Community Council

of the

Royal Burgh of Peebles and District

Minutes of the 344th Meeting of the Community Council which was held on Thursday 9 July 2026 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 (Treasurer), G Ramsay, I Dempster, C Moore, K Guiney, M Bruce, M Marshall (Vice Chairman and Planning Convenor), P Maudsley (Chairman), S Coe, S Watson, Cllr Tatler, Cllr Thomson

In attendance: L Wood of the Peeblesshire News; PCs Beaumont and Sheills of Police Scotland.

Members of the Public: Rev Robin and Mrs Anita Lee

Apologies: H Young, J Wilson, Cllr Begg, Cllr Pirone, Cllr Small, Cllr Douglas

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/

The Chair welcomed Christine Moore to the meeting. Christine is a panel member of Foundation Scotland and will assist with matters relating to wind farm funding. As there is a requirement for one Community Council member to serve on the panel, it was proposed that Christine be permitted to attend Community Council meetings when necessary. The proposal was put to a vote and was approved unanimously.

Police Report: PC Sheills reported that it had been a particularly busy month, with crime levels generally increasing. The Road Traffic Team from Dalkeith had been carrying out regular visits to the area and issuing traffic tickets. While incidents of youth disorder had decreased, there had been a recent increase in thefts and housebreakings, including an unusual violent robbery in the Glentress area.

Work was ongoing to tackle bike thefts, with Glentress access points being reviewed and a bike marking event held. The public was encouraged to use tracking tags on bicycles. Increased police patrols, including quad bikes and the Community Contact Van, would continue over the coming months.

Members were advised of a Child Car Seat Safety event taking place on 27 July at Edinburgh Road Car Park from 10.00am to 1.00pm and a Youth Engagement Day planned for 21 and 22 July involving community painting and clean-up activities.

The Chair raised concerns about reports of dogs possibly ingesting discarded cannabis in a local park and about alleged illegal activity in the town. PC Beaumont encouraged anyone with information to report concerns to the police, noting that few people had come forward.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the June meeting were approved, having been proposed by M Bruce and seconded by S Coe.

Matters arising from the Minutes:

Minor Injuries Unit at Haylodge Hospital: The Chair advised that correspondence had been sent to Callum Kerr MSP regarding concerns about the Minor Injuries Unit, but no response had yet been received. It was agreed to allow a further period for a reply before escalating the matter to senior politicians in the Scottish Parliament if necessary.

Cllr Tatler reported that he had raised the issue with the Integrated Joint Board (IJB). While he had been advised that the matter was not one the Board would consider directly and that representations should be made to NHS Borders, Cllr Tatler had forwarded the Community Council's concerns to the Chair of IJB and Chief Executive. Cllr Tatler agreed to provide contact details to enable the Chair to write directly.

Damaged path: Cllr Tatler reported that the damaged path on the south side of the Tweed has been repaired and that positive feedback had been received from the resident who raised the issue.

Some members had attended a presentation on the proposed removal of the Hay Lodge "hump". All options were considered, with only one viable solution remaining after engineering and cost assessments. This will require the removal of some trees, but replacement planting is proposed at a ratio of five new trees for every tree removed, including some mature trees. The presentation was well received and will be circulated to members by the Secretary and published on the PCC website.

The Chair proposed that the Community Council support the project when it is submitted for planning approval. Members agreed unanimously. M. Marshall advised that works are expected to take place in the autumn, subject to planning consent.

Cllr Tatler also reported strong support for the project at a TAP meeting, with only one letter of objection received to date. Members were encouraged to submit letters of support. Replacement tree planting is proposed near the former play park behind the hedge and will include a community orchard.

Public forum: Tree and Shrub Removal at Caledonian Court. Two residents of Dukehaugh, attended to raise concerns about the removal of trees and shrubs on the Caledonian Court construction site behind their property. They explained that the vegetation had previously provided privacy and screening, but its removal had left their garden completely exposed to view. They provided photographs showing the loss of screening and described the significant stress this had caused their family.

They stated that planning documents appeared to show the area being retained and that no approved changes could be found on the planning portal. Members expressed concern that planning conditions may have been breached and that there could also be implications for wildlife and nesting birds.

