



Community Council
of the
Royal Burgh of Peebles and District

**Minutes of the 345th Meeting of the Community Council which was held on
Thursday 10 September 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, G MacDonald (Treasurer), G Ramsay, I Dempster, C Moore, M Bruce, M Marshall (Vice Chairman and Planning Convenor), P Maudsley (Chairman), S Coe, S Watson, J Wilson, H Young, Cllr Begg, Cllr Douglas and Cllr Thomson

In attendance: C Kerr MSP, C Faulds of the Peeblesshire News, K Peebles of the Peeblean and R Fairbairn from the BBC

Members of the Public: Gemma Suttie, Colin White, Julie Suttie, Joan Todd

Apologies: F Richardson, Cllr Pirone, Cllr Tatler

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. Our Minute Secretary cannot be with us tonight. She will write up the Minutes from the recording so please speak clearly, loudly, and one at a time.

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

Declarations of Interest

M Marshall declared that he is a trustee of Kingsmeadows SCIO and Planning Democracy and notes that he was coopted by PCC at its January 2024 meeting becoming planning convenor in March 2024 because of his involvement with the campaign to save Kingsmeadows Woodland.

Calum Kerr MSP

The Chair welcomed Calum Kerr MSP to the meeting and thanked him for attending.

Mr Kerr began by addressing questions relating to renewable energy developments and wind farms. He explained that, whilst he recognised the significant concerns being expressed by communities, he did not support a blanket moratorium on renewable developments. He believed that each proposal should be considered on its own merits, with careful regard given to the views of local communities. He stressed that the climate emergency remained a real and pressing issue and that renewable energy would continue to form an important part of Scotland's future energy mix.

Mr Kerr acknowledged that the growth of renewable developments had, at times, appeared uncoordinated. He noted that energy policy remained reserved to Westminster, whilst planning powers sat with the Scottish Government, and that the National Energy System Operator (NESO) was currently developing a UK-wide strategic energy plan. As a result, significant uncertainty remained regarding the location and scale of future developments.

The discussion focused heavily on community benefit arrangements. Mr Kerr expressed support for community ownership models, citing the Cloich Wind Farm proposal, which includes the option for up to 25% community ownership owing to its location on Scottish Forestry land. He acknowledged concerns that community benefit payments of £5,000 per megawatt had not kept pace with inflation and agreed that, had they done so, the figure would now be significantly higher. He advised that the Scottish Government had consulted on increasing community benefit rates and that communities were awaiting an updated position.

Members raised concerns regarding the imbalance of negotiating power between community councils and developers, particularly as community councils rely on volunteers and varying levels of expertise. It was noted that Peebles Community Council had previously negotiated improvements to community benefit arrangements but continued to face challenges in securing terms that reflected inflation and the long-term value of developments.

Discussion also covered whether community benefit should continue to be based on a fixed sum per megawatt or instead be linked to developers' profits. Concerns were expressed about significant disparities in funding between communities hosting large renewable developments and neighbouring areas that receive little or no benefit despite facing similar challenges and infrastructure pressures. Members suggested that future arrangements should ensure a fairer distribution of funding while still recognising the impact on host communities.

Mr Kerr agreed that greater transparency was needed regarding the financial models used by developers and confirmed that he was seeking advice from experts in renewable energy economics to better understand the sector and strengthen communities' negotiating positions. He offered to continue supporting local communities in discussions with developers and to raise concerns with Scottish Government Ministers where appropriate.

The wider strategic context of renewable energy was also discussed. Members highlighted concerns regarding grid constraints, constraint payments, the growth in electricity demand from activities such as AI data centres, and the need for improved local resilience and energy infrastructure. Mr Kerr agreed that Scotland would benefit from having its own comprehensive energy strategy and argued that future planning should provide communities with a clearer understanding of how developments fit within the wider energy system. He also stressed the importance of investment in the electricity network and energy storage infrastructure.

The meeting then turned to the condition of the Innerleithen Road at the easter entrance to Peebles, between the BP roundabout and the Eastgate Theatre. Members expressed frustration at the poor condition of the road and noted that Scottish Borders Council had indicated that major resurfacing work was not currently scheduled until the 2027/28 financial year.

Mr Kerr advised that he had already raised the matter with Scottish Borders Council and had spoken directly with the Head of Roads. Whilst the current timetable remained unchanged, he explained that he was exploring potential opportunities arising from the Scottish Government's proposed Better Surfaces Fund. He expressed the view that rural authorities such as Scottish Borders Council should receive a fair allocation based on the size of their road network and confirmed that he would continue to press the case for additional funding.

Members emphasised that the condition of the road created a poor gateway to Peebles and highlighted concerns for road users and cyclists. It was suggested that a further joint approach should be made to Scottish Borders Council seeking an earlier solution. Mr Kerr agreed and proposed inviting senior roads officers to visit the location in person to better appreciate the extent of the problem.

