



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

**Minutes of the 338th Meeting of the Community Council which was held on
Thursday 8 January 2026 at 7pm in the Burgh Hall, Peebles. The meeting
was recorded for the purposes of Minuting and Reporting.**

Present: A Snoddy (Secretary), D Ashmole, F Richardson, G MacDonald, G Ramsay, H Young, I Dempster, J McMordie, J Wilson, K Guiney, M Bruce, M Marshall (Planning Convenor), P Maudsley (Chairman), S Mackay, S Coe, S Watson, Cllr Begg, Cllr Douglas, Cllr Pirone.

In attendance: K Peebles of The Peeblean; Lucette Wood, Reporter, Peeblesshire News.

Members of the Public: None.

Apologies: G Mackie, J Holt Cabrera, Cllr Small, Cllr Tatler, Cllr Thomson.

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/>

Approval of the Minutes of 11 December 2025: The minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2025 were approved. Proposed by M Bruce and seconded by G Macdonald.

Matters arising from the Minutes:

Bus Build out

The proposed bus build-out on the north side of the High Street was discussed. Cllr Tatler had agreed to forward the survey results to P. Gilhooley at SBC. It was noted that the outcome of the consultation was inconclusive, but concerns were raised that not all interested parties had been given a fair opportunity to comment. When the consultation was issued, a request had been made for paper copies to be made available on town buses, but this did not happen, disadvantaging residents without internet access. It also appeared that the consultation process favoured car users rather than those most reliant on public transport. An email had been received from a member of the public and the Chairman agreed to include the item on the February agenda.

Resurfacing of the A72 Eastgate Road: Cllr Tatler was going to write to SBC Road Assets Team. No update.

An update was provided on the proposed upgrade of the path to Priorsford Bridge. Cllr Begg explained that this work forms part of the wider Tweed Trail, linking Moffat to Berwick-upon-Tweed, and is funded by Sustrans, with funding available in smaller, variable allocations. The next section of the trail will connect at Priorsford Bridge, with some widening proposed across Tweed Green and an opportunity to use the funding to address the cobbled section in that area. The works will extend as far as the bridge over the Cuddy and are expected to significantly improve access for residents, particularly enabling large numbers of people in Peebles

to cycle safely to the swimming pool. It was also noted that the area around the existing cycle stand will be tidied as part of the works.

As instructed, the Secretary wrote to Hay Lodge to request information on the number of people who did not attend their flu vaccination appointments; a response is awaited. Cllr Begg would like to see any data.

The Secretary also contacted SBC Planning to enquire about the number of parking spaces included in the plans for the new High School, and a reply is still pending.

Open Forum: Members were given an update on the programme for the next phase of the Tweed Trail path project from Bob Reid the Design Team Leader from Scottish Borders Council. Improvement works to the section of path between Priorsford Footbridge, and the swimming pool are scheduled to take place during February and March. Across Tweed Green, no major alterations are planned, with works limited to resurfacing sections of the path that are currently in poor condition. The existing slabbed path from the wishing well, passing beneath Tweed Bridge and around the swimming pool, will be upgraded as part of this phase.

It was confirmed that the memorial garden and surrounding planted areas near the swimming pool will remain unchanged, following consultation with Bonnie Peebles, and existing picnic benches will be kept. One bench will be repositioned slightly to allow for the realigned path as it approaches the Eddleston Water footbridge. Civil engineering investigations are still underway to inform how the path will be treated further upstream towards Hay Lodge, including the area known locally as “the hump” and its steps. The design team indicated that they aim to submit a planning application for the route as far as Fotheringham Bridge in summer 2026.

M Bruce asked if there was any scope in the budget for interpretative boards, and B Reid agreed it was a good idea. M Bruce and B Reid agreed to exchange details and discuss further.

Pavement between Whitestone Park and The Hydro: Cllr Begg had received no update from Cllr Thomson who has raised it with SBC.

Police Report: PC Ryan Shiels reported that the December police report had not yet been received. He advised that throughout December officers had been carrying out static road checks, with several sessions held each month and plans to continue this approach. These checks involved speaking with drivers, issuing warnings where appropriate, and carrying out licence, insurance and MOT checks, as well as wider operations including licence and warrant checks, which resulted in several arrests, mainly relating to shoplifting. The Christmas Lights Switch-On was reported to have been successful, with a reduction in illegal traders and effective policing through foot patrols. The opening of the new school was noted as having gone well with a smooth transition; however, a break-in occurred at the old school building over the festive period, involving the theft of copper piping with losses estimated at £50,000–£70,000. It was also reported that the robberies at the Park Hotel and the Traquair Arms are believed to be linked, with a suspect identified who is not local, and the matter now being handled by CID. New CCTV coverage was described as excellent and will be used routinely. The Chair and Councillor Pirone both thanked the police for their work, particularly the increased patrols over the Christmas period.

Chairman's Report: No report this month following festive break.

