

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL BERWICKSHIRE AREA PARTNERSHIP

MINUTES of Meeting of the
BERWICKSHIRE AREA PARTNERSHIP
held Via Microsoft Teams on Thursday, 4
March 2021 at 6.30 pm

- Present:- SBC Councillors: J. A. Fullarton (Chairman), J. Greenwell, C. Hamilton, H. Laing, D. Moffat and M. Rowley;
Other organisations attendees: Ms J. Amaral (BAVS), Mr A. Brooking, Mr J. Brown, Mr K. Dickinson (Gavinton, Fogo & Polwarth CC), Ms A. Fisher (Sea the Change/Berwickshire Marine Reserve), Mr B. Forrest (RAGES), Mr T. Hodge (BHA), Mr A. Manley (Foulden, Mordington & Lamberton CC), Ms D. McKinnon (Eat, Sleep, Ride), Ms A. McNeill (A Heart for Duns), Mr A. Mitchell (Duns CC), Ms R. Noble (Outside the Box), Ms H. Paxton (Greenlaw & Hume CC), Ms H. Smith (Re-Tweed), Ms J. Sutton (Cockburnspath Community).
- In Attendance:- Locality Development Co-ordinator, Strategic Community Engagement Officer and Communities and Partnership Manager; Clerk to the Council.

1. **WELCOME AND MEETING PROTOCOLS**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Berwickshire Area Partnership. The meeting was held via Microsoft Teams and the Chairman outlined how the meeting would be conducted and how those both in the meeting and watching via the Live Stream could take part.

2. **FEEDBACK FROM MEETING ON 17 DECEMBER 2020**

The Minute of the special meeting of the Berwickshire Area Partnership held on 17 December 2020 had been circulated and was noted.

3. **TRANSPORT**

Dan Cathcart, SBC Localities Transport Officer, joined the meeting and gave an update on the local bus services which were currently operating at 80% of pre-Covid levels, subject to CSGR payments from Transport Scotland. The Council was currently conducting a review of all public service contracts to try to ensure that this suited the travelling public. NHS and Care sector ticket discount scheme was available for all bus services so, on presentation of ID on any bus service, these staff would get 50% discount and a free service operated for those leaving Borders General Hospital. With regard to Reston Station, planning consent had been given in February 2021 and the opening would hopefully be in late 2021, subject to funding. Scotrail services were currently running at 65% of timetable and Scotrail was fully supportive of Reston station. Bus services would be reconfigured around train services. The school bus service was returning to normal pending a phased return of pupils to school. Announcements were expected by Scottish Government. Currently a 2 metre distance was required on transport so only 7 or 8 pupils could be on a bus and it was hoped 1 metre distancing would come in for 15 March. In response to some questions, Mr Cathcart advised that in terms of publicity for the ticket discount scheme and free transport from BGH, a PR campaign on the discount scheme had been launched in October 2020, stretched out to the care sector and the free bus in the New Year just as lockdown came back in. More publicity would be put out once wider travel was permitted by Scottish Government. Bus operators had had a certain level of payment maintained from the Council despite the fact school services had not been running and this allowed them to maintain their trading status and keep operating. It was hoped that a 1m distance would be introduced for school transport to allow more pupils to get safely back to school as there were insufficient buses available should the current 2m distancing rule be maintained.

Councillor Rowley asked that others also promote the discount scheme for care workers and confirmed that while some Council buildings had been unoccupied, they still needed maintained and the cost of PPE, additional cleaning, etc. had meant little in the way of savings, with income way down. Mr Cathcart further confirmed that he was also happy to pick up with Barrie Forrest about integrated transport links for Reston Station.

