





# Peebles Action Plan



PEEBLES  
COMMUNITY  
TRUST



# Peebles Action Plan

*We need to celebrate what's good and fix what's wrong. Many of us have spent years trying to make our town a better place to live in, work and visit. But our efforts are often hampered by a lack of co-ordination and finance and difficulties in mobilising support. An Action Plan is a way to tackle these challenges.*

It's not a wish list; it's a "to-do" list – focus for a community's efforts and a statement of what local people consider important. It's a guide to what we as a community want to achieve over the next three to five years. It's a road map that signposts the way ahead.

The Action Plan recognises the work done by so many groups to improve our town and create a vibrant community but also recognises that few if any of them have the structure necessary to raise large amounts of cash. Peebles Community Trust is an attempt to put that right.

We know that money isn't everything. Much can be done by people working together, sharing skills, and putting them to good use. We need everyone to get behind the Plan and help in whatever way they can. And we hope that includes Scottish Borders Council, our elected councillors and our MSPs. Together we can make a difference.

Preparing this Action Plan has been a joint effort involving Peebles Community Trust (PCT), the Royal Burgh of Peebles and District Community Council (PCC), Peebles Civic Society (PCS), the Royal Burgh of Peebles Callants Club (RCC), The Guildry Corporation of Peebles (GCP), the Tweed Valley Tourist Consortium (TVTC), Peebles Rotary Club (PRC), and The Bridge (supporting community and voluntary organisations and other interested individuals).

*Together we can make a difference.*





## The Small town with the big heart

The happy holiday feeling expressed in the old saying “Peebles for Pleasure” and in the 15th century poem Peebles to the Play still characterises the ancient royal burgh and former mill town on the banks of the River Tweed.

The Beltane Festival mentioned in the poem still captivates the town every June; it’s now one of many festivals and special events. James I of Scotland is thought to have been that 15th century poet. He was a frequent and welcome visitor. In the 21st century the town’s many attractions draw tourists and visitors from near and far.

A brief survey identifies 14 shows, festivals and major sporting events centred on the town every year. And in 2005, a study by the New Economics Foundation ranked Peebles as the best town in Scotland – second best in the UK – for the range of independent shops and “home town identity”. In 2014 it was named the most creative town of its size in Scotland, celebrated by a year-long programme of additional events showcasing the wonderful range of arts in the area.

But “Peebles for Pleasure” doesn’t sum up the town for everyone. The fuller picture, the one the visitors don’t see, emerged as residents shared their knowledge and experiences. Attractive as it is, Peebles faces many challenges. Jobs are few, wages are low and too many 17-19-year-olds are without college places, training

or work. Jobs outside the retail and hospitality sectors and trades are few and many commute to Edinburgh or Glasgow. Many are self-employed, operating small home-based enterprises. The town is under pressure to accommodate more housing but developers focus on upper price ranges rather than truly “affordable” homes. And services are already stretched.

## Peebles Voices: Local People Have Their Say

The Action Plan has benefited from two years of public consultation:

- Full day Exhibitions and Open Forums held in January 2014, 2015 and 2016, attended by between 100 and 200 people on each occasion;
- Various community engagement workshops held 2016;
- A series of neighbourhood walkabouts where groups of people looked long and hard at different areas of the town;
- Various presentations to community groups.

The information and feedback from these events helped to create the Plan.

We believe that the planning systems that impact on Peebles need a nudge. They over-focus on the short term; they are not sufficiently joined-up.

The Action Plan is also informed by the Local Development Plan (LDP) drawn up by planners in the Scottish Borders Council (SBC), and by a range of statistics and other demographic projections.

Many thanks to all who helped to create this document by giving their time and skills and sharing their views.



**It summarises:**

**What Peebles is like now**

**How we see the future**

**The issues that matter the most**

**The main priorities for action**

# Settlement of Peebles



	trunk road
	secondary road
	tertiary road
	river
	settlement boundary
	buildings
	buildings constructed since 2000
	schools
	medical centre







▲  
North



# *Peebles Now*

Peebles is the third largest town in the Scottish Borders. It's still a small town in planning terms, although our map shows how new housing developments have made it much larger since 2000.

The population of Peebles at the last census in 2011 was 8,798, including 1,542 under 15 years old and 1,954 aged 65 and over. They occupied 4,034 households, of which 35 per cent were of single occupancy.

Peebles benefits from a dramatic setting where the Eddleston Water, known locally as the Cuddy, joins the River Tweed. It sits in a bowl formed by high hills on all sides and benefits from acres of mature woodland and spacious parkland. There are attractive views of the town from the south, eastern and western approaches and views out to the south to the adjoining hill ranges beyond Cademuir. The town is just 23 miles south of Edinburgh or around 50 minutes away by car.

