

Review of the Scottish Borders Community Council Scheme

Dear Ms McKinlay,

With reference to your email of 2nd November 2023 requesting comments on the draft papers produced as a result of the Review of the Scottish Borders Community Council Scheme, Walkerburn and District Community Council fully supports the approach taken by the review team and wishes to offer congratulations to all those involved. We also hope that the results of the review will become policy as quickly as possible.

There is widespread ignorance of the role of Community Councils, but we firmly believe that they are essential for the health of local democracy. Citizen spaces and public consultations are often ignored by most citizens unless the issue is of personal and/or immediate interest, but a locally elected body which can genuinely seek wider community views and work with local councillors to raise local issues appropriately, strengthens democracy and provides a safe space for community debate.

The documents produced are lengthy, but the examples give clear guidance and are easy to use. Most of the detail will only be of direct interest to people who are already serving on a Community Council, and we will probably only use our own Constitution to encourage people to apply for election. However, we consider it important to have the detail, especially Document 1, available to all members and to the public.

Other than to say that we hope the Planning Advice note will be updated soon, we have no objection to any of the drafts. We were delighted to see the change from the last draft on the position of co-opted members and we see the logic of allowing those co-opted into a vacancy to have a vote pending the next election cycle.

Changes to Community Council Boundary. We stated in our January 2023 response to the previous draft that we had looked carefully at our boundary, and had consulted with some residents living close to the current boundary. We still believe that there are grounds for making a small change to our south- east boundary to include the small group of dwellings around Elibank Estate (Elibank House, Elibank Lodges, Elibank Cottage and The Bothy). These houses are in the EH43 postcode area, as are the majority of houses within the WDCC area, and the local Community Development Trust covers the EH43 area. Our current boundary includes the single house at Scrogbank which is on the edge of the Elibank group. Beyond the Elibank group there is a considerable distance before the next dwelling which is in a different post code. The Elibank estate houses are currently within Clovenfords CC area and we informed Clovenfords CC last year of our proposal for this change of responsibility.

Finally, in spite of the temptation to correct grammar and to make other editorial points, all our members are agreed that this is an excellent piece of work which should be progressed to adoption as quickly as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Waller
Chairman, Walkerburn and District Community Council