

Minutes of the Meeting of Kelso Community Council on
Tuesday 14 December 2021 at 7:00pm in Kelso Town Hall



PRESENT: Councillors Owen Adams, James Boulton (Vice Chair), Peter Cooper, Gavin Horsburgh (Provost), James McCombie, Colin McGrath and Gus Russell and Scottish Borders Councillors Simon Mountford and Euan Robson.

IN ATTENDANCE: Shirley Redgrave (Secretary), Tina Newton (Visit Kelso), Ray Licence and Elisa Abrahall (Bluemill Studios Ltd) and members of the public Christine Hamilton and Mr T S Michniewicz.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Toni Oliver, Paul Roberts and Gail Watson, SBC Councillor Tommy Weatherston and Police Scotland

- *Please note questions to either the Scottish Borders Councillors or Kelso Community Councillors need to be submitted in writing to the Secretary seven days prior to meeting.*
- *All Councillors to make a declaration of interest prior to discussion.*
- *All correspondence to be circulated via the Secretary.*
- *All Councillors and attendees to act in a courteous manner and direct question through the Chairperson.*

Welcome

The Provost extended a warm welcome to everyone.

Police Matters

The Provost advised the Multi Member Ward Plan for Kelso and District for November 2021 had previously been circulated. Councillor Adams asked for an explanation of the dates used in the report – the Secretary undertook to find out.

Inspector McGuigan post previous meeting advised that regarding the 9 calls mentioned in the area of the Square at the last meeting, 8 were generated by officers carrying out pro-active patrols and were not calls from members of the public.

Councillor Boulton advised he welcomed the Police attending the last meeting and would appreciate a more regular attendance. SBC Councillor Mountford commented that he and the other ward Councillors had regular meetings with the Police and if

there were any issues or concerns that needed to be made to the Police he would pass them on.

Presentation by Bluemill Studios Limited on the future of North Trinity, Bowmont Street

The Provost welcomed Elisa Abrahall (owner) and Ray Licence (architect) to the meeting. Ray outlined the Design Statement including Planning and Listed Building Consent Applications. Ray outlined the history of the building and the current application. Ray advised the current owners Bluemill Studios Limited had submitted a planning application to convert the Hall into a residential base and for the main Church building to be used for film studio work and a multi-purpose community space for eg exhibitions, local events, meetings, classes etc. Ray advised the proposal takes a realistic approach which will ensure the building is retained as a major town feature and used by the community when not needed as a film studio

Elisa thanked the Community Council for inviting her to the meeting to enable her to share her and her partner's vision for North Trinity Church. Elisa outlined her background in the film industry and the reasons why she wished to relocate her family and business to North Trinity Church. Elisa advised she would welcome local community groups using the Church and only a modest charge would be made to cover the cost of heating, etc. However she did advise she would be unable to offer a regular booking for the Church as this would block its use as a film studio but local groups who were willing to be flexible could approach her. The Provost commented that this could be an ideal venue for the Kelso Community Cinema.

In response to a question Elisa advised the purchase of the property was not conditional on planning permission.

Member of the public Mr T S Michniewicz advised he was the neighbour to North Trinity living at 17 Bowmont Street and commented he had no major concerns but two queries. When the Church was being used for events it was proposed that portacabins be used for the toilets and asked whether these could be located at the back of the Church. He asked what the plans were for the tower and Elisa advised she would love to make use of the space but Building Regulations made it difficult to use the space. Ray advised when events were taking place, access via the carpark would be needed but this would only be on a temporary basis.

In response to a question on the timescale for the project Elisa advised she would like to have the living area ready in 12 – 18 months and the film studio business up and running in 3-5 years.

Elisa advised she is fully aware of the community interest and is very enthusiastic to maintain the link that the building has with the people of Kelso and surrounding area. She advised she would be at the property the following morning and any Councillor was welcome to have a look around the venue.

A copy of the Design Statement is appended to these minutes. The Provost thanked Elisa and Ray for attending the meeting and wished them well.

Visit Kelso

Tina Newton made the following report. Visit Kelso would like to wish the Kelso Community Council a very merry Christmas and a happy 2022.

