**Minute of Virtual Meeting of the Tweeddale Access Panel, held on Zoom, on Wednesday, 6 October 2021 at 7.30pm.**

**PRESENT:** *Paul Nichol (Chairman), Michael Davis, Frank Drummond, Elaine Thomson, and Mark Tilley (new member) (from 8.15pm) .*

**IN ATTENDANCE:** *Mags Greig (BSL Interpreter), Anne McKinnon (Secretary, Peebles Lawn Tennis Club) (Item 2 only) David Robinson (Development Manager, Eildon Housing Association)(Item 1 only), and Councillor Robin Tatler (Scottish Borders Council)*

**APOLOGIES:**  *Yvonne Armstrong and Clare Wildsmith*

1. **Eildon Housing Association – Update on Housing Developments in Tweeddale**

There had been circulated prior to the meeting a Powerpoint presentation by David Robinson, Development Manager, Eildon Housing Association, on the various housing developments in Tweeddale in which Eildon were currently involved.

David began by explaining that “Housing for Varying Needs”, published by Scottish Homes, set out design standards for mainstream housing to achieve “barrier free” design, which aimed to ensure a home was flexible enough to meet the existing and changing needs of most households, including those with temporary or permanent physical disabilities, especially as the occupants age. “Barrier free” homes, while offering choice for some people with disabilities, would not provide the ease of access required by many older people, nor the additional space required by wheelchair users. He then went on to describe the various developments:

Tweedbridge Court, Peebles: A development of 10 two bedroomed/3 person apartments and 12 three bedroomed/5 person houses (all general needs) was due to start on site in November/December 2021, with handover in January 2023.

Springwellbrae, Broughton: A development of 5 three bedroomed/4 person houses and 5 three bedroomed/5 person houses (all general needs), plus one 3 bedroomed/5 person bungalow for a wheelchair user was due to start on site in January/February 2022, with handover in February 2023.

Peebles Road, Innerleithen: A development of 9 three bedroomed/5 person houses (all general needs) was due to start on site in November/December 2021, with handover in October 2023.

Glensax, Peebles: A development of 6 two bedroomed/4 person apartments (all general needs) was currently under construction for Scottish Borders Housing Association, with handover due in Autumn/Winter 2021.

David explained that all costs related to construction had significantly increased over the last 24-months primarily down to supply chain issues linked to both Brexit and Covid-19.  Wheelchair housing was, by its very nature, larger than its equivalent general provision, yet attracted both the same grant and rent.  This made it difficult to financially support the provision of wheelchair housing on smaller sites.  At Broughton this problem was compounded as the initial plan was for a particularly large home designed to meet the needs of an identified family.  When this family pulled out, the decision to change the design to a smaller 3-bed unit was actually driven by the understanding that this size of home would prove more popular. At the planning stage, the design of a home was rarely person -specific, as it could take 2-4 years to bring a house to completion, during which time a person’s needs might change.

Michael inquired about the provision of special fire alarms and door bells for deaf tenants, and about how a deaf person might be alerted to a fire alarm going off in a neighbouring flat. David confirmed that special fire alarms were provided to alert deaf people to a fire in their own accommodation, but he would need to check the position regarding a fire elsewhere and also regarding doorbells.

In response to Elaine’s concern about the infrequent bus service to and from Broughton, David explained that this would be a matter for the local authority.

**DECISION**

**NOTED and AGREED that David Robinson be thanked for giving the Panel the opportunity to comment, and for undertaking to email responses to Panel queries which required further investigation.**

1. **Peebles Lawn Tennis Club – Proposed Alterations**

There had been circulated prior to the meeting an email dated 21 September 2021 from Anne McKinnon, Secretary, Peebles Lawn Tennis Club, with attached photos drawings and accounts relating to proposed Clubhouse and access improvements on which the Club sought the Panel’s comments. The Club also inquired about any possible sources of funding the Panel might suggest.

Anne explained that the Club had spent a lot of money over the last few years on improving the tennis courts, and now wanted to improve the clubhouse and general access.

The courts were several metres below road level, with steps down from Glen Road, steps up to the clubhouse, and steps down to the courts. The Club proposed to instal a disabled toilet in the clubhouse and to provide access to the clubhouse at street level via a new verandah to be built on the east side.

Frank advised that he had consulted a wheelchair user colleague on another Panel, who had provided some very helpful comments on the proposals. He suggested that the Panel might adopt these comments as their recommendations, in the absence of comments from the Tweeeddale Access Panel members. It had to be emphasised, however, that no Panel members were experts, but just people who commented on the basis of their own lived experience. What suited one disabled person would not necessarily suit another. Subject to that proviso, the detailed comments received, which were a combination of commendations for thoughtfulness and recommendations for improvements, were read out for the benefit of the Club, with the promise that written confirmation would follow by email.

In answer to questions from the Panel, Anne explained that none of the Tennis Clubs in the Scottish Borders provide shower accommodation. The Club had investigated the possibility of providing ramped access from the Clubhouse to the courts, but the difference in height between the two, and the need to achieve an acceptable gradient on the ramp, made the ramp too long and the costs prohibitive. Whilst she thought a ramp would be the ideal solution, the costs were just too much for a small club to meet. Wheelchair access to the courts from the Clubhouse would involve going out, via the verandah, to the Glen Road pavement outside, then entering Victoria Park, and accessing the courts from there.

Paul suggested that, whilst the Panel were unable to identify any potential funders whom the Club might approach, if the Club were to adopt the access improvements which had been mentioned, then the Panel might be willing to write an expression of support which the Club could submit along with any funding applications the Club made. **DECISION**

**AGREED that the comments received be adopted as the Panel’s recommendations in relation to the proposed improvements, and that the Club be advised by email of their contents.**

1. **Minute of Meeting held on 26 May 2021**

The Minute of the Meeting held on 26 May 2021 had been circulated.

