

# Peebles & District Community Council

## Chairman's Report – February 2026

### 1.0 General

#### Tourist Signs

The Chair has no information with which to update

#### Illegal Vapes and Tobacco

Nothing new to report.

### 2.0 Meetings attended since October Meeting

11.12.25	December PCC meeting
13.12.25	Visit new High School
16.12.25	Meeting with Guildry Online meeting with SBC working party on replacement for SBCCN, non-financial support for CCs and more
08.01.26	January PCC meeting
16.01.26	Burgh Hall public meeting on flooding
21.01.26	Meeting with Fiona Dalgleish to discuss the way ahead for the Town Team
27.01.26	Meeting at SBC HQ in N St B of working party
02.02.26	Meeting with Planning Convener
05.02.26	Pre-meeting meeting

### 3.0 Working party on non-financial support to community councils and the working party on the Community Councils Network.

Your Chair has now attended all meetings relating to the above, including the face-to-face meeting on 27 January. A programme of future meetings is now in place for meetings by Teams in March, April and June, after which the SBC officers are expected to produce a report to go to council.

Notwithstanding the previously expressed caveats relating to actually seeing tangible progress, there is the feeling that this process may generate something useful. Firstly, the team agreed to expand the subject area to highlight any issues that may have been raising additional concerns. The agenda included a section on "youth participation" and an SBC officer led on this. This wasn't particularly impressive as the officer appeared to have difficulty understanding that community council volunteers have little time to take on the suggested actions. This writer feels that there is a level of realism missing. However, SBC did take away some actions that may be positive. On the question of a replacement for the SBCCN and Area Partnerships, this was debated in some detail, and it is clear that the original format was flawed and that a one size fits all approach may not be realistic. A suggestion was made that a twice-yearly mass meeting of community councils

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with SBC senior management at SBC HQ, with a jointly agreed agenda and break out groups designed to problem solve may be the way ahead. Your Chair agrees.

### **4.0 Place Making – Town Team**

The January meeting with Fiona Dalglish, Chair of the Town Team was with a member of the public who had expressed a possible interest in becoming a member of the team and possibly in due course in taking the lead. Following the meeting, this person contacted us to decline the possibility. The problem is that your Chair can't take it on and that going forward Fiona's workload has increased to the level that she has indicated that she cannot do it justice either. Fortunately, our Planning Convener, Michael has stepped in as a catalyst to move some issues forward, in particular those relating to windfarms and the Kingsmeadows woodland. However, Michael cannot fully add this to his already overloaded portfolio and a long-term solution needs to be found.

### **5.0 Live Borders**

Our interest in this subject has not gone away entirely and colleagues will be aware of Michael's analysis of the Live Borders financial support by SBC and his exchanges with SBC's CFO. The responses to our questions have still left questions unanswered and the financial position as indicated to the public is not currently considered as complete or consequently accurate.

### **6.0 Police Report**

Another month that demonstrates a low level of offences and no particular trends. It is noted that the police have apprehended and charged two men in connection with the theft from the two hotels. Excellent work.

### **7.0 Speeding traffic, SBC and policing**

A member of the public who has concerns relating to speeding on the Edinburgh Road is in touch with us. To date, he does not appear to be getting a great deal of satisfaction from the responsible agencies. From our own experiences I am sure we can sympathise very strongly. The text of his last email is copied below.

I went round in person to the Peebles Police Station this morning and it was closed. The website said it should have been open. As an alternative I was going to complete a form from the Police Scotland website, but I had to say my concern was no longer ongoing, which it is, and that I might not get a reply. I resorted to phoning 101 which again; after being told the line was busy and that I could be waiting a long time I abandoned that route too. [It is some years since we were last highlighting the faults of the 101 system. Clearly, it has not improved] I will go back to Rosetta Road tomorrow to see if I can raise my issue face to face.

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I had a look at the implementation guide and thought items on pages 12 and 16 were also of interest. I had a look too at the City of Edinburgh Street Design Guidance. Our 20mph limit was introduced on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023. It would be interesting to see what metrics were used and also what has been checked post implementation. My SBC initial response and the difficulties recording any concerns with the Police I think reflect where we are as a country.