Christmas is well under way with the advent calendar marketing campaign proving to be more popular than last year with a number of days having 2 prizes to cope with the number of business entries.

The Christmas Market held on Sunday 12 was a great success with our newest member (cookie Kitchen) selling out well before the 3pm closure time.

In December the Visit Kelso committee meet informally and we have taken the decision to delay until a more appropriate time.

The Provost thanked Tina for this update.

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2021

The minutes held on Tuesday 9 November 2021 were approved. They were proposed by Councillor James McCombie and seconded by Councillor Colin McGrath.

Matters arising from the minutes

Police Specials – Councillor McGrath asked for an update on Police Specials and the Provost advised details of the recruitment process had been shared on social media. Councillor McGrath advised he would make enquiries to see whether someone involved could attend a future meeting to talk through the process of recruitment and the work they carried out.

CCTV – the Provost and SBC Councillor Robson gave the following update. The current CCTV provision in the town was no longer fit for purpose with only 2 cameras working. Previous estimates from SBC to upgrade the CCTV system throughout the Borders were estimated at £800,000 and deemed financially unfeasible. The Provost and SBC Councillor Robson had visited the Police Station to inspect the system and see whether any remedial repairs could be carried out. SBC Councillor Robson discovered that there was still a valid maintenance contract in place, however, no money could be spent on replacing any of the equipment. SBC Councillor Robson with the assistance of SBC lighting department and the use of their cherry picker and a local independent expert visited each CCTV location in Kelso and discovered they were able to rectify the faults by flicking a trip switch inside each power panel. As a result Kelso now has 6 out of 8 cameras working. It was noted that cameras are missing from the other two locations and efforts would be made to replace these, if possible.

Tina Newton (Visit Kelso) asked whether the cameras could be used to monitor and deter people from parking more than 2 hours in the town.

The Provost thanked SBC Councillor Robson for all his efforts with this project and placed on file his thanks to Ian Pitman from Pitmans Computers for his expertise.

On Demand buses - This item was deferred to the January 2022 meeting.

Questions from the public

There were no questions from the public.

Kelso in Bloom

The Provost advised a community litter pick would take place on Sunday 19 December and all were welcome.

Tweed Valley Railway Campaign and KCC Railway Committee

Councillor Boulton advised an update had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting –

- 1) We have adopted a budget for 2022, to get the campaign off the ground. Total costs are budgeted at just under £4,000. The Treasurer has opened a bank account with Bank of Scotland.
- 2) This expenditure will give the campaign a website with the domain name tweedvalleyrailway.co.uk ; a social media presence on the four major platforms: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram; email addresses; quarterly newsletters; quarterly press releases; a place to meet six times a year and host an AGM (in October); social media management software; core administration software; access to Zoom; a data protection registration; and treasury and secretarial support and equipment.
- 3) An application for £2,500 of funding was filed with the Cheviot Community Fund on 30 November. We will know on 26 January if we have been successful.
- 4) Even if we do succeed, the remaining £1,500 or so we need will be met from three sources. Membership fees (set at £5 for 2022): we need at least 100 members by this time next year. We also need to raise at least £100 in donations and the remaining £900 or so will be from contributions in kind. We aim to smash all of those numbers!
- 5) We are extremely grateful to Kelso Community Council for its assistance and to the Scottish Borders Council for making available the Town Hall for meetings. We hope we can continue to rely on ongoing support from Scottish Borders Council and Community Councils and can gain support from Northumberland County Council and Parish Councils.
- 6) There have been three significant developments in rail. First, is the publication of the UK Integrated Rail Plan which will increase the importance of Carlisle where trains linking to the high-speed network will split to Glasgow and Edinburgh. As the Tweed Valley Railway would provide a link, through the extended Borders Rail, to Carlisle, this is seen as a positive. The plan also targets electrification of Borders Rail – again, another positive. Second, is the publication of a consultation by the South-East Scotland Transport Partnership. This mentions extensions to the rail network but does not

currently contemplate a crucial East-West train link in the Scottish Borders. The consultation closes on 11 February so we have important work to do there. Third, is the exciting news that Reston station is set to re-open by the end of 2021.