**DECISION**

**APPROVED as a correct record**.

1. **Matters Arising**

**(a) Street Access Surveys**

Paul advised that he had contacted Neil Pringle, Neighbourhood Services Manager, about which of the necessary road and footpath repairs, identified in the Panel’s Street Access Surveys, would be carried out.

Robin confirmed that all of the “quick wins” had been identified. Some of these minor works had already been carried out and the remainder would be completed by the end of the year. He invited Paul to prioritise the larger scale items identified and to submit these for consideration for inclusion in the Council’s capital programme.

**DECISION**

**NOTED and AGREED** **that Paul prepare a list of the major works identified through the street access surveys, in order of priority, and submit this for consideration for inclusion in the Council’s capital programme.**

**(b) Website Improvements**

Paul advised that he still needed more potted biographies and photographs from Panel members to be put on the Panel website. Those received had been passed on to Fiona Munro-Budd and uploaded. Paul would be willing to draw up potted biographies for any members wishing him to do so on their behalf. A Facebook page had also been established

**DECISION**

**NOTED and AGREED that members either send biographies and photographs of themselves to Paul for inclusion on the website, or contact him for assistance.**

1. **Deaf Awareness – Positive Communication Project**

Paul advised that because Clare Wildsmith had put in apologies for her absence from the meeting, as she had to be elsewhere, it was not known whether she, as yet, required payment of the third and final instalment of the grant towards her Positive Communication project

**DECISION**

**AGREED** **that payment of the third and final £500 instalment of the £1500 grant awarded to her be deferred meantime.**

1. **Chairman’s Report**

Paul advised that all of his activities since the last meeting had been covered in the earlier discussions of other business.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

*Sederunt*

*Mark Tilley joined the meeting during discussion of the above item.*

**Welcome to New Member – Mark Tilley**

The Chairman welcomed Mark Tilley to the meeting. Mark wished to become a Panel member.

**NOTED and AGREED that Mark Tilley be welcomed into membership of the Panel.**

1. **Secretary’s Report**
2. **Meetings organised by Scottish Borders Council**

Frank advised that since the date of the last Panel meeting, he had attended the online Tweeddale Area Partnership meeting on 24 August 2021, and seven of the weekly Community meetings, papers from all of which had been circulated to Panel members.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

1. **Webinars and Online Meetings**

Frank advised that since the date of the last Panel meeting, he had attended Webinars on Access To Public Appointments; 20 Minute Neighbour hoods- Getting Around and Accessing Services; Updating Your Charity’s Governing Documents; Our Streets Too; and Meeting The Scottish Charities Regulator. He had circulated papers to Panel members. He had also attended the Virtual AGM of Disability Equality Scotland, a meeting with DES to discuss access to a proposed members’ website, and an online meeting with Kenny Harrow of Scottish Borders Council to discuss access issues.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

1. **Dropped Kerb Maps**

Frank had been in contact with David Sloan at Scottish Borders Council, and it was anticipated that the dropped kerb maps would be published on the Council website fairly soon.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

1. **County Inn, Peebles – Tables Outside**

A complaint from a Panel member that the tables outside the County Inn were too close to the bus shelter on Peebles High Street and causing a bottleneck. The gap between the tables and the bus shelter was checked and found to be less than the recommended 2 metres minimum. Paul referred the matter to the local Councillors, and a discussion between Councillor Anderson and the County management resulted in the tables being set back the recommended distance.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

1. **Innerleithen – Street Obstruction**

Frank advised that the pavement obstruction in Waverley Road, Innerleithen, was thought to belong to Scottish Power, but he was awaiting an update from the Council on its possible removal. Robin offered to assist.

**DECISION**

**AGREED that Robin ask Council officials to provide an update.**

1. **Mobility Scooter Issues**

Frank advised that he had been approached by Ruth Noble of Border Buddies concerning the problems incurred by all mobility scooter users, due to a variety of factors such as the need for pavement repairs, narrow and sloping pavements, parked cars blocking dropped kerbs, and bins causing obstructions. Ruth had referred in particular to the north side of the Edinburgh Road/March Street junction, en route to Tesco. These problems were worse for novice mobility scooter users, who might have issues with manoeuvring around such obstacles and with balance.

Mark pointed out that a number of dropped kerbs, such as those at the entrance to the Victoria Park Day Centre, actually direct scooter and wheelchair users out towards the main road.

**DECISION**

**NOTED and AGREED that numerous examples of such problems were identified in the Street Access Surveys submitted to the Council by the Panel, and that the need for junction repairs highlighted by Ruth be referred to the Council if not already included in the surveys.**

1. **Treasurer’s Report**

Michael advised that the Panel’s bank balance stood at £2.232.08, after making payments of £60 for BSL services, £500 to Clare Wildsmith for the Positive Communication project, £800 to Fiona Webb-Budd for website and IT work, and four payments of Bank charges of £5 each.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

1. **Changing Places Toilets**

Isabel was unable to attend the Panel meeting to show her film about the need for Changing Places Toilets.

**DECISION**

**AGREED** **that Isabel’s film be shown at the next Panel meeting.**

1. **Victoria Park Management Group**

Robin advised that the first meeting of the Victoria Park Management Group had been held during the Summer. Mike Pearson had been appointed as Chair, and he would be fixing a date for the next meeting.

Mark expressed concern at the amount of broken glass around the Park, and the damage this could cause to the tyres of mobility scooters and wheelchairs. Robin explained that broken glass was a problem all over Peebles.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

1. **Date of Next Meeting**

**Next meeting to be held on Wednesday 12 January 2022, probably on Zoom, at 7.00pm.**