The Chair advised that the Community Council would write to the Managing Director of Eildon Housing Association in support of the residents' concerns. Cllr Thomson agreed to provide planning enforcement details, and M. Marshall confirmed that the matter would be pursued with the Council's enforcement team.

Members expressed support for the residents and agreed that the Community Council would do everything possible to help seek a resolution.

Chairman's report. The report had been circulated.

The Chair congratulated Malcolm Bruce on being named Tweeddale Citizen of the Year and recorded thanks to the Beltane Committee and volunteers for another successful event. Recognition was also given to Michael Marshall and Cat McKay for their work in gathering support for the Kingsmeadows Woodland SCIO, and to Peebles Community Trust on the opening of its new premises in the former Bank of Scotland building. The Chair noted the significant contribution made by volunteers across a wide range of community organisations in the town.

The working party considering non-financial support for Community Councils has concluded, with a report now being prepared for Scottish Borders Council. The financial support working group has held its second meeting, at which the Chair presented information highlighting that Peebles Community Council remains one of the lowest funded Community Councils in the Borders on a per-capita basis. Further meetings are planned, with recommendations expected to be considered by Council in November. The Chair also reported that he had written to Callum Kerr MSP regarding both outstanding roads issues and concerns over Minor Injuries and First Aid services at Hay Lodge Hospital. Thanks were recorded to G MacDonald, A Snoddy and the Peebles in Bloom team for their continued work in preparing for this year's competition. No further updates were available on tourist signs, Place Making/Town Team, or the Fish Fountain.

Planning Report: M. Marshall presented the circulated Planning Report and updated members on several ongoing planning and environmental matters. Members noted continuing concerns regarding compliance with Habitats Regulations, the handling and publication of planning objections, and progress on the Kingsmeadows applications, including application 24/00247/FUL, which remains undetermined. An FOI request has been submitted seeking further information on that application. M. Marshall also reported concerns about proposed tree works at Kingsmeadows after receiving a response to an FOI request shortly before the meeting. The response confirmed that the proposed removal of 15 windblown trees had initially been scheduled during the bird nesting season and was only postponed until after the nesting season following concerns being raised. He expressed concern that tree and ecological reports are not routinely made publicly available and often must be obtained through FOI requests. Members noted concerns regarding transparency within the planning process and the effectiveness of existing environmental safeguards.

Members also noted the Community Council's continuing objection to the proposed MOT service building at George Street due to concerns about flood risk, potential land contamination and the need for appropriate environmental assessments. Several new planning applications were noted, including proposals at Watersmeet, Eshiels, Reiverslaw and the former Bank of Scotland building. Support was agreed in principle for the proposed riverside path project between Fotheringham Bridge and Eddleston Water, subject to the submission of a formal planning application. Updates were also received on the Leithenwater, Scawd Law and Cloich Forest wind farm proposals. M. Marshall reported that community support for the Kingsmeadows Woodland campaign continued to grow, with petition signatures increasing, and the Chair thanked M. Marshall and C McKay for their ongoing efforts on the project.

Wind Farms and Community Benefit Funding: C. Moore reported that work on the wind farm community benefit arrangements is at an early stage and that further updates will be provided as discussions progress. The Chair advised that the micro-grants scheme is now underway and working well, with one application received from the Drill Hall, which was awarded £300 ahead of its 125th anniversary celebrations.

M. Marshall provided an update on the Bowbeat Wind Farm community benefit discussions. He reported that, for the first time, quantitative information had been provided regarding a potential community ownership offer. The current proposal includes £5,000 per year in community funding together with a 1% ownership stake, with the possibility of acquiring a larger share in the future. Members discussed the merits of the offer, noting that it represented an improvement on earlier proposals and was broadly in line with arrangements accepted elsewhere.

Following discussion, the Chair proposed that the Community Council accept the offer currently on the table and continue to support further work on the ownership opportunity. The proposal was approved unanimously.

Peebles Community Trust: The circulated report was noted. M. Bruce advised that the former Bank of Scotland building has now opened as the new Re Use Hub, with early trading and donations proving encouraging. Work continues to address building-related issues and to transfer remaining stock from School Brae. It was also noted that the future use of the School Brae building will be considered in due course, although refurbishment is not currently proposed. It was agreed to keep it on the agenda. No further updates were reported.