- 7) 2022 is going to be a huge year for the Tweed Valley Railway Campaign as we build our communications and engagement strategy; enlist a full complement of talents and skills on the Management Committee; quickly grow membership; raise awareness throughout the region and beyond; and generate masses of support and lots of excitement for the Tweed Valley Railway.

Councillor Russell circulated copies of the membership application form. The Provost thanked Councillor Boulton for this update.

Secretary's Report

- Correspondence, consultations, planning, traffic regulations etc. had been circulated and captured and a summary would be attached to the minutes.
- Emma Harper MSP - Abandoned & Derelict Buildings and Vacant Land. The Kelso Council considered the Derelict Buildings letter and agreed that there were no actual derelict and abandoned buildings in Kelso. However there are several that are in need of major work and TLC but they are all in private ownership. These include Roxburgh House, Bowmont House, an old shop opposite the old High School and old jail. All these sites will probably be developed at some stage but we are unsure how much power Local Authorities have in moving private owners on. We are not sure if these properties would qualify for this grant owing to the fact they are in private ownership.
- Dog Education Officer – Rose Hogg to be invited to February 2022 meeting

Provost Report

The Provost advised he had been the official judge at the “Best Window Display” and commented the traders had made an enormous effort this year, as usual, and he had found it difficult to make a decision but had awarded the prize to Swans shoe shop.

The Provost commented he had been invited to several Christmas celebrations but these had been cancelled. He hoped he would be able to attend the lighting of the Christmas tree at Queens House later in the month.

The Provost advised Dean Weatherston had contacted him to advise he had a copy of Will Ogilvies book from Charlie Robertson.

HRH Queen Elizabeth Platinum Jubilee

The Provost advised in 2022, Her Majesty, The Queen will become the first British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee, seventy years of service, having acceded to the throne on 6th February 1952 when Her Majesty was 25 years old. An extended Bank Holiday, from Thursday 2nd to Sunday 5th June 2022, will provide an opportunity for communities and people throughout the United Kingdom to come

together to celebrate the historic milestone. The four days of celebrations will include public events and community activities, as well as national moments of reflection on The Queen's 70 years of service.

A sum of £70k has been allocated to enable non-profit making community/voluntary groups, schools and churches within the Borders whose project or activity is for the benefit of the wider community, to apply for grant funding to take part in celebratory events/community and legacy projects to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Weekend.

The Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) is a tree planting initiative created to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee in 2022. Everyone across the UK is being invited to plant trees. The QGC will create a network of individual trees, avenues, copses and whole woodlands in honour of The Queen's service and the legacy she has built.

The Queen's Green Canopy will create a network of individual trees, avenues, copses and whole woodlands in honour of The Queen's service and the legacy she has built. This will create a green legacy of its own, with every tree planted bringing benefits for people, wildlife and climate, now and for the future.

The Community Councillors discussed the possibility of planting in Bridge End Park, on the land opposite the Community Orchard and placing trees in the Square. It was agreed further discussions would be needed to take this forward and the Provost would mention this in the next Kelso Life article and ask the public for their views.

In response to a question on who owned the land opposite the Community Orchard, SBC Councillor Mountford advised it was SBC and if the community wished to adopt the site for tree planting they would need to apply for a Community Asset Transfer by writing to John Curry, Director of Assets and Infrastructure.

Scottish Borders Council Community Network (SBCCN)

Councillor McGrath advised that for personal reason he had decided to retire from the chair of the Community Council's Network but remain on the Core Group and continue to focus on the Community Empowerment and health and social work integration. He reminded Councillors that parts 7 and 10 of the Community Empowerment Act were still outstanding. A copy of Councillor McGrath's retiral letter and a document charting work on community empowerment would be circulated once received. Councillor McGrath advised the former Vice Chair James Anderson from Eyemouth is the new Chair. Councillor McGrath advised the SBCCN had met on 1 December 2021

The Provost asked Councillors if they supported Councillor McGrath continuing with his post as the Kelso Community Council representative on the SBCCN – as he was elected as Chair but resigned in case anyone else wished to take his place – no objections were received.

