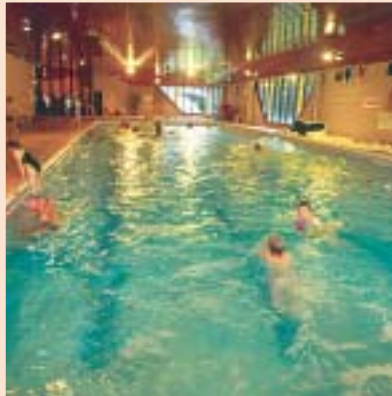


# CHAPTER 5 COMMUNITY SERVICES

Accessibility to Services  
Education, Health and Social Welfare  
Leisure and Recreation

- Arts
- Sports
- Open Space
- Access



### COMMUNITY SERVICES

#### Access to Services

- 5.1 Access to services is a key component of the Plan's Principal Aim to move towards sustainable communities. It is also an important element of the Government's social inclusion agenda. The context for the Structure Plan policies is provided by National Planning Policy Guidelines (NPPGs): NPPG 11 *Sport, Physical Recreation and Open Space* and NPPG 15 *Rural Development*.
- 5.2 In rural areas such as the Scottish Borders, access to community services can be difficult, particularly for those in the remoter areas. The problem is becoming more acute with the continuing trend towards the withdrawal of services, particularly doctors, chemists, post offices and banks. As a result, the need to travel in order to access those services has increased and consequently the availability of a choice of modes of transport assumes considerable importance.
- 5.3 The issue of access is particularly linked to social inclusion, in that the lack of accessibility to services has a disproportionately significant impact on the quality of life of potentially vulnerable groups: for example, older people, disabled people and families on low incomes. In many rural locations, access to a car is essential for journeys to work and for social activities and therefore lack of access to a car can result in severe disadvantage. Many residents in rural areas see the crucial transport issue as being the cost of having to retain and maintain a car, rather than the level of accessibility to public transport.
- 5.4 Whilst, in future, greater access to many services will be provided through telecommunications, it is not anticipated that this will ever completely remove the need for transport and social interaction. As a result, it is important, not only to seek to retain services locally, ideally within walking distance, but also to maintain and improve means of access to them by encouraging a choice of transport modes.
- 5.5 In the case of travel to school, the Council wishes to encourage increased walking, cycling and use of public transport by children in preference to their being driven by car. This change is being promoted by the development of safer routes to school in partnership with schools themselves.
- 5.6 Many key services - schools, day centres, libraries, halls and leisure facilities - are provided by the Council. When any closure of Council owned facilities is necessary, consideration will be given to the role that the facility plays in meeting local community needs, the potential of retaining the facility for an alternative community use, and to any future development proposals in the settlement.

*“... it is important ... to maintain and improve means of access (to services) ...”*

- 5.7 The Development Strategy, in providing for focussed growth, sets out the locational basis for the provision of services and facilities to serve new development. The strategy envisages interdependent networks of towns, notably in the Central Borders, linked by good bus routes. Communities can therefore benefit from new and enhanced provision in neighbouring areas. Local Plans will identify appropriate sites for new community services provision in line with the Development Strategy, guided by an audit of existing services and facilities.

### **POLICY CI**

#### **Access to Services and Facilities**

*The Council will, wherever possible, support the retention and improvement of services and facilities in settlements in accordance with the Development Strategy and will seek to ensure that access to services and facilities is maintained and enhanced. Where closure of Council facilities becomes necessary, for whatever reason, a high priority will be placed upon the retention of a use providing some form of community benefit.*

### **Education, Health and Social Welfare**

- 5.8 The need for education and health services is closely related to changes in the population structure. The Scottish Borders, in common with other parts of Scotland, has an ageing population which will increase the demand for health and social welfare services over the Plan period. In contrast, the school age population has been falling, with varying effects on school capacities because the changes are geographically uneven across the Scottish Borders. The Structure Plan development strategy, in providing for an increase in population, could reverse this trend, resulting in the need for expanded education services to serve the development hubs.
- 5.9 Care in the Community legislation and changes in the National Health Service have led to substantial changes in the method of delivering health and social welfare services. A change in emphasis from residential care to care at home or similar settings has had, and is continuing to have, significant land use implications. This change has led to a diminishing role for, and subsequent closure of, major institutions such as Dingleton Hospital, and the consequent demand for new facilities in the community. The delivery of education services has also changed in line with Government policy. Of particular significance to land use is the trend towards the community use of schools.



