

From: Michael Marshall
Subject: Quantitative data in respect of Live Borders sustainability
Date: 14 October 2025 at 12:58
To: @scotborders.gov.uk
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Suzy Douglas
Director of Finance & Procurement
Scottish Borders Council
By email
cc: Tweeddale East & West Councillors
cc: PCC Chairman and Secretary

Dear Mrs Douglas,

At the Royal Burgh of Peebles & District Community Council (PCC) meeting of Thursday 9 October, Councillor Begg mentioned having asked you about PCC's facts & figures briefing in respect of Live Borders dated 12 Jun 2025 [1]. If I understand Councillor Begg's comments correctly, you had been unaware of our briefing note, but based on your discussion thought the report might not be comparing apples with apples. You did not provide any data yourself and Councillor Begg suggested I write directly to you.

PCC were aware in June of many qualitative assertions that SBC considered Live Borders unsustainable, but there was a dearth of quantitative information available (either to support or refute that assertion). In order to properly brief Community Councillors, we prepared a briefing note collating and referencing the latest data available from SBC, COSLA, CIPFA and the Scottish Government.

SBC's published data show SBC effectively halved payments in real terms to Live Borders since 2016, however funding from Scottish Government to the 32 local councils in Scotland remained flat, with average local authority culture & leisure cuts less than half the level of SBC cuts to Live Borders. With SBC making much deeper cuts than the average over local authorities, PCC took the view this appeared to involve a level of choice that is not justified by the available data and we called on SBC to restore Live Borders funding.

We are aware the picture is complex and nuanced, and we refer you to our report [1] and news item [2] which we believe fairly convey some of the pressures on local authorities.

We had hoped that by publishing our report and feeding it into the Live Borders consultation, SBC would release its own data and initiate a conversation, however to the best of our knowledge this has not happened. For reference, our report remains on the home page of PCC's website and was fed into the Live Borders consultation on several occasions including:

- 12 Aug 2025: briefing report submitted in person to SBC officers at Live Borders drop-in consultation at Peebles Burgh Hall (by M Marshall)
- Aug 2025: chapter 10 of PCC's Live Borders consultation response (referencing figures from briefing report) submitted by PCC Chairman, Peter Maudsley
- 26 Aug 2025: consultation response delivered in person to SBC CEO David Robertson (by P Maudsley)
- 9 Sep 2025: briefing report delivered in person to Live Borders CEO Catriona McAllister at Peebles Settlement Focus Group mtg (P Maudsley & M Marshall)

Having submitted our report multiple times as part of the Live Borders consultation, we are disappointed that SBC's Director of Finance appears not to have been made aware of our report. More fundamentally, we believe the public have a valid interest in seeing SBC's financial analysis, justifying the qualitative statements about the sustainability of Live Borders with reference to data.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the data and underlying drivers for proposed Live Borders cuts. If you could share a preview of your analysis before we meet this would give us an opportunity to adequately prepare.

Yours faithfully,

Michael

[1] Full PCC Briefing <https://ccrbpeebles.co.uk/News/20250612LiveBordersPCCBrief.pdf>
[2] News item <https://ccrbpeebles.co.uk/?item=20250612#News20250612>

Kind regards,

Michael

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