Councillor McGrath advised the Cheviot Community Engagement Officer was David Peebles and he recommended we invite him to a future Community Council meeting.

Councillor McGrath reminded Councillors of the South of Scotland Enterprise engagement tour which would give an opportunity for Community Councils and the public to feedback views on what they think the priorities should be for the local economy and this would help SOSE share its three year Action Plan. It was noted the date in Kelso was on Tuesday 8 February at the Rugby Club and this would clash with our monthly meeting.

The Secretary advised she had received copies of the Community Council Handbook – a handbook to aid Community Councillors in carrying out their roles and responsibilities and these were circulated.

Investing in Communities Fund 2023 - 2026

Due to limited time it was agreed to defer this item to the January meeting but the Secretary undertook to find out more information about future webinars.

Scottish Borders Council

Parking and traffic management

SBC Councillor Robson advised he had received an agreement in principle to introduce better road signage for the town.

SBC Councillor Mountford advised the full Council would be considering the outcome of the 20mph consultation at its meeting next week. The proposal was that 20mph speed limit would be implemented throughout the town with the exceptions of the A698 East (30mph), Kelso bypass (40mph), Edinburgh Road buffer zone (30mph) and B3650 Sprouston Road buffer zone (30mph). SBC Councillor Robson advised the temporary traffic order would be made permanent. SBC Councillor Mountford commented he understood it would be a national trend to implement 20mph in towns in Scotland and SBC were fortunate to be trailing 20mph as they had received £1.2m funding from Government.

Open Water Safety

SBC Councillor Robson there were two outstanding lifebuoys to be installed – one by Mayfield and one by the old Bridge. He advised a generous donation of £150 had been received which had been banked.

SBC Councillor Robson advised the Border Water Safety group were planning events in the spring and would update the Community Council when known.

Bollards for Square

SBC Councillor Robson advised details of bollards with photos had been previously circulated and a preferred option chosen.

Lights at the bottom on seats in the Square

SBC Councillor Robson advised these were being investigated.

Ferneyhill Cemetery Gates / Railings

SBC Councillor Robson advised there was no update but would chase a response.

Old Foundry Perimeter Wall

SBC Councillor Mountford agreed to pass on concerns to SBC and if required contact owners again.

Questions to Councillors

The Provost advised Dean Weatherston (former Provost) had raised two issues which needed attention –

The lamp on Rennie Bridge that was repaired last year lost the cast iron topper. Dean was under the impression that SBC had instructed someone to make a new one but that has never materialised. As a result the lid isn't sitting properly and looks like it could fall off. SBC Councillor Robson agreed to follow up.

The wall from Maxwellheugh Cottage down to where the landslip was earlier in the year. Prior to last month's storm SBC cut back overhanging branches growing through the wall then we had the storm. Since then Dean has noticed big cracks both in the wall and in the garden of the cottage. SBC examined the area the first time and it was ok but think it now requires another look in case the banking or the wall collapses. SBC Councillor Mountford advised the wall would be the responsibility of the owner but agreed to get an officer to investigate.

SBC Councillor Mountford commented he would chase up the possibility of introducing a dropped kerb on the bye pass by the footpath.

Councillor Boulton advised there was a tree down in the graveyard of Kelso Old Church which would need attention.

Councillor Boulton asked for an update on the scaffolding at both Union Street and at the Abbey. SBC Councillor Robson advised regarding Union Street the house had been sold and officers have approached the new owners and once the repairs were carried out and the property safe the scaffolding would be removed and the road re-opened. Regarding the Abbey this would be a long process as it involved Historic Scotland who had requested a full copy of report.

SBC Councillor Mountford commented regarding the wall by the old bridge, officers were in touch with the Church of Scotland. It was noted that any repairs needed listed building consent and SBC were currently looking at requirements.

The Provost thanked SBC for addressing the handrail into Deans Court.

Tina Newton thanked SBC for quickly attending to the damage on the Sprouston Road after the storm.

The Provost asked whether the plants in the window boxes of the Town Hall could be removed and the windows cleaned. SBC Councillor Robson undertook to follow up.

Consideration of Licenses

The Secretary advised one application for variation of premises licence had been received – Sainsbury's Store, Pinnaclehill Industrial Estate, Kelso. There were no objections to this.

