

Floors , Makerstoun , Nenthorn , and Smailholm Community Council

on Tuesday 17th October 2023 at 7 pm

Smailholm Village Hall and MS Teams

In attendance

Makerstoun : Andrew Carter AC

Smailholm : IR, Ian Malcolm IM and Veronica Ross VR

Nenthorn : David Stark DS, Tony Kime TK on MS Teams

Councillors : Tom Weatherson TW and Euan Robson ER

Apologies : Ian Topping, Jane Roberts, Nicholas Biddulph and Phillip Green

Andy opened the meeting by noting the recent passing of Lady Mary Biddulph. She has been pivotal in establishing the Community Council and served as a Councillor and as Secretary for many years. The council send their condolences to Nicholas and the family.

1. Minutes

The minutes of June 13th were approved without alteration.

2. Matters Arising

Philip has kindly offered to take minutes for our meetings, although was not able to be present this evening. In his absence Andy will minute this meeting.

3. Finance Update

There was no formal update of the financial situation, however there was one matter to agree. Tony and Betsy have installed a new noticeboard in Nenthorn following the loss of the village notice board near the telephone kiosk. Betsy has kindly offered to ensure that community notices are properly managed. The Community Council agreed to contribute 50% of the costs of this new board. Total costs were £776.49, therefore our contribution will be £388.25.

4. Reports

4.1 Police Report

This has been circulated by Tony. There were no matters that related directly to our council area. Veronica asked how the report defined “mental health issues”. Euan explained that the police have been given specific training in the management of mental health issues and that report notes the number of cases where the police have assessed the incidents to be mental health related. Euan further noted that while we may think that cases of domestic abuse relates to the interactions between couples in many cases this category also includes teenage and adult children abusing their parents.

4.2 Councillors Report

Euan and Tom noted that the footpath in Makerstoun from Makerstoun House drive to Manorhill Cottages will shortly be upgraded. This work is being funded out of the active travel budget.

Euan also noted that the phone box in Makerstoun is being considered for decommissioning, so might soon be available for adoption by the community. Andy noted that records show that this phone has not been used for a number of years and while there may be an argument for retention for emergency contact this is unlikely to be supported given the evidence of lack of use.

5. Broadband

Andy noted that high speed broadband is now available for all properties in the Community Council area. Veronica commented that this has enabled a person from Manhattan to recently move to Smailholm, while continuing to work in New York. It is hoped that this is just the first example of the type of economic benefit that we will see in the area as a result of the investment in broadband.

6. Roads

6.1 Nenthorn A6089

This currently has a 40mph speed limit, however a speed survey carried out about 3 years ago shows that the average speed of traffic is well above 40mph, and that the fastest 20% of traffic is moving at more than 50mph. This is a continuing challenge for those who live in Nenthorn.

While those living there would ideally like to see a lower speed limit their main concern is that currently drivers appear not to obey the limit that does exist. They would like to see measure taken to effectively reduce the speed of traffic passing through the village.

Euan assured the Community Council that Scottish Borders Council are prepared to help. He stated that Tom and he would work with the roads department to install speed repeater signs though the village and chevrons and the entrance to the 40mph limit during this financial year. Next year they will request a second automatic speed indicator to highlight the speed of traffic travelling south. Tony asked that this be set up near the northern entrance to the village.

Following this there was a lengthy discussion about the value of installing a physical choke point at the northern end of the village. These are widely used elsewhere in Scotland, even on major through routes. They are also employed locally in Northumberland. Tom and Euan agreed to request such a choke point be formed at the northern entry to the village.

Finally, there was some discussion about the junction adjacent to the former church. This junction is very poorly sighted, and housing developments have meant that it is now much busier. Euan agreed to request that sight lines be improved at this point.

6.2 Eden Road, Smailholm

Veronica summarised the work that she and the owner of Smailholm House have done to investigate the status of Eden Road.

The first thing to state is that Eden Road proper only starts at No 1 Eden Road, and runs from there to the gates of Smailholm House. The section from the B6397 to number 1 Eden Road is considered to be part of the B6397. There are four houses that front on to this section of the road and all their title

deeds show that they have no responsibility for the maintenance of the road. This includes the school house which was sold by the council in 1983.

Eden Road proper (from No 1 to No 8 Eden Road) was in place when the council bought land in 1951 to erect the 8 council houses. At that stage it was referred to as “the public road”, with the assumption that this means that it was a road open to the public and maintained at public expense by the council. This has indeed been the case, including the installation of street lighting and the forming of a hammer head. However in 1989 the council started to include notices in the deeds of the former council houses saying that they were responsible for the maintenance of the road. It is unclear where this change of definition arose – there is no evidence of any consultation or notice to existing property owners about the change in status of the road.

The current situation is that while the council have continued to maintain the street lights, and installed a 20mph sign they have not maintained the road surface in recent years. The surface now needs renewing, and the local residents would like to work with Scottish Borders Council to find a way of doing this.

Euan and Tom agreed to pass this new evidence on to the council and see what options there might be to resolve the situation.

Veronica noted that SBC have been very helpful recently in installing dropped kerbs to facilitate safe wheelchair use through the village.

7. Paths

SBC maintain the Smailholm footpath with one cut arranged per year. The community arrange for a second cut. There was some confusion this year over the timing of the council cut, which resulted in the council team meeting the contractor half way round the path.

After discussion it was agreed that Andy will contact Susan Gray of the ranger service and offer that the community are willing to arrange two cuts using a private contractor with one being paid for by SBC ranger service, and the second one being charged under the normal path maintenance scheme. This would avoid the situation that occurred this year when the parks department were not able to get to the job early in the year and thus the work was significantly delayed, resulting in the meeting with the contractor.

8. Next Meeting

Meeting was closed with the next meeting agreed 16th of January, 19.00 at Smailholm Village Hall.