



*Community Council  
of the  
Royal Burgh of Peebles and District*

**Minutes of the 337th Meeting of the Community Council which was held on Thursday 11 December 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), D Ashmole, F Richardson, G MacDonald, G Mackie (Vice Chairman and Treasurer), G Ramsay, H Young, I Dempster, J Wilson, K Guiney, M Bruce, M Marshall (Planning Convenor), P Maudsley (Chairman), Cllr Douglas, Cllr Pirone, Cllr Tatler, Cllr Thomson.

**In attendance:** K Peebles of The Peeblean; Chris Faulds, Editor, Peeblesshire News.

**Members of the Public:** None.

**Apologies:** S Coe, J McMordie, S MacKay, Cllr Begg, Cllr Small, PC Beaumont and PC Shiels.

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://ccrbpeeble.co.uk/>

**Open Forum:** Nothing

**Approval of the Minutes of 13 November 2025:** The minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2025 were approved. Proposed by M Bruce, seconded by A MacKenzie.

**New Powers for Community Councils:** The Chair led a discussion on the proposal to seek new powers and budgets for Scotland's community councils, like English parish councils. Views were mixed. Some PC Councillors felt greater powers and funding could enable community councils to deliver more locally and support paid administrative roles, such as a clerk or secretary. Others were concerned that expanding powers would place an unsustainable burden on volunteers and felt the priority should be making existing powers more effective and better recognised by Scottish Borders Council and officials. There was general agreement that the current system does not work well, but no consensus on adopting the English parish council model, with several PC Councillors favouring improvement of the current framework rather than structural change.

It was noted that SBC is reviewing community council networks and area partnership working, and PC Councillors were encouraged to think constructively about how engagement, influence and communication with SBC could be improved. PC councillors should send their individual views on the proposal to the Chair; the Chair to collate feedback and consider whether a formal position should be taken on the petition; and PC Councillors to suggest specific, practical ways in which the PCC's interface with SBC could be strengthened, including support for administrative capacity.

**Matters arising from the Minutes:**

**Bus Build Out:** A discussion was held on the proposed bus build-out on the High Street, with views evenly split and no clear consensus reached. PC Councillors acknowledged the detailed analysis and work carried out by A

Snoddy, but agreed the issue was not clear-cut and that the PCC was unable to make a specific recommendation. It was agreed that the information and differing views should be passed back via Cllr Tatler to Scottish Borders Council, with Cllr Tatler raising the matter with P Gilhooley. Concerns were noted about access and servicing on the High Street, including difficulties with loading and unloading for businesses, the lack of safe parking and rear access, and whether a loading bay, potentially combined with the bus stop, should be considered. No views had been received from Tweeddale Access Panel, and it was recognised that they may be disappointed by the lack of a definitive position.

**Would we support the introduction of beavers?** The question of whether to support the introduction of beavers was discussed. Public feedback included both supportive and opposing views, and as there is currently no firm proposal, no position was agreed at this stage.

**The resurfacing of Eastgate (A72) was discussed**, with PC Councillors expressing concern that it should be given a higher priority. The Chair noted that the High Street is our most important street and at present flags up to visitors that we are at third world town. Cllr Begg had previously investigated, noting that resurfacing may take 2–3 years depending on resources, while SBC is focusing on other high-profile areas. A Snoddy felt the current approach is inadequate and will draft a letter from the Chair to SBC. Cllr Tatler noted limited funding for the 3,000 km of roads, with allocations from the Scottish Government based on population, and will send the Chair an email so he can contact politicians, he will also send an email to the Roads Asset Team. PC Councillors emphasised that the High Street is important to the public, that works need to address both surface and underlying issues, and that pressure on MSPs is warranted given insufficient funding for all required repairs.

A. Mackenzie raised concerns about the amount of grit being spread by gritters, suggesting that gritting should be more targeted and questioning the annual budget. Cllr Tatler explained that gritting is done based on forecasts and the lowest expected temperatures, typically starting at 4°C, with the coldest period at daybreak, and that the current approach is designed to be as efficient as possible. Concerns were noted about perceived waste where gritting may be unnecessary. Cllr Tatler will circulate the winter gritting plan, explaining when and why routes are treated.

