



## Community Plan 2023 - 2033



## **Our Vision:**

**To promote a vibrant, friendly, supportive and sustainable community, which is well connected, healthy and safe. To retain and protect the rural and environmental benefits of the area.**

**A place we are proud to live.**



## Foreword

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.

### Bob Hope, Chair

# Contents

## Introduction

Local Place Plans were introduced by the Planning Scotland Act, 2019 which contains a new right for Communities to produce their own plans as part of the Scottish Planning system. Place Plans are a way for communities to achieve change in their local area. They provide an opportunity for local communities to think about how to make their “place” better, agree priorities, and take action (often working with others) to make change happen. Community- led place plans are more than just a plan: they can help your community understand what it wants to be like in the future. Having a plan and working together with Scottish Borders Council and others, we can make positive change happen.

The plan has been produced within the National planning Framework and with reference to the Berwickshire Locality Plan whose themes of Economy, skills and learning, Health, care and wellbeing, Quality of Life and Environment and Place are reflected within our local context.

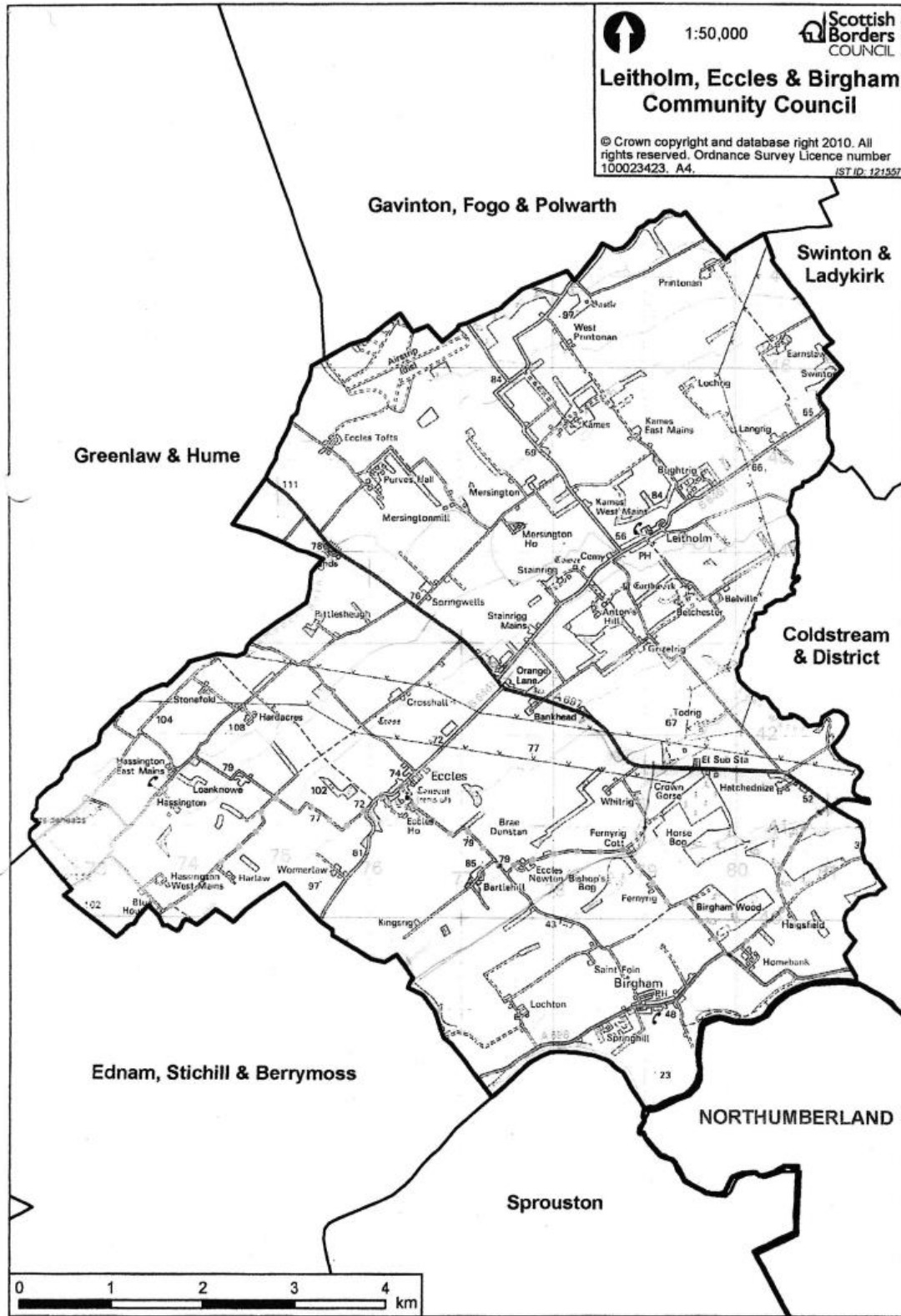
The process of consultation and planning started at our meeting in Eccles on 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2022. This plan reflects planning and progress from that date. The plan was created following an initial consultation with the people residing in our area. It was developed through the study of the Scottish Borders Council Standard Place Plan Tool, the headings of which were built into a questionnaire delivered to every household in Spring 2023. Results from the questionnaire were analysed and the original Place Plan document (now Community Plan) was written to reflect the issues raised and the expected outcomes. It is a living document which will be amended and updated in the light of further consultation or changes to priorities.

