

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
EILDON AREA FORUM

MINUTE of Meeting of the EILDON AREA
FORUM held in the Chamber, Albert Place,
Galashiels on Thursday, 19 February, 2015
at 6.30 pm

- Present:- Councillors B White (Chairman), S. Aitchison, V Davidson, G Edgar,
J G Mitchell, J Torrance
Community Council representatives:- S. Gant (Bowden Village Committee),
Ian Purvis (Galashiels), A. Smith (Lauderdale), T. Cotter (Lilliesleaf, Ashkirk
and Midlem), G. Luke (Newtown and Eildon), P. Docherty (Oxton and
Channelkirk), J. MacKenzie (Stow). Inspector A. Hodges (Police Scotland), J.
Douce (Scottish Fire & Rescue),
- Apologies:- Councillors M Ballantyne, I Gillespie, B Herd, D Parker, Community Councils:
Earlston, Ettrick and Yarrow, Selkirk and District.
- In Attendance:- Chief Officer Economic Development, SBC Neighbourhood Area Manager
(Eildon), Democratic Services Officer (F. Walling).
- Members of public – 4
Press - 1

1. **MINUTE**
There had been circulated copies of the Minute of 13 November 2014.

DECISION
APPROVED for signature by the Chairman.

2. **BORDERS SPORT AND LEISURE TRUST**
Chief Executive of BSLT, Ewan Jackson, and the Area Manager for Galashiels, Dougie Anderson, were in attendance to give a presentation on the activities of BSLT in the Eildon Area. Mr Jackson explained that the Trust was launched as a company limited by guarantee with charitable status in 2003. The purpose of the Trust was to inspire everyone in the Borders to enjoy more active lifestyles, sporting excellence and healthier futures. The organisation grew significantly in 2011 with the transfer from Scottish Borders Council of Sports Development, Active Schools and the Queens Leisure Centre. Further development included the 3G Arena at Netherdale, Borders Tennis Centre and in 2014 the Tweedbank Bowling Club and Peebles High School Sport Centre. In total there had been £750,000 investment in the Eildon Area since 2003. The wide range of services delivered within the Eildon community each year included 3,000 pre-school play visits, 27,500 swim lessons, 84,000 general swim sessions, 69,000 Active Schools visits, 95,000 gym and/or class visits, 105,000 pitch or hall visits and 44 sports clubs supported. The presentation went on to look at the business side of the Trust, at the income, management and an illustration of where the investment was used. The challenges were to achieve a balance between what was sustainable and what was worthwhile. Also to be taken into account were the changing habits of customers, ageing facilities, public sector cuts and energy costs. The strengths of the organisation were the skilled and friendly staff; a diversity of programmes to reach all ages; the geographical reach of facilities and services; excellent relations with partners; and a knowledgeable, voluntary Board of

Trustees. In response to questions, Mr Jackson advised that, to take forward the link between sport and a healthy lifestyle, BSLT was working in partnership with NHS Borders as part of a new strategy. With regard to facilities for the disabled, Mr Jackson emphasised that all BSLT facilities were accessible. In particular there was a Disability Inclusive Programme for Swimming and specific activities organised such as wheelchair bowling. BSLT continued to look at outreach work and explore ways of providing activities in smaller communities. Mr Jackson confirmed that there were currently about 490 volunteers working with BSLT and that they were a vital part of its successful operation. The Chairman thanked Mr Jackson and Mr Anderson for their attendance and interesting presentation.

DECISION

NOTED the presentation.

3. BORDERS RAILWAY

3.1 A progress update and illustrative slides on the construction of the Borders Railway was given by BAM Nutall Communications Manager, Stuart Mackay. The installation of almost 30 miles of rail was officially completed on 12 February at Tweedbank. Mr Mackay confirmed that the project was on track for the engineering works to be completed by June. There was still a significant amount of infrastructure to complete along the route, which would include the spreading of ballast, installing signalling and constructing seven new stations. There were also numerous pieces of minor works to be completed along the line which would be reflected by a change in the team structure. After the engineering works had been concluded, testing and commissioning of the line would take place to enable the line to open to passengers in September 2015. Mr Mackay added that the Borders Railway website had proved to be a very popular source of news and updates, with approximately 1,800 hits per week. As part of its engagement with schools, BAM was working with Heriot Primary School to design and build an outside classroom. Mr Mackay went on to speak about opening celebrations for the railway which were in the planning stages. In answer to questions about ticket prices he advised that details would be confirmed by the train operating company Abellio. However he emphasised that the Borders railway would be part of the national rail network and as such the usual travel concessions would apply. He also advised that some of the services were likely to continue onto the Fife circular which would add to the convenience of passengers.

