

Report From The Chair 2022

With some Covid restrictions remaining in place until spring 2022, meetings continued to be held on Zoom until October 2021. The ongoing implications of lockdown led to fewer grant applications and consequently less money being passed onto the community, as a result there is significant unspent funding available for bids. Nevertheless, work carried on in other areas and progress was made on several fronts. The committee pursued a number of issues from earlier, including the problem of flooding in the Ettrick Valley, road traffic issues, in particular along the A708, plus continued meetings with SBC and Hillside Outside on the running of The Tour of The Borders cycling event.

Discussions continued with the Flood and Coastal Management Team at SBC who arranged an exhibition for the community of proposals to mitigate against further flooding at Upper Ettrick. The feedback from the local community will be included in an appraisal report to enable SBC to assess what options are available to deal with the problem. In the meantime minor works have been carried out to reduce the levels of flooding between Thirlstane Cottage and Thirlestane Gardens.

Road safety was again discussed at some length and the community was canvassed to provide their views and evidence of the problem. Meetings then took place with members of the SBC Road Safety and Traffic Management department and Police Scotland. Although not all measures proposed by the CC were deemed acceptable to SBC and Police Scotland there has been agreement to establish new 40mph limits at Cappercleuch and Yarrowford. In addition there has been some increase in police presence at peak visitor times on the A708, and speed surveys continue to be carried out to demonstrate the extent of the problem.

There was a consultation to gather community views on the annual Tour of The Borders. The event had run with little change since it's inception and without the organisers or SBC appearing to have acknowledged the impact that it had on the local community. The CC pressed for significant changes to be made to alleviate the effects of prolonged road closures and to also ensure that a more thorough review is held by SBC to ensure that local concerns are considered before further events are approved. As a result of our involvement changes to the running of the event in 2022 are now in place. These include a new starting procedure, rolling road closures, improved communications to expedite the re-opening of roads, time limits at feeding stations and improved signage throughout. In addition a new procedure has been approved by SBC to offer a more thorough examination of future tours prior to them being given approval. Discussions with HO and SBC are ongoing and the CC is pressing for more clarity on the benefits to the local community and the need to continue each year on the same route.

To enhance community resilience, 5 salt bins have been put in place between Cappercleuch and Megget Head including an arrangement for salt/grit supplies to be delivered. In addition, a further defibrillator will be installed outside the Tushielaw Inn.

Finally, on behalf of the committee I would like to express a heartfelt thanks to Barbara, Jan and Gordon who are stepping down after many years of service on the Community Council and also to Alistair who although a more recent member, has provided us with invaluable knowledge of the problems affecting the area around St Mary's loch. Barbara has been the mainstay of the committee for some years and has worked incredibly hard on behalf of us all. Both Jan and Gordon are past Chairs and their knowledge and advice has been invaluable to us all over the years. Many thanks to each. Replacing those leaving and filling previous gaps in our numbers, 7 new Community Councillors will be joining to hopefully bring fresh ideas and take on the challenges in the coming years, a warm welcome to all. We look forward to working with Leigh Douglas who will replace Gordon Edgar as one of our 3 SBC Councillors representing Ettrick and Yarrow.

Philip Grant
Chair
May 2022