Cllr reports

Cllr Begg: In Cllr Begg's absence, it was reported that Crossburn Holiday Park had won the Best Holiday Park award at this year's Scottish Hospitality Awards, highlighting Peebles' reputation as a leading tourist destination.

Cllr Begg also advised that he has been supporting a few local businesses facing rental increases of more than 30% year-on-year. An update was provided on the bin replacement programme at Cuddyside, where new 1,100-litre bins have been installed, although one has already required replacement after its lid was damaged. Standard recycling bins have been replaced with larger 360-litre units. SBC remains willing to provide a communal bin at the entrance to Cuddyside if a suitable hardstanding area is created.

Cllr Tatler: Cllr Tatler reported that the proposed bus build-out on the High Street is progressing and has been well received by Tweed Access Panel. Further information on the implementation timetable is awaited.

An update was also provided on the proposed public toilets at Kingsmeadows. A report is due to be considered by the Common Good Committee on 19 August and will look at the wider issues affecting the site, including vandalism, campervan parking and CCTV provision. In response to a question from A. Snoddy regarding timescales, Cllr Tatler advised that further progress should become clearer following the August meeting.

Cllr Tatler also commented positively on a presentation from Live Borders, noting that the new Chief Executive had outlined a clear strategy and vision for the organisation. He suggested that the presentation should be shared more widely with Community Councils.

Cllr Tatler asked members to consider a request from Cardrona Village Association for support towards improvements to the village play park. Although Cardrona falls within the Innerleithen Community Council area, questions were raised about whether developer contributions from nearby developments could potentially assist the project. Cllr Tatler undertook to obtain further information on the availability of funding and report back. It was agreed that the matter would be added to the September agenda for further discussion.

Members were advised that any issues normally directed to Campbell Johnston of SBC should be raised with Cllr Tatler for the time being.

Cllr Thomson: Cllr Thomson reported that the Small Schemes programme is progressing, with approved projects in Peebles now costed and due to be carried out. She also advised that she continues to deal with a range of housing and environmental issues.

The main update related to parking charges and the Parking Fund, which had been discussed at a recent Full Council meeting. Cllr Thomson explained that income from parking charges is not retained locally but forms part of a Borders-wide fund. A further discussion is expected through the Common Good process regarding how these funds will be allocated. She noted her disappointment with the meeting, commenting that some objectives had not been achieved.

Members noted that parking charges in Peebles will increase to £1 per hour as part of efforts to standardise charges across the Scottish Borders, the first increase for several years. Existing charging arrangements and operating days will remain unchanged at this stage, although additional car parks may be considered in a future phase following consultation. Cllr Tatler advised that future parking income will contribute towards roads and pavement improvements, although it has not yet been confirmed how funding will be allocated between towns.

Members expressed concern that income generated in Peebles was not necessarily being spent in Peebles and sought greater clarity on how Parking Fund revenue is used. The Chair reiterated the view that money raised locally should, where possible, be invested locally. It was also noted that opportunities relating to motorhome and campervan parking may be considered as part of future discussions.

Treasurer's Report: A current balance of £2,077 was reported. Work is ongoing to move the account to online banking and to ensure the necessary paperwork is completed. Cllr Thomson advised that some outstanding paperwork remains to be processed and that additional funds are due to be received.

Chambers Institution Update: The circulated report was noted. S Coe advised that there had been little change since the previous meeting, with work continuing on finalising and cost-checking the Stage 4 technical design before progressing to tendering and construction. Members noted that planning permission is in place, the detailed design has been completed, and the project remains on programme, with main construction works expected to begin in November 2026 and completion anticipated in late 2027. The extension of Levelling Up Fund support to March 2028 was welcomed.

Current priorities include finalising outstanding elements of the design, undertaking site investigations, preparing tender documentation and confirming funding arrangements. Members also noted the ongoing challenges associated with refurbishing a Category A listed building, including managing costs, procurement and potential unforeseen building issues.

Peebles in Bloom: An update was provided on preparations for this year's Peebles in Bloom competition. Members were advised that the presentation evening for prize winners will take place on 20 August. Contributions towards the raffle continue to be received and are progressing well. It was noted that eight judges are involved in the competition this year and that arrangements for trophies are in hand. Members were reminded that all judging sheets for nominated gardens should be submitted by Monday 13 July.

