

Upper Liddesdale & Hermitage Community Council

Ordinary Meeting 12th February 2026

Draft Minutes

The Meeting was held at Hermitage Hall.

Those attending:

Councillors: 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 - 6

Meeting started at 19:00hrs

1. Apologies for Absence

Rosie Webster (RW) sent her apologies. Councillor Watson McAteer regretted he was in hospital for three days for a procedure which meant he would miss the Meeting. Everyone joined the Chairman in wishing Councillor McAteer a speedy recovery.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting 11th December 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

In RW's absence, GK reported that the information boards had now been installed: one at the resilience shed on the B6357 opposite Larriston and one opposite Hermitage Hall. It was agreed by all that the boards were excellent and a vote of thanks was given to RW for organising them.

4. Response to Southdean Community Council Place Plan

GK noted that the Southdean Place Plan process required consultation with neighbouring Community Councils and this was in pursuance of this process. The Place Plan was very similar to our own, with a similarly high value of landscape as natural capital. There were similar community projects listed as in our own Place Plan to improve resilience, enhance viewpoints with signage and so on. GK proposed that the Southdean Place Plan be approved and this was agreed with general assent.

5. Motion to approve the Unified Statement of the Convention of Community Councils.

GK reported attending the South of Scotland Conference at Jedburgh Town Hall on 17th January, which was a gathering of 43 Community Councils to express their concern on the onward spread of energy infrastructure projects in rural areas. This is happening without any real plan by the Scottish Government, and affected communities have very little say whether it happens in their area. The South of Scotland Convention followed the pattern of the Highlands Convention of Community Councils, and the North East Convention as well as the Islands. GK reported that there was to be a round-table meeting with Scottish Government Ministers on the 24th of February. GK said he was to be one of ten representing the South of Scotland at that meeting.

GK asked that the Meeting approve the following Statement:

That our Community Councils:

- RECOGNISE the impact of Climate Change on our planet but OPPOSES an unjust and unnecessary industrialisation of Rural Scotland.
- CALLS for our elected members to URGENTLY support and protect our communities at NATIONAL level, given that community consultation is inadequate and LOCAL DEMOCRACY is being overridden, with decisions made by Community Councils and Local Authorities consistently disregarded by the Scottish Government.
- CALLS upon the Scottish Government to undertake a PLANNING INQUIRY COMMISSION to address the whole cumulative impact of all major renewable infrastructure developments, including transmission, storage and generation with all ancillary infrastructure on our communities and landscape, rather than the salami sliced approach which has thus far been taken.
- CALLS for a PAUSE of all major applications, given the impact upon our communities, which may hasten depopulation in some areas until a clear NATIONAL ENERGY POLICY is in place and an ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT undertaken given that tourism is a major part of our rural economy.

The Statement was approved without dissent.

6. Teviot Wind Farm: Pre Examination Meeting.

GK reported that the pre examination meeting had been postponed until the 31st of March. This was in agreement with a request from Muirhall, the developer of Teviot wind farm, who were waiting for the outcome of the Eskdalemuir technical solution to see what the effect of the seismic noise constraints in the technical solution on their turbines would be.

GK said that he had looked at the report by Xi Engineering defining a Seismic Impact Limit (SIL) which was to be the basis of the technical solution and there were a number of methodological errors in the report. GK said that he had calculated a SIL based on the available data and it was substantially lower than that proposed by Xi Engineering. GK said that he had sent a Response to the MoD, the Scottish Government, the Eskdalemuir Working Group, the Secretary of State for Scotland and Xi Engineering. There had been no direct response, but the Secretary of State for Scotland had reported delays in the technical consultation due to “unforeseen circumstances” and other sources had reported “problems” which nobody would talk about. GK thought his Response may have had an impact.

GK noted that all wind farm applications were treading water at present while waiting for clarification on the Eskdalemuir technical solution and while the National Electricity Systems Operator (NESO) was revamping connections to the grid.

7. Report UL&HO

GK reported that the Organisation now had more than ten members. In consequence, there would be an inaugural meeting shortly, after which funds held by Foundation Scotland would be transferred to the bank account of the organisation.

8. Newcastleton & Langholm wild goats

LG reported that the Scottish Government Petition Committee had met last week and Jackson Carlaw, the Chairman, had closed the petition, which stood at 21,926 signatures. This appeared to be a ‘clearing of the decks’ before the elections next May. Jackson Carlaw regretted that NatureScot were not minded to recognise the goats as a native species. He suggested that a new petition be mounted once the next Parliament had formed.

LG thought that the main objective now was to get a proper count of the goats on the moor. Langholm Initiative had done a drone count of the goats on their part of the moor and had subsequently culled about

60 to 80 goats, according to reports. The cull had taken place over several weeks and had involved a number of shooters on quad bikes with some shooting at night.

LG reported that Dr Shirley Goodyear of the The British Primitive Goat Research Group was going to try and do a DNA test to show that the goats were an ancient native breed.

LG recounted a conversation with an ex Buccleuch Estates employee who said that the goats always were controlled by the Estate, but they had stopped controlling them when it was decided to sell the moor. The numbers had subsequently increased since then, but not that quickly since mortality rate for kids was quite high.

9. Damage to bridge walls from B6399 to Steele Road

IH reported that he learned from some bridge inspectors that the barrel/abutment of the bridge was damaged, along with the parapet of the bridge which had been damaged by an arctic lorry. It would seem the waiting time to get the bridge repaired is many months or even years.

10. Financial Report

MS reported that the bank balance as of 11th December 2025 was £2,227.34 of which total ringfenced funds was £1,212.40 and the unrestricted funds was £1,014.94

MS noted that £78 was left over from the ringfenced funds for the info-boards and suggested that this be absorbed back into general funds. This was approved.

11. Any other Business:

IH reported that one of the two Jerry cans of fuel which had been stolen from Newlands had been found near Hermitage Castle. Keith Brough, who manages the CCTV cameras in Newcastleton had managed to isolate the vans being driven by the thieves and the thieves had been apprehended. IH wanted to say 'thank you' to Keith Brough for his diligence.

Councillor Smart advised anyone who had been the victim of a theft to contact Keith Brough and let him know. There is a good chance that he will be able to identify the thief's vehicle.

People were reminded that it is worth putting a lock on the door once the horse has bolted. The tale was told of the farm where some quad bikes were stolen. The thieves realised they would be replaced with new quad bikes and came back a year later to steal those!

An entry for the diary is 2nd July 2017, when the Tour de France rolls down the B6399 on its way from Hawick to Carlisle. Hermitage Hall is planning to host spectators for the event. Councillor Smart confirmed that the Council were also making plans for the event, and that ensuring the road would be in good condition was part of the planning.

13. Date of next Ordinary meeting, and AGM, 9th April 2026

Meeting was closed at 20:00 hrs.