The Chairman mentioned the forthcoming Community Council Convention on the impact of major energy infrastructure in the Scottish Borders, to be held in Jedburgh on 17 January 2026, which had been circulated in advance. It was reported that 43 community councils and campaign groups, representing around 71,000 residents, have committed to attend in response to concerns that community views are being disregarded in energy infrastructure planning. The Convention follows a similar event in the Highlands and reflects widespread concern about the cumulative impact of wind farms, battery storage sites and associated grid

infrastructure across the Borders, despite significant oversubscription of grid capacity. It was noted that, notwithstanding recent reductions in grid connection queues by the National Energy System Operator, communities continue to face large numbers of planning applications, leading to calls for a more strategic and coordinated approach to the energy transition. M Marshall will attend.

The Chair noted that while some proposed energy developments in the area may bring financial benefits to the Community Council and neighbouring councils, there is a broader interest in preserving the Borders' natural beauty and ecological value. He expressed concern that government decision-makers may have limited understanding of rural issues. The Chair pointed out that most communities do not have the capacity to deal with the enormous workload involved in the applications. This is a nationwide issue not a local one.

The Planning Convenor highlighted an event on 27 January by the Planning Democracy, which is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) founded in 2009 which calls for a radical overhaul of Scotland's planning system. Developed by communities, it seeks to shift planning from serving private profit to promoting public good, prioritising people, nature, and climate. Key reforms include strengthening community influence, embedding environmental and human rights protections, ensuring affordable housing, supporting sustainable and community-led development, and making planning transparent, accountable, and accessible. The manifesto emphasises proactive, rights-based planning to address systemic social and environmental injustices.

Bowbeat Windfarm benefit money is now in the bank and will be distributed soon.

Planning report. The Planning Convener highlighted key issues arising from the circulated Planning Report of 8 January 2026. Ongoing concerns were noted regarding SBC's compliance with planning law and the Habitats Regulations, particularly in relation to Kingsmeadows and other developments affecting protected species and designated sites. The Community Council remains concerned about the apparent absence of Habitats Regulations Appraisals in several cases, the use of Section 42 applications to vary conditions on expired permissions, and the lack of response from SBC Legal Services on these matters, including the Ballantyne Place play area decision. While no action was recommended in respect of the former Science Block at Peebles High School due to school needs, concerns about legal interpretation and precedent were reiterated, and councillors are continuing to raise these issues with SBC.

The report also summarised current planning applications of interest, including multiple live and appealed applications at Kingsmeadows House, which have attracted significant objection on environmental, legal and policy grounds, and remain under review by the Local Review Board. A range of new local applications were noted, most of which required no action, alongside continued coordination with Peebles Civic Society where appropriate. Updates were provided on wind farm proposals at Leithenwater, Scawd Law and Cloich Forest, with particular concern expressed about impacts on golden eagles, landscape designations and compliance with national policy. Several long-stalled applications were also noted, along with others removed from the report as no longer of ongoing interest to the Community Council.

S. Coe highlighted the planning applications for three holiday pods at The Park Hotel. Previous applications had been opposed by PCC and the Civic Society, but these new pods are in a different location and are fewer in number, which is considered a more acceptable proposal. Regarding the Hydro Hotel, repairs are needed to the domed cupola. The Civic Society supports the repair work but objects to the proposed design of the replacement domed/conical structures, describing it as a poor substitute for the original. They suggested that modern materials, such as polycarbonate, could provide a more suitable replacement while preserving the character of the entrance. M. Marshall noted that the Civic Society does valuable work and that their opinions should be given due consideration in planning matters.

Peebles Community Trust: PCT has successfully secured insurance for the Old Railway Building, although this proved challenging due to the property being unoccupied. Cover is currently in place on a short-term basis, and quotes are now being sought for the necessary works. Funding options are being explored, including discussions with a local funding body, although competition for grants is expected to be high. The Bowbeat Fund may be approached for part of the costs, and alternative funding suggestions were invited. It is estimated that approximately £60,000 will be required in total, with the intention to phase the work to allow applications for smaller grants.

Most legal and administrative processes for the acquisition of the former Bank of Scotland building have been completed, with the purchase expected to conclude early next month. Quotes are being obtained from local contractors for minor works, including painting and flooring, prior to occupation. In addition, recent woodland management work at Eshiel Woods was noted, with tree felling having improved views towards the river; some tidying remains, but the overall outcome was considered positive.

SBC Councillor Reports

Cllr Begg: Recent sewage issues near Kingsland, some of which had persisted for three years, have now been resolved. He is meeting with S. Coe and M. Bruce regarding the Old Schoolhouse on Tweed Green. Cllr Begg also attended a citizenship ceremony, noting it was a good opportunity to meet local citizens who contribute positively to the community. He will be raising his annual question on roads, highlighting that while it would cost around £123 million to fully repair roads in the Borders, only £5 million is currently available. The budget figures reflect only balancing the books and do not account for outstanding maintenance or unmet repair needs. Common Good: Cllr Thomson continues ongoing dialogue with the public and has provided a written update on her actions following recent forum meetings.

Cllr Thomson: In her absence it was reported that the tourist signs are on hold. The 3-Fishes Fountain is in hand.

Cllr Douglas: Noted that activity has been limited during the festive recess. Attention is now turning to the February budget meeting, with a difficult period anticipated. The consultation process has concluded, and the Council is moving towards setting the Council Tax. Focus is on closing the budget gap rather than on preferred initiatives.

