

DFHC – CHAIRS REPORT FOR AGM 30th OCTOBER 2024

DENHOLM VILLAGE HALL

I was emailed by Lee, just on Sunday 27th with a list of what we have done over the last 4/5 months since we have been formed as a new committee. He requested that this was listed for the AGM, which in his opinion was important for the credibility of the board. I will attach his points as an Vice Chair's Appendix to this report which will be published on the Denholm Village website in due course.

I am winding the clock back and starting with Christmas 2023 as I was involved in the switch on of the festive lighting.

The Christmas Tree for the Green was again made by private donation. Unfortunately once again, the keyboard warriors got to work and criticised the tree. I would like to point out that the village should be very grateful for any donation. It was extremely annoying and disappointing that it was vandalised and no culprit was found. This led to the resignation of a valuable member of the Feuar's Council – Chris Ryde who fortunately remained on the Dean Sub Committee. Thanks should be made to him for the donation and also thanks to Paul and Vicky for the rescue of the tree and to their endeavours to have festive lighting completed in time for a switch-on event enjoyed by many residents. We all enjoyed mulled wine, mincepies, carol singing and a visit from the donkeys.

Following Christmas it appeared that the outgoing committee voted to again pursue the residents in Two Hoots. A Writ had already been served on them in 2022 for non-payment of rent which took a timescale of approximately 15 months of worry and legal appearances. It was resolved in Court and legal expenses were paid to the Feuars. A second Writ was then served early in 2023 and Titles had been raised on the garden ground in dispute by the Feuars Council. This second Writ raised a lot of ill-feeling within the community and eventually led to resignations of the last of the committee members and left only the Chair in that one position. This committee were then elected following the SGM and EGM held in April this year.

To attempt to resolve the position with Two Hoots which incidentally affected the residents in Larach Dene next door, a private meeting was held. Lots of evidence was produced which highlighted that fact that rent had only been asked for once the two houses had been built. There was no evidence in Feuar's records that rent had been requested from the Comrades Hall and then the tenant of the subsequent shop. Archived records also showed the footprint of the building ie the hall and that the site had ground given to them by Cavers Estate around it. The Feuars had no physical measurement as to how much of the garden ground they believed was gifted to them. The previous chair believed it was the whole of the garden ground. Further evidence was produced to show that some of the Bleaching Green as gifted in the Deed of Gift by Mrs Mary Palmer Douglas was in fact sold (not under compulsory purchase) to the Council to enable the completion of construction of houses in Murray Place. After much deliberation we, as a committee and having the powers under the constitution made the decision to follow Sherrif Paterson's recommendation made in Jedburgh Sherrif Court, which was to allow both Two Hoots and Larach Dene have title to the garden ground under dispute. They would bear the legal cost of having the titles changed and make a monetary donation to the Feuars. This is still ongoing as the former legal representatives of the Feuars refused to represent us further. It is well documented as to how much these legal costs have been. It has taken several months to

have new legal representation in place and in fact the solicitor dealing with us has left the firm and a new one has recently been appointed.

We are working with the new legal firm to have all of the land properly registered, investigate the easiest and least expensive way of transferring the land should we go ahead and become a SCIO or indeed a Development Trust. There is financial assistance available to charities to achieve this. They have also been requested to collect all of the legal paperwork held by Haddon & Crowe.

Following the appointment of the new committee, it would appear that the reputation of the Feaurs has improved as we now have regular attendees to our meetings and we also have more volunteers coming forward to assist us at events organised on the Green. We have greater transparency and are working towards even further transparency but do have to have our own business meetings to organise events.

The Rideout was a success in June. It was a bit of a last minute effort to get everything in place to ensure that everything went smoothly. Lee produced a report on the Rideout to see if improvements could be made and to record feedback whether positive or negative. Although classed as a successful day the cost of providing this event is totally reliant on parking fees and it has been agreed to try and source further funding for this event from SBC who provide funding for other festivals throughout the Borders. Obviously this is dependent on whether enough volunteers come forward to assist with setting up and clearing up afterwards.

Every month since May there has been an event on the Green, we held a Family Day, however not well attended by residents it was very enjoyable and we agreed to proceed with another one in 2025. We have managed to fit in 3 car boot sales this year. The last one held on a Saturday was helpful to the Butcher and Cream Puff for trade, so it has been agreed that for 2025 we will hold one per month from April until October on a Saturday instead of the traditional Sunday.

Denholm Dean Sub Committee have been a tremendous asset to the Council. The conditions of the Deed of Gift from Micheal Braithwaite are really coming into fruition now. The Sitka has been felled and the bulk of the brash has been removed and planting will shortly be underway. The income from this has still to be paid to the Sub Committee funds. Their initiative to sponsor and oak tree has been great and I believe still ongoing for other species of trees. Thank you also to Tom for his monthly updates on the progress in the Dean. I don't know how much more information can be given once the steps are reinstated and the planting is complete. They also have a core body of volunteers now and Lisa Telford is also having volunteer Saturdays with adults and kids which everyone is enjoying. I am sure if anyone else wishes to join them, they will be happy to accept them.

EV charging points is still ongoing and this is because of the problem of gifted land not being registered. This ties in with our new legal representation.

We still hope to improve the reputation and standing of the committee in the village and will work hard to engage with everyone in the village. Our next event will be the Sausage Sizzle and Sparklers night next Tuesday and the Christmas Tree Lights switch on which I am currently working on. Just for clarification – I provided everything required by SBC and had a PAT test done on the equipment – despite asking for our MPAN number which we've had for years and saying would be acceptable, they are now requesting a hard copy of the certificate which I am trying to track down.

Thank you to the committee who have had my back, it has been an interesting and challenging time. However there always seem to be an undercurrent at meetings where people want to find fault with procedures, criticise things that haven't been done in the past and need doing just now. We are finding our feet and do not want to perpetuate ill feeling and criticism of others. We are all volunteers and give our time freely and hope that moving forward things will get better and we will continue to live and enjoy living in this beautiful village.

Thank you.