The Local Development Plan (LDP) published by the Scottish Borders Council (SBC) allocates six housing sites for the town, two safeguarded business and industrial sites, extension of the business and industrial area at South Park, and three redevelopment sites at Dovecot Road, George Street and Tweedbridge Court. There are also a number of designated green spaces. Once these allocated sites are fully developed the SBC says the preferred area for future expansion will be to the south east.



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## Community Participation

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This is a strong community concerned to preserve its heritage, engage with the present, and play its part in determining the future.

There are more than 100 community groups run by volunteers. They include scout and guide groups, a camera club, a floral art group, Round Table, Civic Society, Youth Trust, several mother and toddler groups and many more. Some, like the Callants Club, are unique to the town, having grown out of the popular Common Riding, a traditional Borders riding festival. The Beltane Festival – originally heralding the arrival of Spring – was revived in its modern form back in 1897, and now combines a family and children’s festival with the annual checking of the town’s boundary markers – the Common Riding. There is a town silver band, a pipes band, an orchestra, community music group, and a number of art galleries. There is an annual Arts Festival that features all disciplines, and there is the annual Agricultural Show, emphasising the continuing standing of Peebles at the centre of the local farming economy.

The Chambers Institution, given to the town by the Peebles-born publisher William Chambers in 1857, is an important community facility, housing a library, museum, art gallery, the John Buchan Museum, Citizens’ Advice Bureau, council services front desk, Tourist Information Centre, war memorial and the Burgh Hall.

A successful community campaign led to creation in 2004 of the Eastgate Theatre and Arts Centre in a disused church. This is the focus of a wide range of activities including a successful dance school. Eastgate also plays a central role in the amateur theatre groups Tweed Theatre and Shakespeare at Traquair

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## Environment

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Much of Peebles is a Conservation Area that covers both the Old Town and the “New Town”, which itself is medieval. The architecture is varied. The Chambers Institution, parts of which date from the early 17th century, is a notable feature of an attractive High Street where no two buildings are alike. The Old Town includes St Andrews Church Tower and cemetery, and Biggiesknowe where there are one and two storey former weavers’ cottages of vernacular design. More than 150 buildings in the town are listed as being of historical interest.

Three churches in the New Town dominate the skyline. The Old Parish Church with its distinctive crown steeple, occupies the site of the former castle at the western end of a broad High Street, while the tall steeple of Leckie Memorial Church and the lesser steeple of the former Eastgate Church decorate the eastern end. Narrow passages or wynds radiate off both sides of the High Street and the west part of Eastgate in a herring bone pattern (reflecting the dominant “rig” system that still informs the layout of the town), and lead to courtyards accommodating small shops and homes, including Parliament Square, where the Scottish Parliament is said to have met in 1346. Northgate, formerly one of the main routes into town, is an often overlooked retail and commercial avenue.

The older, mostly 19th century, terraces, semi-detached and villa style houses lie to the north, and there are 19th century villas and mansion style properties along the south side of the Tweed. More modern housing developments are mostly further out of the town centre, except where the sites of former mills have become residential. The most recent developments are at Whitehaugh and Rosetta. There are several housing associations that have an interest in Peebles, including Scottish Borders Housing Association (SBHA) and Eildon Housing. Unfortunately the opportunities for development of affordable housing are few, and rely mainly on contributions from new developments.

Thanks to the efforts of successive generations, Peebles has wide expanses of open space, particularly Tweed Green and Ninian’s Haugh, Hay Lodge and Victoria Parks – all owned by the Common Good Fund. The River Tweed is popular with anglers.



# Your heritage, your home



## Transport and Access

The last train left Peebles in February 1962, ending 109 years of railways (formerly two lines – one connecting to Edinburgh and one to Glasgow) in the town. There is now a regular town bus service and buses every 30 minutes to Edinburgh and Melrose, including a newly reinstated service to Borders General Hospital. The new Borders Railway is only accessible from Galashiels, 18 miles distant.

People generally get about town using a road grid that developed piecemeal through housing developments either side of the river Tweed during the 19th century. A number of streets are necessarily one-way. There is a somewhat scattered and sometimes disconnected network of cycle tracks and lanes.

Extremely attractive walks meander along both sides of the river and into the hills. Ten walks of between two and 13 miles are listed on the SBS website, including Cademuir with its grassy waymarked hill paths and Iron Age forts.