The upgrade of the path between the Priorsford Footbridge and Fotheringham footbridge was discussed. Cllr Tatler has requested an update and is awaiting information on the Haylodge section, plans for a tunnel, and work prior to Fotheringham. Cllr Thomson noted that funding is expected from end-of-year allocations. Additional considerations include improvements from the swimming pool to the weir, with efforts being made to minimise disruption during construction. Further updates will be provided when available.

**Police report:** This had been circulated. Things have been relatively quiet.

#### **Chairman's report:**

**Tourist Signs:** Cllr Thomson provided an update on the parking fund. After several weeks of discussions with council officers, the issues have been resolved, and the fund is now back on track. Some of the money relates to Common Good; this will be confirmed in writing and funded as agreed. Cllr Thomson's portion of £11,000 is secured, with the remainder to be released. Go Tweed Valley has already implemented some signage. Chair acknowledged progress and commended the work done.

**Air Route Consultation:** A consultation on 2 December at the Golf Club was poorly publicised. It relates to flight holding patterns near Peebles but is unrelated to the 2018 consultation. Proposed changes would slightly shift overflight patterns, increasing altitude from 7,000 to 10,000 feet, with minimal impact on Peebles; some

rural areas, e.g., West Linton, may see more traffic. Take-offs and landings do not affect Peebles. No issues identified at present.

**Place Making – Town Action Plan:** Climate Place Session (18/11) considered local initiatives on climate change. A grant application will be submitted for a management plan for Kingsmeadows woodland to support a community buyout.

**Live Borders:** SBC Live Borders special meeting saw several councillor amendments, including reducing pressure for Community Asset Transfers (CATs). Tweeddale councillors provided apologies to communities and supported amendments. Some concern remains over infrastructure conditions and SBC's approach to funding cuts in sports and leisure. Chair emphasised need to focus on future improvements under new CEO, Catriona McAllister. Thanks to all the Tweeddale Cllrs who did a sterling job.

**Planning Report:** The report had been circulated. The PCC continues to have significant concerns about planning governance and legal compliance by Scottish Borders Council (SBC), particularly regarding the Habitats Regulations and the interpretation of section 42 of the Planning Act. Key issues include the proposed demolition of the former Science Block at Peebles High School, which would require a new planning application due to an existing re-use condition, and the handling of developments affecting protected habitats and green space. Ongoing concerns remain about the lawfulness of decisions made without proper Habitats Regulations Appraisal, notably at Kingsmeadows and South Parks, and about the approval to build on the Ballantyne Place play area. PCC is still awaiting promised responses from SBC Legal Services and has requested meetings to clarify the legal basis for these decisions, which may have wider implications across the Borders.

The Kingsmeadows House applications remain a major focus, with around 250 objections lodged and one application already refused. Legal advice indicates the remaining applications may be invalid, and NatureScot and SBC's ecologist have confirmed likely significant adverse effects on the River Tweed SAC. An appeal for non-determination has now been submitted to the DPEA. PCC has been advised to make a single coordinated objection on behalf of the community. Wind farm proposals at Leithenwater, Scawd Law and Cloich Forest are also ongoing, with substantial objections raised by statutory bodies and community councils, largely due to impacts on golden eagles, landscape and biodiversity. Other planning applications were noted, with most either unchanged, stalled, awaiting decision, or raising no significant planning issues requiring action at this time.

**Update on Kingsmeadows :** On 25 November, SBC published their email to Granton of 22 Sep saying they could not support one of the two remaining applications 24/00031/FUL. Granton subsequently appealed to the DPEA, which dismissed the objection on 11 December, and Granton have now requested a local review with SBC. M. Marshall is preparing a coordinated objection and sought permission to submit it on behalf of the PCC and all other objectors. The objection will cover all other relevant planning concerns, and community organisations will be asked to endorse it. We note that the community have already submitted extensive objections and need take no further action. Submission of a consolidated objection on behalf of all objectors and the community was approved by all at the meeting.

Cllrs Tatler and Pirone are attempting to schedule a meeting with SBC Planning to raise questions. M. Marshall confirmed that a SCIO has been formed for community ownership of the Kingsmeadows woodland. The woodland has been valued with preparations underway to seek funding once the planning applications are decided. Both M. Marshall and G. MacDonald noted the importance of bringing the woodland into community use, including the number of people who do not reside locally but use the woodlands. M. Marshall has written to SBC Legal Services but has not yet received a response. Planners' decision to refuse one of the two remaining Kingsmeadows applications was warmly welcomed.