### 8.0 Windfarms, Associated Infrastructure and Disbursements.

Colleagues should be fully informed by now of the “unified statement” and that it has been requested that we add our community council signature to it. The latest email from Bob Hope, Chair of Leitholm, Eccles and Birgham Community Council, clearly explain the reasons and your Chair strongly recommends your approval. The text is copied below.

I respond to Mike Marshall's valid questions on what is going on and hope to convince you that we need to stick together and get behind the existing Unified Statement:

1. The problem in the UK probably began over 20 years ago when the then UK Government who have primacy for Energy took the decision to allow market forces to deliver the largest infrastructure project since WW2 with the only strategy to work towards Net Zero by a given date. This opened the gates to multinational speculators who were empowered to do virtually [anything] with Government backing. With no delivery plan provided by the Government, wind farms were developed across the country without the necessary support infrastructure. Electricity was and is being generated which could not be used which has led to the taxpayer paying for wind farms **NOT** to generate electricity. The situation has remained unchanged under successive governments and only in the past 18 months has there been any suggestion for the need for a PLAN. That decision came not from Government, but from Grid Operators unable to cope with year on year 400% increases in demand for grid connections. The UK Government has now directed the National Energy System Operator (NESO) to establish future energy needs and manage grid connections.
2. The Scottish Government, who have primacy over Planning in Scotland, have a different political agenda which is to be the largest exporter of green energy in Europe and is prepared to permit almost all proposed developments. In the past year they have approved 90% of Energy Infrastructure applications irrespective of opposition from local authorities or communities.
3. Climate Change: Is happening. No Community Council that I have spoken to disputes that, nor the need for us to play our part. A Net Zero UK would only remove 1% of the World's Carbon and make no real difference to climate change. This needs a worldwide commitment. The Unified Plan acknowledges Climate change. The reality in Scotland is that due to the

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agenda of the Scottish Government, the South of Scotland is now OVERSUBSCRIBED in all energy production to meet future UK energy needs based on NESO calculations. We can do no more.

### **South of Scotland has seen 37,488 MW out of the queue**

3,055mw solar removed

26,252 mw batteries removed

8,181 mw onshore wind removed - Queue now 16,482 MW and basically full

4. [Regarding] Transmission: We will continue to have to pay Constraint payments until the grid system has been 're-wired' from managing power from power stations to managing power from hundreds of renewable energy projects. This work is understood to take up to 30 years to complete to include undersea cables down both the east and west coasts of the UK. Grid Operators are currently of the belief that they can do as they wish with total impunity. We cannot allow SPEN, SSEN and others to operate like cowboy builders having no regard for our environment or rural habitats. In this respect they need managed through a strategic plan, agreed with, not done to communities. Having a pause to make this happen is essential to ensuring that the countryside we leave to our children and children's children is fit for use.
5. Community Benefits: my community council, faced with multiple applications to develop BESS in the area of Eccles substation took the view that our first priority was our countryside and the wishes of our community. We accepted 3 developments as playing our part and have strongly opposed the other three. Only when a developer gains planning permission and moves to construction have, we pursued community benefits. Being BESS, these are modest compared to the monies being paid out by wind farm developers, and indeed grid operators. To be clear, community benefits are unlikely to be paid from company profits, but are liable to have been passed on to the bill/taxpayer.

### **UNIFIED STATEMENT:**

Originally created by community councils in the Highlands, it was picked up by NE Scotland. They made some alterations to personalise it to their area, however the four ASKS have remained exactly as those in the Highland version. Following our Convention, and in consultation with both Highland and NE, I have removed local emphasis to allow the statement to resonate with community councils across Scotland. Those concerned with Climate change will note that the first words acknowledges Climate change. The remainder speaks to all community councils impacted by any aspect of the transition. I believe that it is essential that as we move forward ALL community councils should get behind this clear message who

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has been accepted by 50 community councils in Highland, 85 in NE Scotland and a growing number from our own area.

