

Proposed Teen Shelter in Victoria Park.

Introduction.

This paper summarises the proposal that SBC erect a teen shelter in Victoria Park.

Background.

Following a survey at Peebles High School in 2021, Peebles Community Council asked one of its members, Malcolm Bruce, to set up and chair a meeting of those with an interest in the welfare of our young people. This group began to meet towards the end of 2022 and has since named itself Peebles Youth Voice. It currently includes participants who represent local youth groups (Tweeddale Youth Action, Oorspaceyouthy, St Andrews Leckie church, Peeblesshire Youth Trust), the police, social work, education, vocational training, SBC Community Engagement as well as having young people representation which it aims to grow.

At its second meeting in January 2023, it met with some young folk – both male and female - and undertook an exercise with them to help the Group understand what was liked, disliked, missing, etc. The provision of a shelter in Victoria Park came up repeatedly in the exercise. Accordingly, the Group decided to explore how a shelter might be provided and how it could be constructed, in order that the Council may give it consideration.

The Group explored a variety of shelter options, including the possibility of involving the young people themselves in its design and construction (which it was considered would create a good sense of ownership and thereby potentially reduce the risk of it being vandalised). However, given that the project is to be funded and delivered by Scottish Borders Council the advice given was that an off the shelf shelter and installation by SBC staff would be the best approach to move the project forward as quickly as possible. A variety of locations was also discussed. Some of the young people were involved in these exploratory thoughts and their suggestions considered.

In parallel with considering these options, contact was made with Councillor Pirone, chair of Scottish Borders Council's Police, Fire and Safer Communities Board, who has a strong interest in youth matters. Councillor Pirone was supportive and so Peebles Youth Voice pursued its research into possible shelters, following which an initial paper was submitted to Councillor Pirone on March 15th. This was circulated by her to her fellow Peebles East councillors and, while there were some questions asked, no objection was raised; accordingly, discussions continued in order to bring greater definition to what might be done. Given budget and other considerations, the possible choice of shelter had to be amended several times but was firmed up as detailed below.

Shelter Description and Location.

The shelter will be a Beckton Chatshak shelter model CS5, provided by Broxap. Details of the shelter - an approximate picture of which is shown in Appendix 1 to this report - can be found at this link <https://www.broxap.com/beckton-chatshak-shelter.html>.

SBC will procure, install and be responsible for the shelter.

The recommended structure is a specifically designed Youth shelter. It is important that this and its difference to other “shelters” where young people currently hang out in Peebles be understood. Designed from robust galvanized mild steel and described as providing “a sturdy structure which is ideal for installing in parks and other areas where teenagers congregate”, it is “Constructed of heavy duty vandal resistant circular hollow sections”.

Weather Resistance Cladding is UV Stabilised Wind resistant to 23m/s and Fire Resistance Cladding is fire tested to ‘1Y’ for BS 476. It comes with a 25 year structural guarantee.

This having been said, it is important to remember that this is only a **teen shelter**. It is not an enclosed building and its nearest points of comparison are probably the huts in Hay Lodge Park (which are wooden – which this is not - and which are already used at times by young people as shelters) and even bus stops.

The young people will be able to personalise the shelter, which it is hoped will increase their level of responsibility and ownership.

In addition to the procurement of this shelter, three additions have been recommended following consultation:

- that a robust notice be placed inside the shelter advising key emergency contact numbers.
- That a rubbish bin be located near the shelter.
- That lighting of the shelter be provided¹.

Three possible locations - numbers 1, 2 and 3 shown approximately on the picture attached at Appendix 1 to this paper - were considered, weighing up a range of considerations, from practical observations (such as avoiding the flood plain area) to matters of visibility and possible disturbance. The preferred location, number 2, while not too far a walk from Priorsford Bridge, is

- not in close proximity to housing
- at a distance from the children’s play park and skatepark
- will be visible from the pathways

It is also the location most favoured by the consultation process summarised below².

¹ It is noted that this may not be possible within the budget for the proposed lighting improvements in the park. The suggestion has been made that angling some of the new lights so that the path to the shelter is clear would be a benefit.

² It is understood that a site survey requires to be undertaken and that the final location may require to be different.

Ownership and Responsibility.

The shelter will be owned by and be the responsibility of Scottish Borders Council, in the same way as the Victoria Park children's playpark and skatepark are.

Peebles Youth Voice will ask its participating organisations to communicate with their young people the importance that they respect the shelter and the ground surrounding it.

Consultation and Support.

Councillor Pirone has undertaken two consultations held in the park on separate Saturdays to gauge public opinion about the proposed shelter erection and also engaged online. She has also galvanised support from council colleagues and officers.

The overall result of the public consultations is shown at Appendix 2.

In addition to the public consultations, it should be noted that

- Councillor Pirone asked the High School to have pupils fill in the online questionnaire
- Peebles Community Council is supportive.
- The police have given their support and believe it to be a worthy trial.

While the overall outcome of the consultation – 56% in favour - is supportive, it has to be noted that 30% were not in favour and 14% were unsure, alongside which concerns were expressed by members of the public during consultation. These largely focused upon the risks that the shelter would be vandalised and could lead to an increase in anti-social behaviour in the park and surrounding area. It is acknowledged that these risks exist and cannot be wholly mitigated. However, in giving consideration to these concerns and, seeking to take a balanced view, the following was noted:

- There is a need. There are no designated places for young people in Peebles to hang out together outside – a natural thing which teenagers have done for generations.
- Young people are already hanging out in Victoria Park and, in the absence of a shelter, congregate in areas such as the Victoria Park day centre and adjoining gardens and the Baptist church framework and gardens.
- Research has demonstrated that such shelters can have a positive influence³
- The shelter proposal is proceeding in parallel with an application to improve lighting in the park.
- The shelter's location has been recommended on the basis of it being reasonably separate from other park facilities and adjacent residencies whilst also accessible and reasonably visible.
- Ongoing interaction with young people who may use the shelter - and their participation in customising the shelter as far as possible - will seek to emphasise the importance to them and their future aspirations of using it for the purpose intended and not damaging it.

³ For example, <https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/pioneering-youth-shelter-helps-cut-toll-anti-social-behaviour-1933063> and https://www.tywardreathandparparishcouncil.gov.uk/data/uploads/1102_42846335.pdf

On its own, simply erecting a teen shelter is not going to solve anti-social behaviour issues in Peebles or see better relations established across the community; quite a few other initiatives – which will be worked on - are necessary. And there remains a risk that the shelter will not be respected by an element of the young people. However, this is a first step and, as acknowledged by the police, is a worthy trial; it is a demonstration that the community wants to listen to our young people and seek to meet reasonable requests.

Funding.

The shelter will be funded wholly by Scottish Borders Council from small schemes and play park funds support by Councillor David Parker, who leads play parks strategy.

APPENDIX 1:
Shelter picture and location.

VICTORIA PARK SHELTER DESIGN



**VICTORIA PARK SHELTER:
PROPOSED LOCATION⁴ - Area 2.**



⁴ Subject to survey



Appendix 2: **PUBLIC CONSULTATION RESULTS.**

SUPPORT FOR SHELTER

4. Do you agree with the shelter proposal suggested by the young people? an example of what the shelter could look like is illustrated here.

[More Details](#)

● Yes	350
● No	190
● Maybe	85



PREFERRED LOCATION.

6. looking at the visual, which shelter location do you prefer?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

● Option 1	151
● Option 2	230
● Option 3	140

