



Community Council of the Royal Burgh of Peebles and District

**Minutes of the 327th Meeting of the Community Council which was held on
Thursday 13 February 2025 at 7pm in the Burgh Hall, Peebles. The meeting
was recorded for the purposes of Minuting and Reporting.**

Present: A Snoddy (Secretary), F Richardson, G MacDonald, G Mackie (Vice Chairman and Treasurer), G Ramsay, J Holt Cabrera, J Wilson, K Guiney, M Bruce, M Marshall (Planning Convenor), P Maudsley (Chairman), S Watson, Cllr Begg, Cllr Douglas, Cllr Pirone, Cllr Small, Cllr Thomson

In attendance: PC G Beaumont of Police Scotland

Members of the Public: R Hamilton, M MacDonald, J Topalian, J Falla, H Narracott, K Peebles.

Apologies: S MacKay, A Mackenzie, J McMordie, S Coe and Cllr Tatler.

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was recorded for the purposes of minuting and reporting. The minutes will be published with names of the public unless requested otherwise. Third parties outwith the meeting will not be identified unless relevant.

Difficulty hearing the meetings has been reported; a solution is being explored.

Reports referred to in the Minutes are available to view at <https://ccrbpeebles.co.uk>

Police Scotland

PC Gary Beaumont from Police Scotland was in attendance and began by noting resource challenges in the role, including liaising with twelve community councils and extensive paperwork. PC Beaumont highlighted issues with vandalism (fires in bins, etc.) in areas like Tweed Green, Port Brae, and Old Town. Efforts are being made to enhance security with CCTV cameras funded by PS, with quick access to crime footage. There are ongoing discussions about patrolling, school issues, and community outreach, particularly focusing on education regarding the cost of fire service call-outs. PC Beaumont noted the difficulty in catching perpetrators due to lack of evidence. CCTV cameras for the Borders are being pushed forward despite resource limitations. Police resources will be stretched thinner due to lack of a dedicated CAT. The disbandment of the Community Action Team was highlighted as shortsighted, leading to concerns about increased workload and challenges in dealing with specific incidents. The Chair emphasised that the CAT was essential for the community's safety and security. A unanimous decision was made that PCC would write to the CEO at SBC, expressing concern about the loss of the CAT.

Open Forum:

J Falla, a member of the public, raised issues with old signage and street signs still not removed, despite multiple requests. Cllr Thomson has forwarded the list to SBC. He is worried that the fence along the newly opened section of the cycle path is not stable. Cllr Begg said this had been raised already and it had been confirmed by a senior engineer to have been designed correctly for its purpose. Finally, is there an update on the Fish Fountain? Cllr Thomson confirmed the fountain would be discussed at the Common Good meeting in 2 weeks' time.

Dr J Topalian, a member of the public, expressed concerns over the approval of a storage container site at South Parks, by SBC, noting potential ecological impacts and lack of proper environmental assessments available (e.g., bat surveys). SBC planning processes were discussed, with concerns about the missing environmental reports and environmental considerations. It was agreed that the Chair would write to the CEO of SBC with comments about SBC's planning process as it appears flawed. On three recent occasions planning committee members appeared not to be making an informed vote and this needs to be addressed. Decisions made by a planning committee must always comply with legislation. Once a decision is made it is almost impossible to overturn it. Planning legislation exists to protect the public interest and members of the public have a legitimate interest in ensuring legislation has been complied with.

R Hamilton, a member of the public, raised concerns about the threats reported at the Eastgate Theatre. The theatre faces a £60k budget shortfall for the next year, with around 70% of its income self-generated. The Chair mentioned challenges faced by Live Borders (LB) and SBC due to funding cuts, questioning if the pain was shared across all LB venues. It was agreed that the Eastgate is a vital part of the community, and its loss would be a tragedy. There was a call for support, with suggestions including raffles, JustGiving pages, and lotteries. Cllr Pirone emphasised the need for shared responsibility in facing financial difficulties and highlighted the importance of reviewing all facilities. Live Borders is running at a loss, and there's a nationwide decline in arts funding, with changes in Creative Scotland's funding packages. The Chair emphasised the need for clear communication in Peebles. The Chair clarified that some funding would still be available, but it's uncertain. Members discussed the public's role in supporting the theatre, especially in terms of filling auditoriums to increase income, reducing reliance on grants. The theatre serves as more than just a venue for performances—it's a crucial social resource for the community, serving all ages.