### That our Community Councils:

- RECOGNISE the impact of Climate Change on our planet but OPPOSES an unjust an unnecessary industrialisation of Rural Scotland.
- CALLS for our elected members to URGENTLY support and protect our communities at NATIONAL level, given that community consultation is inadequate and LOCAL DEMOCRACY is being overridden, with decisions made by Community Councils and Local Authorities consistently disregarded by the Scottish Government.
- CALLS upon the Scottish Government to undertake a PLANNING INQUIRY COMMISSION to address the whole cumulative impact of all major renewable infrastructure developments, including transmission, storage and generation with all ancillary infrastructure on our communities and landscape, rather than the salami sliced approach which has thus far been taken.
- CALLS for a PAUSE of all major applications, given the impact upon our communities, which may hasten depopulation in some areas until a clear NATIONAL ENERGY POLICY is in place and an ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT undertaken given that tourism is a major part of our rural economy.

### MOVING FORWARD:

I started this process in the South of Scotland in an effort to join up with the other regions. I am happy to arrange a further Convention to allow community councils to formally sign up to this Unified Statement and decide next steps but have no appetite to start a new process of negotiating a different proposal. Please take this Unified Statement to your community council, if they decide to support it, let me know and I will add you to the invite for the next convention. In the meantime, I will continue to work with our partners in Highland and NE Scotland to extend the reach of this movement across rural Scotland.

Bob Hope - Chair, Leitholm, Eccles and Birgham Community Council0

### Disbursements

The last few discussions and the move towards a final agreement relating to **Bowbeat** windfarm is well on and a meeting is scheduled with Foundation Scotland on 10 February. Following this we should be very close to the point that we can advertise for grant applications. As colleagues are aware the annual money available in this fund is just over £100K between us and Eddleston.

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**Leithenwater** wind farm community benefit offer has been sent to us for consideration. This will probably be around £450K per annum between three community councils and may be available from 2030. The offer also includes a 1% share ownership, although how this quantifies in financial terms is not known. This is a significant amount of money and will require careful management. However, we do have much more knowledge and experience gained from Bowbeat.

### **9.0 Road Maintenance**

Most people would agree that the roads in the Scottish Borders are a mess. Some of them are becoming third world standard and we must state our belief that it is not entirely the fault of Scottish Borders Council.

Potholes are springing up everywhere. Many are serious and may cause a significant hazard. Our main High Street in Peebles from the Eastgate to the Edinburgh Road roundabout is in serious need of resurfacing and this community council has repeatedly raised this with SBC. However, each time we raise it, we are told that it is unlikely to be done before 2028. This is considered totally unacceptable. We also have concerns relating to the condition of the pavement east from the roundabout.

If it is not entirely the fault of SBC, then whose fault is it? It is only possible to level this particular issue squarely at the door of our Scottish Government in Holyrood. Councillors of all persuasions have consistently identified that although, at 3000km, we have a considerably greater quantity of road surface to maintain than urban local authorities such as Edinburgh and Glasgow we receive no additional funding from Scottish Government to assist with this. The annual funding settlement from Scottish Government is largely based on per head of population, and we have only 116,000 people in the Scottish Borders compared with 530,000 for City of Edinburgh Council. Their (Edinburgh) Roads and Pavements budget was around £40m last year where ours was around £8m. Edinburgh has circa 1,500 Km of roads. [figures provided by elected SBC councillor] Therefore, in a fair society, the SBC budget would reflect twice the roads network, perhaps, around £20m.

We are told that the backlog of required work in the Scottish Borders is around £135M if we include both roads and bridges. Probably more if pavements are included and the budget is apparently around £5M. Clearly there is something badly wrong with our treatment in the Borders when compared with our Capital city. Ratepayers, whether rural or in towns should have every right to expect equal treatment. We have a right to have safe roads and the tourists visiting our region need to see a country that we are proud of. This writer has concerns on both counts.

Peter Maudsley  
Chair - Peebles and District Community Council