### Extensive range of facilities serving the Peebles community

## Health and wellbeing

Hay Lodge Hospital and Health Centre (HHC) aspires to meet local health needs. It accommodates local doctor surgeries (a total of 14 GPs) and acute hospital services. There is a 23-bed ward and treatment rooms allowing local doctors and consultants to lead clinics for medical, surgical, orthopaedic, ophthalmology, gynaecology and obstetrics services. In addition there is acute medical care for the elderly, convalescent, rehabilitation and terminal care, and round-the-clock treatment for minor injuries. Borders General Hospital is located outside Melrose some 28 miles distant. Dental surgeries for Peebles are found in the town centre and in Cavalry Business Park. Sheltered housing is provided by Riverside and Dovecot care homes. There is an ambulance station in Caledonian Road. There are two pharmacies, both in the High Street.

There is a good range of facilities, including the Gytes Leisure Centre, Peebles High School Sports Centre, a swimming pool, bowling green and tennis courts. The rugby and soccer clubs are vigorous and successful; also established and successful are the Tennis Club, Netball Club, Golf Club, Cricket Club, Swimming Club, and Bowling Club. The golf course is much admired and kept in shape by a team of nine ground staff. The Rugby Club also maintains the substantially refurbished Hay Lodge and Gytes pitches using volunteers.



## Education

Peebles High School is a state run comprehensive school for some 1,400 girls and boys aged 11–18 from across the Tweeddale area. It is the largest in the Scottish Borders and has a good reputation. A Millennium Wing added in 2000 enabled an increase in pupil numbers and included a Learning Resource Centre and a business suite. A new sports centre was completed in 2014.

There are three primary schools – Kingsland, Priorsford and the Roman Catholic Halyrude. There are two local authority-run nursery schools providing a combined total of 149 places and an additional privately owned nursery with 56 places where the Polish language is spoken.

The local economy is dominated by the retail and service sectors including hotels, bars, shops, restaurants and cafés. The town centre is considered to be one of the most economically healthy and vibrant in the Scottish Borders, though this outward face can be deceptive.

## Open for Business

There are two industrial or business sites and a diverse variety of artisan crafts businesses, together with the usual range of tradesman; but little manufacturing. Many small scale businesses, some of which operate internationally, are based in people's homes. These mostly provide professional services to customers outside Peebles, and are thus very dependent on good internet and airport connections.

In 2010 an initiative, Positively Peebles, brought town centre businesses together to try and establish a Business Improvement District (BID). In the event this was narrowly defeated at the vote (needed support from 50% of town centre businesses).

Market traders set up their stalls in Edinburgh Road car park every Thursday and there is an artisan food street market in Eastgate every Saturday.

## Tourism

Tourism is now the economic bedrock, following the demise of the once thriving woollen industry. A growing number of special events, mostly clustered in the warmer months, bring visitors and their trade into the town. The principal events are the Beltane Festival and Common Riding, Arts Week, Tweed Valley Forest Festival, Food Festival, Highland Games, Agricultural Show, Christmas Lights and Market, Peace and Justice Book Sale, TweedLove, Three Bridges Race, Activity Week, Peebles Rugby Sevens

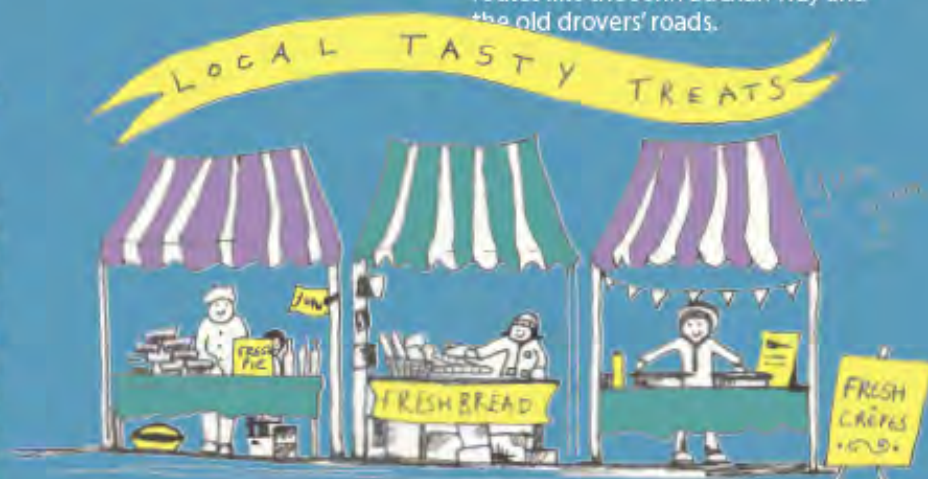
and the Big Festival.

This is a popular biking centre with Glentress, just outside town, a hub for many countryside activities including some of the best mountain biking in the UK. There are several popular biking events every year, including the ten-day TweedLove festival, which incorporates a leg of the Enduro World Series, and the closed road Tour o'the Borders.