Approval of the Minutes of 9 January 2025: The Minutes were approved as amended by M Bruce and seconded by S Watson.

AMENDMENT: Cllr Thomson wishes to clarify the situation about the fundings and timings regarding a new entrance/exit in Campbell's Dyke. *"The application was submitted in its current form to meet the timelines for an end of year spend as a small amount of funding has potentially become available from Sustrans. The proposed works will form part of the overall multi use path works but can be done as a standalone project. The application is for listed building consent which is different to a normal planning application. It was noted that should the bid for monies not be successful the project would not be carried out at this time. An assurance was also given that the appropriate plans are being drafted in the background. It will need to come to the Common Good Committee and will be on the agenda for the meeting on 26 February."*

AMENDMENT: *"S Coe said there was not much to report this month. The architects are working away to clarify proposals, and he expects an update at the next CIT meeting. Meantime a meeting with tenants was planned for the following week when options for decanting current tenants would likely be discussed, and although he had an invitation S Coe may not need to attend and we will hear the outcome in due course."*

Matters arising from the Minutes:

Eastgate Toilets: Still no plans to re-open.

Fish Fountain: Will be discussed at the Common Good meeting later this month.

Gold post box: This is in hand.

Bus stop build out in the High Street: No further update.

Glensax Road: The proposed felling of the trees has been dealt with and all the residents are happy with the the resolution.

Gate on School Brae: Fixed.

SBC's deliberation about charging for Common Good assets: Will be discussed at CG meeting in February.

The proposed hole in the wall of Haylodge Park: This is to be discussed at a meeting of the Common Good on 26 February.

Chairman's report: This had been circulated.

Peebles Town Action Plan: The group agreed that the Peebles Place team is needed to move forward, and we need a town manager. The team, representing PCT, the Civic Society, PCC and other groups, would represent Peebles on windfarm issues. PCC fully supports the coordinated group of Eddleston, Innerleithen and Peebles Community Councils focusing on windfarm-related matters across all three communities.

Planning report: This had been circulated.

Community Benefit from windfarms: This is ongoing, and M Marshall had circulated several informative documents. RWE have made an offer for benefits from Bowbeat windfarm starting August 2025. PCC have also received legal advice on Memoranda of Understanding from Belltown Power re: Leithenwater windfarm. M Marshall encouraged everyone to reach out for further information or with questions. J Wilson said that she, and perhaps others in PCC, would benefit from a deeper conversation around this to reach a fuller understanding, particularly if they are part of any decision-making. Cllr Thomson suggested using one of the scheduled meetings to do a catch-up, where it's not an official meeting. Most CCs take a month, or two, off every year. M Bruce disagreed with having a meeting where the public was not invited. The Chair will consider a way forwards.

Peebles Community Trust: The report had been circulated.

SBC Councillors' reports:

Cllr Begg: provided an update on the Tweed Tourism BID, focusing on the Go Tweed Valley initiative, which includes innovative activities and trails. Tweed Trails Advocacy Group meeting was held. The initiative not only brings trails for visitors but also includes maintenance. The Old Schoolhouse project is a work in progress.

Cllr Douglas: Cllr Douglas will be attending the Tweeddale Area Partnership meeting at Burgh Hall and noted that some funding is still available for specific projects, though limited. If unused, the funds may be lost. The fires in Victoria Park were raised at the CAT meeting, with ongoing attention being given to it. The Peebles High School project is on track for completion by September, with a visit planned in a couple of weeks to inspect the site. Storm damage and roof issues are being addressed, and the project is running on budget. The Chair said that it was good news that the new head teacher has been confirmed, and it is Kevin Ryalls the current interim head teacher. This had been received well.

