

I have pleasure in introducing your 'Community Led Plan' for the Leitholm Eccles and Birgham Community Council area. Community led, as it has been created following a process of consultations across our area including community meetings, questionnaire and discussions in the street. Plan, in so much as it is a set of aspirations and things we would want to do/have done in the future.

### ***Now What?***

The writing of plans is a pastime as old as time itself, with many being consigned to a shelf unopened and unread. For your plan to be more than a Winter pastime, we need to make sure that it is and continues to be a living document. Your plan will be lodged with Scottish Borders Council as a means of influencing their future strategies. As a standalone document it is unlikely to have an impact, but taken alongside the plans of other communities it should have influence. The main purpose of the plan is to provide us, as your Community Council with a mandate to lobby the Scottish Borders Council and other public bodies to get things done on your behalf. In the current financial climate, where all public services in Scotland have suffered year on year reductions in budget this can be a tough task and one which needs to be approached with a reality check. Tasks which we may have expected to be addressed in weeks or months ten years ago will now take much longer. Some will not be addressed at all. In this climate we will need to be realistic with regard to our targets and innovative as to how we achieve them. Looking beyond our public servants to solve our problems will become a regular means of achieving success. John F Kennedy comes to mind, in his inaugural speech he said: "Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country". On a more local level this rings true to our community. Doing things for ourselves is not new: we have been cutting grass, planting borders and managing our halls for years. This will need to continue. Partnership working with local businesses and seeking funding from grant giving bodies will also form part of our means of delivering your Community Led Plan.

At this time we have the challenges and opportunities of Battery Energy Storage Systems being created in the vicinity of Eccles Substation. Our challenges include mitigating the impact of these developments on those who live closest to them and limiting proliferation on our prime arable land. The opportunities are in the potential for community benefits from those developments which do proceed which could assist in delivering our plan. To take full advantage of such opportunities, we need to have a clear view of your wishes and aspirations.

As your Community Council we will look to the plan to guide our work, to continue to consult you and keep you informed.