

Ettrick & Yarrow Community Council

Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 2nd June 2025

St Mary's Hall Cappercleuch

Present: Alison Renwick (AR) (Chair), Kirsty Irving (KI) (Treasurer), Karen O'Brien-Barret (KO) (Secretary), Jane Telfer (JT), John Davidson (JD), Elizabeth Williamson (EW), Neil Chalk (NC), Paul Scott (PS), Councillor Elaine Thornton-Nicol (ET-N) and approx. 18 members of the public

1. **Apologies:** Douglas Walker, Jonathan Rowley, Caroline Cochrane, Councillor Leagh Douglas
2. **Minutes of last meeting:** The minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 7th April 2025 were proposed by EW and seconded by KI
3. **Matters Arising (not on the agenda)**

50 MPH Speed Limit – it was queried whether heavy goods vehicles were subject to the same speed regulations as other traffic where a speed limit sign is in place. PS Crawford Laing stated that it was his understanding that heavy goods vehicle restriction of 40 MPH remained even where a sign indicated a higher speed limit was in force on the road.

Update: PS Laing provided the following update after the meeting:

"I have checked with SBC Traffic & Road Safety Management as well as the Roads Policing Inspector for Lothians and Scottish Borders and have had confirmation that where the upper speed limits of 60mph have been reduced to 50mph then the lower limits for other vehicles remain. Goods vehicles more than 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight remain with a 40mph speed limit as before (not raised to 50mph as someone suggested at the meeting). Other vehicles which had previously been either 60 or 50mph are now all 50mph."

4. **Police Report** PS Crawford Laing and PC John Murray attended

AR thanked PS Laing and PC Murray for attending.
PS Crawford confirmed that the report for May would be circulated once complete. There had been only five calls within a month and a minor issue with a camper and a collision with a lamb being those affecting the local area.

Quad Bike Theft – PS Laing confirmed that this was a recognised crime in rural areas. He urged owners to lock vehicles and fitting tracking devices is the most effective in ensuring recovery.

A708 50 MPH Restriction – It was queried whether statistical information collected by the air track monitoring system was available. ET-N stated that the location of the air track was based on road conditions, accident

rates and non-compliance with speed restrictions. It was noted that some air tracks have been deployed in areas that aren't problematic. It was also noted that the speed restriction seems to have had no effect on the speed of motorcycles. It was queried whether more monitoring was needed given that the restriction was on a trial basis so that change could be measured. ET-N requested that she be provided with details of the specific areas in question and she would request the GPS data captured anonymously from cars. PC Murray confirmed that this would provide an average of the speed of the upper quartile and, currently, doesn't show that there is an issue with speeding. Incidents of speeding and dangerous driving were discussed and it was agreed that this needed to be reported, with a licence number where available, using the Police Scotland Contact Us form -

<https://www.scotland.police.uk/secureforms/contact/>

5. Councillors' Reports

Live Borders – ET-N confirmed that a new CEO, Catriona McAllister, has been appointed. She also confirms that the public consultation has been launched, is open until 31st August 2025 and urged everyone to complete the survey. The current arrangements for Live Borders are not financially sustainable and information gathered from the survey will be vital to discussions which may affect services provided by Live Borders.
<https://scotborders.citizenspace.com/customer-communities/sportleisure-and-cultural-services-and-facilities/>

Borders Buddys Launch – Volunteers are being sought to crochet or knit 1000 toy mice. These will be given to local children going into Primary 1 to support the transition from nursery.

Financial Report – The unaudited report is due next month. This shows an overspend for the first quarter. This is due to be published imminently and public suggestion are welcome.

Chief Executive – is due to return from sick leave on 23rd June 2025.

6. Financial Report (presented by KI)

Opening bank balance - 2 nd April 2025	£23,485.78
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Income

Foundation Scotland (unrestricted cost of living increase)	£500
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Total Income	£500
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Expenditure

Direct EYCC Expenditure

Officer's Expenses	£81.63
D Hewat – Paths maintenance (Ettrick & Yarrow)	£235

Windfarm Expenditure

Kirkhope Horticultural Society (Garden Shredder)	£220
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Total Expenditure	£536.63
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Balance as at 1st June 2025	£23,449.15
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KI encouraged anyone who has a project which will benefit the wider community to get in touch as there may be funding available.

7. St Mary's Loch Campsite

Martin Andrews, Factor for the Wemyss and March Estate in attendance. The planning application to establish a campsite on the shores of St Mary's Loch at Henderland has been submitted to SBC and circulated via the EYCC.

