

Ettrick & Yarrow Community Council

Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 5th February 2024 Kirkhope Parish Hall

Present: Alison Renwick (AR) (Chair), David Currie (DC) (Vice Chair), Miranda Alcock (MA) (Treasurer), Karen O'Brien-Barret (KO), Elizabeth Williamson (BW), Kirsty Irving (KI) (Secretary), John Davidson (JD) , Jane Telfer (JT), John Wildish (JW), Paul Scot (PS) Councillor Caroline Cochrane (CC), 25 members of the public

1. Apologies

Councillor Leah Douglas (LD), Councillor Elaine Thornton-Nicol (ET-N), PC John Murray

2. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 3rd December were proposed by MA and seconded by JD.

3. Matters arising (Not on agenda)

- Item 18 – MA confirmed benches in Yarrowford Playpark have been installed and paid for.

4. Police Report

No police presence

AR noted a request has been submitted to SBC to have the abandoned vehicle on the A708 removed / uplifted. As has now been there since Sep '23

5. Councillors Reports - ET-N

CC Budget process still ongoing.

Statement has been made by NHS Borders that cuts need to be made - £45m which is very worrying. JD asked what the overall budget for NHS Borders is. **Action: CC to confirm.**

Councillors ET-N and CC are starting up the monthly surgeries first Saturday in every month at Selkirk Farmers Market if anyone needs to discuss anything. Can still be contacted via email / FB.

Selkirk Community Council have created a new newsletter to be published quarterly and is available on Selkirk Community Council website. AR suggested this is something we could tap into once EYCC website up and running. Also would be useful for advertising any events on in the Valleys.

JT raised the issue of the road (A708) west of Foulshiels Farm where there is no barrier or verge. **Action: CC to follow up**

6. Financial Report

MA delivered the financial report and provided copies

Balance as at 1st February 2024 is £5,504.31

Wind farm fund B grants have been approved as follows;

- Ettrick Forest Sports Club for fencing
- Eildon Electrical for fitting defibrillators
- Kirkhope Horticultural Society for path improvements
- EYCDC for reprinting of maps
- SBC Community Justice for benches at Yarrowford

7. Tour of the Borders (Item moved forward on the agenda)

AR introduced Sam Smith (SS) to the meeting, Chief Officer for Economic Development within SBC.

AR started the discussion by stating there has been a change to the agreement in place with Hillside Outside (organisers of Tour of the Borders).

After the 2022 event the route was changed, to pass through Moffat in 2023.

It was then agreed that there would be no event until 2025, 2024 - there is now going to be an event but held on open roads which does not cause any issues other than general road safety.

E&YCC are now concerned that there will be an event in 2025 which will again be on closed roads which goes back on our agreement and places us right back at the start of when we first raised issues from residents along the route.

AR also stated the survey circulated by SBC was done without any consideration for our concerns therefore leading us to be extremely concerned about the results from this and also if these results will be used to form future events.

SS joined SBC in 2022 and was concerned how relationships had almost broken down with event organisers and the community, recommended to Councillors that work needed to be done. Event organisers were asked to look at alternative routes and alternate ways to hold a closed road event in the area. SBC want to support the economy across the whole region and South of Scotland being a cycling destination and wanted to spread the benefits of the event across the region.

Event organisers supported by SBC looked at alternatives but thought as it is a commercial event this was best placed as is. SBC wanted a better understanding of the impact of a closed road event of residents / businesses along the route.

SS stated the survey was created by SBC in consultation with E&YCC and Hillside Outside but designed by SBC policy team. Mail drop letter went to all businesses and residents on the route within a 500m buffer. Survey opened 6th Nov and closed 9th Dec. 597 responses in total with from E&Y area. ¾ of respondents came back that the event had a positive impact.

Member of the public asked what the total population of the survey area is, as 597 responses seems extremely low given the population of Moffat / Peebles etc. SS did not have this info to hand but would follow up. SS stated that 300+ responses is a good response rate and representative sample. PS confirmed this is a correct assumption but was concerned that there were leading questions in the survey and there was no validation of where the answers were coming from. SS stated that

people had to put in a valid postcode and e mail address. PS stated that email addresses are not tied to specific postcodes and addresses. Also that the survey was just to gain a snapshot of feeling towards the event, decisions were based on other factors.

Action: SS to connect a colleague who has worked on surveys with PS to discuss

PS stated E&YCC were notified about the survey and were asked for input on this but the survey was then published without this being accounted for.

SS stated Hillside Outside created their own survey to participants which returned an unsurprising positive response. **Action: SS to share results of this survey with EYCC.** SBC questionnaire has been analysed by Community Council area rather than postcode.