Primary Education at Melrose Grammar School

## CHAPTER 5 COMMUNITY SERVICES

- 5.10 The Council will continue to liaise with its partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors in the provision of health, education, social care and criminal justice services and in the pursuit of joint agendas concerned with social inclusion, child care, community care, crime prevention and reduction.
- 5.11 It is important that the planning of new and expanded education and health services is geared to the implementation of the development strategy. Any site requirements will be identified in Local Plans as appropriate.

### **POLICY C2** **Education and Health Services**

*New or expanded education and health services will be located to take account of:*

- (i) the development strategy,*
- (ii) current and proposed future housebuilding,*
- (iii) the availability of safer links to the facility by foot, cycle, or public transport,*
- (iv) the operational requirements of the relevant service providers and stakeholders.*

### **Leisure and Recreation**

#### **Arts**

- 5.12 Arts and cultural facilities not only contribute to the general quality of life of residents but also attract visitors and investment to the area. The Council recognises the close links that exist between the development and improvement of arts facilities, the promotion of tourism, economic benefit and enhancement of quality of life. These links are recognised in the *New Ways* Economic Development Strategy and the Scottish Borders Tourism Strategy.
- 5.13 The Council's Arts Plan is designed to enable and support arts and cultural activities in the Scottish Borders. The Arts Plan is based upon three defining features : the sense of identity and belonging in communities allied to a rich and diverse community activity; the cultural heritage and living traditions of the Scottish Borders; and the area's environment and special landscape quality.
- 5.14 Local Plans will identify opportunities for cultural enhancement as part of area regeneration and town centre improvement schemes.

### POLICY C3

#### Development of Arts and Cultural Facilities

*The Council, in conjunction with other partner agencies and organisations, will seek to develop and enhance arts and cultural facilities through the implementation of the Arts Plan.*

#### Sports

- 5.15 Sports and physical recreation are recognised for their role in health promotion, community well being and social inclusion. Sport is also a growing economic activity and source of employment.
- 5.16 The Plan policies distinguish between formal sports facilities - swimming pools, sports halls and sports pitches for example - and informal recreational areas and amenity open space.
- 5.17 Given the dispersed population, the provision of sports facilities in the Scottish Borders is difficult and expensive to provide and it is therefore essential that provision be made in accordance with the locations for growth as set out in the Development Strategy. To complement this approach, ensuring accessibility to facilities in accordance with Policy C1 is particularly important.

### POLICY C4

#### Sports Facilities

*In accordance with identified existing and predicted future community needs, the Council will safeguard existing sports and recreation facilities and encourage new provision.*

- 5.18 Playing fields and sports pitches are an important component of sports provision and also provide green space in towns. Government advice is to discourage the development of these facilities, particularly as, once developed, reinstatement is rarely possible.



Peebles Swimming Pool

### POLICY C5

#### Protection of Playing Fields/Sports Pitches

*The loss of playing fields and sports pitches to development will only be permitted where:*

- (i) a replacement facility of comparable quality and accessibility is to be provided in the locality, or*
- (ii) it can be demonstrated that there is no current or future likely demand for the facility or demand is being met elsewhere locally, or*
- (iii) the retention or enhancement of the facility can best be achieved by the redevelopment of part of the site which would not affect its sporting potential or amenity value.*

### Open Space

5.19 Open space, other than formal sports fields, takes a number of forms ranging from public parks, play areas, gardens and burial grounds to woodlands and linear features, such as footpaths and riverbanks. Attractive open space, even without the benefit of public access, can also make an important contribution to the quality of life in a particular location. This quality may be adversely affected by instances of town or village 'cramming'. The community and environmental value of open space therefore needs to be carefully considered in assessing any development proposals.