## Context

The plan relates to the three villages of Leitholm, Eccles and Birgham and surrounding rural areas which are identified on the boundary map below (see p. 6). The National Census Scotland identifies the areas as ‘accessible rural’. They fall within the UK parliamentary constituency of Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk, the Scottish parliamentary constituency of Etrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire, the Scottish Borders council area, the ward of mid Berwickshire and the parish of Eccles.

The plan relates to proposed and existing shared concerns and activities whilst retaining each village’s sense of identity and place. Activities in Birgham are co-ordinated through the well- established Birgham Community Development Trust. Activities in Leitholm are co-ordinated currently through its Village Hall Committee and through the Friends of Leitholm. The plan is to establish a Leitholm Community Development Trust . A small development group will be established for Eccles to investigate and establish community activities there. Overall co-ordination and areas of concern to all three villages and the area as a whole will take place through the Community Council.

# Boundary Map



## Leitholm and outskirts

Population – Leitholm has a population of 232 people, according to the Local Development Plan dated 2023. Of this amount, the wee village of Leitholm itself has approximately half, the rest being in the outskirts, with Printonan and Charterhall to the North, Orange Lane and Todrig to the South, Eccles Tofts and Mersington to the West and Earnslaw and Swinton Mill to the East.

Housing – Leitholm village housing is primarily old stock two storey houses and single storey crofts. At least four of the buildings have listed status. On the site of the old school are modern purpose-built bungalows primarily for the elderly and Berwickshire Housing Association have four bungalows for social care. There is one small social housing estate at the East end of the village and four more houses for social care along Main Street. One purpose built house is energy self sufficient with a design that captures heat and keeps it in the very well insulated building.

The outskirts of Leitholm have six large estates built around grand houses, namely Purves hall, Kames, Bughtrig, Belchester, Anton's Hill and Stainrigg.

Education - Leitholm has a Play Park but no longer has a school. Children take school transport to either Swinton, Kelso, Duns or Ednam. However the Village hall runs several classes for adults and children alike in creative crafts and indoor sports.

History – a wealth of detailed information about Leitholm village and area, exists in the form of a booklet readily available to residents and visitors. Some notable features within the village include, Leitholm Mill, the Public House & Inn, the Kirk, the Village Hall, a peaceful cemetery, and a memorial Cross which has strong links to the Ramsay family, with a museum dedicated to Sir Admiral Ramsay situated at the East end of the village. Notable historic attributes around Leitholm include an Iron Age Hill Fort, a ruined Peel tower, Stainrigg Well, Mersington Mill and Printonan Bastle ruins. Once a year the village celebrates the Reivers history.

Healthcare – residents of Leitholm village and outskirts travel to Coldstream or kelso Medical Centres or Melrose Borders General Hospital for healthcare. Our local shopping town Coldstream has an excellent pharmacy. Transport to our local towns, including Berwick is limited by a very restricted Public Transport system.

Small Businesses – Leitholm village is visited regularly by several local services such as a butcher and fish monger. Coal and logs are brought to the village and we have a mobile library and bank. The local corner store in Coldstream can supply the village with postal, chemist and general store goods. The village of Leitholm also has a Thai takeaway, a Wine merchant, two building companies, a Public house which is primarily a B&B, a Wedding specialist, Upholsterer, a Campervan workshop and skilled crafters.

Voluntary team – volunteers keep grassed spaces and pathways trimmed, plant flowers, litter pick, organise the Kirk events and organise the village hall classes and events.

Environment - Leitholm village is surrounded by very productive arable and livestock fields. Some fields have SSSI status due to evidence of mediaeval occupation. The rolling landscape indicates the Drumlin glacial deposits, now cut through in places by the various burns and the River Leet. Owing to the geology and especially the clay layers, Leitholm has several recognised, permanent springs and ephemeral pools. Flood plains surround the village and such fields slow water through reed beds along the River Leet



valley. Wildlife seen along the watercourses include Otter, Kingfishers, Heron and Dipper, with a variety of deer, and foxes too. Sparrow Hawks, Tawny Owls, Buzzard, Great Spotted Wood Peckers and Barn Owls are frequently seen or heard in the mature trees and Oyster Catchers feed on the fields. Red Starts and Spotted Flycatchers are often seen in the shelter belts. Small birds such as Tree Creepers and the Nut Hatch can be seen on the Oak Strip pathway as well as in the village gardens.

