

Scottish Borders Community Councils' Network (SBCCN)



December 2009

Chairman's Comments

The first meeting of the reconstituted Network was quorate!! All is well.

Meetings are open to all and every Community Councillor who would like to become gently involved with the work of the Network. The Core Group elected at the October AGM agreed to the following appointments:

- Graeme Donald (Lauderdale) to continue as Chairman until June 2010 when he steps down as a community councillor and therefore no longer eligible for office.
- Logan Inglis (Reston and Auchincrow) Vice Chairman to succeed Graeme Donald from June 2010 until the October 2010 AGM.
- Secretary – SBC to provide Minute Secretary. The meeting agreed, however, that a Network Secretary, separate from SBC staff, was an essential appointment. Consideration to be given to a paid appointment at the next meeting of the Network.
- Robin Thomson (Floors, Makerstoun, Nenthorn and

Smailholm) agreed to undertake the responsibilities of Treasurer.

Other members of the Core Group are: - John Elliot (Duns) – who will represent the interests of the Network on the Voluntary Sector Liaison Group; the SB Environment Partnership and the Working Countryside Group: Raymond du Bois (Newtown and Eildon): Roy Garden (Chirnside) – who will maintain contact with Borders Voluntary Community Care Forum: Gillian Steel (Innerleithen) and John Swanson (Peebles).

There remain two places on the Core Group for representation from the Cheviot and Teviot areas.

Co-opted to the Core Group was Diana Findlay as a representative from Elder Voice. Diana to be invited to represent the interests of the Network at Public Performance/Partnership meetings with NHS Borders. Other co-options will be considered in due course to ensure informed knowledge across the interests of the Network.

If any Community Councillor is interested in Health Issues or

Community Planning would they please let Graeme Donald or Clare Malster know as these areas will form an important part of the work of the Network over the next year.

Links between LEADER and the Network will be further considered.

Clare Malster continues *ex officio* as the representative of the local authority and Bob Kerr (Selkirk) continues as the representative of the Association of Scottish Community Councils.

It is encouraging to sense active involvement by members of the new Core Group. 2010/11 could be an important period in the debate on the future place and responsibilities for Community Councils. It was disappointing to learn of the difficulties associated with implementation of the blue print for Area Committees/ Ward Forums as drafted in the Parker Paper. Why do we need a middle tier? With active Community Councils interested in community engagement assuming additional responsibilities linked directly with the local authority the middle tier becomes unnecessary!!!

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Response from Scottish Parliament to letter seeking the Continued Development of Community Councils:

Following on from the question put to John Swinney MSP at the National Conversation Event held in Melrose, the Chairman of the Borders Network wrote to John Swinney on the same topic. A copy of the Chairman's letter and the full reply is available on request; however, community councillors may be interested in the following

extracts:

"Ministerial approval has been given to develop a further four community council pilot projects 2 of which will focus on promoting community council elections and 2 of which will focus on potential asset management."

"The criteria required to be a local authority area in which pilot community council/councils would be considered is that the local authority in question uses the Model Scheme of Establishment of Community Councils and associated documents as a basis for any recent or forthcoming review of that local authority's Scheme of

Establishment of Community Councils." (Borders Council does not use the National Scheme).

So we miss out on an opportunity perhaps – or simply await the findings of the other pilots and those about to be announced, all of which appears to be confidential at this time.

Response to Area Committees:

The Core Group were made aware of the issues arising from the Parker Paper and discussed the views of the Community Councils represented in the Core Group. The Group decided not to make a response at this time as little could be added to responses already submitted by individual Community Councils. If a follow on consultation paper appears then the Network would make a detailed response at that time.

Comments made within the Core Group included – as voting rights were controversial and probably illegal the Ward Forums would become ineffectual talking shops with no direct responsibility or accountability for any function; pupils from High Schools invited to attend should be trained/fully briefed in the work of the Forum before they attend; trial projects with willing Community Councils could remove the need for Forums.

As this is our last newsletter of
2009

we would like to take this
opportunity to wish you a

*Merry Christmas
and all the very
best for 2010*



Our Scottish Borders
Your community

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Local Renewable Energy Opportunities

Two students spent their summer vacation this year working on a renewable energy project which was jointly supported by the Southern Uplands Partnership and Scottish Borders Council.

Fraser Wallace surveyed community groups to assess what renewable energy projects they are interested in and what support they felt they need to take such projects forward. He found that groups are well aware of the need to reduce carbon emissions and there is interest in a wide range of renewable technologies.

Selkirk and Hawick are exploring a range of opportunities, Whitsome already has a state-of-the-art village hall with geothermal and solar heating, and the Lamancha Hub is another great example of a community developing its own renewable energy assets. Lauder and Walkerburn are part of the

Scotland-wide Powerdown project and there are other communities where projects are being developed.

Part of the work which Fraser did was to contact all Community Councils to ask them to complete a brief questionnaire and many of you helpfully filled them in. The information which this provided has been extremely useful and we are now aware of a further 7 communities which would like to investigate energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.

Martin Schork from Germany worked in the Borders thanks to a grant from the British Council and he worked closely with Fraser concentrating on opportunities for small scale hydro-electric schemes. "When you think about how much energy was captured by the mills in this part of the world a hundred years or so ago – it is surprising how little is being

used today" he said.

Martin found that there are hardly any working small scale hydropower units in the region. There are however a number of derelict schemes which could be brought back into production and there are lots of potential sites where schemes could be introduced.

It is intended that members of the Scottish Borders Sustainable Energy Association will now pursue ways of promoting these support systems and improving levels of awareness. Fraser also found that some groups feel they need more assistance to help them develop projects. The ideal solution might be to employ a specialist to work with Borders communities.

Pip Tabor, Project Manager with the Southern Uplands Partnership is leading this work at the moment

and is very keen to pursue ways of supporting interested communities. "We will be contacting the Community Councils who responded positively to Fraser's questionnaire with a view to making a bid to the Climate Challenge Fund for funding for dedicated support for these communities. If there are any new ideas out there we really need to hear about them so that we can build momentum behind such projects and get some more really good practical demonstration sites around the Borders."

If your community is interested in developing a local renewable energy project or for further information visit

www.sup.org.uk

or call Pip on
01750 725154.

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Future Dates and Newsletters:

The Network Core Group agreed to the following dates for Network meetings during 2010:

3rd March; 30th June; 22nd September; 2nd October (Conference and AGM); 24th November.

As agreed at the AGM these dates are made known so that any interested community councillor can attend.

To co-incide with meetings the Network Newsletter will be published every 2/3 months as follows:

early February; May; August and late October.

Special editions may appear from time to time. The regular Newsletters will include the agenda for the relevant meeting of the Core Group – all welcome!

Training Programme:

Just another review and questionnaire – so the sparse return was not unexpected. No surprises from the returns received either.

However, together with informal discussion at the October Conference the following opportunities will be programmed for 2010:

- **Examples of Best Practice from Borders Community Councils** (this may feature as part of the October 2010 Conference).
- **The Planning Process** (further discussion required to clarify specific planning matters for training purposes)
- **The Roles and Responsibilities of Office Bearers** (this too may feature in the annual conference)
- **Community Engagement Techniques**
- **How to become a Community Councillor** (this would be most effective once combined election months are in place)
- **Fund Raising Sources** (including and beyond the Community Grant Scheme and the Lottery themes)

We can provide this document on tape, in large print and various other formats by contacting the address below. In addition, contact us for information on other language translations, additional copies, or to arrange for an officer to meet with you and explain any areas of the publication that you would like clarified.

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