

Upper Liddesdale & Hermitage Community Council

Ordinary Meeting 9th October 2025

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. Presentation: Low Carbon (Hartsgarth wind farm)

We were visited by Patricia Carr and Angus Thomson of Low Carbon. Their presentation was very brief. They had dropped the Blackburn part of the windfarm on the advice of SBC who warned them off a wind farm on two sites.

GK pointed out that the 9 turbines at the top of the array would all be visible from Hermitage Castle, so they would have to go. Angus said they would be consulting with Historic Environment Scotland.

Angus confirmed they were working on a setback of 1km for the Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA). GK said every other windfarm was working to 3km. Angus said 1km was the guidance. GK said that when that guidance was issued by the Landscape Institute, the average height of turbines in the Appendix examples was 80m and the proposed turbines for this scheme are three times higher. So, 3 km was a more acceptable setback.

Angus confirmed that they are looking at the same route in as Cliffhope and Liddesdale - and Millmoor Rig. GK pointed out that Cliffhope had stated that the schemes would take it in turns to do the construction. They would not all be using the same roads at the same time, there is not the capacity for that. That could leave Hartsgarth delaying construction until the 2040s. Angus seemed relaxed about that and said that assumed all the wind farms would get consent. Also, an alternative route would be up through Newcastleton.

On peat, they have done a very coarse survey on a 1 km grid and based the preliminary turbine placements on that. They will do a 100m grid survey for their Environmental Impact Assessment which will better inform the turbine placement.

On the Eskdalemuir Noise Budget (ENB), they are 22.5 km from the Eskdalemuir Seismic Array. Angus said they have not appointed a consultant to guide them through the ENB. GK noted that they would be at the back of a very long queue to get an allocation, but Angus was optimistic that a number of wind farms would drop out.

Angus said that to be considered for Gate 1 of the NESO grid connection review, a wind farm developer needed the land owner's permission. The threshold for Gate 2 is a realistic prospect of a planning

application being submitted. They are currently looking at a connection date of 2033 to the Teviot substation. He accepted that they might have to underground the connection cable as the connection would necessarily have to bypass Hermitage Castle.

Battery storage was something they are looking at, but there are no firm plans as yet.

Community Benefit offered is the Scottish Government recommendation of £5000/MW installed capacity. GK said this was a bit stingy as Teviot were offering £7k and it showed they were not really committed to the community by only offering the minimum! Angus said that was the guidance....

They seemed minded to just rely on a computer model of wind speeds over the UK, and LIDAR for fine tuning, without using a met mast.

They are looking to submit an application in 2027

There is a public exhibition in Newcastleton Village Hall on 18 and 19 November, when it is hoped they will have some more detail for us.

Presentation: Sir Arthur Elliot Memorial Fund

Madam Margaret Elliot gave a short talk on the work of the Sir Arthur Elliot Memorial Trust, set up in memory of her father who died in 1990. The trust was set up with a bequest of £20k and the interest from that sum has been used to benefit the inhabitants of Liddesdale; to advance education, provide facilities in the interests of social welfare and to improve quality of life within the community of the Parish of Newcastleton and the Liddesdale area. Annual grants enable successful candidates to carry out individual ambitions or community projects that lie within the purposes defined above, which may be either in the UK or outwith.

Margaret Elliot recounted how her father had been born and raised in America, but had gone to Harrow where his Americanisms were 'knocked out of him'. He went on to become a stock broker in London, but retained a love for Liddesdale and retired here when he was 55. He moved into Redheugh, which had been in the Elliot family since the time of Robert the Bruce, except for a period of 60 years.

Margaret Elliot gave as an example of the work of the trust a young McGregor who was funded to go to South Africa to be a trauma surgeon.

Margaret Elliot thanks the Community Council for the gift of £300 and wondered if this could be an annual endowment? GK replied that it would be earnestly discussed!

Margaret Elliot referred to her family's connection with Hermitage Hall and presented John Scott of the Hermitage Hall a copy of the governance document for Hermitage Hall required by Buccleuch Estates to supplement the transfer of title of the Hermitage Hall land and building to the Trustees, namely Sir Arthur Francis Augustus Boswell Elliott, Lieutenant Colonel Maurice Alan Johnson, Robert Forster and John Fotheringham.

2. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Jane Cox regretted a clash with a Rotary meeting. Rosie Webster was on holiday. Andrew Warburton passed on apologies from Alena Warburton.

3. Approval of the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting 14th August 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.

4. Matters arising

Place Plan update

Rosie Webster was not present, but GK read out a written report as follows: "We had responses from Watson McAteer and Southdean CC and I emailed again the neighbouring Community Councils for any comments, but none has come forward that I am aware of. The appropriate documents and supporting letters etc. have therefore been sent to the SBC and we now await the formal acceptance of the plan."

Information Boards

Rosie Webster was not present, but GK read out a written report as follows: "I have applied for the money from Foundation Scotland and the money was moved over into our accounts. This is to add to our ringfenced funds for boards which was not going to be sufficient on its own given the high cost of boards.

I have asked Colin Wilson to come and have a look at the sites to advise on design and then hopefully we can get this project completed."

Scottish Parliament Protected Status Langholm Goats

LG reported that the protection of the Langholm wild goats petition was considered by the Public Petitions Committee on 10th September. There were over 13,000 signatures on the petition and the petition remains open. LG said there were too many comments made to relate them all, but they were all positive. Rachael Hamilton MSP moved the motion for the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to grant protected status to the primitive goat species in the Scottish Borders.