AOB:

Questions for Callum Kerr MSP. The Chair invited members and members of the public to consider any questions they wished to raise with Callum Kerr MSP ahead of his attendance at the September meeting. Topics suggested for discussion included the future of Minor Injuries and First Aid services at Hay Lodge Hospital, ongoing roads issues, and other matters of local concern. Members were asked to submit any additional questions in advance of the meeting.

I Dempster asked about the funding of Christmas tree for Peebles. M Bruce confirmed there will be a tree and details will be made public in due course.

S. Coe reported that funding has been secured from the Community Enhancement Fund and the Small Schemes Programme for improvements relating to the Spigot Mortar emplacement. Work is progressing, including the development of an interpretation concept study, and a meeting will be held to agree the project brief. He also raised concerns about the condition of the pump track at Victoria Park, commenting that it is currently of little value and that there may be an opportunity to develop a higher-quality facility like the skate park. He noted that a few residents had expressed support for improvements and suggested that future funding opportunities be explored. A discussion had taken place at the previous meeting regarding the spelling of Horsburgh/Horsbrugh. S. Coe advised that the correct historical spelling is believed to be Horsburgh, reflecting the name of the family after whom the area was named. The Secretary advised that the matter had already been referred to Scottish Borders Council and that the spelling used had reflected existing signage. It was agreed that the correct spelling should be clarified with the Council.

K. Guiney reported that an increasing number of bus tours are visiting Peebles, bringing more elderly visitors to the town. Concerns were raised about uneven pavements outside several premises, including the Tontine Hotel and FatFace, following reports of visitors tripping in these areas. It was suggested that temporary warning measures, such as cones, could be considered where hazards exist.

K. Guiney also advised that the Peebles Retailers and Traders Association is producing a town map highlighting member businesses and other key visitor attractions and locations within Peebles.

I. Dempster raised concerns about the future effectiveness of the Town Team, noting that attendance at meetings is often low and represents less than 20% of member organisations. He observed that many attendees are also Community Council members and questioned whether there is duplication of effort and discussion between the Town Team and PCC. He suggested that a Town Team representative could attend PCC meetings and provide updates, reducing the need for issues to be discussed repeatedly in different forums. The Chair acknowledged these concerns and outlined the challenges faced by the Town Team since the retirement of Crick Carleton, who had undertaken much of the work required to establish and coordinate the group. While others had attempted to support the Town Team, no permanent leadership structure has emerged, and the group is currently struggling to maintain momentum. M. Marshall noted that the Town Team remains important as a forum bringing together a wide range of community organisations that are not directly represented on the Community Council, particularly when considering significant issues affecting the town. S Coe commented that similar challenges are being experienced elsewhere, with many communities lacking the capacity and resources needed to take forward Local Place Plan work. Members agreed that leadership and wider community involvement are required if the Town Team is to develop further and noted that this is not a challenge unique to Peebles.

D. Ashmole raised concerns about the condition of the Lodge House at Rosetta Caravan Park, stating that the building appears to be deteriorating and is becoming increasingly unsightly. He expressed concern that a prominent and historic building appeared to be falling into disrepair and asked whether any action could be taken.

S. Coe noted that, as a listed building, there is a responsibility to maintain it and that the matter may be one for planning enforcement. D. Ashmole agreed to provide photographs of the building, and Cllr Thomson undertook to investigate the matter further with the appropriate Council officers.

M. Marshall referred to DEFRA's "National security assessment" and noted that several people had expressed environmental concerns to him. He advised that it would be helpful for members to see the associated emergency briefing and any related information to better understand the potential implications. Members noted the concern.

The Chair reported that Scottish Borders Council had recently received recognition at the Scottish Transport Awards. He noted that some recent projects had been particularly successful and highlighted ongoing work to support the planting of native woodland and native tree species to encourage biodiversity and wildlife. G MacDonald also recognised the contribution of Gordon Grant and his team at Scottish Borders Council for their work in this area.

The meeting ended at 2105hrs.

The next meeting will be on 10 September 2026 in the Burgh Hall.

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