



Community Council
of the
Royal Burgh of Peebles and District

Minutes of the 330th Meeting of the Community Council which was held on Thursday 10 April 2025 at 7pm in the Burgh Hall, Peebles. The meeting was recorded for the purposes of Minuting and Reporting.

Present: A Mackenzie, A Snoddy (Secretary), F Richardson, G Mackie (Vice Chairman and Treasurer), G Ramsay, J Wilson, M Bruce, M Marshall (Planning Convenor), P Maudsley (Chairman), S Coe, Cllr Begg, Cllr Tatler.

In attendance: K Peebles of The Peeblean, R O'Connor of the Eastgate Theatre.

Members of the Public: D Ashmole.

Apologies: G MacDonald, H Young, J Holt Cabrera, J McMordie, K Guiney, S Mackay, S Watson, Cllr Douglas, Cllr Pirone, Cllr Small, Cllr Thomson, Cllr Douglas and PC G Beaumont of Police Scotland.

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.

Apologies were made to any members of the public who have difficulty hearing the community council business. It is an issue. All community councils are short of funds. It will be resolved in due course. Please direct any complaints to SBC.

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

Peebles Community Council Election 2025: It was noted that nomination forms were received by SBC Democratic Services for Jacqueline Wilson, Gill MacDonald, Fiona Richardson and Peter Maudsley to commence a new three-year commitment to the Peebles Community Council. A nomination form was also received for Joshua Holt Cabrera who has attended recent meetings, and for Dominic Ashmole. Nominations have not exceeded the number of spaces available therefore an election is not required.

Open forum: No comments or questions were raised during the open forum.

Approval of the Minutes of 13 March 2025: The minutes of 13 March 2025 were proposed for approval by S Cole, seconded by G Ramsay. The motion was carried unanimously.

Matters arising from the Minutes:

Proposed High Street bus stop buildout: No update

Planting of wildflowers in Haylodge Park: Cllr Begg reported there was no update. It was being discussed by the Common Good. There are differing views and no clear plan for now.

Police Report: The report was circulated prior to the meeting. The Chair expressed disappointment over the increase in vandalism compared to previous reports. There was discussion around assault cases, with a notable emphasis on mental health-related calls, which are not criminal but require significant police time. The Chair acknowledged that the police are currently short-handed, but local police officers are doing a good job. The

Street Pastors are doing excellent work, though regulations such as PVG certifications and trustee requirements are proving challenging. Bureaucratic hurdles are also present, and it was noted that observers also need PVG certification and relevant training. The street pastors are centrally funded, but local street-level efforts receive donations. M. Bruce discussed the tobacco products from vape shops with K. Guiney, exploring the possibility of involving the public analyst to test for illegal substances. It is disappointing that Trading Standards appear not interested in this matter. The Chair has written to the Chief Executive of SBC and to 14 politicians and the Chief Constable. This is addressed in the Chair's report.

Chairman's report. The report was circulated prior to the meeting.

Tweeddale Area Partnership Update: The Chair expressed deep disappointment at the formal abolition of Area Partnerships in the Scottish Borders. Remaining funding has been significantly reduced and is now to be administered by Scottish Borders Community Action as seed funding, dependent on match funding from other sources.

The Chair criticised the lack of planning, consultation, and transitional arrangements, calling the decision poorly conceived and detrimental to local democracy.

The report highlights a perceived failure by SBC to engage with proactive community councils like PCC and raises concern about the implications for local democratic participation. The Chair emphasised that while TAPs had their flaws, they were beginning to show improvement in Tweeddale. Their removal may severely hinder efforts to strengthen community councils or rebuild the Scottish Borders Community Councils Network (SBCCN). The Chair will forward a copy of his previous two reports to the councillors. M Marshall said that participation with the community is core. Cllr Begg said that getting groups together at local level is a very good idea, however the participation needed to be more inclusive and easier to access for all members of the community. The Chair is going to send a participation request to be on the team to discuss a way forward.

Illegal vapes and tobacco: Local press has reported allegations made. The Chair has written to MSPs and other authorities with concerns. The feedback so far has all been supportive and positive.

Baptist Church/Cleland Site Update: Progress is being made regarding the Baptist Church/Cleland site. The Tweed Valley Community Collective reports that it has become a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation and is progressing with the Peebles Baptist Church on purchasing the land. They are speaking to many funders, stakeholders and community groups in their ongoing consultation and work to bring the site into charity and community ownership. They are also in discussions with SBC about the possible removal of the structure on the site, which is still the responsibility of the Baptist Church as the current owners. Cllr Tatler said that all residents want a resolution and that it is important that the residents are consulted with and that the Tweed Valley Community Collective also need to advise the PCC as to what their plans are. The current proposal is to build a community hub which will then need to be sustained. M Bruce noted that the PCT is also creating a community hub on School Brae. The groups running such projects need to communicate. The Tweed Valley Community Collective should be invited to join the town plan as part of the place making team. It was agreed that M Marshall would reach out to M Haslam.

