



Community Council
of the
Royal Burgh of Peebles and District

Minutes of the 331st Meeting of the Community Council which was held on Thursday 8 May 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 MacDonald, G Mackie (Vice Chairman and Treasurer), J McMordie, J Wilson, K Guiney, M Bruce, M Marshall (Planning Convenor), P Maudsley (Chairman), S Coe, Cllr Douglas, Cllr Small, Cllr Thomson.

In attendance: K Peebles of The Peeblean; S Maura Hoffman Chair of the Tweed Valley Community Collective.

Members of the Public: L Scott, A member of the public (name supplied), S Clink.

Apologies: J Holt Cabrera, S Watson, G Ramsay, D Ashmole, S Mackay, Cllr Begg, Cllr Pirone, Cllr Tatler, PC G Beaumont.

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.

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

Open Forum:

Discussion Regarding Tweeddale Youth Action (TYA) and High Street Pizza Project

S. Clink, an employee of TYA for four years, spoke regarding recent issues surrounding the High Street pizza shop project involving local young people. He noted that, due to his position, it would not be appropriate to comment publicly but he encouraged an independent investigation.

A member of the public (name supplied), the parent of a young person employed at the shop, described the positive impact the opportunity had on his autistic child. The young person had gained confidence, recognition, and support in a safe environment. Earlier this year, staff were informed that redundancies might be necessary due to financial concerns, specifically that the project was projected to exceed the VAT threshold. Staff efforts to engage trustees in discussion were reportedly ignored. Redundancy letters were eventually issued, though some lacked clear information. The shop later reopened, with concerns about replacement staff being hired.

The Chair acknowledged the project's value and youth benefits, stating that TYA believed the VAT threshold presented a financial risk they could not take. He expressed willingness to facilitate a conversation between the parties.

K. Guiney questioned the absence of a financial forecast to anticipate VAT implications and the lack of planning. L. Scott, a member of the public, noted that redundancies followed by new hiring raised legal concerns.

S. Clink reiterated the need for an investigation. Cllr Douglas advised that the matter may require legal advice and suggested staff contact Citizens Advice Bureau. The Chair recognised challenges in managing volunteer-led initiatives and confirmed support for resolving the issue. S. Clink confirmed six young people, and two adults were on contracts.

A member of the public (name supplied) described the emotional impact on his child and their peers, highlighting a sense of ownership over the project that had been taken away. They and others noted that offers of expert help had been declined by TYA. M Bruce offered assistance in reviewing the VAT situation.

The Chair reiterated support for the youth project and openness to further dialogue. He will contact TYA and set up a meeting.

Discussion on the Future of the Drill Hall and Community Buildings

L. Scott, a member of the public, raised concerns about the future of the Drill Hall, having attended a recent stakeholders meeting. Cllr Douglas had indicated a timeline of 3–5 years for decisions, while Cllr Thomson mentioned West Linton's Graham Institute expects a report by autumn. L. Scott fears the Drill Hall may close imminently and criticised the accuracy of figures used in reports. She highlighted the importance of the hall to the Walking Netball group (part of the Over-55 Aging Well programme), which provides exercise and social connection for 28 women.

The Chair noted that the SBC report on community buildings was weak and that poor management by SBC and Live Borders had led to the current poor condition of buildings. He argued that communities should not bear responsibility for this and emphasised the need to defend local facilities. He expressed greater concern over the Gytes, which reportedly requires £3,000/year for maintenance, though no supporting data has been provided.

Cllr Douglas confirmed the Gytes is managed directly by Live Borders. Cllr Thomson noted multiple issues with the report, stating she has requested background data including income and bookings, and hopes for a response soon. Consultations are expected to begin in the coming weeks.

M. Marshall suggested requesting balance sheet estimates, including property value and ongoing maintenance costs. J. McMordie reported that Schools Out (run by C. Swan) is receiving new bookings but warned that less vocal communities might be overlooked in the process. J. Wilson echoed concerns about supporting local organisations like the pizza shop, Live Borders, and the Eastgate Theatre.

M. Bruce is seeking support for Peebles Community Trust and stressed the need for a strategic approach, recognising that not all buildings can be saved. The Chair agreed, announcing there is a Town Planning meeting on 12 May and calling for leadership, noting that previous requests for support had gone unanswered.