4. **FIT FOR 2024: REVIEW OF AREA PARTNERSHIP AND COMMUNITY FUND**

- 4.1 With reference to paragraph 4 of the Minute of 3 December 2021, copies of the findings and proposals from the Berwickshire Area Partnership Review Sub-Group had been circulated. The Chairman of the Review Sub-Group, Mr Keith Dickinson, gave a presentation on the work of the Sub-Group, thanking the members of the Group for their work and effort in considering a number of issues. The Group had met on several occasions during January and February 2021. With reference to the future of the Area Partnership, the Group favoured the Partnership continuing as a Council committee and was content with the current role, remit and purpose of the Area Partnership as it related to the development, implementation and monitoring of the Berwickshire Locality Plan and Action Plan; and the delivery of the Berwickshire Community Fund. However, in the future, significant modifications to the working/operation characteristics of the Berwickshire Area Partnership would be required to ensure that the core functionality of the Partnership was discharged in a more effective and participatory manner. A key activity of the Partnership related to how the Berwickshire Locality Plan was developed and monitored. The Group believed that the current Partnership model was rather unwieldy, lacked focus and failed to engage with many communities. Discussions in the Group had highlighted how planning at a more local “place” level was seen to be more relevant and would attract greater engagement within communities, and the Group therefore proposed a model of “bottom up” planning from several/many communities. It was recognised that more needed to be done to collate and review existing community plans, bring “place” plans together into a coherent Locality Plan, and regularly monitor all plans. In order to achieve this, it would likely be necessary to undertake substantial capacity building within communities. Good practice already existed throughout Berwickshire, but further efforts would be required to share this experience and operate more effectively as a Partnership.
- 4.2 With regard to the best way forward for the Community Fund, the Group favoured initially (in line with recommendations of the Scottish Community Development Centre report to Scottish Borders Council in early 2020) that no changes be made to the grants for Community Councils, Village Halls and local Festivals. The key outcome from further discussions in the Group was that substantial benefit would derive from a change in the criteria and decision-making processes associated with the Community Fund. It was proposed that a Sub-Committee of the Area Partnership be set up with full delegated powers to undertake the assessment of applications and make awards. All applications to the Community Fund would be dealt with through a single process, to ensure rigour, rationale and uniformity in the assessment of applications. The proposed 10 person Sub-Committee would be drawn from the membership of the Area Partnership and would comprise a combination of experience, representation and “new blood”. While allowing flexibility, it was envisaged that membership would include 3 SBC Elected Members, with an open recruitment process for the remaining members. In general, the Group felt that Area Partnership meetings had yet to realise the level of community engagement and involvement that was originally envisaged. The term “partnership” implied a level of equality between parties and participation in the management of the business and therefore a greater involvement in agenda setting and facilitation of meetings was proposed. In addition, the Group favoured the introduction of a rotating Chair. While a committee of Scottish Borders Council, and therefore for Council to appoint the Chair, the view of the Area Partnership prior to the appointment of a Chair should be sought. If all this was taken forward then the Group considered this would give confidence that the Area Partnership could work in a more effective way in future. The Chairman thanked Mr Dickinson and the Review Sub-Group for all their hard work.

- 4.3 Comments were then received from the meeting attendees:
- Fantastic piece of work; the role of the Chair or a Facilitator was about empowering and enabling but keeping the focus on the purpose of the meeting.
 - The Area Partnership was about people having control and participating.
 - A clear role for SBC officers in the proposed Sub-Committee; the Sub-Committee would be accountable to the Area Partnership.
 - The Sub-Committee would make the decisions on awards of grants from the Community Fund and advise the Area Partnership accordingly.
 - Area Partnership would have an annual discussion on how well the process was working.
 - Consideration would need to be given to widen participation and involve communities; if the business of the Area Partnership was interesting and valuable, with good decisions, then people would participate. If the meetings were just talking shops then it would not work. There should be a group looking at agenda items.
 - When discussing greater community engagement the Review Sub-Group recognised the amount of work happening at a very local level and this could feed in to the Locality Plan and the wider Borders Community Plan e.g. Eyemouth Plan.
 - There were some excellent examples of community place planning; Heart for Duns group was working with Duns Community Council to take forward planning for the local environment and wanted to pilot that model if successful and roll it out further in support of local communities.

DECISION

AGREED to support the recommendations of the Review Sub-Group:

- (a) **the continuation of the Area Partnership as a Council committee;**
- (b) **the continuation of the current role, remit and purpose of Area Partnerships;**
- (c) **the development of a model of bottom-up community planning, assisted by appropriate capacity building and the sharing of good practice;**
- (d) **the retention of the existing Community Councils, Village Halls and Local Festivals grant schemes;**
- (e) **the creation of a Sub-Committee of the Area Partnership – the Berwickshire Community Fund Assessment Group – with full delegated powers to undertake the assessment of applications and subsequently make awards;**
- (f) **the introduction of an Area Partnership sub-group with responsibility for setting and facilitating future meeting topics; and**
- (g) **the request that the Council sought the views of the Berwickshire Area Partnership prior to the appointment of the Chair.**

5. BERWICKSHIRE COMMUNITY FUND 2020/21

5.1 The Chairman advised that there was a similar problem to the last time when the Fund was oversubscribed, with £33,988 available and applications totalling £62,869. Gillian Jardine, Locality Development Co-ordinator, presented highlights for each project. The applicants were available at the meeting to answer questions, and then left the meeting prior to decisions being made.