Committee member Fergus Ewing MSP mentioned that he could not understand why NatureScot do not apparently value wild goats. Mr Ewing also commented on the removal of hill cattle and sheep from Langholm and Newcastleton hills left ungrazed moorland, building dangerously high fuel loads of vegetation with a high risk of fire. The Convenor referred to the "Dead hand of NatureScot" in its lack of willingness to engage with local communities on important issues such as the subject of this petition.

It was concluded that the petition should stay open and further detailed information should be requested from JNCC, NatureScot and the SFRS.

A video recording the petition being considered is available at:

<https://www.scottishparliament.tv/meeting/citizen-participation-and-public-petitions-committee-september-10-2025?>

LG reported that the Tarras Valley Nature Reserve had published a goat management plan on their website. She said the Wild Goats Conservation Trust would be in talks with them about their plan. The Mammal Society would also be conducting an independent count of the goats on the Langholm Moors and seeks funding for that project.

Gary Cooper reported that David Braithwaite of the Wild Goats Conservation Trust has made enquiries what the cost would be to have the whole moor counted in one day using a thermal drone. He was quoted £12,000.

Gary Cooper wondered if SBC could pass a local bylaw to protect the goats? It was commented that the goats are in the areas of two local authorities and that complicated the matter.

Gary Cooper asked if the CC would support protecting the wild goats? GK responded that the farmers in the community were the ones most affected by the goats and they were not well represented at the meeting. There were no farmers on the Community Council, for example. It was a matter on which the

community was not united and so the CC could not take a position on the matter. GK thought that the counting of the goats would help inform further discussion on managing them and he thought the Community Council could support that.

5. Report: Teviot wind farm

GK reported that the application for Teviot wind farm was to be the subject of a public inquiry following its rejection by the SBC Planning Committee. However, Muirhall, the developers, had asked for a delay in the inquiry while new information and changes were considered by the planning officers of SBC. GK noted that the guidance for public inquiries sets out a timetable to which the Reporter should endeavour to keep. However, the timetable suggested by the Reporter was already about three times longer than recommended and the delay requested by Muirhall would make it yet longer.

The Reporter had asked for confirmation from SBC before making a decision. Meanwhile, the Teviot Landscape Community who are fighting the wind farm was questioning the Reporter on the overly long timetable of the inquiry.

6. Report: Other wind farms

GK reported that Millmoor Rig wind farm had submitted a large amount of additional information on their application. There was nothing in the submission which addressed the comments by the various community groups, including the Community Councils. A response to these submissions was requested by the 28th. The affected Community Councils were meeting on the 15th to determine a joint response. GK asked if he could wait until after this meeting before drafting a response from this Community Council, which could be approved by the other Community Councillors before submission? This was agreed.

GK reported that applications for Liddesdale wind farm and Cliffhope wind farm were now not going to be submitted until 2026.

7. Report: Hermitage Hall:

Grant request to be considered.

GK noted that Foundation Scotland were holding Pines Burn Community Benefit funds on behalf of the Community Council. Hermitage Hall was making an application for various items including a dishwasher, replacement exterior lighting, a marquee for public events, a bicycle rack and repair station and a collection of social entertainment games. The total was £4,370.64. The Hall sought approval from the Community Council for a grant of this sum.

Gary Cooper noted that the water supply to the Hall was shared and while he had a large storage tank, it was not a robust supply. GK asked John Scott for the Hall if anything in the grant request would increase the amount of water the Hall used? John Scott replied that it would not. GK then ruled that concerns Gary Cooper had about the water supply were therefore not relevant to this item. IH suggested that Gary Cooper should raise the matter in Any Other Business.

GK asked if the meeting could approve the application and this was agreed without dissent.

Contribution to “Christmas Cheer at Hermitage Hall”, December 19th 6:00 to 8:30

GK noted that the CC had contributed £250 to this event last year and it had been a great success. GK proposed that the CC should contribute £250 to this year's event. This was agreed unanimously.

8. Request to consider the Upper Teviot & Borthwick Water Community Council Place Plan

GK noted that just as we had put out our Place Plan for consideration by surrounding Community Councils, so UT&BW CC had asked us for comments. GK said he had put the Place Plan on the website for consideration. It was agreed that this was a very comprehensive document with aims and aspirations that were broadly aligned with our own Plan. **GK said he would respond accordingly.**

9. Report: Progress on the Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO)

GK reported that the application by the Upper Liddesdale & Hermitage Organisation had been submitted to OSCR and there had now been a response with a number of questions. GK said that he expected there would be a 'too and fro' for a while and then the charitable status would be awarded, probably before the next CC meeting.

10. Report: Financial Report

MS reported that the bank balance as of 9th October 2025 was £3,545.81 of which total ringfenced funds was £2,796.40 and the unrestricted funds was £1,161.72

11. Any other Business:

Timber harvesting Steele Road

IH reported that Buccleuch Estates had indicated that they intended to fell the woods to the side of the road from Newlands to the seat on the road to Steele Road. There was general concern that the bridge at the B6399 end of the road was only suitable for vehicles up to 7 tonnes weight. In the other direction, the bridge at Steele Road had a clearance height of only 12 feet 6 inches. There was speculation that the bridge could be circumvented by going up onto the railway line. **IH said he would continue a dialogue with Buccleuch Estates.**

Issues with Water supply to Hermitage Hall

Gary Cooper noted that the water supply he shared with Hermitage Hall and Hermitage School House was fragile and feared disruption due to Hermitage Hall activities. It was suggested that Gary continue his conversation with Hermitage Hall directly.

Sign for Kielder by Steele Road bridge

LG reported on a suggestion from Jackson Ewart that there should be a sign so that traffic from the B6399 headed for Kielder would turn in the correct direction for Kielder after passing under the bridge. **GK said he would ask the appropriate department.**

12. Date of next meeting 11 December 2025