirhall CBF update** - Index linking an issue but better to compromise than die in a ditch over it, £7k MW still above industry standard, issues ref proposed grid capacity development ref regional/local energy creation, localized rates etc adding to burden on development costs. Slow progress
- e) **Applications:** no objections
 - a. 24/00193/FUL – Extension 2 North Liddle Street
 - b. 24/00180/PPP - Erection of dwelling house: Land Southeast of Ettleton Cemetery
 - c. **Forest plan/Till Hill Scottish Forestry Consultation Signdean LTFP - 99FGS34018** – just arrived for review. Sits in ULHCC catchment will liaise with them ref their concerns to support their views if necessary. NDCT will request riparian planting and consideration of leaky dams inclusions as part of the planting program to support the wider nature based solutions being considered in the valley for flood mitigation.

7) CONSULTATIONS/CORRESPONDENCE

- a) **Flooding Scott Street** – SBHA Property. CC progressed and actions taken.
- b) **Draft Council plan 2024** – JL commented on concerns regarding late receipt, lack of time to consider and even though it responded what was the value in doing so when the meeting proceeded without any recognition of the community feedback. Cllrs would be asked to respond on this to ensure that a reasonable amount of time was provided for future reviews.

8) PUBLIC FORUM/COMMUNITY ISSUES

- a) Area Partnership Meeting 20/2/24 Feedback. Review of grant funding structures to be concluded in next meeting.
- b) Community Grant Fund update - CC providing additional support material to support claim.
- c) **Request for help** – sightings of March Tit for Scottish Ornithology Club in the Borders Newcastleton & Scotland's Rarest Bird – The Marsh Tit

Newcastleton CC was asked for its help from **Alisdair Reid, Engagement Officer** for the **Scottish Ornithology Club** in the Borders responsible for coordinating rare inland breeding bird surveys; In 2023, it was established that the Newcastleton area may well hold the last remaining population of what is now one of Scotland's rarest birds: the marsh tit. This is a bird whose UK population has reduced by 80% between 1967 and 2020.

A survey conducted in 2022 concluded that the birds were likely to become extinct in the Borders region via a study of areas where they were previously observed in Berwickshire, and hence that they were likely extinct in the entirety of Scotland. However, in 2023 they became aware of what appears to be a very small breeding population in the Newcastleton area. This population may be no more than 3-10 pairs but may still be the entirety of the Scottish population of this species.

Interestingly, despite sightings at around seven locations in the immediate area, no sightings have been recorded within Newcastleton itself. The species often visits garden feeders and there is a possibility that they may well be present within the town as well as the surrounding area.

Local Actions and Community Groups

The species requires a highly specific habitat, which is very sensitive to change, which requires both conservation to protect its existing suitable habitat and creation of further suitable habitat to increase its chances of survival. If there are individuals, groups or landowners who are interested in helping with this aspect please get in touch.

Underburnmouth speeding signs now in place.

Post Concerns regarding placement of post/solar panel north end of the village, no one knew what this relates to.

Static caravan on roadside entering village from south – CC received numerous complaints from members of the public; its location; whether the hardstanding was under the ownership of the new landowner as previously this had been part of the railway lands, had relevant road connections been applied/granted for as this joined the public highway; increasing number of sheds/garden pots/plants appearing; water and sewage connections. All were encouraged to report concerns to SBC to be reviewed by the planning dept. CC would ask elected members to review and report back on the planning criteria.

Road sweeping – very apparent that notice is not being received as leaves remain on roadside blocking drains which necessitate locals clearing them during weather events. Leaves also remain on pavements which used to be previously cleaned, CC would seek response on the formal process and request that advance notice of the regular cleaning program be provided so that residents could move cars to enable this to be undertaken around the village.

9) Date of next meeting: **April 9th 7pm village hall**