**Minute of Virtual Meeting of the Tweeddale Access Panel, held on Zoom, on Wednesday, 24 March 2021 at 7.00pm.**

**PRESENT:** *Paul Nichol (Chairman), Spencer Cobley (from 7.28pm), Michael Davis, Frank Drummond, Callum Macdonald, and Elaine Thomson.*

**IN ATTENDANCE:** *Mags Greig (BSL Interpreter), Councillor Robin Tatler and Clare Wildsmith (Wildsmith Training/Positive Communication).*

**APOLOGIES:** *No apologies.*

1. **Resignation of Treasurer**

The Chairman advised that Stuart Hill had submitted his resignation as Treasurer, because he was moving to Kelso.

**DECISION**

**NOTED and AGREED that the Panel’s thanks to Stuart, for volunteering as Treasurer, be recorded in the Minutes.**

1. **Appointment of Treasurer**

The Chairman advised that our former Treasurer, Michael Davis, had offered his services as Treasurer until such time as another person could be found to fill this office. Michael’s knowledge and experience would be invaluable to the Panel in this role.

**DECISION**

**AGREED that Michael Davis be appointed as Treasurer.**

1. **Minute of Meeting held on 20 January 2021**

The Minute of the Meeting held on 20 January 2021 had been circulated.

**DECISION**

**APPROVED** as a correct record.

1. **Matters Arising**

**(a) Street Access Surveys**

Paul confirmed that he had received a response from Philippa Gilhooley at Scottish Borders Council regarding the Street Access Surveys carried out by the Panel. She advised that the Council had no budget available for large scale works requiring public consultation, such as pedestrian crossings at the Parish Church roundabout, nor did they have funds to eliminate wide bell-mouths at road junctions which the Panel considered encouraged faster driving. However, she had passed on the request for minor works, such as pothole-filling, to her colleagues in Neighbourhood Services.

Robin offered to contact Neil Pringle, Neighbourhood Services Manager, for further information, if Paul would email him a request to do so.

Paul advised that he had shared the Access Surveys with Jeremy Cunningham of the Spaces For People project. Robin confirmed that Philippa Gilhooley was also involved in that project, as were the 6 local Councillors.

Frank expressed concern that Tweeddale might be faced with similar problems to Edinburgh with Spaces For People, where the introduction of cycle lanes had led to the establishment of “floating” bus stops, causing difficulties for disabled people and exposing all passengers boarding or alighting buses to the risk of being hit by a cyclist. Robin advised that the project proposals would shortly be subject to public consultation, when the Panel could submit their views.

**DECISION**

**NOTED and AGREED** that Paul email Robin, asking him to contact Neil Pringle regarding the minor works requested by the Panel.

**(b) Website Improvements**

Paul reminded members that he still needed potted biographies and photographs from several Panel members to be put on the Panel website. He had arranged for someone to take photos of the area for inclusion in the website, along with the Minutes from meetings over the last year. When the website was sufficiently populated, Fiona Munro-Budd would let it go live and hand it over to Lewis Murray and Kathleen Travers to support us, sharing the responsibilities of WordPress updates and social media.

**DECISION**

**NOTED and AGREED** that members send biographies and photographs of themselves to Paul for inclusion on the website.

**(c) Constitution**

Frank advised that he had passed a draft of the Panel Constitution to Lorna McCulloch at the Bridge for her views. Her initial comments had been received and acted on, but further, detailed comments from her were awaited. A final draft would be brought to the full Panel. for comments before being submitted to OSCR for approval.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

**(d) Deaf Awareness and Covid – Positive Communication Project**

Paul confirmed that, as agreed at the last meeting, an application had been made to the Scottish Borders Council Community Fund for a grant toward the £1,500 costs of the Positive Communication Project initiated by Clare Wildsmith. The Council had awarded a grant of £1,350, and members had agreed that the £150 balance would be paid from Panel savings over the lockdown period.

Clare pointed out that her work would benefit everyone and not just people with hearing impairments, as masks made communication difficult for all.

Paul proposed that the £1,500 be paid to Clare in three instalments of £500 as work progressed, with the first instalment being paid immediately to give her some working capital, and that she attend Panel meetings to provide reports on her progress.

**DECISION**

**AGREED** that the Panel’s thanks to the Council for the grant be recorded in the Minute, that Clare be paid in three instalments of £500, and that she attend Panel meetings to report on progress with the project.

