

**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**  
**2 MARCH 2017**  
**APPENDIX I**

**Question from Councillor Logan**

To Executive Member for Culture, Sport, Youth and Communities

There are clear concerns in both the USA and Holland about the nature of the product used for 3G pitches.

Do you agree that the Scottish Borders Council should adopt the precautionary principles adopted by the Dutch Government and the EU. This means that no more 3g pitches should be installed pending reviews made by the Dutch Government and the EU.

If you do not agree I believe that this Council should as a precautionary measure arrange for chemical tests to be carried out to identify carcinogens on the product as it is installed and a guarantee that similar tests should be carried out on all products which are used to repair the pitches which regularly show signs of wear and need upgrading or replacement.

Reply from Councillor Davidson

We are aware of concerns and have been taking advice and following the progress of international studies carefully. Advice on this comes from the Scottish Government which itself receives specialist advice on environmental risks to health from Health Protection Scotland and Public Health England. The current advice is as follows:

*A number of studies have shown that chemicals of potential concern are present in rubber-crumble products used in 3G artificial sports pitches. However, levels of exposure to these chemicals have been found to be very low.*

*Studies to investigate, firstly, whether these compounds are released from the material on ingestion, secondly, if biomarkers of exposure are higher in players using these pitches, or thirdly, whether extracts of the product are mutagenic within in-vitro tests, demonstrate no current health concerns related to these products.*

*Current estimates of cancer risk associated with worst case exposure scenarios, including to children, are below levels considered of a concern to human health. Therefore, based on both past and most recent research, artificial pitches are considered safe for use.*

In terms of on-going studies:

The European Chemicals Agency, (ECA) are currently undertaking their own research on the safety of rubber crumb and we expect a draft report of their findings to be published soon. DEFRA, who have overall responsibility for the UK, are leading on this and are in contact with Sportscotland, the Scottish FA as well as governing bodies in England and Wales.

A similar study is being undertaken by the Federal Government in the USA but this is not due to be concluded until the middle of next year.

Regarding measures taken by Scottish Borders Council:

The Council uses reputable contractors and suppliers for the construction of their artificial pitches and this is controlled via procurement and construction monitoring processes. The suppliers of the rubber crumb infill undertake testing to ensure it meets the legal requirements and details of this can be obtained where considered necessary.

The Council will continue to take advice from Sportscotland and other government agencies, and will review its position following completion of the ongoing EU and USA studies.

### Supplementary

Following the removal of 30 such pitches in Holland, Councillor Logan asked that the Council continue to monitor the situation. Councillor Davidson confirmed that this would be done.

### **Question from Councillor Smith**

#### To Executive Member for Economic Development

Does the Member for Economic Development consider that the designation of a National Park covering a part of the Scottish Borders is required to stimulate the local economy and in particular the tourism sector?

#### Reply from Councillor Bell

While designating a National Park in the Scottish Borders might help Economic Development through developing tourism in the area it is highly questionable whether this would be achieved solely by such a designation and without additional investment. It is currently unclear how this additional investment would be obtained.

It should also be noted that, contrary to the negative interpretation of the state of the Tourist sector which some National Park supporters have been propagating, there has been a clear growth in this sector such that it is now the fourth largest employment sector in the Borders. This has been achieved without the complexities of new governance arrangements, the imposition of new regulations that National Park would bring, and additional costs that will be associated with the establishment and operation of a National Park.

Whilst real benefits have been delivered in other National Parks, it is unclear whether these would necessarily be replicable in a Borders National Park. The current proposal is at a very early stage and it is not yet possible to confidently say what economic benefits might be achieved. There is not clarity on the potential boundary; on the scope and therefore the costs of establishing and running a National Park; on the essential nature and heritage conservation objectives; or on the public and particularly the agricultural sector's support or concerns.

I understand that a feasibility study is being completed by the promoters. We await the findings of that study before we can consider these issues further and establish what a National Park might be able to contribute to growing our economy. Such a designation might help part of the Borders to thrive; but it would certainly not be an essential component of overall economic growth.