Cllr Pirone: Cllr Pirone echoed Cllr Douglas's positive remarks on the school project, calling it beneficial for the town. The new Head Teacher is an outstanding individual and will bring huge benefits. Concerns about the bins issue has been raised with the school. The budget is coming up next week, with decisions yet to be made based on recommendations.

Cllr Small: Cllr Small gave updates on roadworks at Leadburn Junction and the signs being replaced on High Street after painting. He also noted a lorry parked at the bus stop near the Eastgate crossing had caused issues and noted suggestions for the bus stop to be moved to the East Station car park.

Cllr Thomson: Cllr Thomson reported on actions taken by the Peebles Business and Retailers Association, including street cleaning and addressing concerns about the vape shop. She shared good news about four more “pop-up Bobs” which are the cut-out, stand up policemen used to deter speeding, and that the small schemes budget is fully spent and all planned actions completed.

Treasurer’s report: This had been circulated. The bank account currently has just over £2,000. A new screen purchase of £88 will be deducted, and there is a £4,000 purchase order for the Flood Group walkie-talkies. Professional fees for solicitors related to the windfarm total £5,400, but a grant has been confirmed to cover these costs. One bank account has been closed, and alternatives are being considered due to the local Bank of Scotland’s closure. Options like RBS or Nationwide are being explored, with a report to follow.

Chambers Institution Trust: S Coe’s report had been circulated. Cllr Pirone provided an update on S Coe’s report. The design is progressing, with some changes. The toilets have been reinstated, and a lift with a glass front is planned to reach the top floor. The final design is still in progress, but this is positive news. Officers are looking at the Bank of Scotland building on the High Street to see if it could be considered for decanting people from CIT temporarily.

AOB

Bank of Scotland: The Secretary informed that she had spoken to the Bank of Scotland on the High Street about the closure, and a one-day-a-week facility may remain, possibly using a hub or a van. The post office will continue receiving payments for the bank.

CCTV in Peebles: A mobile CCTV unit may be used in addition to police presence, particularly in Victoria Park near the Greener Peebles end, during spring and summer. Cllr Tatler will have more details.

Youth Summit: F Richardson will represent PCC at the March Youth Summit, hosted by Peebles High School.

Fallen Trees: Local traders did a fantastic job clearing the fallen trees after the recent storm and everyone was sincerely grateful.

Murals: Murals on the hoardings from Tweed Bridge Court are weathered and need maintenance. There were mixed views on whether to keep them all, with suggestions to reduce the number and maybe commission new pieces. Some believed the murals have already served their purpose, while others suggested that if space allows, new artwork could be created. In the end, it was decided not to move them. The Secretary will notify those concerned.

SBC and FixMyStreet: SBC no longer accepts notifications from FixMyStreet, as their own website performs the same function. There were questions on how many reports came through, and if a licence is required.

Center Parcs: The pending development will increase foot traffic in the town but may worsen parking issues. SBC is reviewing parking across the Borders. There are concerns about visitors not paying for parking, though it benefits local retailers.

Town Manager: There’s a need for a town manager with authority to address issues holistically, particularly with SBC. The manager would represent the town, have support from local organisations and councillors, and help push forward solutions. There are concerns that without this someone in this role, nothing will move forward.

Roads and Potholes: S Watson pointed out that the roads, while generally well-gritted, have recurring pothole issues that are not cost-effective to fix repeatedly. Cllr Pirone confirmed that SBC has new machinery to help fill potholes.

Men's Shed: M Bruce said The Men's Shed is facing significant planning fees without any charity relief. The Executive Committee has said that any planning applications for the Shed should be submitted under PCC on behalf of The Men's Shed, which will secure a 50% discount on fees. This was agreed unanimously by PC councillors.

IT Gap for the Elderly: G Macdonald would like a discussion about the IT gap affecting the elderly, particularly with apps and banking. This issue needs further attention.

The meeting ended at 2110hrs.

The next meeting will be on Thursday 13 March 2025 in the Burgh Hall.

..... Chairman

..... Dated