Cllr Pirone: Reported that road funding is population-based, making it difficult to close gaps in rural areas, which have lower populations but more miles of roads. Emphasised the disconnect between funding allocation and the vital role of rural roads. Noted that a council tax freeze further complicates the budget, creating a crisis point. Highlighted the opening of the Galashiels Academy campus, describing it as impressive, with Hawick next. Mentioned changes to mental health counselling in schools, now more professional, addressing post-COVID challenges and supporting students returning to school.

The Chair asked about the Parking Fund contribution for the sound system. Cllr Begg replied that this is on hold for the current financial year and will need to wait.

Treasurer's Report. Circulated. No questions. The Treasurer is looking to change the bank account due to bank charges from Bank of Scotland. However, it takes months.

Chambers Institution Trust: S. Coe reported that there was little new to update. Phase 2 feasibility work and the business development are ongoing, and discussions continue with OSCR, with an emphasis on ensuring that the local authority does not take control of the funding. Planning and building applications were submitted on 17 December, including a comprehensive set of drawings showing existing and proposed alterations, along with a Conservation Management Plan, Design and Access Statements, and photographs.

was noted that there were no unexpected elements in the proposals, and members were encouraged to review the full documentation, which contains a large amount of information. The works were for the benefit of the residents of Tweeddale and as an opportunity for the community to better understand, engage with, and develop a sense of ownership of the project.

AOB

The Chair advised that letters to politicians regarding the flood group will be drafted. He is in discussion with Colin Kerr and confirmed that the matter is being progressed jointly and is in hand.

A. Snoddy reported receipt of an email from the Borders Forest Trust advising that funding of up to £1,000 is available for tree planting; this information will be circulated. She noted that the Gypsy Glen Hill Race will take place on 27 May and that the UK General Election is scheduled for 7 May. Members agreed that the Community Council should host election hustings. A discussion followed on economic growth, noting that while national and Westminster narratives focus on growth, local authorities can contribute by supporting local initiatives, festivals, and major events. Councillor Pirone commented that local examples, such as visitor attractions and biking events, demonstrate economic benefit, although inward investment remains slower, and improved data from SBC would be helpful in evidencing impact and social cohesion.

M Marshall: Further discussion took place on correspondence with SBC's Chief Finance Officer regarding the sustainability of Live Borders. Members noted that SBC had stated £6 million of additional funding had been provided over the past three years and that total funding in 2024/25 exceeded that of 2016/17. However, it was highlighted that this comparison does not account for inflation, and that SBC's own data, when adjusted for inflation, shows a real-terms reduction in funding over that period. Members expressed concern that qualitative statements about mismanagement and emergency funding were not fully supported by the quantitative data, and that inflation-adjusted figures present a different picture.

It was acknowledged that Live Borders has received additional short-term support and is carrying debt, with auditors raising concerns about long-term sustainability and requesting letters of comfort. Members agreed that while pressures on SBC budgets are understood, the information being presented publicly should be accurate and consistent with the data. The Chair indicated that clarification of the figures would be sought in a constructive manner, with M. Marshall to liaise with Cllr Begg on next steps. Members emphasised the importance of learning lessons, ensuring transparency, and moving the situation forward collaboratively.

H. Young agreed that it was appropriate to seek clarification, noting that when the public is being told about pressures on key services and potential closures, it is essential that SBC reports are transparent and accurate. She emphasised the importance of ensuring figures are clearly explained and supported by a credible plan. The Chair added that communities should not be penalised as a result of the Live Borders situation or previous decisions.

J. McMordie raised concerns regarding the ramp at Caledonian Court, which has been closed for approximately six months, and asked when it is expected to reopen. A. Snoddy advised that no timescale has been provided. The Secretary agreed to write to seek an update. J. McMordie also noted that the closure has resulted in a lack of disabled access and that existing signage is misleading and requires replacement.

J. Wilson asked that thanks be recorded to the Christmas Lights Association for the Christmas Lights Switch-On, which was described as excellent and much appreciated. She also noted how fortunate the town is to have two town bands, highlighting in particular the Peebles Silver Band for their continued support of community events in all weathers, and requested that her appreciation be formally minuted.

The Chair noted that pro bono planning advice had been provided by consultants and suggested that the PCC should write to formally thank them.

G. Macdonald reminded Cllr Begg that the bins at Cuddyside still needed to be discussed. She also asked for an update on the Baptist Church; the Chair reported that he had checked the church website and there was no update. It was noted that the town is not using joined-up thinking and suggested that a member of the Baptist Church group should be invited to join the town team.

I. Dempster stated that when information presented can be shown to be inaccurate, it is not for the PCC to determine whether this is intentional or unintentional. However, if such information is not challenged, the PCC risks failing in its responsibility. He noted that statistics can be selectively used or misinterpreted, and that the work undertaken by M. Marshall is relevant and appropriate to raise, whether or not it is convenient.

The meeting ended at 2100hrs.

The next meeting will be on 12 February 2026 in the Burgh Hall.

..... Chairman

..... Dated