Within the village an old garage site is now recognised as a Brownfield Habitat with 70 plus species of wildflower / grasses and over 40 species of moths and incidental insects. A study was undertaken of the site by the village community and a bench donated so everyone could sit, watch, listen and appreciate the biodiversity on what was once thought of as wasteland.





Eccles

**To be added**

## Birgham and surrounding area

(NB Section to be amended following publication of 2021 census data in Spring 2024)

Birgham is located near the River Tweed on the A698 between Coldstream and Kelso. The area covered by the Scottish National Census includes Birgham village, Fernyrigg and the rural area to the north and west, Birgham, Litkeltern and Mayfield woods and the rural area between Birgham and Carham to the south in Northumberland.

**Population** - According to the latest available census data (2011), the population consists mainly of older workers and retirees. However, whilst this is still the case, it should be noted that there are a number of younger families in the village as well as visiting grand children. The population is of higher socio-economic status than the national average. The population is less ethnically diverse than the UK average.

**Housing** –Birgham contains a number of older terraced stone cottages at each end of the village, reflecting its history as two smaller hamlets. It is largely a ribbon development with detached properties built in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century forming a large part of the village. There is a small development of semi detached properties built in the 1950s, (originally as farm workers cottages,) at Treaty Park. Newer properties developed in the last decade can be found mainly at East Haugh (large detached and bungalows) , with a couple of large detached houses at the west end of the village. Census data indicates that a substantial number of properties in Birgham are 1 or 2 person households. There is a lack of housing developed specifically for older age groups.



**Education** – There are no schools in Birgham, with the school located in what is now the Village Hall having closed in the 1950s. The nearest primary schools are in Coldstream, Sprouston and Ednam and the nearest secondary schools are Kelso High School and Berwickshire High School in Chirnside. Lifelong learning and extra- curricular activities are afforded by the various clubs, societies and activities which take place mainly in the Village Hall. There is a lack of provision of this type specifically for young people but the play park, including the recently installed pavilion and table tennis table, is well used. It is intended to undertake consultation with local schools.

**Healthcare** – As noted above, the population is of higher socio-economic status than the national average, with affluence generally being linked to good health. In 2011, 79% of the population regarded themselves as being in good or very good health. Doctors surgeries are available in Coldstream and Kelso and the nearest hospital is at Kelso. It is intended to undertake consultation with health and social care professionals to identify issues, including those caused by the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and issues relating to care in people’s homes.

**Business and Employment** - The key business in the village is the village pub, The Fisherman’s Arms, which together with the village hall, is a key social hub in the village. There is also a Pond and Aquatics business. However, the village is largely reliant on facilities in Coldstream and Kelso, with visiting mobile services such as butchers and fishmongers. Birgham is entrepreneurial, with a larger than average number of working residents being self- employed. Working residents are employed in industries such as agriculture (including forestry and fishing), manufacturing, education, health, construction and retail.

**Environment (built and natural)** – Birgham is surrounded by arable and productive farmland and the area includes the woodlands of Birgham, Lithkelim and Mayfield. It is near to the River Tweed and its flood plains. Consequently, the natural environment is home to a variety of flora and fauna. The rural environment provides both agricultural employment opportunities as well as opportunities for leisure pursuits. The key buildings and land in Birgham village itself are the Village Hall and the pub both of which are key social hubs, as well as the play park and the cemetery.



# Community Outcomes

Diagram to be added (including timeline)





## Community Outcomes linked to Action Plans

### Key

**S = Short term 2023 - 2025**

**M = Medium term 2023 - 2027**

**L = Long term 2023 – 2030 and beyond**

### Outcome 1 : Connectivity

**Our Community will be well connected:**

- Our communications network will ensure that our community, both village and rural, know what is happening and have the opportunity to get involved. **S**
- Disability access for both village halls and for events held in all the villages will be communicated **S**
  - Partnerships will be developed with our elected members, public officers and local businesses to support the delivery of our plan. Further partnerships will be developed with neighbouring communities to share resources and ideas. **M**
- We will have better public transport for our villages and suitable cycle routes to connect our village with neighbouring villages and towns. **L**

#### Community Council Actions

##### Communication -

- We shall hold consultative meetings in each of our villages and deliver a comprehensive questionnaire to all households in our area. **S**
- We will continue to develop our communications through both electronic means and use of noticeboards. **S**
- We shall develop digital connectivity through a Facebook page, website and e-mail circulation list **S**

We will consult with young people in our area through contact with schools. **M**

We will meet with companies intending to develop Battery Storage sites in our area:

- a. To try to limit the impact on local residents and our rural environment.
- b. To seek mutual partnerships for the benefit of our communities. **L**

### Public Transport

- We will seek meetings with bus operators and our elected representatives to see what can be done to improve this situation. **S**
- We will explore alternative methods of improving transport for our communities including extension of Pingo service, car clubs and car sharing. **M**

### Leitholm Actions

In addition to CC priorities:

