

# Lammermuir Community Council

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 13<sup>th</sup> December 2016

Longformacus Village Hall, 7.30 pm

Present: Cllr Frances Renton(FR), Maureen Ferguson (returning officer) (MF)), Alistair Dawson (AD), Corinne Mycock (CM), Bill Renton(BR), Mark Rowley(MR), Clive Warsop(CWa)

Public: Anthony Homer, Bill Landale, David Mycock, Keith Noddle, Cheryl Philipson

Apologies: Cllr John Greenwell, Melvin Landale, Carol White

MR introduced himself, opened the meeting and welcomed Forbes Gamley, member of the public.

He explained that before the next meeting, after the AGM, the CC steps down. Maureen Ferguson, the returning officer will then take the chair to welcome the new members of the Community Council.

Minutes of the previous AGM: Proposed by CWa, Seconded MR

Points arising from the minutes:

- The CC has held a successful full election
- Broadband Survey has been sent out in February
- Roads, white lines still an issue, still only one line vehicle
- Mailing list has been updated and the e-mail list extended

Chairman's Report: MR presented the following report, a copy was circulated in the meeting

2016 seems to have been a busy year for one of Scottish Borders Council's smallest Community Councils. I'm told that at SBC HQ we have a reputation for making ourselves heard that eclipses some of the larger Community Councils.

It is our job to make sure that Scottish Borders Council take account of the views of our residents and the issues that concern them in this remote and rural area, some distance from St Boswells. Recently, with our neighbouring Community Councils, we criticised SBC for not even responding to a UK Government consultation paper on making a minimum broadband speed of 10Mbs a Universal Service Obligation. Recent discussions with those at SBC suggest that, at last, they are starting to see the difficulties dire broadband and mobile coverage has for remoter areas. CC have a job to stand up for their issues.

Which brings us to the issues which are residents have raised during 2016 and where the Lammermuir Community Council has engaged;

## **Broadband**

This continues to be a great concern for most residents as poor broadband increasingly limits the opportunities to live and work here and so it a brake on a small community's viability. We know it has played a part in some decisions to leave the area and for others prevents them coming to live here, or being able to work here when they do.

Other bodies are now accepting our argument that it is the fourth utility and 2017 should see action by UK and Scottish Governments and possibly more "enabling" activity from Scottish Borders Council, Community Broadband Scotland, and others. Ironically 2017 will see BT deliver fibre to just a small cluster of properties in the Lammermuirs, most will see little change.

Since the Community Council's very successful Broadband Survey dozens of meetings have been held with CBS, Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband, Minister Ewing, SBC, BB providers, technical consultants, windfarm mast owners and the Scottish Borders Digital Forum (next meeting in January). Perhaps the most useful ones have been with our very collaborative neighbouring CCs (Abbey St Bathans, Preston & Bonkyl, Gordon & Westruther, Gavinton, Fogo & Polwarth and Grantshouse). Our local MP, Calum Kerr has proven very helpful.

Whilst progress has been slow, delayed first by BT and now the Scottish Government's own information gathering exercise, we have established three things;

- We now know for sure that most of our residents will not benefit from any planned schemes.
- We know that there are feasible technical solutions that work successfully for communities with similar topography and populations such as ours.
- CBS and DSSB have confirmed that, if we wish it, we would be eligible for technical support through the tendering process and most of our properties have been identified as appropriate to receive state aid funding to 89% of the cost.

The Scottish Government picture will not be known until March, so no final decision is possible until then, but there are ongoing meetings scheduled and I hope the new Community Council will continue to pursue this issue as it clearly matters a lot and to many. I think it would be helpful to have a couple of public events to engage with our residents and bring in some expert views. The Community Fund has given the Community Council a budget to allow this if the new CC supports.

On a connected issue, the Lammermuir Life website is well on its way to being resuscitated thanks to Keith Noddle especially and the website working group. The return of an effective, and attractive, website will be welcomed and be very useful.

### **Roads.**

Whether it is potholes, white lines of broken edges the poor state of the roads continues to cause residents concern and, often, cost!

### **Planning.**

This year has seen relatively few applications though we do now have a new Local Development Plan to which we contributed and the regional SESPlan is now in the process of being drafted.

The CC will shortly be asked to consult on Supplementary Planning Guidance on Renewable Energy. We've been able to support a number of small local developments.

### **Windfarms.**

2016 has been a year of the good, the bad and the ugly!

Good – after three years of detailed opposition from our CC (and a whole range of other bodies) the developer has withdrawn their application for Inch Moor at Kettleshiel.

Bad – Fallago Rig, a windfarm our previous Community Councils objected to through two Public Inquiries is back. This time asking to extend the duration of the existing windfarm (with risks of perpetuity) and adding a second one to extend it. Largely due to our CC, and some of our residents, both SBC and ELC have objected to the development and so it will go to a full Public Inquiry in 2017 before any decision.