Walking, or hiking, also attracts visitors who take advantage of the town's ready access to the surrounding countryside and to long distance

**A hub for many  
countryside  
activities  
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in the UK.**

routes like the John Buchan Way and the old drovers' roads.



# Likes

**"Peebles is also a family-friendly town with lots of things for children to do."**

**"The area is well-provisioned with an inter-connecting paths and roads network, facilitating easy access to the river, to walks and to the centre of town, and this encourages exercise for young and old – walking, cycling, pushing buggies, etc."**

**"Beautiful setting with views to hills"**

**"The view from Elcho Street over the jumble of roofs towards centre of town is very attractive."**

**"A major positive feature of the area is easy access to and proximity to the river and associated river walks."**

**"Peebles has been named the most creative place of its size in Scotland and the best in Scotland for its range of independent shops and home town identity."**

**"The bowling green attracts mixed ages to the sport and provides strong supportive visual images."**

**"Our green spaces, paths, woods and parks are essential for promoting health and well-being"**

**"The area is safe – for young children, mums and babies, old and less agile."**

**"This is a very desirable place to live and there are some lovely homes."**

**"The Walkershaugh and Tweed Green area is quiet and secluded because there's no through traffic."**

**"The views of the parish church are very attractive."**

**"Trees in front gardens are very attractive."**

**"There's something for everyone here."**

**"The thing that makes Peebles so special is its location within its surrounding hills – and that these hills and their tree-covered slopes can be seen from all parts of the town; giving a sense of space and openness."**

**"We could also consider expanding the footprint of the bandstand as a means of improving its use and amenity. It needs to get power, water and drainage if it is to be used as, for example, a café or ice cream stop."**



# Dislikes

"We need more affordable housing for young people who have been born and brought up in Peebles or who want to move here."

"Peebles is dependent on only one road bridge to join north and south of town."

"Peebles is already stretched to the limit – services and schools are not keeping up"

"The old house at the bottom of School Brae looks very sad; it's obviously an old and special property but needs attention."

"The major expansion of Peebles will undermine its attractiveness to visitors"

"Tweedbridge Court is the best location in Peebles for sheltered housing and the idea that this is being forfeited to private housing is crazy."

"The service/planning team at SBC does not work at a local level – cannot adequately seek and respond to local opinion"

"It is difficult to get an appointment with my doctor."

"The bridge columns are at risk from tree trunks washed down river and erosion. I've seen large sizes of timber hitting the bridge during storms."

"We need more allotments and a transparent allotment policy"

"Road surfaces throughout most of this area are in poor repair, with extensive pot-holing, dropped and cracked kerbs, and dropped or sinking drain and man-hole covers."

"Newly married with not much money, I came here 42 years ago to a small, cheap property and raised my family with my wife. It's such a pity that it is so hard for the next generation."



# Challenges

## *Whole Town Master Plan - a vision for Peebles*

### Community Participation

Peebles is fortunate in having a great number of volunteers who run a wide variety of services and amenities of benefit to the community. In addition, and complementing this work, the Peebles Community Trust provides a planning and coordinating role within the community, and promoting new projects and initiatives.

The Trust is established to seek and secure development funding, bring key town assets into community ownership, and promote social and economic enterprise. It has been the prime mover behind development of this Town Action Plan, and is a key supporter for development of a "Whole Town Master Plan – a Vision for Peebles". Together these are important documents in directing and channelling resources to addressing the key issues facing the town, including the sourcing of the necessary funds.

The Peebles Community Trust is also promoting the establishment of a "Town Team", a funded co-ordination facility within the town centre to implement this Action Plan and to take forward the Whole Town Master Plan – potentially also doubling as a Community Hub for the town.

*shortage of  
affordable  
houses*

## Environment

"As quiet as the grave – or Peebles," joked an 18th century wag. The 2006 Pevsner architectural guide to the Borders thought this sliver of wit might still apply, but warned that ease of access by road and "an insatiable demand for new housing" threatened to turn Peebles into a suburb of Edinburgh.

It's maybe an exaggeration. But over 500 houses have been added to Peebles since the year 2000, and provision has already been made for more than 500 new homes in SBC's Local Development Plan. This situation is not entirely welcomed by local residents, though it is of note that any development of more houses south of the river will first require construction of a second Tweed bridge. North of the river a development of 52 new homes (Peebles Gait) is nearing completion at Violet Bank and a second phase of 25 units is about to be approved. Almost directly opposite these developments, plans for up to 100 new units at Rosetta Holiday Park will first require changes to the nearby road network, including a new bridge over the Cuddy (Eddleston Water). Is the drift towards Peebles as a dormitory town for commuters unstoppable? All these new homes will put further pressure on schools and health services.