- We will secure a second noticeboard for our village **S**
- We shall communicate the availability of disability access for the village hall and all events held in the village **S**
- Lack of any Public Transport is a priority for our community, we will campaign for public transport for our village, particularly between Leitholm and Kelso. We will explore potential for extension of Pingo service and/or car club. **M**
- A regular Newsletter design and delivery system will be considered and any relevant funding applied for, as a means of connecting residents in village and outskirts. **S**
- Planning for a Cycle route linking at least Eccles with Leitholm, will be initiated and relevant funding applied for. **M**
- A grass footpath with signage will link Leitholm village to the newly opened Admiral Ramsay Museum. **M**
- A Core Paths Walking Map and required signage will start to be collated with consultations with relevant land owners and advice sought for product design. **L**

### Eccles Actions

- We shall communicate events to be held in the village including disability access for those events **S**
- Lack of any Public Transport is a priority for our community. We will campaign for public transport for our village. We will explore potential for extension of Pingo and/or car club **M**

### Birgham Actions :

- Development of footpath from Birgham to Home Farm has been noted as a priority. We shall campaign for this through the SBC **S**
- We shall communicate the provision for disability access for our village hall building and all village events **S**
- The location of cycling routes to divert them through Birgham will be explored as a means of enhancing Birgham's interconnectivity **L**

## Outcome 2 : Inclusivity

- Our Communities will be Vibrant, Friendly and Supportive. **L**
- Our People, irrespective of age or background, will be valued, included and supported. **L**

### Community Council Actions

From consultations and questionnaire there are clearly different challenges facing each of our villages.

- We will continue to support the priorities highlighted by our villages and communities. **L**
- We will seek to recruit, support and acknowledge the work of volunteers in our communities. **L**
- We will look to develop policies to allow our communities to work effectively and safely: Safeguarding, Health & Safety. **M**
- We will signpost funding opportunities for our communities to deliver on their priorities. **M**
- We will explore the needs and aspirations of our young people, in particular considering the potential to access youth centres in nearby towns and/ or the use of Live Borders peripatetic youth leaders for activities in our villages **M**

### Leitholm Actions

We shall ensure that our Village Hall is financially secure and a vibrant place for people to meet and participate in a wide range of activities. Through our communications on Facebook, Noticeboard and word of mouth we shall engage a wider range of people in our community. **S**

- We will seek to extend the work of our gardening team as a means of enhancing our village and engaging our people. **S**
- We will explore the potential of a village shop &/ or communicate those goods and services already brought to the village by weekly traders. **M**
- Provide training and support about the use of IT. Obtain funding for installation of Broadband and a TV license at the Village Hall. **S**
- Provide those with hearing disability access to a functioning Loop System in the Village Hall. **S**
- Apply for the Greener gateway Award 2023. **S**
- Establish a What's App Friends of Leitholm group. **S**
- Work with the Kirk to create a Community Garden. **L**
- Assess need / enthusiasm / ideas for a Women's Group to replace the recent loss of the SWI. **S**

### **Eccles Actions**

Our village lacks a place to meet and open areas for recreation. In consequence, we currently lack a sense of community. We will engage with a wide range of people in our village to work together to provide a place to meet and an outdoor area for recreation. **S**

- We will pursue, in partnership with Scottish Borders Council the potential for community use of the disused Primary School. **S** (Update : Discontinued due to the school now having been sold)
  - We will establish a development group to consult with the community and take forward ideas for village events. An initial event, possibly based around the history of Eccles will be held as a springboard for this **S**

### **Birgham Actions**

- Our village has an active, vibrant community led by our Birgham Community Development Trust, with a number of clubs and societies in existence. We will work in partnership with BCDT and others to continue this good work in line with our Community Council targets. **L**
- The village pub and village hall are central to Birgham,s sense of place and to its cultural heritage and identity. They are the key social hubs for the village. Maintaining these buildings and institutions as a core part of village life is a key priority. BCDT will liaise with the pub to ensure the future development and co-ordination of social activities. **S**
- At present village social activities are not geared particularly to the engagement of young people, but this will form a future key priority to sustain the village as an inclusive community. **L**

## Outcome 3 : Sustainability

Our Community will be sustainable:

We will work with our residents and businesses (including farmers and landowners) and partners towards becoming a greener, more sustainable community. We will explore how we can:

- Better insulate our homes. L
- Generate Green Energy. L
- Improve on our recycling of materials. M

### Community Council Actions

We will work with our residents and businesses (including farmers and landowners) and partners towards becoming a greener, more sustainable community. We will explore how we can:

- Better insulate our homes. L
- Generate Green Energy. L
- Improve on our recycling of materials. M
- We will work in partnership with companies developing battery storage in our area in line with Scottish Government infrastructure plans for a greener community, whilst opposing expansion of the project if this is to the detriment of our rural environment and impact on our people. L
  - We will signpost opportunities for our communities to access funding to better insulate their homes or produce green energy. L
    - We shall apply for funding to ensure that both the village halls use sustainable energy S