*Play facilities in Melrose*

### POLICY C6

#### Open Space

*In accordance with identified existing and predicted future local community needs, the Council will seek to safeguard amenity open space, including informal recreational areas, and encourage new provision.*

5.20 Local Plans will identify any shortfalls in sports facilities, playing fields and informal amenity open space, in consultation with *sportscotland* using their Facilities Planning Model.

5.21 Space where children can play freely and safely is a central component of community provision. The importance of play as a means of learning and development is recognised from the international level downwards. The Council's Children's Services Plan encourages the availability of safe play areas and opportunities for physical activity for children.

### POLICY C7

#### Play Areas

*The Council will aim to ensure the availability of facilities for children's play that are safe, accessible and appropriate to the needs of children and young people.*

### Access

- 5.22 The natural beauty, nature conservation and cultural heritage interest of the Scottish Borders' coast, countryside and forests offer opportunities for enhancing access on foot, horseback and cycle, both to residents and visitors. (Existing long distance routes are shown on Diagram 14). Access to the countryside is a key strand of the Scottish Borders Tourism Strategy, particularly through its focus on facilities for walkers. Access is also becoming an increasingly important issue for Government, which is currently considering proposals for land reform.
- 5.23 The Council has a duty to keep claimed Rights of Way open and free from obstruction and also has powers to repair and maintain them. Future legislation may result in an extension to local authority responsibilities, which will involve the promotion and maintenance of core path networks comprising routes which are not necessarily Rights of Way. This approach is closely linked to the lead role of Scottish Natural Heritage in securing local recreational access through its 'Paths for All' initiative.
- 5.24 The context for the Structure Plan policies is the Scottish Borders Access Strategy, which has been developed by Scottish Border Paths, a partnership involving the Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Scottish Borders Tourist Board, the Local Enterprise Company, Forest Enterprise and other interest groups. The Access Strategy provides the framework for developing and improving a comprehensive, high quality network of long, short and circular routes, together with complementary facilities such as interpretation boards and toilets. Opportunities for cross-border routes are also encouraged by the strategy where appropriate, in partnership with neighbouring local authorities.
- 5.25 While some routes will not be suitable for all modes of non-motorised transport, the Access Strategy encourages the principle of shared use wherever possible. The development of the access network aims to enable use by the whole community, for example, including parents with young children or people with disabilities. Similarly, the Access Strategy encourages the integration of routes with public transport networks, thereby enabling use by people who do not have access to a car.

Diagram 14  
Long Distance Access Routes



## CHAPTER 5 COMMUNITY SERVICES



5.26 Successful implementation of the Access Strategy will depend on continued partnership working and the active involvement of landowners and communities. Additional policies relating specifically to cycling and walking as modes of transport are to be found in Chapter 6 Infrastructure.

### **POLICY C8 Access Network**

*The Council will support the protection, development and enhancement of a comprehensive access network in the Scottish Borders in accordance with the principles of the Access Strategy.*

5.27 The Pentland Hills represent a major recreational resource, particularly for the Northern Borders and the Edinburgh conurbation. The area within the Lothians was designated as a Regional Park in 1986. The Access Strategy concludes that the extension of the Regional Park into the Scottish Borders could offer considerable benefits for access provision and management. The proposal received considerable local support during the consultative stage of the Structure Plan.

### **Recommendation C1 Pentlands Regional Park Extension**

*It is recommended that the proposal to extend the Pentlands Regional Park into the Scottish Borders is investigated by the Council in association with other appropriate organisations.*