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*Spencer Cobley joined the meeting during discussion of the above item.*

1. **Grant/Donation – Westerleigh Group**

Frank reported that he had been in contact with Judith Emond, the Manager of Borders Crematorium, part of the Westerleigh Group, regarding arrangements for BSL signed funerals.

As a result of the Panel becoming known to Judith Emond, she had put the Panel’s name forward to the Westerleigh Group headquarters for consideration for a donation from their charitable arm, and the Panel had since received a payment of £1,000.

**DECISION**

**NOTED** with thanks.

1. **Guidance For Live Streamed Events**

There had been circulated Guidance on the use of interpreters at live-streamed events, which had been drawn up by Mags Greig, our BSL interpreter, along with some of her colleagues on the Scottish Register of Language Professionals with the Deaf Community.

Frank had circulated a copy of this document to a number of organisations who might find it helpful, including Borders Crematorium, the local Council of Churches, and Disability Equality Scotland, who in turn had circulated details to every Access Panel in Scotland.

**DECISION**

**AGREED** that the Panel’s thanks to Mags be recorded in the Minute, and a copy of the Guidance, or a link to it, be placed on the Panel website.

1. **Tweeddale Area Partnership – Format For Future Meetings**

There had been circulated an email dated 28 January 2021, with various attachments, from Kenny Harrow, Locality Development Co-ordinator, Scottish Borders Council, regarding suggested changes to the operation of the Community Fund and Area Partnership.

Robin explained that there would be an opportunity for the Partnership to set different criteria for Community Fund grant applications, and to introduce shortlisting if they so wished. He also encouraged ideas to attract a greater number and a wider variety of people to attend Partnership meetings. Clare would be attending the next Partnership meeting to provide hints and tips on improving accessibility.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

1. **Chairman’s Report**
2. **Bank Account – Change of Bank**

Paul advised that the TSB Penicuik branch, which held the Panel bank account following the closure of the TSB Peebles branch, was also due to close. In the circumstances, he had begun discussions with the Peebles branch of The Royal Bank of Scotland, regarding the transfer of the Panel account to them. They would waive Bank charges for the first two years, saving the Panel £60 a year

**DECISION**

**NOTED and AGREED that the Panel bank account be transferred to the Royal Bank Peebles branch.**

1. **Disability Hustings**

Paul had attended the online Disability Hustings on 17 March 2021, organised by Disability Equality Scotland, where all of the major parties were represented, and a good number of people, with a wide range of disabilities, were in attendance.

**DECISION**

**NOTED and AGREED that Paul circulate a link to the Hustings, if a recording became available.**

1. **Secretary’s Report – Annual Conference of Access Panels**

Frank advised that he and Paul had attended the online Annual Conference of Access Panels on 25 February 2021.

The Conference included a keynote address by Monica Lennon, MSP, and presentations by Robin Wickes of the Edinburgh Panel on the impact of Spaces For People, and Susan Fulton, a director of DES, on Inclusive Design.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

1. **Treasurer’s Report**

Michael advised that the Panel’s bank balance stood at £4,242.09, after receipt of the £1,350 grant from SBC and the £1,000 donation from the Westerleigh Group, and making two payments of £125 to Fiona Munro-Budd and two payments of Bank charges of £5 each.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

1. **Three Bridges Walk, Peebles**

Robin advised that ramping the stepped section of the Three Bridges Walk at Hay Lodge Health Centre would involve complex engineering and significant expenditure, because of the sloping site, the presence of the river on one side, and mature trees all around. Robin feared that ground contours would prevent the achievement of the most desirable gradient. The project would need public support to proceed,

Callum pointed out that, in the meantime, a handrail was needed beside the steps, and offered to meet Robin on site to point out where this was lacking.

**DECISION**

**AGREED** that support in principle be expressed for the provision of a ramp to make the Three Bridges Walk more widely accessible, subject to approval of the final plans.

1. **Anti-Poverty Strategy**

Robin advised that the Council had put their draft Anti-Poverty Strategy out for public consultation, and undertook to provide details of the closing date for submission of comments.

**DECISION**

**AGREED that further details be circulated to members once received from Robin.**

1. **Date of Next Meeting**

**Wednesday 26 May 2021, probably on Zoom, at 7.00pm**