



West Linton Community Council

David Robertson, CEO, Scottish Borders Council.

Jenni Craig, Director Resilient Communities

Cc Jill Franks, Live Borders

16th May 2025

Dear David,

Thank you for your email and the accompanying report, received on Easter Sunday.

While I will refrain from detailing the numerous omissions, inaccuracies, and contradictions in the document, I must stress that the fundamental issue lies in its superficiality. The report does not contain the level of factual evidence, contextual understanding, or reasoned analysis required to support sound, long-term decisions about vital local facilities such as the Graham Institute. Even if the report were internally consistent, it would still fall short of what is needed for fair and informed consideration.

This lack of depth strongly suggests that the original brief provided to the consultants by Scottish Borders Council was much too narrow—appearing to amount to little more than a desk-based exercise. There is no evidence of any meaningful attempt to assess the real value, use, or function of individual assets within their communities.

I must ask: did you personally or anyone from SBC or Live Borders review the report before its release? Do you believe it provides a strong enough foundation for decision-making, either for yourself or for the citizens now being asked to engage in this process?

That said, there is important work to be done, and we are hopeful for more transparent, collaborative, and informed engagement going forward. Following a recent public meeting convened by our Tweeddale Councillors and attended by many residents, West Linton Community Council requests the following information and assurances:

1. Detailed Financial Breakdown

While the report presents a specific figure of approximately £7,222 in annual losses associated with the Graham Institute (GI), this figure lacks the necessary financial detail. We request the following:

- Booking hours and revenue per hour
- Local labour costs (itemised by type or role)
- Energy costs
- Council Tax (including water)
- Itemised maintenance and repair costs
- The proportion of the £7,222 loss that is attributable to Live Borders administrative or overhead charges

We require these figures for financial years 2024/25, 2018/19 (for pre-COVID comparison), and a forecast for 2025/26.

2. Independent Building Survey

A full condition survey by a qualified building surveyor is essential. It must include a schedule of necessary works and associated costs. Crucially, the community must have access to the completed survey report before any decisions are made, or consultations take place regarding the future of the GI.

3. Ownership and Disposal Conditions

We request confirmation of the legal ownership status of the Graham Institute, along with any restrictions or conditions on its future sale or transfer. Specifically:

- Does Scottish Borders Council hold legal title to the building?
- Are there legacy conditions from the original 1903 gift by the Graham family?
- Are there legal or policy obligations requiring the property to be sold or transferred only to a body committed to continued community or social use?

4. Consultation Process

While we welcome your stated commitment to consultation, there is currently no clarity about the process. We request:

- A detailed timetable and structure for the consultation
- Clear mechanisms for how the community can respond and participate
- Confirmation that the community will be given adequate time and access to all relevant information—including the financial breakdown and building survey—before being asked for views.
 - We expect that the consultation process will at least meet government guidelines as per included in the attached link: <https://www.scdc.org.uk/what/2023/2/7/national-standards-for-community-engagement-the-7-principles-in-graphics>

In addition, we believe it is essential that a senior representative from Scottish Borders Council and/or Live Borders visits West Linton in person to explain and justify the council's position, and to engage directly with residents.

5. Decision-Making Criteria

We ask for full transparency on the criteria being used to evaluate and decide the future of public halls. In particular:

- How will the local value and role of each hall be assessed?
- How will the presence or absence of alternative facilities be taken into account?
- Will the high costs and complex administration associated with hiring council-owned halls—which we know discourages use—be factored into utilisation figures?
- Is it fair to compare the Graham Institute's usage (503 booked hours in 2023/24) with facilities in much larger towns?
- GI usage has been steadily increasing since 2019/20, counter to the wider trend—how will this positive growth be reflected in any analysis?

6. Timeline for Response

Please confirm when the above information—financial breakdown, ownership clarification, survey results, consultation plan, and evaluation criteria—will be provided to West Linton Community Council.

The Graham Institute is not simply a property; it is a living community asset, gifted for educational and social benefit over 120 years ago. Decisions about its future must be grounded in fact, context, and fairness—and made with the full involvement of the community it serves.

We look forward to your prompt response and to a more transparent and respectful approach as this process continues.

Kind regards

Mark McDavid

Chair

West Linton Community Council

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