At this juncture there is an urgent need to slow the pace of new developments to allow currently over-stretched physical and institutional infrastructures to catch up. Meanwhile there is not only a shortage of "affordable houses" (by government / council definition), but also of houses / flats that low income households can actually afford to buy or rent. This is a particular problem in Peebles, where developers prefer to build "executive homes". Even so, new housing tends not to incorporate such climate resilient features as chimneys, grey water and heat exchange systems, energy generation, and increased levels of insulation. New housing earmarked for the flood plain should, of course, be scrapped – but these are still listed in planning documents.

Other challenges

include protecting the grounds of the former Kingsmeadow Estate (19 acres) and Rosetta House (103 acres) from inappropriate or unsustainable development. The iconic Chambers Institution – a public facility at the centre of the town – must be consolidated sympathetically and sustainably. And other elements of public architecture deserve inspiring redevelopment – for example the bandstand on Tweed Green.



## Transport and Access

The road network is out-dated. It developed out of the need to service the housing developments of the 19th and early 20th centuries and is not designed to serve modern domestic and commercial motor traffic.

Council budget constraints mean that roads and pavements are poorly maintained. Pavements are sometimes too narrow for wheelchair users and pushchairs and dropped kerbs are missing or wrongly sited. This means that vulnerable people are forced into the roadway. There is also a need to create more safe routes to school.

Improved connections are needed both within the town and with routes outwith the town boundary. Cycling and walking are important visitor attractions but are poorly served by dedicated networks. Cyclists say it's difficult to get around town by bike and there's nowhere to park, limited changing facilities, few seating areas and generally poor recognition of cyclists' needs. Long-distance walking and cycling routes along former railway lines to the east, west and north come to an abrupt halt when they reach the town.

A second Tweed bridge is a major but contentious issue. A 2005 study by external transport consultants concluded that the existing bridge could handle the extra traffic from housing developments south of the river currently proposed in the LDP. But congestion would increase north of the river at peak commuter times, when the bridge would be near capacity; there is already some congestion at the junction of the bridge and the High Street during the morning from combined commuter, school bus and local traffic. The structure itself is sound, but should the bridge be closed for any reason the emergency services, located south of the river, would face a lengthy and circuitous route to respond to a crisis on the north side. Lives could be lost as a result. SBC has investigated possible sites for a second bridge but none of these are ideal and alternatives should be considered further east and also west of the town. In addition, any new bridge must include safe lanes for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.

*There is a strong community*

*concerned to preserve its heritage,*

*engage with the present*

*and play it's part in determining*

*the future*





## Health and wellbeing

Medical and social services are already stretched and will come under increased pressure as new housing comes on stream. Central to provision is the Hay Lodge Hospital and Health Centre (HHC) – the gateway to the NHS in Peebles. Arguably the former is under-utilised and the latter is fully subscribed. Work is currently underway to try and better integrate SBC social services and NHS provision for the Borders – the local challenge is to match integration and future development with needs – no easy task. Seeing your registered doctor is not easy; parking at the surgery difficult; and for many relatively standard procedures it is necessary to take a trip to the nearest hospital, Borders General, some 23 miles away. Similarly, a shortage of suitable day care facilities for the elderly leads to people being sent elsewhere. Only Dovecot accommodates people with dementia as well as those who retain their faculties, which is difficult for both staff and residents. There is virtually no local mental health facility.

Peebles High School is expected to exceed its capacity of 1,400 pupils from 2016 onwards, but there are also more immediate issues: parts of the High School campus, in particular the science block, need urgent attention. Other than reducing the catchment area of the school there appear to be three main options: build or refurbish a new block or blocks; build a completely new school; or restrict the school to Senior 1 to 4 years and provide a college for Seniors 5 to 7.

Further, the LDP concludes: "If development continues and school capacities are pressured further, a second primary school on the south of the river in Peebles will be required."

On paper the town is well provisioned with sports facilities – playing fields, sports centre, swimming pool, golf course, bowling green – but increasing pressure on land and our green spaces is taking its toll, complicated further by many of the outdoor surfaces being unusable part of the year being poorly drained, or worse, at risk of regular flooding.

Plans for a Skate Park founded when SBC refused to adopt the facility once established. Young people now tend to make use of less suitable alternatives, such as the Edinburgh Road car park. A new initiative is now underway.



*On paper the  
town is well  
provisioned.*





## Open for Business

The tendency for empty properties like Veltch's Corner and the Cross Keys inn to be occupied by large retail or hospitality chains could become a trend that damages Peebles' reputation for small independent enterprises, with increased competition from national brand jeopardising the viability of the existing cafés and restaurants.