Consideration of Plans

The Secretary advised the following plans had been considered –

21/01828/LBC – Ms Malgorzata Erbel - external redecoration and new signage 22 Bridge Street Kelso TD5 7JD. The Community Council supported this application.

21/01375/FUL – Ms Malgorzata Erbel - change of use from Class 10 to Class 2 - 22 Bridge Street Kelso TD5 7JD. The Community Council supported this application.

However, regarding the above applications in relation to 22 Bridge Street, Councillor McGrath questioned whether there had been a previous planning application in place to erect the sign initially.

21/01812/LBC – M&J Ballantyne – demotion of teaching block, games hall, music block and dining room and partial demolition of main building and alterations to form 34 extra care residential flats with associated communal area. Variation of listed building consent 19/01245/LBC. Former Kelso High School Bowmont Street Kelso TD5. The Community Council supported this application.

21/01723/FUL SBHA replacement windows 103 195A and 107A Roxburgh Street, Kelso TD5 7DU. The Community Council supported this application.

21/01722/FUL SBHA replacement windows 85 Roxburgh Street, Kelso TD5 7DU. The Community Council supported this application.

21/01829/FUL - Bluemill Studios Ltd: Change of use from workshop and alterations to form staff accommodation, film studio and multi purpose community hall - North Trinity - Workshop and Grounds Bowmont Street Kelso Scottish Borders. The Community Council supported and welcomed this application.

It was noted regarding the above application that the nature of the proposal “change of use from workshop and alterations etc” should have been “change of use from redundant church etc”

21/01842/FUL - Mr Tadeusz Michniewicz Alterations and dormer extension to dwellinghouse and alterations to section of driveway wall: Braeside 17 Bowmont Street Kelso Scottish Borders TD5 7JH. The Community Council supported this application.

21/01836/FUL and 21/01838/LBC - Treetop Toys Ltd - External redecoration (retrospective) 27 Bridge Street Kelso Scottish Borders TD5 7HT. The Community Council supported this application.

21/01861 and 21/01888/LBC - Mr L Becattelli - Change of use of ice cream shop to include hot food takeaway with internal and external alterations SITE: 6 Bowmont Street Kelso Scottish Borders TD5 7JH. The Community Council supported this application.

21/01907/FUL Mr M. Curtin - Change of use from office, alterations and extension to form dwellinghouse - Rosebank Cemetery Lodge Shedden Park Road Kelso Scottish Borders TD5 7BW. The Community Council supported this application.

It was noted that several of the applications were "Retrospective" and various questions were raised which the Secretary was asked to put to the planning department -

- What are the reasons planning applications are raised retrospectively?
- When people/traders move into the town and their property is situated in the Conservation area - are they aware of the conditions / restrictions imposed on what they can and cannot do? And if so, why are they applying retrospectively?
- If the application is retrospective, is this because they were unaware / ignorant of the restrictions?
- Are retrospective applications more expensive to process?
- If the Community Council object to retrospective applications, what can be done to reinstate the original fabric?
- Can the KCC object to the application simply on the grounds that it is retrospective?

Obviously it was agreed that retrospective applications should be discouraged and what can SBC do to enable this?

The Provost thanked everyone for attending the meeting

The next Community Council meeting will be held on Tuesday 11 January 2022.

