

## **COMMON GOOD EXHIBITION**

Question from Joe Wilton: Most residents of Peebles seem to know very little about the Peebles Common Good. A recent straw poll showed that, although the majority of those questioned had heard of the Common Good, very few had a clear understanding of how it was managed. When asked to name any of the 40 fixed assets that currently make up the Common Good, few could name even one asset. To try to rectify this lack of knowledge and engagement we think there is a strong need for a public (purely factual) exhibition describing Peebles Common Good. This idea was endorsed unanimously by the Peebles community council at their last meeting and the Peebles Civic Soc think this is a "good idea". We have already written a draft text for the councillors to consider and the Eastgate Theatre cafe has agreed to host the exhibition. Would the councillors support such a proposal?

**Response from the Chair: The proposal was supported. Further discussions were to be arranged with SBC officers to consider content, format, date, venue, staffing and cost implications.**

## **COMMON GOOD INVESTMENTS**

Question from Lesley Morrison: Peebles CG has approximately £500,000 invested through Aegon Asset Management, a global investment company. SBC has declared a climate emergency. Can you reassure us that this money is invested in sustainable businesses and not fossil fuel or other non-sustainable companies? And shouldn't more of this money be spent investing for the future in local sustainable energy & renewables?

**Response from the Chair: The report from Aegon can be made available to attendees. Members of the Sub-Committee had received assurances from Aegon on the sustainability of investment funds.**

**Response from Councillor Pirone: The Pension Fund Committee reviews and scrutinises investments. Councillor Pirone is a member of that Committee and reiterated the response from Councillor Tatler.**

## **CLIMATE CHANGE/ENVIRONMENT**

Question from Joe Wilton: SBC has declared a climate emergency. Some of the Peebles Common Good assets offer a great chance for sustainable energy production, such as PV panels on roofs. This would also provide a long-term income to the CG Fund. Is this currently being considered by the councillors?

**Response from the Chair: This issue was to be added to the agenda for the next meeting of the Peebles Common Good Fund, 24 May 2023.**

Question from Nic Barrett: In what ways is carbon reduction a factor in decision making around common good assets or allocation of funds?

**Response from the Chair: The Council is committed to achieving Net Zero and this is considered as part of all decision making.**

## **PROCESSES and ADMIN**

Three Questions from Cat Hamilton

1. Could there be a publicly accessible AGM (with annual summary document) held where our elected councillors, as the committee of The Peebles Common Good, report back to the community, as stakeholders, the current situation of all the PCG assets & the PCG Fund?

**Response: There was an agreement to produce an annual report to present to an in-person AGM. Further discussions were to take place with SBC officers.**

2. There should be a named point of contact for Peebles Common Good. What/who is it and where can it be found?

**Support Officer : Lynne Cuerden 01835 826527  
lynne.cuerden@scotborders.gov.uk**

**Support Officer details was to be found on the Peebles Common Good Fund page [Committee details - Peebles Common Good Fund Sub-Committee - Scottish Borders Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)**

3. The Peebles Common Good section of SBC website is not the easy to navigate. To find details you have to trudge through previous meeting minutes and documents. To fulfil the requirement of transparency, information should be 'clear and easily accessible' (Scottish Land Commission). How do the councillors propose to make information clear and easily accessible?

**Agendas and minutes of all meetings were to be found at [Browse meetings - Peebles Common Good Fund Sub-Committee - Scottish Borders Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#) Consideration was to be given to where to site a paper copy of the minutes for public reference. There was currently a review of the Council website with a view to improving accessibility.**

**An attendee had offered to set up a Peebles Common Good Fund website. However, it was explained that there was no resource to keep such a website up-to-date and that the Acting Chief Corporate Governance Officer would liaise with the Council's Communication Section to look to improve the information provided.**

Two Questions from Richard Welander

1. An Ofcom report published last April highlighted the fact that more than 1.5million households across the UK have no access to the internet. Many more have only limited access via their mobile phones. Do councillors agree that the publishing of all information about Common Good solely on the SBC website is not best practice (particularly when navigating to that information on the website is itself hard) and would they undertake to:

1. produce an annual report on the status of the Fund, the activities of the previous year and plans for the forthcoming year, to be published in the Peeblesshire News **Already answered**
2. to hold an annual open meeting in a suitable local venue (such as the Burgh Hall), at which the sub-committee chair would present an annual report and take questions, and (following the laudable current practice of the Peebles Community Council) **Already answered**
3. post printed copies of the sub-committee latest minutes on the notice boards at the entrance to the Chambers Institute? **Already answered.**

2. The Common Good register for Peebles, published last year by SBC on its website, contains errors and oversights. SBC have undertaken to review the registers 'at least every 5 years'. This seems an excessively long time to leave mistakes uncorrected. Tapping into the wealth of local knowledge in Peebles, would councillors please explore the possibility of instigating an effective mechanism for the capture of issues in need of correction or further investigation and to encourage SBC to undertake an annual (or biennial) review to incorporate new and/or corrected information on its website?