- (a) **Eat, Sleep and Ride**
This project sought funding of £24,267 to start 'Take the Reins', a personal development programme designed to provide a learning opportunity to high school children aged 13-17 years who were not in full-time education. The programme would be delivered over 26 weeks, with space for 12 young people. In response to

a question, it was confirmed that spaces would be offered to young people from Berwickshire first and then opened to the rest of the Borders.

(b) **Berwickshire Marine Reserve**

This project sought funding of £12,511 to contribute to the costs of employing a Project Officer and project costs for “Conserve Your Marine Reserve”. This Citizen Science project would engage users of the Marine Reserve to help identify pressures that threatened the survival of marine ecosystems and promote people’s ability to appreciate and protect it.

(c) **Sea the Change**

This project sought funding of £7,684 to commission a feasibility study to explore solutions to changes to Coldingham beach infrastructure which were identified in an Access Audit report. The 5 key issues identified were access to the disabled parking, beach wheelchair storage, disabled toilets, the beach and the boardwalk. The Area Partnership expressed some concern about the cost of the feasibility study and queried whether funds would be better spent on the solutions rather than the feasibility study.

(d) **Re-Tweed**

This project sought funding of £5,504 to pilot the delivery of a minimum of two (maximum three – depending on resources) 6-week intensive skills based training (one day/week) in Berwickshire village halls in communities where no other provision existed – Cockburnspath and Westruther or Longformacus. It was confirmed that the Board had talked about this for some time with various organisations, trying to encourage more young people into the mix. A course had taken place in Cockburnspath but due to social distancing requirements, only 4 places were available for the 11 applicants. The aim was to take these courses to smaller communities in Berwickshire where no other provision existed.

(e) **Outside the Box**

This project sought funding of £12,903 for staffing costs for a project to reconnect individuals with each other and encourage and support people back to attending group sessions. The aim would be to deliver 1 to 2 sessions (physical or virtual) per group to raise confidence of individuals, maintain connections and reduce isolation. In response to a question it was confirmed that the organisation worked with individuals to identify gaps in support and encourage peer support so after one or two sessions groups could be self sustaining.

5.2 Members of the Area Partnership considered the applications and discussed whether a reduced amount of funding could be offered to applicants and whether this would have an impact on projects. While officers were able to work with groups on other funding sources, the availability of these could not be guaranteed. The applicants then left the meeting and members of the Area Partnership considered each of the various projects in turn.

AGREED to the following:

- (a) **to award Re-Tweed £5,504 from the Community Fund for skills based training training;**
- (b) **to award Berwickshire Marine Reserve £12,511 from the Community Fund for the “Conserve Your Marine Reserve” project;**
- (c) **to award Sea the Change £4,000 from the Community Fund towards access works at Coldingham Beach;**

(d) to award the remainder of the Community Fund (c. £11,973) to Eat, Sleep, Ride towards the “Take the Reins” project; and

(e) to not award any funding to Outside the Box.

6. CURRENT CONSULTATIONS

The Area Partnership noted the following consultations were current:

- Mainstreaming Equality in Scottish Borders Council and the Scottish Borders – consultation to close on 7 March 2021.
- Update Supplementary Planning Guidance – Planning Brief – Former Borders College, Galashiels – consultation to close on 31 March 2021.

7. BERWICKSHIRE LOCALITY PLAN & ACTION PLAN

It was noted that the Berwickshire Locality Plan and related Action Plan which outlined the priorities for the Berwickshire area were published on the Council website.