Cllr Thomson had questioned whether the report considered rurality and asked for details on its cost and methodology. The report cost approximately £38,000 and was described as a desktop study that fulfilled its commission. Cllr Tatler explained that staffing cuts across councils have necessitated outsourcing such work. Several attendees criticised the report's quality, with concerns about competence and flaws. The Secretary hoped no further charges would be incurred, while Cllr Thomson reiterated the report met its original brief but acknowledged its limitations.

Approval of the Minutes of 10 March 2025: The minutes of 10 April 2025 were proposed for approval by M Bruce, seconded by M Marshall. The motion was carried unanimously.

Matters Arising from the Minutes:

Proposed Bus stop buildout on High Street: No update.

Planting wildflowers in Haylodge Park: No update.

Christmas Lights Groups in Scottish Borders: Cllr Tatler to update.

Three Fishes Sculpture and Greenside Car Park Funds

Cllr Thomson reported that the Common Good Committee has decided no maintenance will be carried out on the Three Fishes Sculpture due to lack of funds. The Chair recalled that Cllr Tatler had previously stated the Common Good would arrange for the third fish to be reinstated, but Cllr Thomson clarified this was incorrect—no money will be spent on the sculpture.

The Chair questioned how much Scottish Borders Council (SBC) owes the Common Good from Greenside Car Park takings, noting that discussions have been ongoing for over a year. He described this as a misappropriation of funds and pressed for a calculation.

Cllr Thomson acknowledged the sculpture should not have been taken on by the Common Good and confirmed no repairs will be undertaken. The Chair argued that SBC documents show the sculpture does belong to the Common Good and that the manner of its transfer is irrelevant.

Cllr Thomson reiterated that, despite ownership, the decision stands not to allocate any funding to it. She also confirmed that issues surrounding the misdirected Greenside Car Park income has led to all car parking funds being addressed across the Borders region.

Parish Church bells: The bells are not working. Cllr Thomson will chase the repairs.

Police report: At the time of the meeting this had not been received.

Chairman's report. This had been circulated. There were no questions.

Planning report: The report had been circulated. Regarding Scawd Law windfarm, PCC has an extension to 12 May to allow time to finalise our response. Restoring Upland Nature (previously South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project) have objected based on impact to local eagle populations and these concerns have been supported by RSPB and NatureScot. Neighbouring community councils (except for Innerleithen) have all objected. The meeting agreed that PCC would object to this proposal.

Wind Farms: The meeting agreed that the Planning Convenor will lead on this together with the Town Team. Bowbeat has increased its community benefit offer. While acknowledged as a positive start, M Bruce cautioned that such companies are under no obligation to provide any financial contributions. Members were encouraged to share any further thoughts with the Chair or the Planning Convenor.

Peebles Community Trust: The report had been circulated. The Chair asked whether there was a representative on the Town Team, aside M Bruce. M Bruce confirmed there was not and agreed to raise the matter with the Board. The Peebles Community Trust AGM will take place on Saturday 17 May at 10am.

SBC Cllrs Reports

Cllr Small: Cllr Small reported that the new town bus service will commence on 12 May. There will be a six-week period for public feedback, which should be directed to Cllr Tatler. Only paper copies of the timetable are currently available. In response to a question from G Macdonald, Cllr Small confirmed that the LED board outside the post office will not display the timetable at this stage. It was agreed that the PCC will upload the timetable to its website. Cllr Thomson has a digital copy she can send. The service can still be adjusted based

on feedback. Cllr Small also noted that Small Schemes funding has been cut, but he will be conducting a walk around the town to compile a list of needs.

Cllr Thomson reported that Tweedsmuir had borrowed a replacement *Pop Up Bob* after theirs was stolen. She was recently interviewed by S2 pupils at Peebles High School, who asked about the Tweedgreen Pavilion and whether games like putting could be restarted. They suggested removing the gates to improve accessibility for students. J McMordie invited councillors to visit the school hub on Thursdays, where a range of community members attend. Cllr Thomson also noted upcoming activities in Broughton Woodland involving young people, including animal observation, tadpole spotting, and accessible nature walks. Cllr Small added that the VE Day wreath-laying ceremony had gone well.