**Response: The Register was reviewed every five years and could be added to in the intervening years. Members of the public should write to Scottish Borders Council with details of any artefacts for inclusion on the register.**

Five questions from Nick Barrett

1. Who is responsible for validation of the 12 CG asset lists, and who is responsible for valuations, insurance & maintenance?

**Response from Norrie Curtis: Rolling assets revaluations occurred every five years, which were then audited.**

2, Why is there such a big depreciation on many of the property values? Eg old corn exchange?

**Response from Councillor Douglas: Depreciation of property values was a standard accountancy tool to write off their value over the life of the asset.**

3. Who ensures that SBC's environmental protection policies are followed in the management & maintenance of CG assets, and how is compliance monitored & recorded?

**Response from Norrie Curtis: Leases covered environmental and nuisance clauses and properties with the aim of regular inspections.**

4. How do long leases of CG assets apportion responsibility for all components of the asset, and who is responsible for enforcing those responsibilities?

**Response from Norrie Curtis: Property Maintenance, based in Peebles, looked after Peebles Common Good Fund assets and followed landowner obligations.**

5. Where are grants and applications listed / summarised on CG minutes and the SBC website?

**Response from the Chair: Minutes from previous meetings detailed the applications made and funds granted.**

## **INCOME and ACCOUNTS**

Four Questions from Joe Wilton

1. The Peebles Common Good accounts show that the 8 lock-up garages at Kirkland St (within the Golf Club car park) bring in an annual rental income of just £800. That's £8.50 per month per garage. The current going rate for same is around £80 pm per garage. That's 10 x the current CG rent. Garages 1,2 and 3 Tweed Green may also be underpriced. What is the explanation for these low rents?

**Response from Norrie Curtis: Ground rent is paid for the land on which the garages were built. The garages were built by those who rented the ground. When the rental agreement ends, ownership of the garage falls to Peebles Common Good Fund/SBC.**

2. On a similar theme, who makes the decisions regarding who pays fees (and who doesn't pay fees), what the costs are for the use of Peebles Common Good land for events, commercial and not for profit/charitable?

**Response from Nuala McKinlay: A cross party working group was to be formed to consider the issue of Common Good charges across the Council area, followed by a report from the Director Infrastructure and Environment to be presented to Scottish Borders Council in due course. Councillor Begg reported that a retailers' association had been recently formed to which he had been an attendee and this group was to be consulted as part of any future review of Peebles Common Good Fund charges. There was no charge for charities and not for profit events.**

3. How are rental incomes reviewed? Where is this recorded?

**Response from Norrie Curtis: Each rental agreement contained a clause which allows for rent review.**

4. Although first established 600 years ago, the principle of the Scottish Common Good is still a brilliant idea - it keeps local money local. Can land or assets still be gifted to Peebles Common Good?

**Response from Nuala McKinlay: Land or assets cannot be gifted to the Peebles Common Good Fund. Gifts can be made to Scottish Borders Council through various means.**

#### **QUESTIONS FROM RUTH NOBLE**

1 Who is responsible for checking condition and safety of areas of Haylodge Park? Are you aware that the gate in the north-west corner is off one hinge, making it difficult to open and potentially hazardous? When will this be repaired? Picture attached

**Response: Parks Manager Craig Blackie was to be informed of the issue.**

2. I commend the Callants' initiative re bench and picnic table installation. However I hope these will not be abused. I wonder if it might be useful to consider installing at least one picnic table with a disposable barbecue plate. This would save charring of tables or grass.

**Response: The matter was to be referred to the Callants for their consideration.**

3. I note the (rather unsightly) shipping container adjoining the rugby building has been placed directly in front of a bench making it unusable. This bench was previously used by NHS staff for their (cigarette) breaks. Now the staff have to stand around. Was any consultation undertaken with them (apart from the statutory planning notification) and are there any plans to resite the bench? Picture attached

**Response: The matter had already been discussed with the owners of the Highland Games container. The bench was to be re-sited.**

