

Chairman's Report – AGM – May 2026

1.0 General

The last 12 months has been extremely busy, and our activities seem to have covered a much greater range than has been usual in previous years. Further, at least some of these activities have been of a more serious nature than we normally deal with. Examples are windfarms, Live Borders, Kingsmeadows, the hustings, the Chambers Institution and the Town Team (Place Making and Town Action Plan). Also, during the year, we have seen the demise of the Area Partnerships and the Parking fund. In addition, normal business has continued at its usual pace and Peebles in Bloom stands out in this respect as a massive task.

I strongly believe that a community council has a vital part to play in promoting local democracy, helping to form a bridge between community and service providers such as SBC, SEPA and the police and in supporting both individuals and organisations where help is needed. This year has seen us expand our influence through our membership which now includes representatives from the Guildry, PCT, Callants, Gutterbluids, Christmas lights, Traders and the Chambers Institution Beneficiaries and Friends.

A community council is nothing without its volunteers and all our members deserve the communities' thanks for their service. Some especially stand out for their contributions and without any doubt our Secretary, Anne is the very foundation of what we do. Fiona, our Minute Secretary continues to amaze us with her ability to keep pace with a fast-moving meeting. Gill with her oversight of Peebles in Bloom and Michael as Planning Convener (plus) without whom, much that is of importance would not have been done, or at least not been done as well. We must recognise Josh Holt Cabrera who has represented the towns youth and who now leaves us to go to university. We wish him good luck. Finally, we owe a debt to Graham Mackie who joined the community council in 2014 and who after 12 years staunch service, much of it as Treasurer and Vice Chair is finally taking a well-deserved retirement.

2.0 More Serious Activities

2.1 Live Borders

Live Borders was dropped upon us as a sort of bombshell and took a great deal of effort from this team and others outwith the community council. In this latter respect, Clare Swann, who as Chair of the Drill Hall committee was at the forefront of the action. A great deal of angst amongst the community could have been avoided if this whole process had been better managed by SBC. We demonstrated that in many respects the consultant's report was poor and incomplete and that SBC appeared to be cutting support at a much greater level for sport and the arts than other local authorities. Indeed, much of the pain appeared to us to be self-inflicted. However, we are where we are and I hope the new Live Borders CEO makes a success of the challenges going forward. There were few of our monthly minutes that did not include some reference to Live Borders.

Ian Dempster representing the Guildry noted that if information provided to the public is not challenged, the PCC risks failing in its responsibility. So long as I am Chair, then

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at the direction of this community council, we will challenge any authority where such a challenge is deemed to be in the interests of the community we serve.

2.2 Kingsmeadows

Our Planning Convener, Michael, identified that as a resident of Kingsmeadows he could be considered to have a conflict of interest relating to the proposed development and consequential damage to some of the woodland. As all members of the PCC present at meetings voiced the same opinions as Michael and as he was acting solely at the direction of the PCC in responding to the planning applications, this was not considered an issue. Michael, with others has now been instrumental in setting up a SCIO (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation) with the purpose of protecting and developing the woodland for the benefit of the community. Although the SCIO is separate and not directly connected with the PCC, it does have our full support. The work put in by our Planning Convener should not be underestimated.

2.3 Windfarms

Until recently windfarms were not an issue for the PCC. We may have been asked to comment upon a particular proposal, but there was little impact and certainly no money on the table. This has changed. The requested 5-year extension for the Bowbeat windfarm came with an offer of payments to the PCC, Innerleithen and Edderston CCs. This necessitated a negotiation with the operator, RWE and our sister CCs and a dialogue with Foundation Scotland, the organisation which receives the monies of behalf of the communities, manages the safekeeping and investment of the sums received and facilitates the award of grants. It is important to note that these negotiations initiated by this CC resulted in a slightly larger sum being received for community benefit. A selection panel is being set up to adjudicate grant applications, and the first grants should be available in late summer.

Additionally, PCC is negotiating over the proposed Leithenwater windfarm, although any monies available here may be some years away.

The issue of windfarms has become more complex lately as there seems little overall national strategy. Further, infrastructure in the way of transmission lines is not keeping up with either applications for new farms or indeed the construction of sites already approved. To add to this complexity are the questions of battery storage, underground lines or overland pylons and in some areas the question of AI databanks. Consequently, we are involved in the debate over a moratorium and the signing of the so called "Unified Statement".