### Supplementary

Councillor Smith asked what the economic downside of a park could be. Councillor Bell advised that he had looked at the Cairngorms National Park's 3 objectives of visitor experience, rural development, and conservation. It was important that the appropriate tourism structure was in place for a National Park. As regards rural development, the view that it would increase house values could have a negative impact on the availability of affordable housing. As regards conservation, he was unable to speculate on what those important objectives for the Park might be and looked forward to receiving the feasibility study on a National Park in the Borders.

### **Question from Councillor Marshall**

#### To Executive Member for Environmental Services

Can the Executive Member for Environmental Services explain what if any effective changes have been made to the dog fouling strategy specifically with regard to the role of the Dog Wardens given levels of complaint concerning what many consider to be very poor levels of performance.

#### Reply from Councillor Paterson

Neighbourhood Services have confirmed that they have not received any complaints regarding the poor levels of performance of the Enforcement Officers.

The Council agreed a pilot, for a period of a year, with a third party provider which will run until 31<sup>st</sup> May 2017. A full evaluation of the pilot, and the wider responsible dog ownership strategy, will be undertaken and reported to Council at a later date.

The work of the Enforcement Officers is targeted based on the intelligence held by the Council and the provider. Their work is overseen by one of the Neighbourhood Managers who is analysing incident reports on a weekly basis and ensuring that the resource is used to best effect.

Getting accurate and detailed information on offenders is key to enforcement activity and I would urge everyone to provide as much detail as possible when reporting offenders.

#### Supplementary

Councillor Marshall asked how many fixed penalty tickets for dog fouling had been issued in Hawick. Councillor Paterson undertook to provide this information but highlighted that a large part of the strategy included the education of dog owners and the promotion of responsible dog ownership.

#### **Question from Councillor Mountford**

##### To Executive Member for Environmental Services

How much has fly tipping cost Scottish Borders Council in each of the last 3 years including the disposal of the dumped waste?

##### Reply from Councillor Paterson

Neighbourhood Operations deal with the removal of fly-tipping as part of their varied daily duties. Due to the generic and responsive nature of their work, costs relating to fly-tipping are not specifically calculated and recorded. I am therefore unable to provide this information.

I can however confirm the numbers of fly-tipping incidents dealt with in the last 3 years.

2014 (557)  
2015 (640)  
2016 to date (602).

These incidents cover a range of things such as single black bags through to white goods

#### Supplementary

Councillor Mountford asked if the Council would consider introducing a zero tolerance policy which operated in other areas. Councillor Paterson undertook to raise this with officers.

#### **Question from Councillor Bell**

##### To the Executive Member for Social Work

This Administration set an ambitious target to complete 100 new affordable homes per year. Given that the exciting and successful filling of the Innerleithen 'gap site' and associated developments, opened by you on Monday, have added a further 9 new affordable homes. What do you anticipate will be the performance against target over the 5 years of this Administration?

##### Reply from Councillor Renton

Thank you for your question.

I was delighted to be invited to open the new development in Innerleithen this week which has not only provided 9 excellent new affordable homes but has also filled a gap site and removed an unsightly building from the middle of the village.

This is of course just the latest in a series of new affordable housing developments to be delivered by the Council and its partners.

Members will be aware that this Administration set a target of delivering 110 affordable housing units per year. With little over a month to go until end of the financial year, I am pleased to note that over the period of the Local Housing Strategy 2012-17 we are on track to deliver an estimated 591 affordable homes , which means around 118 per year. This is quite some achievement, and exceeds the Administration targets.

#### Supplementary

Councillor Bell noted that the next plan included 1192 affordable homes and asked if there were any specific concerns regarding what needed to be put in place to achieve this. Councillor Renton agreed it was an ambitious target but if land was available in the right areas, funding coming down from Scottish Government, and houses built in the areas of greatest need, then this target could be achieved.