Barbara Harrison commented that the survey was poorly designed and had very restrictive options therefore leading the participants responses. Also sought clarification that there will be no closed road event in 2024. This was confirmed by SS.

AR summarised that EYCC are welcoming the 2024 event to be held in June as this will be held on open roads and reiterated the agreement made with EYCC / SBC & Hillside Outside which stated that Tour of the Borders following the 2023 event would take a break of 2 years, but this has not been upheld. EYCC are very unhappy about the quality of the survey and are concerned about the results of the survey being used to affect any future events. EYCC had made it known to SBC that changes needed to be made to the questions on the survey but the survey was published without discussion and this was not received by every household on the route.

EYCC are feeling very let down as Hillside Outside are already advertising future closed road events and working to their own time frame.

SS clarified that no decisions had been made as yet but this would be made soon. AR thanked SS for coming along to the meeting but asked what the time frames are going to seek reassurance that EYCC are going to be involved and engaged in discussions and will not be rushed into any announcements until after the June event. SS is keen for SBC to have a good working relationship with EYCC and Hillside Outside. **Action: SS to ensure meeting to be arranged with all relevant parties / AR to continue dialogue**

8. Langhope Rig Community Benefit Fund

MA has submitted annual report of how EYCC have spent Fund B monies.

2023 – Nearly £18 spent which is more than we receive

2024 – EYCC will have approx. £15k immediately but also have in reserve the 2024 allocation which is £10k if demand is there.

MA suggested we set aside £2k for new defibrillator units, £2k for micro grant applications and this year set aside monies to cover amenities which don't have a community group looking after them. Eg James Hogg statue fencing. Suggested this could be called Small Schemes Fund – All agreed

Fund A – Approx. £96 to be shared between 3 Community Councils - **Action: JW to update following next funding meeting**

9. St Marys Loch

AR read out a statement received from Wemyss & March;

Measures put in place for the 2023 season seem to have helped in deterring campers, new signage etc. Most people adhered to these new rules.

Camping berths are available up Megget Valley, mindful of the need for a campsite and are looking at possibly creating a permanent campsite in the vicinity of the Megget River and have appointed planning consultants to assist with the design process.

Toilets are currently under control of SBC, they are closed when there is a danger of frost or drought as water runs dry. Situation is not ideal but are in talks with SBC about the future of the toilets.

Café is now under new management and will be reopening at the end of March.

Members of the public stated that where the campers may not have camped on the Green at the loch they have moved to an unofficial campsite at the East end of the Loch, complaints over human waste as no facilities are available there. This is SBC ground. **Action: CC to update at next meeting**

10. Ettrick Flooding

JD updated that a number of floods since last meeting with the dumpy bag had helped but have since been washed away.

No contact with Duncan Morrison (SBC) to date. Metal sheeting to be put in place in summer which should be more permanent.

Tweed Commission (James Stewart) are concerned that salmon stocks will be affected as river is so blocked with gravel so hoping they might be able to improve the situation, currently no solution in place.

Emma Harper MSP has been informed and highlighted the issue.

Action: JD to contact Duncan Morrison to correct the dumpy bags

Action: ET-N to update on advance warning electronic signs as this was an action from EYCC meeting December '23

Action: CC / ET-N to contact SBC Roads & Infrastructure department / SEPA to arrange another meeting to be held to discuss further as concerns once again raised over safety and access for emergency vehicles if required –

Outstanding from last meeting

11. Update from EYCDC

Vicky Davidson updated membership is 298

Grant received from EYCC to reprint maps which will be distributed to businesses locally, stocks should last for year. AGM held, accounts available.

Trees felled up at Ettrick marshes but wood not removed yet due to wet weather, paths remain closed for now.

1 large unit still to let at Kirkhope Steading. SBC to install new drain at entrance due to run off from Swire. Looking into producing a newsletter which could dovetail with EYCC website providing details of what's on in the valleys

12. Community Action Plan

Action: MA to meet with Vicky Davidson to discuss

13. EYCC Website

JW has met with 2 companies who have quoted to set up and maintain a website. EYCC agreed to move forward with Border Web Design based in Hawick.

14. Planning Applications

No applications received.

15. Correspondence

Meeting invitation received to attend with SBC Planning Team – **Action: KI to attend and send details to Community Councillors.**

16. AOCB

Question of broadband fibre works in valleys - ongoing

17. Grant applications

Grant application received from Yarrowford WRI to fund a new Rosebowl – Approved
Grant application received from EYCDC to fund maintenance of path around St Marys Loch – It was agreed by EYCC to fund this through the SBC Paths Maintenance grant which is already in place.

Dates of future meetings;

Monday 1st April 2024, Yarrow Feus Hall, 7pm

Monday 3rd June 2024, Boston Memorial Hall, 7pm (AGM)