The final area of discussion concerned access to minor injuries services at Hay Lodge Health Centre. Members reported ongoing concerns that residents presenting with minor injuries were often being directed elsewhere, including the Borders General Hospital, despite the significant distance involved and limited transport options. It was noted that many residents believed there was confusion over what treatment could be provided locally and that some individuals had been turned away even when requiring immediate attention.

Mr Kerr advised that he had raised these concerns with the Chief Executive of NHS Borders and agreed that the current position appeared unclear and inconsistent. Whilst official guidance suggested that patients should initially contact NHS 24, members provided examples of individuals receiving different responses when presenting in person. Mr Kerr acknowledged that this inconsistency was causing frustration and uncertainty within the community.

Discussion also considered plans for a future walk-in healthcare service within Tweeddale. Mr Kerr confirmed that work was ongoing to develop proposals and that discussions were taking place with local GP practices and healthcare providers. He indicated that lessons were being learned from the existing model operating in Hawick and that any future service in Tweeddale would be shaped by local needs. Members stressed the importance of ensuring that any walk-in service was integrated with the provision of minor injury treatment and wider healthcare services.

Concerns were also raised regarding the perceived centralisation of healthcare services and the need for greater public engagement during any future service redesign. Mr Kerr agreed that meaningful consultation would be essential and undertook to return to a future meeting to provide an update on progress.

In closing, members briefly discussed wider funding pressures affecting local government, community facilities and services. Mr Kerr acknowledged the financial challenges facing councils, health services and organisations such as Live Borders, and suggested that significant structural reforms were likely in the coming years. He emphasised the importance of ensuring that rural communities such as those in the Scottish Borders continued to have a strong voice in these discussions.

The Chair thanked Calum Kerr MSP for attending the meeting and for answering members' questions.

At this point in the meeting, the Chair temporarily handed conduct of the meeting to the Vice Chair and resumed the Chair later in the meeting.

Open Forum: No matters were raised.

Approval of the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2026: The minutes of the July meeting were approved, having been proposed by M Bruce and seconded by S Coe.

Matters arising from the Minutes: In view of time constraints and the extended discussion with Calum Kerr MSP, it was agreed that any outstanding matters arising from the previous minutes would be carried forward to the October meeting.

Chairman's Report: The Chair's report had been circulated in advance of the meeting and was available online. Members noted updates on a range of ongoing matters, including the Peebles War Memorial survey, membership of the Scottish Forum of Community Councils, representations regarding a commemorative tree in Haylodge Park, and continued concerns relating to the removal of mature trees and shrubs at Caledonian Court.

The report also highlighted concerns regarding dog fouling within Peebles Cemetery, progress on Community Council working groups considering financial and non-financial support for community

councils, and ongoing correspondence relating to roads maintenance and healthcare provision in Tweeddale. Members further noted the Chair's attendance at a range of meetings and community events since the previous meeting, including Peebles in Bloom, Community Conversations and discussions on renewable energy matters. Appreciation was recorded for all those involved in the successful Peebles in Bloom event.

Planning Report : The Planning Convener's report had been circulated in advance of the meeting and was available on the Community Council website. Members noted updates on a number of ongoing planning matters, including the Kingsmeadows application, where NatureScot had confirmed the presence of ancient woodland and further correspondence obtained through Freedom of Information requests had highlighted continuing legal and procedural issues. Members also noted updates on Caledonian Court, the proposed MOT service building at Peebles Autocentre and other current planning applications. The Community Council agreed to submit a letter of support for the proposed upgrading of paths and footbridge infrastructure between Fotheringham Bridge and Eddleston Water.

Windfarms : Members noted the Planning Convener's update on current wind farm applications affecting the area. This included the continuing objection by the Ministry of Defence to the Leithenwater proposal and the withdrawal of its objection to the Cloich Forest development, subject to specified conditions. It was also noted that a more detailed discussion on renewable energy developments, community benefit and associated infrastructure had taken place under the agenda item with Calum Kerr MSP. In relation to Belltown Power's changed MOU, the Planning Convenor sought confirmation of his proposal that PCC had no choice but to accept the change. Calum Kerr MSP offered to write to Belltown Power on PCC's behalf and PCC accepted this offer unanimously.

Police Report: The Police Scotland report for August 2026 had been circulated prior to the meeting and was available on the Community Council website. Members noted that, within Peebles, reported incidents during the month included assaults, anti-social behaviour, vandalism, thefts and frauds, together with several road traffic offences. Particular areas affected included Northgate, Dovecot Road, Old Town and North Street. The report also highlighted ongoing community policing activity, crime prevention work and road safety enforcement across the area. No specific issues requiring action by the Community Council were raised. Members continue to be disappointed that the information about actions is no longer available.