Planning report: The report was circulated prior to the meeting. The development at Horsburgh Ford was discussed and it was agreed that M Marshall will write for an update from the developer and copy in Cllrs Begg and Small. M Marshall asked if everyone had looked at the new SEPA surface water flood maps published. Residents should be aware of their risk which is increasing with climate change. M Bruce said that the sandbag store near the Fire Station had fallen into a state of disrepair and is not being maintained. Cllr Tatler will take that on. A Mackenzie had been approached by some of the residents of Ballantyne Place to ask if they would be able to collectively purchase the strip of land that has been under discussion and turn it into a play park and

then for SBC to adopt it. After discussion it was agreed that it was not likely to be straightforward. Cllr Begg asked A Mackenzie to ask them to email both him and Cllr Small so that a dialogue could be entered into involving the appropriate bodies.

Windfarms and community benefit: The deadline for the consultation is 11 April 2025. There have been lots of workshops. The Scottish Community Coalition on Energy (SCCE) are going to, rather than the £5k for onshore wind, ask for 4% of revenue for communities with 1% to a national fund; and for offshore energy – the reverse. And a floor of £7.5k per megawatt. Workshops suggested that wind farms typical profit is around £100k per megawatt (though no citation or justification was provided). D Ashmole, a member of the public, voiced his support for community ownership option to be mandated such that the community to take over a percentage stake. M Marshall will submit a consultation response saying we agree with SCCE recommendations, including up to 20% community ownership stake. These are higher figures than we have so far been offered. The Chair agreed we should not take first offer that is on table. It was agreed the Chair will send the letters that had been drafted to that effect.

Peebles Community Trust: The report was circulated prior to the meeting. Everyone agreed it was very good. There were no questions.

Aarhus Convention: M Marshall explained that this is an international treaty that gives the public rights regarding access to information, public participation, and access to justice in environmental matters. The UK (and by extension Scotland) is a party to it. It's often referred to in Scottish legal and environmental activism contexts, especially when discussing access to courts or tribunals to challenge environmental decisions.

Concerns remain regarding Scotland's compliance with the Aarhus Convention, particularly in the context of planning. The Convention requires that members of the public have the right to access environmental information, participate meaningfully in environmental decision-making, and seek justice when these rights are denied. However, in Scotland, the high cost of legal action, lack of third-party rights of appeal in planning, and limited legal aid make access to justice prohibitively difficult for communities. The Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee has repeatedly found the UK, including Scotland, [in breach of these obligations](#). This raises serious concerns about transparency, fairness, and accountability in planning decisions that affect local communities.

M Marshall reported that the recent development at South Park is a good example of where the Aarhus Convention should have been accessible. This was communicated in the recent letter PCC sent to SBC. It was agreed that the Chair would send a follow-up letter to ensure that SBC are going to consider future cases in line with the Convention. M Marshall is keen to activate dialogue.

SBC Councillor Reports

Cllr Begg: speaking on behalf of all three Tweeddale councillors, reported a productive meeting with Robin Crichton regarding the Merlin project pitched to the Scottish Parliament, aimed at developing a visitor attraction. The initiative was well received. On health and social care, all councillors agree on the value of strong community-based services. Regarding Eastgate Theatre, clarity is still lacking from Live Borders. However, councillors have been engaged, and all are aware of the situation. Eastgate Theatre's leadership and management were praised as robust and impressive, particularly in challenging times. Eastgate was seen as good value for money for core funding. Other updates included the recent purchase of the Pop-up Bob road safety figures—anyone who wants to assist with the initiative should contact Cllr Begg. Concerns were raised about otters being killed on roads, so signage may be considered. Cllrs Begg and Tatler had hosted a surgery at Tesco as the residents continue to face multiple issues. Cllr Thomson had attended the Bowling Club opening where there had been improvements in accessibility. The Common Good Forum continues to explore ideas

around sustainability. Regarding the School House on Tweed Green; legal discussions are ongoing and confidential at this stage, with no resolution yet.

Cllr Tatler reported that the lighting works in Victoria Park are now complete, and three new high-quality benches have been installed, and thanks were extended to Gutterbluids and Campbell Johnston for their contributions. A mobile CCTV unit is now in place at the play park to enhance safety. There had been a meeting to discuss clearing the area around the historic spigot mortar foundation. A team are working to make the area safe. The Parking Fees Working Group is progressing, including discussions around off-street parking and provision for camper vans. Finally, a reminder was given about the Peebles Hill Race taking place on 14 May.

Cllr Begg also wanted it noted he and Cllr Small's next surgery is at 11am on 22 April at the Eastgate Theatre, for one hour.