### Leitholm Actions

- Provide information about sustainable living opportunities / funding / contacts. M
- Invite relevant speakers &/ or provide information on topics such as better recycling, zero waste, turning garden waste into community compost and bio-diversity projects. S
- Enable the village Swap Shop to be a positive asset to use. M
- Set up a community garden waste composting system. S
- In conjunction with the Community Council, we shall apply for funding to install solar panels and a heating system in the village hall S

### Eccles Actions

- We shall explore the possibility of establishing a community store or swap shop in the disused bus shelter M
- Once a development group is established, provide information about sustainable living, opportunities, contacts M



### **Birgham Actions**

- Most houses in the village are reliant on oil fired heating. Support for alternatives will be explored **S**
- In conjunction with the Community council, we shall apply for funding to install solar panels in the village hall **S**
- Consideration will be given to the provision for electric car charging points in the village, including the possibilities for generating revenue **M**
- Currently the nearest centre for the recycling of materials and disposal of garden waste is Kelso. Other alternatives need to be explored possibly in conjunction with the other villages **M**

## **Outcome 4 : Health and Wellbeing**

**Our community will be a healthy and safe place to live and work:**

**All of our people, irrespective of age, will have access to exercise and social interaction. **S****

**All of our people will have access to medical services and care support locally. **M****

**Our villages and community will be a safe place to live and work. **M****

### **Community Council Actions**

Road safety within our villages has been highlighted as a priority. . Reductions in policing numbers for Berwickshire alongside high levels of officer extraction means that a programme of regular enforcement is not possible. Policing priority if given to serious accident hotspot areas. Our villages are not priorities. Poor condition of pavements in villages has been highlighted with a specific need that they be disability friendly.

- We will work with partners to explore other means of speeding enforcement. **S**
- We will work with elected members and the council to have our village pavements improved. **M**
- We will support village priorities in relation to access to exercise and social interaction. **S**
- We will monitor feedback in relation to access to medical services and care support locally. **M**
- We shall commission a report on both village halls from the Central Borders Access Panel to ensure disability safety in both venues **S**

### **Leitholm Actions**

- We will work with the full Community Council regarding road safety, pavement and road improvement goals. Particular concern regarding condition of pavements/access for disabled. **L**
- We will continue to encourage the use of our village facilities and classes instigated at our hall. **S**

- We will work with Scottish Borders Council regarding parking issues, in particular at the Ramsay Crescent junction and Coal Lane. **M**
- Buddy groups set up with Kirk support to help residents with day to day living needs and in the event of winter weather extremes. **S**

#### **Eccles Actions**

- We will work in with the full Community Council regarding road safety, pavement and road improvement goals. **M**
- Realistically, our main focus will be on the provision of meeting and recreational facilities for the village. **S**
- We shall apply for funding to establish a defibrillator in the village **S**

#### **Birgham Actions**

- We will work in with the full Community Council regarding road safety, pavement and road improvement goals. **M**
- In particular, we shall work with SBC to install salt bins throughout the village to ensure safety during the winter months **S**
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- The village will continue to maintain pressure regarding the issue of speeding in the village . Possibilities include the use of uniformed officers or trained volunteers and/ or speed cameras. **M**
- BCDT has carried out significant projects over recent years to improve the fabric of our hall and the facilities in our park. We will take stock of what now needs to be done to further enhance our amenities. The park is central to the village's sense of place and social life for all generations. the further development of park amenities will be considered. **S**
- Consideration will be given to a system of monitoring who is in receipt of health and social care in their homes with a view to generating advisory support within the village community. **M**
- The possibility of creating a Citizens Advice Bureau surgery will be explored, possibly in conjunction with the other villages. **M**

## Outcome 5 : Pride of Place

**Our Communities will be places we are proud to live. S**

### Community Council Actions

Our Village and surrounding area will be neat and tidy, litter free with suitable floral displays. We are delighted in the work which has been done in all three villages through teams of volunteers to enhance the appearance.

- We will continue to support this work through provision/signposting of funding for small projects. **S**

### Leitholm Actions

- We will seek funding to purchase a rechargeable/petrol strimmer to assist us to maintain common ground. **S**
- We will work with villagers to ensure that plants which overgrow our pavements and village signage are managed. **S**
- We will apply for a litter bin in the west layby. **S**
- We will start a campaign & display signage / poop bags around the village to support dog owners to clear up after their pets. **S**
- Village flower displays will continue to develop. Shrubs will be planted at the West and East approaches to the village and we will work with Parks and Environment to enhance land owned by SBC. **S**
- Play Park railings will be sanded down and repainted with relevant funding and / or SBC support. **M**

### Eccles Actions

- We shall investigate the possibility of installing planters in the village **S**