3.2 Consideration of the opportunities presented by the railway continued with a presentation by Chief Officer Economic Development, Bryan McGrath. He explained that a national focus had been brought to the opening of the railway by the establishment of a Leadership Group which included Scottish Borders, Midlothian and City of Edinburgh Councils, Scottish Government, Transport Scotland and Visit Scotland. The 'Borders Railway Blueprint – Achieving Economic Impact' had been launched at Abbotsford on 17 November 2014. There were three key themes within the Blueprint: great locations for working and investing; great communities for living and learning; and great destinations to visit. The development of the Central Borders Business Park, a Borders Railway Prospectus and an investment fund were key parts within the 'working and investing' theme. Within 'living and learning' attention will be given to housing land supply, the integration of rail with other transport modes and functional walk and cycle routes. The potential of feasibility to extend the railway line in future would also be scoped. To promote 'great destinations' there would be a tourism destination audit and tourism business development. The location of the Great Tapestry of Scotland, steam trains, open top bus services and a railway exposition were other proposals for development. Other relevant actions not included in the Blueprint would be delivered locally such as attention to Galashiels Town Centre, encouraging the development of new events and community engagement.

Discussions continued on the celebrations being planned for the opening of the railway at the beginning of September. Mr McGrath advised that details would be announced in April. The Chairman thanked Mr Mackay and Mr McGrath for their very informative presentations.

NOTED the presentations

4. **PILOT REGIONAL LAND USE STRATEGY FRAMEWORK**

With reference to paragraphs 3 and 4 of the Minute of 19 February 2014, Derek Robeson of Tweed Forum returned to Eildon Area Forum to give an update presentation on progress in respect of the regional Land Use Strategy (LUS) Framework. He explained that, following the examination of opportunities and constraints and through the development of mapping and extensive stakeholder engagement, a draft Framework had been produced which was approved by Scottish Borders Council in December 2014 for public consultation. The presentation detailed the extent of consultation carried out in 2013/14 with regular meetings taking place of a key stakeholder group representing 20 organisations in addition to engagement with 44 organisational representatives and 36 Community Councils. The draft Framework set out the key land uses in the Borders and how these might change. Further sections dealt with how the Framework should be used, the next steps and monitoring and assessment going forward. The Framework identified the important goods and services delivered by the Borders landscape as follows: the provisioning of crops, livestock, renewable energy and timber; the regulating of water quality, flood risk, soil erosion, sediment risk and carbon resource; supporting biodiversity and pollination; and cultural considerations such as sense of place, game and sporting, historic sites and landscape designations. There were seven opportunities for change identified and mapped indicatively in the Borders at present: mitigation of flood risk; expansion of timber provision; native woodland expansion; biodiversity enhancement; improvement in agricultural production; water quality enhancement; and enhancement of soil carbon storage. The presentation went on to look in more detail at where the information and maps could be used in respect of natural flood management and the enhancement of water quality. Mr Robeson stressed that the Framework was a non-statutory strategy for the Scottish Borders. It would assist and support decision-making about land use that was currently undertaken through existing processes. It provided new information as a web-based tool which could be used to evaluate different land use options in an integrated way at sub-catchment or farm/estate level. Mr Robeson advised that, following the end of the public consultation a final report would be submitted to Scottish Government by the end of March 2015. In answer to questions Mr Robeson confirmed that the Framework was available on the Scottish Borders Council website and that the web-based mapping tool would be available on SBC Local View Fusion by Summer 2015. The Chairman thanked Mr Robeson for his useful presentation and update.