Peebles Community Trust : The Peebles Community Trust report had been circulated in advance of the meeting. Members noted that the Reuse Hub at 70 High Street continued to perform well, with increasing sales and a steady flow of donations, although additional volunteers were still required to enable longer opening hours. Progress was also reported on the refurbishment of the former East Station Office, including preparatory works and funding applications to support the project. The Trust continues to explore opportunities to generate sustainable income from the building whilst also addressing business rates issues affecting its property portfolio.

Members further noted ongoing work in relation to the proposed Community Asset Transfer of the former School Brae public toilets and updates from the Trust's affiliated groups, including Floral Peebles, Cycling Without Age and the Eshiels Wood Group, all of which continue to make positive contributions to the community. The report was noted with thanks.

SBC Councillors' Reports

Cllr Douglas reported on the recent Community Conversations event held in Peebles, which had provided a useful opportunity for councillors to engage with members of the public. He congratulated everyone involved in the success of Peebles in Bloom. He also reminded residents that consultation on

the Local Development Plan remained open until 30 September and encouraged members of the public to participate, noting that the plan would shape planning policy, housing development and other land-use decisions for many years. In addition, he advised that early discussions were taking place regarding the possible development of a cycling pump track at Victoria Park, with public consultation expected to form part of the process.

Cllr Begg reported that the High Street bus stop had recently been repainted and asked residents not to affix posters to the structure, as the adhesive was damaging the Perspex panels and detracting from its appearance. He also provided an update on the ongoing difficulties facing Peebles Rovers FC in meeting East of Scotland Football League ground requirements. He expressed concern that costly fencing and screening requirements, estimated at around £100,000, were placing an unsustainable burden on a small community football club and hindering opportunities for youth football development. Following discussion, it was agreed that Cllr Begg would prepare a letter to the East of Scotland Football League setting out these concerns. The letter would be issued jointly on behalf of the elected members and Peebles and District Community Council.

Cllr Thomson advised that outstanding Peebles in Bloom funding had now been paid following previous administrative issues. She also reported that discussions regarding Kingsmeadows parking income and Common Good Fund arrangements remained ongoing, as agreed changes had not yet been implemented. An additional Common Good meeting was scheduled for 18 September 2026 and a further update would be provided in due course. Concerns were raised regarding increased parking charges at the swimming pool car park, particularly for swimmers and families attending lessons. Cllr Thomson agreed to refer the matter back to the appropriate working group.

During discussion, members also received updates on proposals for public toilets at Kingsmeadows, future consideration of parking arrangements at Kingsmeadows car park, the accounting arrangements for parking income, and the condition of the Lodge House at the campsite. It was agreed that several of these matters would be revisited at future meetings as further information became available.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer thanked all those who had donated prizes for the recent raffle. She reported that the Community Council was still operating an analogue banking system and was in the process of moving to digital banking. Progress was proving slower than anticipated, but work was continuing to complete the transition.

Chambers Institution Trust

The Chambers Institution Trust report had been circulated in advance of the meeting and was available to members. It was noted that, following a value-engineering exercise to align project specifications with the available budget, attention was now focused on the tendering process for the Phase 1 works. It was hoped that tenders received would be within the approved budget.

Members also noted that fundraising activity was continuing, with the Friends organisation now established to assist with applications for charitable funding. The recently completed Phase 2 business plan and feasibility study would support future funding bids and help articulate the longer-term vision for the project. In addition, work had commenced on planning for the future operation of the Chambers Institution following completion of the Phase 1 works, including discussions with key partners and development of a transition plan to support delivery of the Phase 2 objectives. The report was noted with thanks.

Any Other Business

Members noted correspondence received regarding dog fouling within the cemetery. It was reported that Scottish Borders Council had installed a temporary barrier and that repairs to the cemetery gates were being progressed. It was also clarified that the Council employs both a Dog Control Officer and a Dog Education Officer.

The Chair advised that the planned bus build-out on the north side of the High Street would proceed.

Members also noted that representations had been made to Scottish Borders Council regarding flexibility in the operation of the new parking charge arrangements and permits, recognising that some initial difficulties may be due to implementation issues.

On behalf of a resident, concern was raised regarding local preparedness for wildfires. Members were advised that a specialist wildfire response unit based in Galashiels covers the area.

S Watson reported that this year's Highland Games had been a successful event and thanked all volunteers who had contributed to its organisation.

I Dempster questioned the comparatively low number of Trading Standards visits and enforcement actions in the Scottish Borders compared with other local authority areas. M Bruce referred to recent information obtained under Freedom of Information legislation which indicated a significant disparity in the use of enforcement powers. Cllr Begg requested that the relevant statistics be shared with elected members so that further enquiries could be made.

C Moore reported that Foundation Scotland had received the first round of applications for funding and that the value of applications exceeded the funds currently available. A further update would be provided at the next meeting.

M Marshall sought confirmation that a letter of support should be submitted for the proposed improvements at Hay Lodge ("The Hump"). Members unanimously agreed that the letter should be sent.

The meeting ended at 2050hrs.

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

..... Chairman

..... Dated