### Birgham Actions

- Birgham has a strong tradition of maintaining the village, with volunteers undertaking upkeep of the planters and grass cutting. The issue of grass cutting will be raised with the SBC as the current situation in relation to the park and the cemetery is unsatisfactory. **S**
- The issue of the state of pavements raised above under health and safety is also an issue in relation to the appearance of Birgham and pride of place and, as such, it will continue to be addressed with the SBC with a view to achieving this improvement **M**

## Outcome 6 : Rural Environment

**Our rural environment will be retained for the benefit of our community, our wildlife and fauna and remain a centre for food production. L**

### Actions

- We will seek to limit the proliferation of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) to a sustainable level. L
- Where planning permission is granted, we will seek to work in partnership with developers of BESS to mitigate their impact on our communities and environment. M

Through this partnership we will seek to gain support for our communities from developers, both in kind and financial.

## Outcome 7 : Tourism and Heritage

**Our villages and surrounding area will contribute to and benefit from responsible tourism and heritage development in Berwickshire and the Scottish Borders, maximising the advantages of our natural and physical environments. L**

### Actions

- Initially we shall research and explore the possibilities for contributing to and benefitting from responsible tourism development in the area, with reference to existing bodies such as the Tweed Forum and the National Parks Campaign S
- We shall seek to improve footpaths and cycle paths in and around each of the three villages M
- We shall promote the heritage and history of each village through publications, events and signage. S
- We shall create heritage trails around the villages and surrounding areas M
- In the longer term we shall seek to create a joined- up route of foot and cycle paths between the three villages linked in to the history and heritage sites and trails L

## Appendix 1 : Projects and Costings

To be added



## Appendix 2 : Record of progress against action plans

2023 -2024

### OUTCOME 1 : Connectivity

<p>Community Council</p> <p>We Have held consultative meetings in each of our villages and delivered a comprehensive questionnaire to all households in our area. We now have a Facebook presence and recently harvested emails from those who wish to be kept in touch with our work. Through the Scottish Tech Army we have been gifted a website build which is now operational. We have met with the Road Safety Officer, Scottish Borders Council and our local Community Police Sergeant to discuss road safety concerns and general policing of our area. Improvements to signage and road marking for each of our villages have been agreed.</p> <p>A newsletter has been circulated for distribution in the villages</p> <p>An on-line meeting was held with members of the SBC and with BH, JJ and AW on 12 January. It was agreed that the plan was at a well- developed stage. The proposal is to create a final version for submission in the next few weeks.</p>	<p>April – Dec 2023</p> <p>Jan 2024</p>
<p><b>Leitholm</b></p> <p>A second noticeboard has been secured for the purposes of displaying LEB information particularly relevant to Leitholm village and outskirts. Abridged minutes and new event posters are visible to residents and through traffic. Consultations with local public transport providers have taken place. Transport limitations are still an issue. A Newsletter design has been discussed and may involve all three villages. Three members of the Community Council for leitholm have trained to be Digital Champions . We have recently had our first success at enabling a resident to upload What’s App onto her smart phone and start to communicate and send photos of events to her friends.</p>	<p>Nov 2023</p>

<p>IT Funding has been received and the hall will be upgraded to have Internet access, screen, projector, music licence and a licence to play films.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Berwickshire Federation of Village Halls AGM was attended. A meeting is being arranged to discuss with other like-minded Village Halls, the process of becoming a Community Trust / SCIO.</li> <li>• The current Village Hall Constitution is being updated with support from Borders Community Action</li> <li>• We now have a monthly What's On information Calander to inform our local community of events/ societies etc</li> <li>• BT Broadband is due to be installed in the hall soon.</li> </ul>	<p>Jan 2024</p>
<p><b>Eccles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant work has been done over the past year to improve communications. We have a small committee who are dedicated to improving the ethos of the village and achieving our goals</li> <li>• Following a costing exercise, it has been agreed not to pursue the Eccles School project.</li> <li>• Following a meeting between BH and the Eccles representatives it has been agreed to visit Eccles residents door to door with an additional petition and then to take stock to determine the best way forwards for Eccles</li> </ul>	<p>April – Dec 2023</p> <p>Nov 2023</p> <p>Jan 2024</p>
<p><b>Birgham</b></p> <p>Continued good communication through a regular e-mail newsletter. Continued BCDT meetings and effective community liaison</p> <p>Website to be reinstated and linked in to the CC website WiFi provided in the Village Hall</p> <p>CC newsletter circulated to the whole village</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Nov 2023</p> <p>Jan 2024</p>



equipment, with a slow cooker and dishwasher.	
<b>Eccles</b>	
<b>Birgham</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvements have been made in the park including the building of a new pavilion and provision of a table tennis table which proved popular with young people</li> <li>A number of successful activities continue to support and be held in the Village Hall eg, Art Club Exhibition, Community Lunches, Film Club and the village continues to support various charities eg Poppy Scotland Quiz and a talk on wildlife.</li> <li>Groups and Societies continue to meet -eg Wine Circle, Gardening Club, Art Club. A new Photography Club has been established.</li> <li>The Fishermans Arms has reopened and seems to be successful. The new manager attended the last meeting of BCDT.</li> <li>There is now more co-ordination of activities across the Village Hall and the pub, with the Domino night and the quiz now re-instated at the pub</li> <li>Groups and societies continue to meet in the Village Hall with a Music night and Scots night planned for February.</li> </ul>	<p>Summer 2023</p> <p>Sept/ Oct 2023</p> <p>Oct 2023</p> <p>Nov 2023</p> <p>Jan 2024</p>

