

# **CRAILING, ECKFORD AND NISBET COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

## **ANNUAL REPORT BY THE CHAIR**

**MAY 12 2025**

### **Introduction**

This is the first Annual Report from the Community Council in its 2024-2027 cycle.

This report will focus on the work that the Community Council has undertaken, much of it ongoing, during the year from May 2024 to May 2025.

This is a small Council – 9 members when all the vacancies are filled. We couldn't achieve all that we do without the help of many volunteers who take on specific tasks to support the Community.

### **Ongoing tasks**

The Community Council has overall responsibility for several initiatives which have been in place for a number of years.

The Community Council Website, which provides regular updates on issues and events in our communities, and is the main way that we communicate with the public in our area. Many thanks to Sheila Campbell, who, with the assistance of Virginia Burbridge, operates the website on our behalf.

Oil Purchase Scheme. This continues to run very successfully and has resulted in considerable savings for those involved. Our thanks go to Jane Vickers for operating this scheme.

Defibrillators. We have four defibrillators in our villages. Each is checked on a weekly basis by a local volunteer. Overall responsibility is taken by Malcolm McGregor. Our thanks to all these people who help to keep this important resource in operation

Resilience There are groups of volunteers in each community who are prepared to offer help and support in emergencies and in times of difficulty. The degree of organisation into Resilience Groups varies, but each community has an identified individual who acts as co-ordinator. We never know when these groups will be needed, but it is comforting to know that there are people who are prepared to offer their help.

Paths The Jubilee Path, initiated by the Community Council, links our communities. It is popular with walkers. Parts of it require strimming and clearing from time to time. Thanks to volunteers, the path is maintained in good order. A proposal to link this path with the President's Route in Nisbet, and to provide a route description for the Presidents Route is in development.

Grants The Council makes an annual grant available to each settlement to purchase bedding and other plants and to improve our street furniture.

Jedburgh Callant's Festival The Community Council holds a short Ceremony each year at Crailing to welcome the Callant and to present him with a Quaich. Discussions are ongoing about possible changes to this format

Remembrance In November, Councillors are present at Remembrance ceremonies in Crailing and Eckford.

### **Community Council Admin**

Each community Councillor on the new council has a dedicated e-mail address for Community Council business. This offers greater security to Councillors and, at the same time keeps Community Council business in an easily accessible format. In addition, the Councillors are members of a Whatsapp group for quick and easy communication.

Sheila Campbell agreed to continue in her role as website and communications administrator. She files all correspondence and documentation and autoforwards incoming correspondence to the appropriate Council member. Over the year, this system has worked very well. Many thanks go to Sheila for continuing in this role. This has lifted a considerable load from the Chair.

We have a list of short and long term projects, arising from the Community Consultation in 2022, and progress towards addressing them. This will be addressed in the Place Plan Project (see later).

### **Liaison with SBC**

We are fortunate to be well supported by our three SBC Councillors, John Bathgate, Scott Hamilton and, in particular, Sandy Scott. Council Officers and the Bridge staff are unfailingly patient and helpful when we contact them and we greatly appreciate their support. Over the year we have attended meetings with them in relation to Resilience, Planning, Place Planning and the Cheviot Area Partnership and responded to consultation activities.

### **Planning Matters.**

During the year we have considered two housing planning applications, both resubmissions, the Council, after requesting responses from the public, raised no objections.

### **Community Council in Action.**

- The work to improve safety at the Crailing Junction with the A698 have been completed. Ongoing maintenance is to be monitored.
- New signage has been erected at the approaches to Nisbet Village. While this does not meet all the requests from villagers, it was a definite improvement. This will be monitored on an ongoing basis.
- Concern was expressed about the speed of farm traffic through the villages, and damage to verges, at particular times of the year. The Chair had contacted the farmer concerned and farm traffic through Eckford had been stopped. It was felt that this format should be followed in future.
- The four defibrillators are due for replacement in 2026. Sponsorship from local individuals and businesses is still being sought. The Treasurer has worked hard to ensure that there are sufficient funds available to cover the costs.
- The Council has had a standing agenda item for Kalemouth Bridge since its closure to vehicles and has noted with concern its deteriorating condition. We have met with SBC Engineers on three occasions over the years and have

met with the bridge engineers from the Union Chain Bridge at Horncliffe to see if that might be able to offer other solutions. Currently, we are awaiting feedback from SBC Officers on possible actions to address some of our concerns.

SBC have submitted funding bids to cover the costs of replacing the decking.

- In September, the Community Council, after much discussion, agreed to go ahead with the preparation of a Place Plan.

Local Place Plans were introduced by the [Planning \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#). This gives a new right to communities to produce their own plans as part of the new Scottish planning system.

Local Place Plans contain the community's proposals for the development and use of land, and provide a new opportunity for communities to feed into the planning system with ideas and proposals.

However, even more important than this is the opportunity for the local community to determine its own priorities and to establish how we would like to see our communities develop.

Scottish Borders Council are actively encouraging local communities to prepare Place Plans and pilot exercises have been ongoing over the past year. Some communities in the Borders have already finalised their Place Plan.

Because of the small number on our Council, it was decided that we should go ahead, in the first instance, on the basis of preparing a plan for one village community and then to use the lessons learned in this process as we sought to extend it to the other village communities in our area and to the preparation of an overall plan covering our whole area.

We chose Eckford as the community that we would work on first. One of the main reasons for this is that we have a full complement of Community Councillors in Eckford to help conduct the consultation exercises and to help take the work of preparing the plan forward.

Work on this is at a draft stage. Draft documents have been produced and consultations with SBC Officers about help and support are in progress.

## **Membership**

Membership of the Council has been settled over the year. We have six members. There is the possibility to fill vacancies by co-option and we would be keen to do this. Crailing, for example, has only one Councillor and this is a far from ideal situation. It is hoped that volunteers will come forward from the community to fill the vacancies.

It is hard to believe that a year has passed since this Council took office. Much has happened during the year which should, in however small a way, help to support and improve our Communities.

May I, as Chair, express my thanks to our Treasurer for her work and to the Council members for their continued help, support and commitment.

Charlie Robertson

Chair

May 2025