

Upper Liddesdale & Hermitage Community Council

Ordinary Meeting 11th December 2025

Draft Minutes

The Meeting was held at Hermitage Hall.

Those attending:

Councillors: Watson McAteer, Annette Smart

Community Councillors - Geoffrey Kolbe (GK) Chairman, Ian Hunter (IH) Secretary, Martin Steed (MS) Treasurer. Lynda Graham (LG) co-opted

Members of the public - 10

Meeting started at 19:00hrs

1. Apologies for Absence

Rosie Webster (RW) sent her apologies

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting 9th October 2025

IH proposed that the minutes were a true and accurate record of the meeting. MS seconded the motion, There were no dissenters and the motion was carried.

3. Matters arising

GK reported that this community's approval of the Upper Teviot & Borthwick Water Community Council's Place Plan had been communicated to them.

IH reported that there was no further update to the proposed tree felling along the road from Steele Road to Hermitage.

In RW's absence, GK reported that someone had been found to make the information boards and they could be made at our convenience.

4. UL&H CC Place Plan Approval

GK reported that our Place Plan was approved by Scottish Borders Council on 10th of October and has been published on their website. It will in due course become part of the third Local Development Plan. GK thanked RW for all the work that she had put into the Place Plan and that we were well ahead of other Community Councils in the area on getting our Place Plan approved.

5. UL&H CC Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO)

GK reported that the Upper Liddesdale and Hermitage Organisation (ULHO) was granted charitable status by OSCR on October 21st with a charity number SC054659. This organisation will enable this community to receive community benefit funds directly from (initially) Pines Burn wind farm and distribute it to the community on projects that benefit the community. IH asked GK to outline why it was necessary to set up a SCIO and GK replied that Community Councils had no protection against any debts or liabilities incurred due to mis-spending or mis-allocation of funds and they were jointly and severally liable for the funds in the Community Council bank account. A SCIO organisation, on the other hand, protected the trustees and enabled the community, through ULHO, to handle the funds from Pines Burn wind farm initially, but potentially other funds in the future.

GK asked for people to sign up for membership of the ULHO as a minimum of ten members was required by the Constitution. Once ten members had been signed up, an inaugural meeting would be called, after which ULHO would take possession of the Pines Burn community benefit funds which Foundation Scotland is currently holding on our behalf.

6. Community Council Convention on Energy Infrastructure (17th January)

GK reported that there was a meeting of Community Councils called for the 17th of January to note the growing concern regarding the onslaught of planning applications for renewables energy infrastructure and to press the Council that the transmission lines, battery energy storage units, wind farms and solar farms being proposed were not in the interests of the people of the Scottish Borders. GK said that he and RW would be attending the meeting to represent the community of Upper Liddesdale and Hermitage in opposing these applications.

7. Roger Clark Rally

GK noted that there had been long traffic holdups on the B6359 near where it joins the A6088 road to Bonchester Bridge. RW and Andrew Douglas had been caught up in it. Rally cars being repaired were blocking the road and the police seemed to be standing by and doing nothing.

Councillor McAteer reported that he had been kept awake as rally cars passed his house not once, as advertised in the information letter sent around by the rally organisers beforehand, but

twice, due to the cancellation of another stage and so a re-run on other stages. Cllr McAteer reported that a meeting would be held on Thursday 18th by SBC resilience with the police and the rally organisers and he would share the outcome of that meeting.

8. Wind Farm Update

GK reported that having been objected to by the Scottish Borders Council Planning Committee, the Teviot wind farm application had gone to Public Local Inquiry. However, at the Pre Examination Meeting on the previous Monday, Muirhall asked for the Inquiry to be postponed due to decisions the UK government were about to publish regarding the management of the Eskdalemuir Noise Budget. The reporter agreed to delay the Inquiry and would hold a second Pre Examination Meeting in March, pending a start to the Inquiry in June.

Liddesdale wind farm (developer EDF) was due to submit an application early in 2026, but was also waiting for the outcome of the consideration by the National Electricity Systems Operator (NESO) on who would get connection to the grid and when.

Meanwhile, GK had drafted a response to the Hartsgarth wind farm Scoping Report, which was on the UL&H CC website. GK asked the meeting for any comments on the response or any changes. None were forthcoming so GK proposed that this response be submitted to the Scottish Government. This was agreed.

9. Hermitage Hall and UL&H CC 'Christmas Cheer' gathering

The Hall Committee reported 30 replies. The food was organised. IH was asked to organise the wine. The gathering will be from 6:00 to 8:30 on Friday 19th of December.

10. Mammal Society Goat Count update.

LG read out an email from Matt Larsen-Daw of the Mammal Society in which he stated his regrets that the Mammal Society had decided not to carry out the survey it had planned to do in the Spring of 2026. The reason given was the failure to establish 'good relations' with the stakeholders and the local community. There was a fear that due to heightened feelings, the volunteers conducting the count could not be guaranteed to be able to conduct their work in safety and so the exercise was called off.

The Mammal Society had therefore decided to conduct a goat survey on a small selection of other sites where goats were present, but with equally challenging geography, a smaller total area and no local controversy to navigate.

There was some discussion about the validity of such a survey. LG cited other surveys done historically by Peter McDougall in 1972 and surveys of the Bewcastle goats, which had been last seen in the 1980s and were now gone.

David Braithwaite (Chair of The Wild Goat Conservation Trust) commented that he had been quoted £12,000 by BH Consultancy to do a drone survey, but that was a lot of money to find.

Gary Cooper commented that Oxygen Conservation did not seem to have yet applied to Forestry Land Scotland to plant their proposed forest.

11. Financial Report

MS reported that the bank balance as of 11th December 2025 was £3,947.62 of which total ringfenced funds was £2,796.40 and the unrestricted funds was £1,151.22

12. Any other Business:

GK said that he had reported the potholes on the minor road from Steele Road to Hermitage, one of which was now a 'tank trap', but nothing seems to have happened. Others commented that their reports to Scottish Borders Council had been met with similar inaction. Cllr McAteer said there were now two pot hole repairing machines, which were making their way around the area. One problem these machines faced was when the pothole was in fact a breakdown of the road's edge. It seems the machine needed a definite 'hole' to work properly. Cllr McAteer said that there is a website where potholes can be reported and urged people to report the potholes.

13. Date of next meeting 12 February 2026

GK wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and closed the meeting at 20:00 hrs.