The demise of the Robert Noble textile mill with the loss of 87 jobs is a blow to a shrinking manufacturing sector in Peebles. There are only a few vacant units in the South Park and Cavalry Park industrial / business estates and little provision for additional space. We need to attract more and bigger companies to relocate here, as well as encouraging startups. To do that we need to ensure that the March Street mill site remains in economic use.

Employment based on retail and hospitality is dependent on seasonal activities. These are mainly low wage jobs and insufficient on their own to sustain the town in the long run. Young people in particular have difficulty finding local jobs, and therefore move away, or join the rising number of NEETs (young people not in education, employment or training). How can we increase employment opportunities locally for young people – the town offers few training / apprentice opportunities, and no job centre?

A new local trader association and a Peebles business database could connect locally-based enterprises with their customers and with each other, and help to access government incentives.

Unexploited business opportunities associated with cycling and cyclists, with a significant arts and crafts cluster, and with local web / digital design and content management capacity could provide more local employment opportunities and enterprises, and make use of vacant premises.

## Tourism

More effort is needed to take advantage of the area's popularity with visitors. A report for the former Peebles Traders Association following an evaluation of visitors during 2007 showed a huge untapped potential among mountain bikers and golfers. Accommodation providers are already tapping into the golf market but most mountain bikers visiting Glentworth (300,000+ unique visits per year) bypass Peebles and few stay overnight. The Report recommended working with the Tweed Valley Tourism Consortium, involving more businesses and joint activities to maximise the potential.

Meanwhile, Peebles is missing out on a comprehensive study of tourism development. Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) has produced a Master Plan for Glentworth – but this only deals with property owned by FCS. SBC should supplement this with a broader strategic study of tourism development for the Tweed Valley.

Visit Scotland's Tourist Information Centre (TIC) in the Chambers Institute is no longer meeting the needs of the town. Its former function of connecting visitors with accommodation has been effectively side-lined by the internet: Peebles has the most visitors of Visit Scotland's five TICs but the lowest booking rate. The resultant drop in revenue has led the centre to become a souvenir shop – competing with local enterprises. The solution is for Peebles to have its own information centre with a museum-type exhibition telling the stories of the town and its people and making use of material currently displayed in the rarely used Chambers Room – the reference library. This would enable residents and visitors to find out about current events in the town. It would help to promote the excellent local amenities, open up the town centre, and encourage visitors to wander beyond the High Street.



## *The Action Plan*

Arising from 2½ years of deliberations, a long list of actions identified as important by local residents, businesses and town organisations has been collated, ordered, and ranked. This has been slimmed down to present a programme of initiatives and projects that can be promoted and taken forward by the town. The listing and resultant priorities are not, and are not intended to be, exhaustive. Rather they are there to allow us to FOCUS on a small number of practical initiatives, and once we have got our teeth into them to move on to the next set of priorities. We need to take one step at a time. Priority are described in the left-hand column of each page, and the champions of each action are listed in the right-hand column of each page.

A number of clear themes emerge from this process – within an over-arching ambition to conserve and protect what we already have and to “adopt sustainability as the foundation of all plans and actions for the town”:

### **Quality of life: How we Live**

The over-arching tenet of the Action Plan should be that all policies and plans **embrace and strengthen town sustainability**. The re-balancing act needs to start somewhere. In terms of impact on people’s lives and those things we can influence, the proposal is to start with **a review of the Hay Lodge Health Centre & medical practices**, including provision of a surgery south of the river, aimed at achieving a better alignment between provision and community needs and expectations; not an exposé, but a partnership between health professionals and townspeople. It needs also to be recognised that there is a lack of care and facilities for the treatment of mental health and dementia, and it is not easy to access the mental health crisis team. The second priority initiative is to advance the **design, funding and construction of a new High School, or a substantial remodelling of the existing building**. Educational standards are good – that is not an issue. What we need is a better built environment for our kids, a better teaching environment, and better facilities and equipment. Also, recognition that education is for life; there should be provision for adult education and evening classes. We have the largest secondary school in the Borders – but we are selling our children and our teachers short.

It is already accepted as a principle of the Action Plan that sustainability will inform all plans and actions. For the action to take a fresh look at the (wider) range of services that the Hay Lodge Medical Centre could provide to the Peebles community the intention is not to interfere with the operations of the medical practices and the Hay Lodge Hospital in any way, but to explore how more could be made of the facilities that are already there, and where additional facilities could be reasonably and productively added. In the first instance it is considered appropriate that the Peebles Community Council brokers a dialogue between community representatives, practice managers and local NHS managers to explore ways forward – possibly also involving representatives of the Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership and SBC social services. In terms of planning the upgrading and/or replacement of all or part of the High School, this is now a pressing issue. Given the lead-in time for the securing of funding for any such development this issue needs to be quickly established within the SBC capital planning framework. This will be taken forward by the Peebles Community Council, in association with the High School’s Pupils’ Council and PTA, SBC education service, and local SBC Councillors. The task is to engage with SBC planners to identify and advance a suitable strategy to meet the needs of local secondary school education provision.