**OUTCOME 3 : Sustainability ( home insulation, green energy, recycling)**

<b>Community Council</b>	
<b>Leitholm</b>	
<p>Hannah Park <a href="mailto:hannah@sustainableseirk.org.uk">hannah@sustainableseirk.org.uk</a> (Energy Advisor for Selkirk Regeneration) has accepted an invitation to attend our Leitholm Village Hall Coffee Morning 16th December 23 to offer advice to our residents about energy saving. Dec 23 update; one resident reports she has been visited by Hannah and has received several items to help keep her warm.</p> <p>A suitable site for Leitholm residents to bring their garden and kitchen waste has</p>	<p>Nov 2023</p>

<p>been found and a knowledgeable local compost expert has agreed to support a Community Compost Project!</p> <p>Local installation of Battery Energy Storage Systems adjacent to the expanding Eccles Substation and now being proposed in random fields around Leitholm village, continue to be causing Leitholm residents extreme concern. Leitholm Village Hall is a hub for information / meetings about the campaign to stop an uncontrolled proliferation of BESS from industrialising our rural location. This situation will be ongoing for a considerable period of time. It has already generated too much information to record all of it on our Place Plan. For an update, contact Mr Bob Hope <a href="mailto:Leitholmecclesbirghamcc@gmail.com">Leitholmecclesbirghamcc@gmail.com</a> (LEB CC Chairperson).</p>	<p>Jan 2024</p>
<p><b>Eccles</b></p>	
<p><b>Birgham</b></p>	

**OUTCOME 4 : Health and Wellbeing (exercise and social interaction, health services and care, place safety)**

<p><b>Community Council</b></p> <p>We have met with the Road Safety Officer, Scottish Borders Council and our local Community Police Sergeant to discuss road safety concerns and general policing of our area. Improvements to signage and road marking for each of our villages have been agreed.</p>	
<p><b>Leitholm</b></p> <p>Free Home security packs including stickers to deter cold calling, have been delivered to forty Leitholm households.</p> <p>Training for the SBC Walk It activity has been successful and our first walking group has been well received.</p> <p>Awaiting further training for First Aid / Strength &amp; Balance and the funding for pathways to support the project.</p> <p>The new village hall committee has already obtained Healthier, Happier, Stronger funding to ensure activities such as Gentle Exercise classes can continue. A number of classes, groups and activities contribute to people’s physical and mental wellbeing (see outcome 2 for further details)</p> <p>Traffic Calming, pavement improvement and changes to signage agreed to earlier in the year, are now, disappointingly, expected to be implemented early 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awaiting further training for First Aid / Strength &amp; Balance and the funding for pathways to support the project.</li> </ul>	<p>Sept 2023</p> <p>Nov 2023</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SBC Road Traffic and maintenance are starting work 29 th January to add road markings to village road boundaries to reinforce speed restrictions. Work is also being done to connect the current speed control sign to mains power for greater reliability.</li> </ul>	Jan 2023
<p><b>Eccles</b></p> <p>Grace Ormiston and Alyson Paul have been beavering away during the past two months determined to find funding for the Defibrillator for Eccles. The funding has been sourced. They received confirmation from Kelso Heartbeat that the balance of the cost and maintenance will be available from them. Kenny Oliver is committed to financing £1,000 and has confirmed. Josh Hebdon of Knots &amp; Barley will host the defib on his building wall. Waddells Joiners have also offered a financial contribution.</p> <p>☐ Awaiting date for installation of village speed check.</p>	Jan 2023
<p><b>Birgham</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Road safety and the issue of the pavements in Birgham have been discussed at the BCDT</li> <li>Improvements have been made to the park, enhancing opportunities for exercise and social interaction (see outcome 2 above)</li> <li>There is a proposal for keep fit sessions at the Village Hall using the newly installed wi-fi (to start in Feb 2025)</li> </ul>	

**OUTCOME 5 : Pride of Place**

<p><b>Community Council</b></p> <p>The CC has identified funding and supported funding applications for activities in the villages</p>	
<p><b>Leitholm</b></p> <p>The flower planters requiring new autumn / winter colour and Spring bulbs have been planted up by community members, who have also been collecting and</p>	Sept 2023

