



Scottish Charity No SCO 26072

BORDERS CHILDREN'S CHARITY
Chair's Annual Report
For the year ended 29 February 2012

Four and a half years ago I went into the downstairs room of the Cobbles in Kelso and joined a meeting of the BCC with 6 members present. There was another new girl there too, Isabel Fullerton! I was so impressed with their meeting and what they were doing, as they dealt with 10 paper requests, the tweaking of a new website, the finalisation of a foldaway black and white leaflet and a forthcoming fundraising ceilidh, that I decided to join there and then although I had never really heard of BCC before. Times were tight and the committee was worried about low funds and increasing requests, especially around school trips and home basics. Over £11,000 was given out in grants annually at the time.

Four and half years later we are holding our AGM where we have a healthy surplus of more than £8,000, more than £20,000 in the bank, grants up to almost £29,000 and an incredible £30,000 of donations. We are now dealing with virtually all requests by email, often responding in a matter of days, have increasing contact with professionals directly via email, and have a new and effective website accompanying a successful leaflet which has led to many more donations and professionals contacting us. We continue to have virtually no expenses, and in the past year have had 10 press releases in the papers and have been overwhelmed by other people's generosity and fundraising for BCC.

In many ways, as Isabel has said, it has been a record year but it has also been a year of consolidation whereby all the hard work that has gone on throughout the years and in 2010/11 especially has reaped tremendous success. As a Committee, we have spent time looking at the strategy and *raison d'être* of the BCC, confirming that its overriding aim to help children 47 years ago is still the same today.

In the past year we have brought our house in order: we have updated our accounting procedures in line with OSCR (thanks to the huge amount of work and excellent accounts by Isabel), we have updated our guidelines, checked and renewed our constitution, updated our costings and, as I have said, updated our website. Considerable thanks must go to Jac for all her hard work on the website free of charge and for bringing it not only in line with our logo,

colours and leaflet but for making it so user friendly. The website has been more successful and effective in getting applications and donations than we ever hoped for and we are now contacted by people based purely on the website. The new dedicated email address has made a big difference to how we work. In fact it has been one area of enjoyment for me this year as I have had increased contact with our 'clientbase' – the professionals who get in touch on behalf of the children – and we have had the chance to build good working relationships. We are trusted and seen to be effective and what better PR can you ask than that?

Our PR machine is rolling and I want to thank everyone for their efforts on this and to Bronwyn in particular. Regular press activity has been fundamental in raising awareness of BCC. We have the continued support of Peebles Life, and of Kelso Life, owing to Linda for which many thanks, and The Southern Reporter is always very happy to accommodate us. One thing we should be proud of is the fact that we have now begun to break into more commercial collaborations and have built on the success of last year with the Borders Book Festival and Roxburghe Hotel and Golf Course by having BCC nominated as the annual charity of 9 different companies and organisations. As a result of our collaboration with Roofline Scotland we have worked through a participation agreement, which in turn has meant that we have had a good and proper discussion as to what BCC is and stands for. But our support is by no means limited to the big guns; individuals have made a considerable difference to BCC's purse and efforts this year, with particular mention going to Christopher and John with their MadHat Challenge, to Richard Moore with his cycle and to Bryce Fraser for organising the Wine Man's Bluff. And these are just a few in the many ways we have been supported – large or small we have been so lucky and grateful for all the wonderful and often moving donations we have received in the past year, giving us, as Isabel has noted, an incredible record year of third party donations. People have now heard of BCC and what we do, are keen to support us, recognising that we are unique in the fact that 99.99% if not all money donated goes directly to children who need it, quickly and effectively. As we say, we know because we write the cheques!

As we move ahead we have the exciting prospect of a reunion of past and present members based on all the hard work of the committee and Ann in particular (thank you Ann). A coffee morning will hopefully take place in June this year and following an article in the Southern, we hope that we can extend this friends' and past members' database so that the fifty years of BCC can be celebrated in style in 2015. But we also have a small cloud over us at the moment as the grant we have received for many years from Children in Need is no longer certain. SWAN will no longer exist and, after this year, we are unsure whether we will be receiving this valuable support in future. We are meeting Children in Need in April and will put the case forward to receive some continued support but in the meantime the work of the Committee and everyone who has supported us this year means that we can still enter 2012/13 with a healthy surplus. We cannot be complacent though and need to continue raising awareness and getting support for the invaluable work that BCC does.

None of what I have outlined now though would have been at all possible without such an incredible, generous and dedicated Committee and I thank everyone for their commitment and time. It is not about any individual, we are a team and everyone, (and I should say their families too), has something to give and bring to the table to work together. Every event has been so well supported, everyone has done so many different things to help and most of all everyone has made it one of the best working experiences that I have encountered. But at the end of the day, we joined BCC because we wanted to try and help children in the Borders – we don't expect to get anything out of it, other than the knowledge that we have hopefully helped and supported some very needy children in some way. It is a constant reminder just how lucky we are and how, sadly, so many children in this beautiful part of the world are still suffering and are in need. And it is this that is fundamental to BCC and whilst we talk of our record donations and receipts, sadly we are also dealing with an ever increasing amount of requests as the state of economy hits families harder and services are cut. This not only serves to underline the importance of charities like BCC, but shows how crucial it is that we continue raising awareness on behalf of children in the Borders. We move into another year with BCC in safe and good hands to achieve this and with the support of many people across the region and country to continue its invaluable work.