*Adopt sustainability as the  
foundation of all plans and  
actions for the town*



## Environment: Where we live

We need to make time and resources available to **allow the provision of social and physical infrastructure services to catch up** with the recent expansion in the population of Peebles – a re-balancing exercise aimed at facilitating the strengthening of care and education provision, the provision of local jobs, reducing energy needs, accommodating our lowest earners (and often the very people we rely on to provide town services), providing safe transport options, and dealing with floods. Over-dependence on developer contribution to fund infrastructure improvements have brought us to the current situation, further compromised by overly tight Council budgets. We need to take a breather, and to achieve this it is proposed that there should be a **slow-down in the building of new houses**. In tandem with this, the quality of the environment around us (natural, built, economic) is weakening as our community grows and “apparently” prospers. It’s not working. As a second thread under environment, we need to pay more attention to **protecting and enhancing the landscape setting of the town** – maintaining our green spaces, and encouraging strategic planting (trees and hedgerows) on the hillsides and visual gateways to town to strengthen visual impact as well as enhance water retention and reduce erosion.

The intervention points on housing, infrastructure and landscape are likely to be of a more political and planning related nature, though it is expected that effective drafting of the Town Master Plan, hopefully leading to its recognition / adoption by SBC planners, will provide important leverage in achieving progress against these action points. Key organisations taking this forward will be the Peebles Community Trust, the Peebles Community Council, the Peebles Civic Society and Tweedgreen.



## Community Participation: How we Network

The town needs to build up its capacity to influence the future development of the town, and to promote, fund and undertake / progress priority projects. The first steps have already been taken with the **formation of the Peebles Community Trust** and the **preparation and completion of this Town Action Plan**. Next up is the **drafting of the Whole Town Master Plan** – which will establish the principles that should govern future development – and the **establishment of a “Town Team”** – essentially a town development coordination unit comprising a funded coordinator and office / shop window, located in a central and visible position in the town, and supported by a small complement of volunteers and paid staff tasked with planning and taking forward priority actions.

The Peebles Community Trust will head up these initiatives, and will seek professional support from Scottish Borders Council, and funding and other support from programmes operated by the Scottish Government (such as the Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative, Town Centre Regeneration Programmes, the Scotland Innovation Challenge, and other initiatives arising from the Scotland Communities Empowerment Bill), from the Development Trust Association Scotland (DTAS), and from public, charitable trusts and funding bodies. Once the “Town Team” is funded and operational, its lead officer will then form a focal point for these and other projects.

## Infrastructure and connectivity: How we move around

We also need to focus on making sure that we can get around town easily and safely – and with less use of the car for short trips. Here the starting point is cycling and walking – we are making great progress with our multi-use paths to Lyne, Innerleithen and Eddleston, but rather less progress simplifying travel in-town. Our first priority is therefore to **plan out how we can improve our in-town network of paths**, with a particular focus on improving off-road paths to handle more cycle as well as pedestrian traffic. We also need to make sure we have level pavements and well-situated lowered kerbs and ramps for wheelchair users and pushchairs. On top of that we need a **better balance between on- and off-street parking, cycle parking and public transport provision**. A second Tweed bridge, appropriately located, would ease town centre traffic congestion at peak periods. And jumping ahead of ourselves, a specific priority is to **level the “hump” at the back of Hay Lodge House** linking the riverside path connecting Greenside to Hay Lodge Park. Plenty of background work has already been undertaken; it is now a matter of negotiating permissions and raising the necessary funding.

The intention is to focus on making the experience of walking and cycling around town more attractive, including attention to bike and car parking. Considerable headway has already been achieved by Tweedgreen, with assistance from Cycling Scotland, and further work is encouraged. SBC strategic transport studies have been undertaken and continue in relation to developments north and south of the river; study outputs need to be translated into functional improvements, with rather greater focus on pedestrian and cycle path networks. Pressure to this effect will be applied by the Peebles Community Trust, the Peebles Community Council, and Tweedgreen. In addition, and arising from some of the earlier work referred to above, the Callants are taking forward planning and funding initiatives to bring about levelling of the “hump” at Hay Lodge Park so as to facilitate access to the park along this entrance route by wheelchair users and children on bicycles.