Cllr Pirone had also emailed to say that she is looking at the upgrading of elephant signage at the school crossings especially at Kingsway and Priorsford Primary School.

Treasurer's Report: The report was circulated prior to the meeting. PCC had been charged by Live Borders for the use of the Burgh Hall, for the extra meeting hosted to discuss windfarms, but as this is a PCC-related meeting it should be credited as per clause (13.7) in the [Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils](#) which M Marshall will email to the Treasurer for ease of reference.

Chambers Institution Trust: The report was circulated prior to the meeting. The next stage of the project is now underway, with focus on ensuring all elements—particularly the lift—are fit for purpose and fall within the available budget. A business plan will need to be developed, and the space should be reimagined with fresh input; ideas from the architects would be welcomed at this stage.

AOB

A Mackenzie is still working on the tourist noticeboard.

Peebles in Bloom: G Macdonald, A Snoddy and S Mackay had attended the first meeting and tasks had been allocated. Please note the presentation evening in all diaries: 21 August. All PC Councillors will receive their routes to walk and more updates will be forthcoming in the next couple of months.

Christmas Lights Association Update: M Bruce and A Snoddy had attended an online meeting with other Christmas Lights Associations in the Borders, which highlighted a clear disparity in how these groups are treated by SBC. Key issues discussed included access to power via street lighting, licensing queries for festive events such as switch-ons, and ongoing difficulties some groups experience with SBC. It was noted that SBC has no dedicated executive member for Christmas or festive lighting—this was seen as a potentially useful appointment to help overcome bureaucratic hurdles. Questions were also raised about responsibility for supplying Christmas trees and insurance arrangements. Cllr Begg cautioned against assuming that smaller villages would want to be overseen by larger operations, highlighting the need to respect local autonomy. Cllr Tatler agreed to raise these issues with Caroline Cochrane.

The Peebles Community Festival: This year's festival is on Saturday 31 May from 10am to 5pm and everyone is invited and encouraged to spread the word.

G Macdonald had asked who is responsible for the lumps of tarmac left at Leadburn following the road works? Cllr Tatler thought it may be Midlothian Council. The secretary will contact them.

The **Fire Brigade** have sent us an email seeking one person from the Borders to attend a conference in Stirling on 29th April – expenses paid. If interested, please contact the Secretary. We would need to find out how to liaise with other CCs in the Borders.

The **My Place Awards** are the Scottish Civic Trust's annual celebration of the difference communities can make to their local places. Their aim is to bring proper recognition to community-led regeneration that has transformed a neighbourhood. It was agreed to propose someone from Peebles and that person's name will be put forward by M Marshall.

Three Fishes Sculpture & Common Good Fund: It was confirmed that the Three Fishes sculpture, owned by the Common Good since 2000, needs refurbishment costing around £4,000, plus ongoing maintenance of around £160 per year. The Chair expressed strong concern that the CG is not taking this on. The sculpture is valued by the community and should be properly maintained by the CG.

There was also discussion around Greenside parking fees, which were reportedly misdirected and should have been paid into the CG fund. This had been raised 3 years ago and the total amount owed by SBC still remains unclear. The Chair argued that, perhaps had the proper funds been paid in, the CG would be in a better financial position and could afford the repairs. Notably, the CG recently had to borrow £190k, raising questions as to whether this reimbursement was considered.

Cllr Begg agreed it was important to pursue the Greenside fees but noted that, relative to other CG priorities and debts, the fountain repair is not currently a priority. Some felt that CG funds should not be used for a new water pump or full fountain restoration, but that the sculpture itself could be maintained. Cllr Begg clarified that the CG is responsible for the repairs, and Cllr Tatler will obtain income and expenditure figures (past and projected) for the CG, including details on the parking fund.

A Snoddy asked whether the church bells belonged to the Common Good? Cllr Tatler confirmed they do, and parts are currently being restored. The BBC have asked if the PCC would like to make any comment on the closure of Morrisons. Noone had any comments. Are Peebles Rovers still moving to Violet Bank? Cllr Tatler confirmed that this was no longer happening following a feasibility study.

A Mackenzie wanted it noted that the roadworks to the Edinburgh Road were commendable. When are they going to do the Northgate? What about the bridge over the Cuddy? It is falling into disrepair and needs attention. Cllr Begg said he would take a note.

M Bruce suggested that the £1,000 gift from Leithenwater Windfarm should go to the Beltane Committee. This was agreed as the Community Council's viewpoint, which S Coe reminded us should be decided by the Town Team together with Peebles Community Trust and Peebles Civic Society.

G Mackie wanted to compliment SBC on the repair work done on a wall in Franksroft; the work was of a very high standard.

The meeting ended at 2105hrs.

The next meeting will be on Thursday 8 May 2025 in the Burgh Hall.

..... Chairman

..... Dated

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