KELSO COMMUNITY COUNCIL
CORRESPONDENCE/EVENTS/CONSULTATIONS NOV / DEC 2021

Date	Event/Correspondence	Venue and comments
09.11.21	Approved minutes Oct 21 posted	For information
	Thanks sent to Police Scotland, Paul Mitchell and member of public for attending meeting	For information
	Planning application approval submitted	For information
11.11.21	Update on lights in Berrymoss Court are	For information
	Remembrance Parade details	For information
	Footway Closure - Bowmont Street to Orchard Park, Kelso	For information
	Live Borders - Stuck for things to do with the kids this winter?	For information
19.11.21	Road Closure - A699 East of Maxton to Ploughlands	For information
	Emma Harper MSP - Abandoned & Derelict Buildings and Vacant Land	For comments
	Feedback from Inspector McGuigan	For information
	Press Release Borders businesses come together to celebrate Living Wage week	For information
	News release: Further support for people experiencing financial hardship to be made available	For information
	Bollard Options for Kelso Square	For comments
22.11.21	Application for Variation of Premises Licence - Sainsbury's SL Ltd - Sainsbury's Store, Pinnaclehill Ind Estate, Kelso	For comments
	Platinum Jubilee Fund	Agenda item
	Cheviot Area Partnership Meeting - Wed 24th Nov – link to meeting	For information
	QME Care Press Release	For information
	Dog Education Officer – details	To be invited to future meeting
	Planning – 21/01828/LBC external redecoration and new signage 22 Bridge Street Kelso TD5 7JD	For comments
	Planning – 21/01375/FUL – change of use from Class 10 to Class 2 - 22 Bridge Street Kelso TD5 7JD	For comments
	Planning – 21/01812/LBC – M&J Ballantyne – demotion of teaching block, games hall, music block and dining room and partial demolition of main building and alterations to form 34 extra care residential flats	For comments

	with associated communal area. Variation of listed building consent 19/01245/LBC. Former Kelso High School Bowmont Street Kelso TD5	
	Planning – 21/01723/FUL SBHA replacement windows 103 195A and 107A Roxburgh Street, Kelso TD5 7DU	For comments
	Planning – 21/01722/FUL SBHA replacement windows 85 Roxburgh Street, Kelso TD5 7DU	For comments
	Community Council Scheme Review WG meeting - 23 November at 6pm	For information
25.11.21	Planning – 21/01829/FUL - Bluemill Studios Ltd: Change of use from workshop and alterations to form staff accommodation, film studio and multi purpose community hall - North Trinity - Workshop And Grounds Bowmont Street Kelso Scottish Borders	For comments and invite to meeting
	link to Investing in Communities webinars Tues 30/11 and Wed 8/12	For information
	News Release: 2021 Scottish Youth Parliament election results announced for the Scottish Borders	For information
	Road Closure - Hermitage Lane, Kelso	For information
	The revolution of Participation in our local authority decision making has begun	For information
	News release: Borders asked to show their support for #16DaysofAction 2021	For information
	New Regional Transport Strategy for the South East of Scotland Region – Statutory Consultation	For information
	News Release: Mark Rowley is new Leader of SBC	For information
26/11/21	Kelso Resilience Group – weather updates	For information
27/11/21	Planning - 21/01842/FUL - Mr Tadeusz Michniewicz Alterations and dormer extension to dwellinghouse and alterations to section of driveway wall: Braeside 17 Bowmont Street Kelso Scottish Borders TD5 7JH	For comments
	Planning - 21/01836/FUL and 21/01838/LBC - Treetop Toys Ltd External redecoration (retrospective) 27 Bridge Street Kelso Scottish Borders TD5 7HT	For comments
	Secretary contacted Bluemill Studios to see if they could attend our December meeting.	Dec agenda item
06/12/21	Entente Florale Europe Competition 2022	For consideration - not financially viable
	Funding Opportunities I Corra Foundation	For information
	EU citizens want a physical proof of their status	For information
	Police Scotland monthly report	For comments
	Consultation Letter Update - A1 Resurfacing Works	For information

	Supporting Cash for Kids - win 12 months free membership!	For information
	Papers for 14 December meeting	For information
	Demand responsive buses - presentation for Kelso Community Council	For consideration
07.12.21	Planning - 21/01861/FUL and 21/01888/LBC - Mr L Becattelli - Change of use of ice cream shop to include hot food takeaway with internal and external alterations - 6 Bowmont Street Kelso Scottish Borders TD5 7JH	For comments
11.12.21	20mph Community Council Information EMAIL 10 update, upcoming Council meeting summary	For comments
	Lights on ground in the Square	For information
	News release: Play #yourpart and shop local this festive season	For information
	News Release: Permanent 20mph plans recommended for approval as data from pilot scheme shows drop in speeds	For information
	Scottish Community Council newsletter	For information
	Investing in Communities Fund - Presentation Slides	Agenda item
	21/01907/FUL: Mr M. Curtin : Change of use from office, alterations and extension to form dwellinghouse SITE: Rosebank Cemetery Lodge Shedden Park Road Kelso Scottish Borders TD5 7BW	For comments
	Notification re late circulation of MMW December report	For information
	Tweed Valley Railway Campaign and KCC Railway Committee	For consideration
	Comments from Inspector Jacqui McGuigan	For information
	Revised agenda circulated	For information
13.12.21	Planning – 21/01894/ FUL - Ninewells Farms Ltd: Erection of 9 no industrial units, new access and associated parking. Plots 15 And 16 Land South Of Border Precision Services Ltd Pinnaclehill Industrial Estate Kelso Scottish Borders	For comments