Ugly- the second Aikengall Windfarm has been constructed behind Cranshaws and a third Aikengall with another 19 x 145m turbines has been consented extending the turbines towards Ellemford. There has been a lot of local comment about its high visibility.

Developers are delaying but applications are likely in 2017 at Crystal Rig IV and possible at Blackrig.

Negotiations between our CC, three neighbouring CCs and the developers regarding community benefits will be a task for the CC to continue in 2017. The scale of the increased Community Benefits is likely to be substantially larger than we currently receive, so, as we've previously discussed it seems prudent for the CC to encourage some significant Community Planning events so our residents can tell us what matters to them and where we can best invest our funds. Planning Aid Scotland have offered to visit to explain a process called "Charettes" (which engage with communities over a period) at a future meeting if the new CC wishes to pursue.

### **Closure of Rural Telephone Boxes.**

BT's threat came out of the blue but seems to have been rebuffed after lots of lobbying and significant help from Douglas Scott at Scottish Borders Council. Ellemford has been removed from the threatened list and Longformacus and Cranshaws are likely to be too.

*MF- remembers BT first threatened with closure in 2008, then offered us to 'adopt' them, this fell through and the tel.boxes were kept active as emergency telephones.*

*FR - The SBC intended to object to every closure, if so desired.*

Everyone accepted our line that with poor BB and negligible mobile coverage it would be scandalous to remove a vital rural life line. The Herald even picked up the issue and ran it as a feature and gave us an Editorial.

### **NHS Borders.**

Whilst provision of local services locally continues to concern our residents the new management team at NHS Borders appear more open to constructive engagement than the last. Good news is that the Knoll has survived the threat of GPs giving notice and Dr Bruce Auld has been taken on to provide some medical cover.

### **Scottish Borders National Park.**

The amount of interest in this issue surprised me. Several of us went to the meeting in Jedburgh and I've heard a lot of comment since – mostly "why not here" but also concerns if it brought additional regulation.

The campaign is at an early stage and only an early draft proposal is available, showing it extending north of Melrose into Lauderdale. It might be an issue for the new CC to follow as certainly our landscape makes the criteria.

### **Lammermuir Mapping & Scotways**

With a lot of help from locals Scotways completed mapping of the Lammermuirs and its trails this year. They are very keen to work with us and the Lammermuir Moorlands Group to continue to promote the area's recreational resource. We have significant ring-fenced funds for this purpose and they are hoping we can jointly promote an event or two together in May 2017.

*CM- The CC's ring-fenced amount for the Walking Fund is £1580*

The Community Council should express our thanks to those who have supported us in 2016, particularly our Councillors Frances Renton, Donald Moffat and John Greenwell who have had to listen to our meetings so often. Staff at SBC have often provided help or direction, particularly Darren Silcock in Duns, Douglas Scott and the planning team including Charles Johnston, Scott Shearer, John Hiscox and Ian Aikman who have heard from us often!

For helping with our election we need to express thanks to Pauline Bolson and Clare Malster.

I started last year's AGM Report by expressing thanks to those who had left us during the year (all via removal vans, not hearses). This year we can end by thanking Bill Renton and Melvin Landale who are retiring as Community Councillors but not leaving the area.

My personal thanks go to Corinne as a relentlessly helpful and supportive Secretary, Treasurer and community "Herald". I couldn't have done my job without her support and the encouragement of the CC as a whole.

We can end on a very, very positive note as we have successfully gained a full team for the next Lammermuir Community Council.

Over half are new and they include residents from all across the area, with a huge diversity of different skills and expertise and with interests in just about all of the local initiatives – Community Workshop, Arts development, Watch Promotions, Village Halls, our much-loved local Agricultural Show and Broadband.

We can close one chapter of the Lammermuir Community Council safe in the knowledge that when the new one opens, the Lammermuirs have a strong Community Council team to represent the issues and concerns of our residents across the area to anyone who'll listen.

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Treasurer's report:

CM – circulated a copy of the year accounts ending on th 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2016 (independently examined by BAVS), together with an overview of the financial situation at that date.

MF- picked up on the payment to the NFU, for the aerial at Craig Windshiel Farm. It turns out that this aerial has not been in use since it's electricity supply was cut off in the snow storms of 2010, due to a collapsing roof.

CM- to take this up with the NFU and cancel the Insurance of the Aerial

CM- the other insured object is the Memorial Cairn. Possibly the Longformacus War Memorial could be added.

FR- theScottish Borders Council cares for the war memorials

MR- this seems to be a grey area. He thinks the memorial is insured through the extra insurance with Zurich, through the SBC. CM not sure and was advised to ask Pauline Bolson.

– Financial Position on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016

Community council: £697.85, Walking Fund £1580, Public Art Strategy £2000

- There were no further questions about the accounts, all agreed that they were correct.

MR closed the meeting and asked Maureen Ferguson to take over as Chairperson.