## Economy : Where we work

Peebles households have above average earnings, yet we support a minimum wage service economy in our town centre, and we host a busy Foodbank; we can offer little in the way of local work with clear earnings progression for our established workforce, let alone for our school-leavers and those returning from college; we have failed to retain traditional mill work, but struggle to bring in new businesses; and even if we could, any available land is quickly converted to housing. Many issues arise from a lack of local employment. We need to create more better paid jobs, we need to **actively encourage businesses to locate to Peebles**, and we need to **ensure that the March Street Mill site remains an economic asset** and doesn't turn into yet another housing estate. There is a demand for small start-up areas.



These action points are perhaps those presenting the largest hurdles, but also offering the greatest transformational potential. Given this backdrop it is considered most appropriate to instigate establishment of a multi-agency / multi-organisational task force to advance these actions. This will necessarily involve at a minimum the Economic Development and Planning sections of SBC, and representatives from Scottish Enterprise (and maybe also Forestry Commission Scotland and Cycling Scotland) and from the following town organisations – the Peebles Community Trust, the Peebles Community Council, the larger existing businesses operating in the town, the retail traders association, and a Peebles business association. It should be noted that neither a Peebles retail traders association nor a Peebles business association currently exist. The principal focus of the Task Force will be to come up with, and then take forward, a strategy and plan to achieve the intended outcomes. In the case of the March Street Mill site, the issue is pressing and some form of “fast-track” intervention is called for. The initiative will be championed by the Peebles Community Trust and the Peebles Community Council, with support from the Economic Development section of SBC.



## Tourism: How we welcome visitors

And we have the crucial matter of tourism – the lubricant that keeps our small-town heart pumping. Whilst a large proportion of us disappear off to Edinburgh, the Bush, and Gala to earn our pennies, the lifeblood of our local economy is tourism – visitors to our shops, cafés and hostels; our guesthouses and B&Bs, and hotels; and even to our wigwams, caravans and lodges. “Peebles for Pleasure” remains at the forefront of our offer, but we need to keep abreast of the times. Today, most days, Glentress welcomes the stream of visitors that keeps it at the top of the mountain biking lists, but still Peebles is hesitant to fully embrace our lycra and mud clad visitors. Likewise there is more that we could do for our rambles and birdwatchers, our conference goers and festival watchers. It’s been said before, but what we need is a strong tourism brand for the town within **a comprehensive Upper Tweed Valley Tourism Strategy**. And to take forward the Peebles bit of that – the largest settlement in the Upper Tweed, offering the most accommodation, the largest number of pubs and coffee shops, and the greatest array of souvenir shops – **we need a vibrant Peebles Traders Association** and **we need a Peebles Business Network** (linking all those small and medium-sized businesses operating from upstairs rooms, garages and extensions around town).

The focus is on the development of an integrated Tourism Strategy for the Tweed Valley – to be taken forward by the Tweed Valley Tourism Consortium, with support from Economic Development at SBC, and VisitScotland. In addition there is a need to (re-)establish a Peebles Retail Traders Association and to at a minimum bring together and publicise a listing of all the other businesses (large and small) that are based in or otherwise operate from Peebles and its surrounds. The “Positively Peebles” Business Improvement District (BID) initiative of a few years ago only very narrowly failed to get the level of support it needed to secure external funding. This or an equivalent route to establishment of a Traders Association will be taken forward by the Community Trust in association with Economic Development SBC. A similar initiative to encourage collaboration between the many other businesses in Peebles should be taken forward by the same bodies.





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## Local Residents & Businesses: What You Can Do To Help

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### *Join the Peebles Community Trust*

Membership is just £1 and we need a large membership to demonstrate to funding bodies that the community is fully supportive of the actions set out in this Action Plan. Being a member also makes it easier for you to keep in touch as things progress - and it's easy to sign up using the Peebles Community website - [www.PeeblesCommunity.org](http://www.PeeblesCommunity.org)

### *Join one of the Action Groups that will be formed to take forward the projects in this Action Plan*

Are you passionate about improving our local footpath network? Would you like to see a better bus service in Peebles, serving more parts of the town and beyond? Does the traffic in Peebles annoy you? Do you think the council keeps getting it wrong? Be part of the solution!

### *Want To Get Involved?*

Key contacts are shown below:

Peebles Community Trust - [www.PeeblesCommunity.org](http://www.PeeblesCommunity.org)

Peebles Community Council - [www.peeblescommunity.org/community-council/peebles-community-council](http://www.peeblescommunity.org/community-council/peebles-community-council)

Peebles Civic Society - [www.onlineborders.org.uk/community/pes](http://www.onlineborders.org.uk/community/pes)  
Tweed Valley Tourism Consortium - [www.visittweedvalley.co.uk](http://www.visittweedvalley.co.uk)

Tweedgreen - [www.tweedgreen.org](http://www.tweedgreen.org)

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