FORMER TRINITY NORTH CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
EAST BOWMONT STREET KELSO

DESIGN STATEMENT

PLANNING AND LISTED BUILDING CONSENT APPLICATIONS



1.00 INTRODUCTION

1.01 The former Trinity North Church in East Bowmont Street Kelso is a Listed building Cat B reference LB35744 and forms a focal point at the confluence of East Bowmont Street, Bowmont Street and the Dardenelles.

1.02 The Church was designed by John Starforth and erected in 1885-1886 and is an imposing symmetrical first pointed Gothic style.

The main entrance is at the south end contained in a gabled porch with angled buttressed stair towers, conically roofed and a square tower with a crenellated parapet.

The Church hall is a single storey addition to the north gable constructed in a similar style but to a lesser scale.

The roofs are clad with Westmoreland slate with cast iron shaped gutters and lead flashings.

The walls are sandstone with dressed window surrounds and detailing and random coursed infill split stone facings.

The pointed arch windows are generally diamond pattered leaded light glazed directly into the stone openings with amber glass panels, the main north gable window is more decorative.

Internally the main feature is the tiered balcony supported on slender cast iron columns with a wonderful curved section with relief panelled balustrading.

The pulpit on the north wall is carved oak and the organ is still in place on the south wall but is no longer operable due to rainwater ingress and total neglect for the past forty years.

2.00 RECENT HISTORY

2.01 The Church of Scotland decommissioned the Church in the late 1970s and disposed of it in the late 1980s to an entrepreneur who converted the church hall section into a dwelling house on a very informal basis.

The main Church building was used as a workshop for the manufacture of steel woodburning stoves and the floor and walls were subject to considerable abuse and a complete lack of maintenance.

The tiered balcony was used as a materials store and was also subject to neglect and abuse.

No attempt was made by the owner to maintain any element of construction and windblown seeds from nearby trees were simply allowed to grow in the gutters and roof valleys causing considerable damage to the slating, flashings and stonework.

The owner also stripped most of the lath and plaster from the walls thereby losing any detail finishings but positively allowing air movement to the exposed stonework. This action may have had a positive contribution to the condition of the walls by allowing air to circulate around the building and ventilate any moisture from roof leaks.

An attempt by the owner to gain a building warrant and planning consent for the change of use to a dwelling house was made in 1993 but the applications were withdrawn.

2.02 The first owner after the Church of Scotland ceased to trade at some point after 2000 and passed away following a short illness.

The Church then became subject to a study on behalf of a Kelso Community Group who had plans to convert the Church into a multi-purpose community building but although this was a commendable and extremely suitable use it was found to economically not viable.

2.03 The Church then suffered further neglect and decay and became a haven for pigeons before being sold to a development company from Edinburgh.

This company had plans developed to convert the Church and Hall to residential use and again applications for planning and Listed building consent and building warrant were applied for but withdrawn as the project was again financially not viable.

2.04 The Church was again sold to another enterprising individual around 2015 and another study prepared for a multi purpose community space.

The owner at this time did spend considerable sums in maintenance work to the roof and lead flashings including the removal of seedling growth and some repair work to the leaded windows. He also eliminated the pigeon inhabitants and disposed of their accumulated guano which did improve the general appearance to a marked degree. I understand that he also carried out a couple of wedding ceremonies and parties in the Church.

2.05 It was good to see some progress with this owner on the maintenance of vital structural elements but eventually he lost interest and decided to sell in 2021.