**Community wind farm benefits:** The final draft of the Memorandum of Understanding had been circulated for feedback. Peebles and Eddleston Community Councils will operate a combined fund of £104k per annum, sharing funds approximately pro-rata by population, but with the final split deferred to the decision making board. Innerleithen will operate a separate fund of £52k per annum. One outstanding point related to section 7.2 on microgrants, which required clarification before finalisation.

The meeting agreed that microgrants of around £400–£500 should be available, with the principle that individuals may benefit but applications must be made through, or sponsored by, a recognised organisation or group to ensure an appropriate audit trail. This approach balances support for individuals, including those experiencing hardship, with accountability and transparency. Parameters for microgrants will be clearly set out at application stage, and applicants will be expected to report back on outcomes. The proposal to proceed on this basis was agreed by all members.

**Peebles Community Trust:** The Peebles Community Trust continues to make excellent progress towards the purchase of the former Bank of Scotland building, with the Board now meeting fortnightly to complete preparations. Support is being provided by a recently retired building trade manager and a locally based Advocate with property expertise. Title transfer work is ongoing, three new Directors have joined and are contributing positively, and there remains optimism about securing tenant or tenants to share the building. School Brae is being assessed by the Chambers Institute team as a potential decant location during works, while plans to demolish and rebuild School Brae continue, with funding options being explored and best practice shared with a similar project in Crieff.

Following the purchase of the railway building, refurbishment planning is underway, with funding being sought and an intention to use local contractors where possible. New uses for the building may be explored next summer, subject to funding and contractor availability, with a three-year completion requirement in place. At Eshieils Wood, the first timber sale has been completed, and arrangements are being finalised to remove remaining brash ahead of replanting. A volunteer thank-you event is being held, reflecting the vital role volunteers play in current and future projects, particularly the High Street venture, and umbrella groups continue to prosper and make a valuable contribution to the town.

### SBC Councillor Reports

**Cllr Douglas:** Cllr Douglas provided an update on Live Borders, noting that the situation has been well reported and that there was nothing further to add at this stage. He expressed confidence that local hall management committees will be able to identify a way forward to help secure the future of facilities, and that the current period of change should lead to a positive outcome. Live Borders is undergoing a significant management restructure, with lessons being learned from previous challenges. He also commented positively on the new Peebles High School, describing the facilities as impressive and comparable to a university campus. An open day is scheduled for Saturday 13 December, with tours running from 10am to 12 noon.

Budget discussions are ongoing and have been slightly delayed. It is anticipated that the budget process may be undertaken in two stages, with council tax setting and the main budget considered as separate items, dependent on the timing of the Scottish Government settlement.

**Cllr Pirone:** Cllr Pirone provided an update noting that Environmental Rights Centre Scotland items had not been appearing online on the planning portal due to a technical error. Further discussions are planned in January with the Chief Planning Officer regarding the planning portal, including recent improvements which now allow positive comments in support of applications. An update was also given on the Dux notice boards, with Cllr Thomson confirming these have been resolved. Live Borders was briefly discussed, with an executive board meeting due next week and ongoing scrutiny of finances. An issue was raised regarding chlorination

problems at the swimming pool, with a need for better public communication. It was confirmed that the former Science Block at Peebles High School is planned for demolition, as no viable re-use has been identified and refurbishment costs are prohibitive. The site is expected to become green space, potentially including outdoor seating and some parking, although concerns were raised about the adequacy of parking provision, particularly staff parking and increased pupil driving. Cllr Pirone expressed strong concerns about parking pressures and requested that the PCC write formally on behalf of residents regarding the lack of sufficient parking. Alternative uses of the building were discussed, alongside questions about planning conditions and whether these could be legally changed. M Marshall agreed to investigate this and report back.