DECISION

NOTED the presentation

5. **SMALL SCHEMES 2014/15**

With reference to paragraph 8(b) of the Minute of 13 November 2014 and 2(b) of the Minute of 27 February 2014, there had been circulated papers detailing the programme of Small Schemes and Quality of Life projects which had been funded from these budgets through delegated powers. The Neighbourhood Area Manager highlighted those schemes which had been completed and those in progress. He advised that there was £1860 remaining in the Small Schemes budget and a total of £5,400 in the Quality of Life budget. In accordance with the decision of Eildon Area Forum, the remaining Quality of Life budget for the financial year, which was unspent and uncommitted in each Ward by the February 2015 meeting, would be pooled for use on any approved projects within the Eildon Area.

DECISION

NOTED the update.

6. PARTNER UPDATES

- 6.1 Jeff Douce of Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) gave a report on operational activity within the Eildon Area during the period 12th November to 15th February 2015. SFRS had responded to 8 dwelling fires, the majority of which were as a result of cooking activities and electrical issues. There had been one eight pump house fire in Peebles and two suspicious farm fires where SFRS were working jointly with Police Scotland. Other work during the period included response to 7 Road Traffic Collisions. In conclusion Mr Douce referred to the SFRS Multi Ward Operating Plan 2014-2015 for Eildon which had recently been published and which had been circulated to representatives on the Area Forum. The Plan, which was also available on the SFRS website, set out the Priorities, Actions and Outcomes for the area.
- 6.2 Inspector Hodges gave a verbal update on the main areas of activity for Police Scotland over the recent period. Eildon area had seen a 2% drop in recorded crime compared to the same time last year with 58.9% currently detected. Community Inspectors endeavoured to utilise performance data to address issues identified. An example was anticipation of the usual sharp rise in retail crime in the Central Borders in the month of January. Community Officers ran a proactive initiative resulting in a significant drop in reported retail crime rather than the predicted rise. Inspector Hodges reported that the plain-clothes unit based in Galashiels was producing some excellent results in the fight against drugs in the Borders, examples being £1,100 Heroin stop and search in Selkirk, £4,000 Cocaine vehicle search in Galashiels and £30,000 Cocaine house searches in Galashiels. There had been a rise in Anti Social Behaviour incidents in the Eildon area compared with the same time last year but Police Scotland were working in close partnership with Scottish Borders Council and Registered Social Landlords to tackle issues quickly. With regard to incidents of violent crime reports of common assaults in the Eildon area had reduced by 53 in the year to date with a current detection rate of over 83%. Inspector Hodges advised that the next financial year's Multi Member Ward Plans were being formulated and were intended for publication on 6 April.
- 6.3 NHS Borders Employee Director, John McLaren, gave an update on current NHS Borders consultations. He explained that, following on from the clinical strategy consultation 'Health in Your Hands' and the Local Annual Review presentation, his update was to highlight reviews of five principle areas. With regard to in-patient services he advised that there had been no intention to close Community Hospitals but that NHS Borders must ensure that they were fit for purpose. There would be a full and robust public engagement plan. There was also an ongoing public consultation, which closed on 28 February, about out-of-hours services. In this regard, the national shortage of GPs was a significant issue. In relation to Accident and Emergency, there had been a recent 12% increase in the number of patients through the Department at the Borders General Hospital. However figures revealed that during the week ending 8 February 91.3% had been seen within 4 hours. Further action was being taken to address car parking problems at the Borders General Hospital. A further 38 spaces would be available by the end of March 2015, an additional bus service laid on and the car sharing scheme re-launched. With regard to work being carried out with Scottish Borders Council to integrate Health and Social Care, the current public consultation on the scheme of integration would close on 13 March 2015. The details could be found on both the NHS Borders and Scottish Borders Council websites. Five public interactive events were also being held around old people's services, including one on 26 February 2015, from 6.30 to 8.00 pm at Old Gala House.

DECISION
NOTED the partner updates.

7. **OPEN QUESTIONS**
There were no open questions.

DECISION
NOTED

8. **COMMUNITY COUNCIL SPOTLIGHT**
No issues were raised.

DECISION
NOTED

9. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**
It was agreed that, for the next meeting, new ScotRail operator Abellio be invited to present the proposals for the Borders Railway and that consideration also be given to the plans around the Borders Railway Opening Celebrations.

DECISION
NOTED

10. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**
The next meeting would be held on Thursday 14 May 2015 at 6.30 pm. In accordance with the agreement to move meeting venues around the Eildon Area, it was suggested that the May meeting be held in Lauder, the exact venue to be confirmed.

The meeting concluded at 8.30 pm