<p>providing plants and bulbs for us to use.</p> <p>The open site in the village previously described by residents as the ‘Wasteland’ has been formerly recognised by the SBC Greener Gateway Award as a rare and important Brownfield Habitat due to the residents of Leitholm creating a Pollinator Project in the space and promoting an awareness of what is already growing on the site and introducing, with advice, other plants attractive to pollinators. Residents have volunteered plants, seeds, containers, time, manual labour and a Mindfulness Bench, to create a site that won a Silver for Biodiversity at the Greener Gateway Award in Tweedbank on 26th Sept 23. The award application included survey information from an independent Ecologist and an expert in Moths, recording over 70 species of wildflowers and grasses, various types of insect including solitary bees, and 44 different moth species. Christine Johnston, <a href="mailto:christinejohnston50@gmail.com">christinejohnston50@gmail.com</a> member of Scottish Wildlife Trust visited the site during the summer months and John Greenwell (SBC) and Carol Cooke (SBC Parks &amp; Environment Manager) have asked to visit us in Spring 24. Plants suitable for pollinators have been added to the new flower boxes along Leitholm’s main street and are being tended by our villagers.</p> <p>The Cemetery gates, damaged by Storm Arwen, have been repaired / rebuilt and replaced. Cemetery steps have been weeded and swept and hedges cut back. Other outstanding SBC maintenance and repair jobs have been reported to John Curry, our Environment and Infrastructure contact.</p> <p>Update Nov 23</p> <p>Overgrown hedges have been cut back by residents to allow better pavement access. Trees around the VH have been trimmed and made safe by an experienced local volunteer.</p> <p>Signage asking dog owners to pick up after their dog has been placed around the village and along both Coal Lane and the Kirk path. A free, dog poop bag dispenser has been placed on the Kirk path adjacent to the dog waste bin. Requests to all dog owners to pick up after their dog, have been added to the village facebook page.</p> <p>We attended the Borders Community Action open meeting 19th Oct 23 to discuss our Place Plan for Leitholm and outskirts, obtain funding information and highlight those outcomes on the plan that we need support from SBC to complete, such as the maintenance and repair of the children’s play park railings and the village bus shelters.</p>	<p>Nov 2023</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting had with Alison Boyles – our new SBC Community Engagement Officer. Discussed village repairs and maintenance that’s been asked for since Spring 23.</li> <li>• Actions are to investigate the possibility of funding for planning of purpose-built Swap Shop similar to the one in Duns. The design could include a roof canopy to allow the current village ‘swap shop’ / bus shelter to be removed and replaced with the proposed new build. It could have fridge / freezer capacity and as such provide a few basic items to residents</li> </ul>	<p>Jan 2024</p>

/holiday makers	
<b>Eccles</b>	
<p><b>Birgham</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers continue to cultivate the Birgham in Bloom planters and funding events are held throughout the year to support this activity</li> <li>• For the second year running Birgham has been awarded the Greener Gateway Gold Award for the Best Wee Village</li> <li>• Volunteers continue to undertake grass cutting around the village and even on the path down to the river</li> <li>• An annual village tidy up event is held</li> <li>• Volunteers continue to cultivate the Birgham in Bloom planters and funding events are held throughout the year to support this activity</li> <li>• Arrangements for Birgham in Bloom 2024 are underway</li> <li>• Volunteers continue to undertake grass cutting around the village and even on the path down to the river</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Sept 2023</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Oct 2023</p> <p>Jan 2024</p>

**OUTCOME 6 : Rural Environment**

<p>We have set up a small committee to investigate all aspects of the renewables programme. Thanks to the work of Richard Jackson, James Finnie and Kevin Howell, we now have a good understanding of the subject. Through consulting our community we have a clear mandate to oppose Battery Energy Storage applications beyond the three initial applications which are for sites close to Eccles substation.</p> <p>We have raised the profile of the issue through contacts with the media, secured the support of our elected members and consulted with both Scottish Borders Council and Scottish Government officers on the subject. We anticipate a number of applications from developers in 2024 and feel that we are well placed to mount strong objections on your behalf.</p> <p>Zenobe, a developer who has obtained planning permission for BESS in our area, will be starting work in 2024. We are looking to work closely with the company to mitigate the impact of their work on local residents and also to explore the potential of financial benefits for our communities. As Leitholm is one of the</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
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<p>closest communities to forthcoming developments we will look to work with that community to see how they can best be represented to take advantage of any windfall from BESS.</p>	
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**OUTCOME 7 : Tourism and Heritage**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A talk by Malcolm Dickson from the Borders National Parks Campaign was a feature of a CC meeting</li> <li>• Issues relating to tourism and heritage have recently been embedded into the Community Plan</li> <li>• In Leitholm, The Walk it team continue to provide fortnightly ambles around the village and fields, with attention to wildlife and ecology. Keith Elliott, an expert on historical sites and local heritage, is due to visit and share some of the walks with us.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p>Nov 2023</p> <p>Nov 2023 Jan 2024</p>
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