Credit goes to our Planning Convener, Michael for the work he has put in on these topics and in his explanations of sometimes complex issues.

2.4 Hustings

As we had parliamentary elections this May, we organised a husting in the Burgh Hall for our candidates to respond to questions from the public. Both candidates and public were well behaved, and the Burgh Hall was full, with circa 170 persons present. Feedback was very positive.

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2.5 Chambers Institution

The Chambers Institution is presently in the first operational phase of a two-phase project, following a lengthy planning stage. This phase is circa £4.5M and the second phase subject to successful grant applications could be in the region of £10M. Overall, the projects are set to modernise the buildings and seek to provide an important asset for the town and for Tweeddale and which has a viable financial basis to support it. PCC is an integral part of the process with our Sam Coe having been Chair of the Beneficiaries Group helping to provide direction. Now a SCIO has been approved as “Friends of the Chambers Institution Trust”. Again, Sam is the Chair, and I have agreed to be a trustee.

2.6 Town Team

Since Crick Carleton retired at the turn of the year, the Town Team has been floundering a little. I acted as interim Chair to move it forward. Then Fiona Dalgleish, of the Foodbank agreed to take on the responsibility. However, she found that the Foodbank was taking up too much of her time to do justice to the new position. Consequently, our Michael Marshall has been taking an unofficial leadership role, which is keeping the subject alive. It is important that we do.

An MoU has been drafted for organisations to buy into and modified to reflect decisions made at the last meeting. However, as is often the case, things are not as straight forward as one would wish.

- Place Plans can only be prepared and registered by Community Bodies as defined in [schedule 19 of the TCPSA](#) i.e. Community Councils or community-controlled bodies within [section 19 of the Community Empowerment Act](#) (**completed**)
- However, ordinary, voting members eligible to join the Town Team and its board **must be individuals**. Groups (e.g. businesses, charities, etc) can join as associate members – but can't vote and aren't eligible to join the board. Business leaders simply join in their capacity as an individual

The embryonic Town Team agreed amongst other things that a paid Town Manager is critical going forward and that this position should sit under the banner of the PCT.

2.7 Town Bus Service

PCC took a strong part in discussions over the new bus service and its implementation. Feedback on the new service has been very positive, and it is hoped that it remains viable.

3.0 **Routine Activities addressed, chased or progressed** (No particular order)

- Peebles in Bloom competition
- Proposed bus stop build out
- Three fishes' sculpture
- Greenside car park funds
- Congestion at the bus stop by the post office
- Pavillion gates on Tweed Green
- Repair church bells

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- Wildflower planting in Haylodge Park
- Baptist church site
- Flood risk issues Caledonian road sandbag store
- Kingsmeadows toilets out of action and a push on to get ready for Beltane
- Tweeddale Area Partnership
- Police – illegal vapes, etc. Letter to politicians
- Public toilets and vandalism
- Spigot mortar site
- Opening wall and paths in Haylodge park
- Gold post box wrong wording on the replaced plaque
- Lights on Tweed bridge out
- Objection to house at Ballantyne Place
- Chase police over parking on double yellow lines
- Meeting between SBC's CEO and PCC Chair to consider
 - The Old School House on Tweed Green. At this time, this is still a good example of how SBC and a community can work together for mutual benefit.
 - Planning issues and concerns relating to the work of the Planning Committee
 - Area Partnerships
 - Live Borders
 - Engagement
- Presentation by SBC Flood and coastal Management Team Leader
- Naming of streets in new March Street Mill estate "Weaver's place"
- Tourist signage
- War memorial maintenance
- SBC Community council chair's meeting
- New powers for community councils
- Beavers
- CCTV was demonstrated
- Flood group letter to politicians
- Letter to politicians on roads maintenance
- Air route consultation
- Caledonian court disabled ramp
- Presentation by Cricket club
- Rose Park Wall
- Stained-glass window in Peebles High School with no accompanying explanatory wall plaque or documentation;
- Baptist church hall
- Working party non-financial support and SBCCN replacement
- Great Polish map of Scotland Conference and attendance at Polish ballet
- Town walk arounds with councillors
- Gypsy Glen Hill race
- Additional issues covered monthly
 - Review elected councillor activities

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- PCT
- Chambers
- Traders
- Police
- And probably much more that I have missed

Peter Maudsley
Chair
Peebles and District Community Council