Cllr Douglas has been actively involved in the ongoing discussions with Live Borders, including those concerning the Drill Hall. He is also assisting with the nursery closures issue, although Peebles is not expected to be affected in the current round. A meeting is scheduled for tomorrow to review the situation. He noted that the *Small Schemes Fund*—shared between East and West—has been significantly reduced. Christine Graham MSP will be holding a surgery on 9 May at 11am in Tesco.

Cllr Tatler had emailed about the new bus service, and the upcoming Gypsy Glen Hill Race on 14 May. Volunteers are needed for the event, and J McMordie will ask if J Holt Carbera can assist. Anyone interested in helping should email Cllr Tatler with their contact details. The Chair will circulate an email with full details and direct potential volunteers to Cllr Tatler. S Coe confirmed he'd spoken to Cllr Tatler about the wording for the plaque for the gun placement. Signage was being made. There have been complaints about littering at the Neidpath traffic lights. How can it be solved? The parking group are still looking at this across Scottish Borders. Wide. The fund in Peebles is sitting at around £85k but we are unable to access it for now until everything has been agreed across the Borders. J McMordie said there are only 5 public electric charging points in Peebles and the one in Edinburgh Road had not been working for weeks. Cllr Thomson confirmed that they there is a strategy being looked into. Kingsmeadows Road potholes will be dealt with this year.

Old Schoolhouse on Tweedgreen: S Coe and M Bruce met with SBC's legal team and have another meeting scheduled. Progress is being made and the initial meeting was constructive with good information sharing. M Bruce has located contact details for the family, and it was agreed the Civic Society will make the initial approach. Further information will be obtained from the family.

Chambers Institution Trust: S Coe had circulated his report. There were no questions.

Peebles in Bloom: G Macdonald said that the zones for all the PC Councillors will be distributed at the next meeting. G Macdonald is asking for donations with a gardening theme for the raffle hampers. All contributions are welcome.

AOB

Bus stop traffic congestion at the Post Office. The Secretary proposes that we ask for the bus stop to be moved to Edinburgh Road. Everyone agreed unanimously. The Secretary will write to SBC and Borders Buses to ask what the steps should be.

The double yellow lines missing at Bridgegate and Cuddyside. Lines should have been painted there years ago but access was an issue because of parked cars. The Secretary will follow up.

Request from Polish Community. Twinning with a town in Poland. The Chair noted that exploring a twinning arrangement with a town in Poland is complicated. Previously, EU funding supported such initiatives. It was suggested that a member of the Polish community could be invited to join the Community Council if there is

interest. M Bruce commented that during the last twinning with Hendaye in France, the process was expensive. Cllr Douglas shared that Loanhead had a twinning arrangement with Harnes in France, initially well-received with some EU funding and involvement from a holiday club, but it eventually dwindled with little lasting impact beyond signage. France had once encouraged such twinning schemes. The Chair agreed to do further research. J McMordie noted there is currently a school twinning initiative with Ukraine.

Cllr Thomson said the wall repairs near Rose Park will start soon. Signage in cemetery asking for all dogs to be on leads has been erected but will not be enforceable.

K Guiney, Chair of the Business and Retailers Association, reminded members of the upcoming Community Festival taking place on 31 May. The event will feature 20 musicians performing at various venues across Peebles, along with numerous stalls and street entertainment. Portaloos will be available in the Edinburgh Road car park. It promises to be a lively and exciting day for the community.

A Mackenzie enquired about the ownership of the monument outside the Tontine Hotel, known as the Veitch Memorial Fountain. He asked whether it could be reinstated. It is unclear whether ownership lies with Scottish Borders Council (SBC). Cllr Thomson agreed to investigate and report back.

G Macdonald asked when the gates of the Tweed Green Pavilion would be opened, as we were previously advised this would happen in April. Cllr Thomson confirmed she has requested this be actioned. Peebles in Bloom garden nomination dates will during 11 July and 20 July. Each councillor will be allocated one judging block. The Presentation Evening will be held on 21 August, and all PC Councillors are expected to attend. A sound engineer will be looking after the sound system. G Macdonald will liaise with the Treasurer regarding the available budget.

The meeting ended at 2105hrs.

The next meeting will be on Thursday 12 June 2025 in the Burgh Hall.

..... Chairman

..... Dated