2.06 The Church was then sold to a Film production company, Bluemill Studios Ltd who are the applicants for this Planning and Listed Building application.

Their current brief includes the conversion of the Hall into a residential base for staff occupation and the maintenance of the main Church building for film studio work and as a base for any suitable community activity such as travelling exhibitions, meetings and local events.

3.00 CURRENT APPLICATION

3.01 The current application is for the conversion of the hall section to a staff dwelling house and for the stabilisation of the former Church to a film studio and multi purpose community space.

3.02 THE HALL

The conversion of the hall to a staff dwelling house is an opportunity to retain and enhance the building structure in terms of weathertightness, structural integrity and future maintenance.

The layout and subdivision of the space into the accommodation required presents many challenges in terms of physical space, thermal insulation, access and most other aspects of the Scottish Building Standards not all of which can be resolved without concessions having to be made both by the client and the governing bodies.

The addition of a first floor for the bedroom accommodation also results in aesthetic conflicts with the existing windows as does the need to ventilate and provide a means of fire escape from the first floor bedrooms.

The condition and layout of the fenestration of the existing windows is not compatible with these needs and the solution to replace all but three of the hall windows is a result of this. The proposed new windows will be narrow section metal frames in a grey colour to match the original leaded lights but with clear glass and opening panels as required by building standards.

The existing roof also requires extensive work particularly around wallheads and gutters and at the lower rear section which will be totally renewed within the constraints of the existing stonework and roof structure.

The external walls will be insulated internally to current standards and the external walling reconstructed at damaged wallheads and repointed as necessary in lime based mortar.

The former Hall will provide ample staff accommodation with some associated administration office space and will have dedicated space for disabled and car parking within the current boundary utilising the existing entrance from East Bowmont Street.

3.03 THE FORMER CHURCH

The proposed use of this major section will not involve any major changes to the building structure or fabric. The applicant proposes that the character of the basic structure in its unrestored form will be entirely suitable as a studio and will in itself form the basis as a backdrop for film making and by preserving it in its current state will add to its charm and character in any community use which may occur.

It is proposed therefore that the main structural and weathering elements are simply maintained as they are and any necessary repairs to the roof, gutters, windows and wall stonework carried out as and when necessary.

The only structural element requiring attention is the concrete floor which is in very poor condition and it is proposed that this is overlaid with a synthetic resin screed which will act as a suitable finish and damp proof membrane.

The proposed studio use will not require any additional staff facilities as these will be provided in the associated staff living accommodation.

The proposed additional uses for community based activities which may require catering and associated sanitary provision will be provided by mobile units located within the parking area.

This proposal takes realistic approach which will ensure that the building is retained as a major town feature and put to a use which will from time to time involve the community who have shown considerable interest in seeing this building brought back to life.

The applicant is fully aware of the community interest and is enthusiastic to maintain the link that the building has with the people of Kelso and surrounding area.

3.04 EXTERNAL WORKS

The former Church sits in land bounded on two sides by East Bowmont Street and Bowmont Street, a public car park and a stone boundary wall to an adjacent domestic property.

The Street boundaries are defined by a dwarf stone wall with non original metal railings and the car park boundary has no physical division.

The main defining features of the landscape are two very large copper beech trees , Fagus Sylvania f. purpurpea, which dominate the frontage to Bowmont street and it is intended to retain these and carry out any tree maintenance which may be necessary following a tree survey to ensure the health of the trees and public safety from and branch damage.

The trees sit in a raised area of soil which is overgrown and poorly maintained. It is proposed that this is cleared and planted with ground cover to be decided and agreed.

The remaining areas are poorly maintained concrete which will be repaired where necessary and used for car parking and access.

The open boundary to the public car park will have a new steel balustrading erected along its length to provide security and delineate the boundary. The design of the balustrading to be agreed with the planning department.

4.00 CONCLUSION

This proposal is a great and realistic opportunity following many false starts to ensure that this Former Church is retained and given life in the community.

The works required to achieve this will not materially affect the quality of the original Architecture to any great degree and it presents a great opportunity to enhance this long neglected major building in Kelso.

ARCHITECT
APPLICANT

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