**Cllr Tatler:** Cllr Tatler advised that town twinning arrangements no longer exist and are not currently active. He also reported on the Chambers Institution Trust consultation held on Saturday 29 November, which was well attended with over 80 people present and generally supportive. CIT is progressing towards establishment, with meetings planned with OSCR and others, and a bank account in the process of being set up. Other ongoing issues were noted, including continued work relating to trees and the Baptist Church, which remains subject to an ongoing process. Flood protection was discussed at length. It was noted that Peebles has yet to benefit from a flood protection scheme, unlike other towns such as Hawick, and that flood risk is expected to worsen. Funding from the Scottish Government remains the key issue, with SBC continuing to apply pressure, although it was acknowledged that delivery of any scheme could take 10 years or more. The local resilience group was reported to be active and better prepared than in the past, with equipment such as radios and sandbags in place. It was agreed that a letter to politicians should be drafted by the flood group and endorsed by community councils, with a joint approach suggested between Peebles and Walkerburn. It was agreed that a combination of engineered and natural flood management measures should be pursued, including upstream interventions and engagement with landowners, as concrete defences alone would not be sufficient and could exacerbate flooding elsewhere.

**Cllr Thomson:** Cllr Thomson advised that there is currently no funding available from the parking fund, and as a result the purchase of microphones and stands cannot proceed at this time. It was agreed to revisit this after Christmas and make a further request. Thanks were extended to the Christmas Lights Association for a successful and well-attended switch-on event. Cllr Thomson also noted that funding applications can be made to support roof works at the Chambers Institution Trust.

**Treasurers report:** The report had been circulated. There were no questions.

**The Old Schoolhouse on Tweed Green:** This is a very complex issue and exceptionally complicated. It is currently being looked at by solicitors. Huge thanks to M Bruce and S Coe for progressing the issue to date.

**Chambers Institution Trust:** An update report was provided, with the full progress report available on the PCC website. Phase 1 has reached a key milestone with completion of RIBA Stage 3 and submission of planning and listed building consent applications, which are expected to go to public consultation this month. The Project Board's latest report confirms positive progress, including completion of required surveys, agreement of the tenant decent strategy, and confirmation that the lift design will meet future Live Borders requirements. The public drop-in session held at the Burgh Hall on 29 November was well attended, with largely positive feedback on the Phase 1 proposals. Phase 2 work, including the feasibility study and business plan, is progressing well. Review meetings have been held with consultants, and trustees have approved the work in progress. A response has now been received from OSCR, and a meeting is scheduled to discuss the SCIO application.

**AOB**

An invitation has been received to attend the Community Council Convention on the impact of major energy infrastructure on communities in the Scottish Borders area. The event will take place on Saturday 17 January 2026, from 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm, at Jedburgh Town Hall. M Marshall has volunteered to attend on behalf of the PCC.

It was agreed that it would be worthwhile to undertake occasional outreach sessions with other local groups. Suggestions included the Guildry and the Tweeddale Access Panel. Everyone was invited to email the Secretary with further suggestions.

Concerns were raised by the Pensioners' Association regarding the poor condition of pavements between Whitestone Court and the Hydro. Cllr Thomson agreed to take this matter forward.

The Christmas Lights Switch-On event, held on 30th November, was very successful and well attended.

A short demonstration of the CCTV system for office bearers was held. The system was found to be impressive, with all cameras linked for monitoring and the ability to track number plates (not faces). It was noted that the camera at the end of Northgate, mounted on a wall bracket for Christmas decorations, may potentially interfere with CCTV coverage; Cllr Thomson will investigate. The system could be particularly useful for incidents such as locating lost children. Overall, the CCTV is considered an intelligent and valuable tool.

Three Fishes Fountain: A school in England, which uses three fishes as its emblem, has requested information about the fountain. Cllr Thomson will follow up to identify who is handling the restoration, and the Chair will be linked in to ensure progress. The Common Good and the original creator will coordinate to move the project forward.

The Secretary said that it had been reported to her that the dog fouling signs in the cemetery at Wemyss Place had been removed. Can they be replaced?

F Richardson asked if there was an update on the repairs to the Macfarlane Hall; there was not.

G Macdonald raised several points, requesting information on the cost of damage to three fire-damaged sites. She expressed repeated concern about the bins at Cuddyside, highlighting a public health issue with rats and noting that there is insufficient space for waste storage; five residents have requested bins, and there is available space. Cllr Begg had been dealing with this request. She also asked for information on flu jab attendance, specifically how many Peebles residents did not turn up for their appointments. It was agreed it would be followed up with the Health Board.

G Mackie reported the damage at the Golf Club had been covered by insurance and repairs were almost completed.

The meeting ended at 2056hrs.

The next meeting will be on 8 January 2026 in the Burgh Hall.

..... Chairman

..... Dated