8. RESTON STATION PROJECT

Mr Barrie Forest, Chairman of the Rail Action Group East of Scotland, and Allan Brooking of Network Rail were at the meeting. Mr Forest explained that the campaign to reinstate Reston Railway Station went back to 1999, with the first meeting held in Reston Village Hall. The full planning application had now been approved and while it had been a long haul, this would help Berwickshire residents to go north and south by train and also bring people into the area. Mr Forest thanked everyone who had supported the campaign which would bring much benefit to Berwickshire. People understood that the construction period would bring some disruption and the only outstanding matter was that of toilet provision, which Network Rail would not provide at an unmanned station. Councillor Rowley paid tribute to Mr Forest’s work, commenting that Scottish Borders Council had contributed £4m to the project. In terms of toilet provision, this was up to Network Rail as it was their land and station. Councillor Hamilton also paid tribute to the hard work and persistence of Mr Forest and the campaign group which would especially benefit young people by opening up access to college, sports, theatres, shops, etc. Mr Forest added that this would also allow young people to stay at home if they wished.

9. COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 2015

It was noted that no formal participation or asset transfer requests had been received. There was one informal asset transfer request currently under discussion, but no details of that could be released at the present time.

10. COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT FOR AREA PARTNERSHIPS

The Area Partnership noted the links to information on Community Empowerment on the previously circulated paper.

11. FIT FOR 2024

James Lamb, SBC Portfolio Manager, joined the meeting and gave a presentation on the Council’s proposals for Place Making. Rather than engaging on the Built Estates, the focus would be on Service Redesign. This was a more joined-up, collaborative, and participative approach to services, land and buildings, across all sectors within a place, enabling better outcomes for everyone and increased opportunities for people and communities to shape their own lives. Place making would be carried out in four phases, with Phase 1 being preparation and planning (up to July 2021); Phase 2 the initial place making engagement (from August to October 2021); Phase 3 developing the place programmes (September to November 2021); and Phase 4 delivery, monitoring and review (November 2021 into 2022). A workshop would be held at the end of March/beginning of April, to consider alignment, narrative, timescales, themes, governance and best use of resources. During April, high level principles would be drafted, including the criteria for the selection of communities, and initial testing of the engagement plan. Support was being requested from communities for the approach and direction of travel, including making it happen, and linking – over time – Place Planning

with Strategic and Service Planning cycles. Feedback could be given at the meeting or later via email. This linked in very well with the development of the Area Partnership and in response to a question about how this would be prioritised, Mr Lamb confirmed that this would be carried out in all localities and then one or two places would be selected in each locality to take things forward. This was not just the Council but its partners, including South of Scotland Enterprise Agency. Juliana Amaral of BAVS advised that that exercise was already happening in Berwickshire with conversations with communities so it was important to bear that in mind and have joint exercises where possible. Keith Dickinson commented on the workshop and high level plan, and whether a better option would be to support plans at a lower level, which were currently in place or under development, which could feed into a high level plan. It was important that community representatives were involved in the development of the high level plan, rather than having it imposed on communities. Mr Lamb gave assurance that input was being sought from everyone. Councillor Rowley commented that in an ideal world, every village and community would have its own plan and that would be aggregated up. A gate check was in place for each of the 4 phases so the Council would receive a report at each stage for approval before moving on to the next stage. This was a fantastic engagement opportunity. There was also a balancing act between those communities which already had plans in place and these needed to be weighed up as some of them were ready to go. Andrew Mitchell supported the concerns expressed by Keith Dickinson about a top-down approach, referring to the development of the Community Plan and Locality Plan, so it was essential that communities' views were given primacy.

12. **COVID-19**

Links to the NHS Borders website for current updates and Covid support were noted.

13. **NHS BORDERS WELLBEING SERVICE**

The link to the NHS Borders Wellbeing Service was noted.

14. **NHS BORDERS WELLBEING POINT**

The link to the NHS Borders Wellbeing Point was noted.

15. **CARING CONNECTED COMMUNITIES WINTER NEWSLETTER**

The link to the Caring Connected Communities winter newsletter was noted.

16. **NEXT AREA PARTNERSHIP MEETING - AGENDA ITEMS**

No agenda items were raised at the meeting but it was noted that these could be forwarded after the meeting to local Community Councillors, SBC Elected Members or the Communities & Partnership Team.

17. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Juliana Amaral advised that BAVS was creating a directory for emergency food response, community larders, etc. and was currently liaising with others on this.

18. **OPEN FORUM**

No matters were raised.

19. **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

The dates of the next scheduled meetings of the Berwickshire Area Partnership were noted.

The meeting concluded at 9.30 pm