It has been recognised that there is a marked change in the amount and behaviour of people accessing the area to camp which has led to significant issues at the cafe green. Whilst work has been ongoing to resolve these issues; supply of skips, taking over the running of the toilets, supplying portaloos, employing a ranger etc. However, moving campers from the cafe green has led to them, and the associated issues, being displaced to other locations which has proved difficult to control and a new site would help.

The site would be accessed via a new junction off the main road have facilities for approximately 20 tents and 4 RVs with the aim of adapting the service to match demand. It is recognised that no toilet provision has been included in the application but the aim is to use portaloos in the first instance to keep the capital costs at a manageable level. It was confirmed that there was scope to increase capacity for RVs should there be the demand for this.

Concern was raised concerning the potential for visitors getting into difficulty in the water when paddle boarding with strong currents and the prevailing wind pushing them further into the Loch. It was felt that the safety of visitors should be paramount. It was suggested that those

engaged with the Loch could come together to form a water users group to help mitigate potential issues.

It was confirmed that the relationship with the hire company at the Loch of Lowes would continue and that the aim is not to promote the campsite as a place for water sports. Appropriate signage would be in place and there would be a management presence on the site allowing interaction with users to manage safety.

Concern was raised that, whilst the campsite would provide a more appropriate place for some visitors, it was unlikely to contain all of the problems that currently exist; parking, anti-social behaviour, fires, litter etc. It was suggested that the community work together to try to find solutions. This was welcomed by Martin who said that the current offering at Megget was not sustainable and the hope was that the anti-social element would be moved away with an appropriate facility being made available.

Issues with speeding vehicles approaching entrance to the site were also a cause for concern and it was suggested that an extension to the 40MPH limit be explored. It was anticipated that SBC would look at the impact of this when considering the application.

AR confirmed that everyone would have their own thoughts, concerns and suggestion in relation to the plans and were entitled to this. She recognised that the planning process provided a proper and appropriate mechanism for these to be fed back and urged attendees to do so.

8. Ettrick flooding

Whilst remedial work has been done to alleviate issues with flooding more still need to be done. Representatives from SEPA, Tweed Commission and owners of the land (which includes EYCDC) have reached an agreement to remove some of the gravel from the river. The current blockage runs for around 25 yards and, in addition to exacerbating the flooding issue, is impacting the salmon population making it impossible for them to reach their spawning ground. The parties involved, including the Community Council, are considering funding for this and It is hoped that the work could be completed by the end of the month.

ET-N raised a concern about the blockage reoccurring and future funding being needed. It was felt that, regardless of this, the work would need to be done since the flooding issue is a serious matter.

9. Community Resilience

AR confirmed that this was still a work in progress. A new community resilience officer is in place in Ettrickbridge. It is hoped that SBC could provide more guidance as to what is expected of the officers. ET-N agreed to provide introductory information for them.

10. Defibrillators

EW confirmed that 6 of the cabinets needed to be replaced along with the electrodes. This work needs to be carried out by a qualified electrician and will cost in the region of £5,000. This sum has been ring fenced from the budget.

A question was raised in relation to a cabinet being provided for the defibrillator at the Sailing Club, which is currently housed inside and inaccessible during closed hours. It was felt that because there were two other defibrillators in close proximity this wasn't something that the Community Council could fund.

11. Update from EYCDC

The latest copy of the EYE has been circulated which contains the most up to date information.

It is hoped that a borehole could be installed which would provide a more secure water supply to the School and Boston Hall. This would also alleviate any additional draw on the domestic supply to the nearby houses.

It was hoped that a bunk room and associated facilities could be installed in the school, which would also require a more reliable water source.

More ranger led walks are planned in the Marshes with some that are aimed at children.

The path in Ettrickbridge has reached a sticking point despite planning permission being obtained.

The Ring of the Loch is 10 years old this year and it was hoped that an event would be held to celebrate this. Parts of the route need strimming. It was confirmed that funding would be made available from the Community Council paths maintenance fund. There are some issues with access; a footbridge missing from the original Captain's Road and other areas on the SUW that need to be looked at.

The issue of signage on the St Mary's Loch side were raised. Walkers were using the road on the side of the loch rather than on the permitted path across the road. Vicky wasn't aware of this and confirmed that signage onto the old drove road should be in place and that she would have a look at this.

12. Planning Applications

Application documents for the following have already been circulated. These are available from Karen – ettrickandyarrowcc@gmail.com

- Bowerhope Forest Renewal Planning
Responses were due by 4th June. An extension has been requested but nothing has been confirmed
- Loch of the Lowes Woodland Creation
Response deadline - 21st June 2025

A question was raised in relation to footpath access. Martin Andrews confirmed that footpath access should be available and that he would check that this was the case.

- East Deloraine Woodland Creation
Responses were due by 16th May. An extension has been requested but nothing has been confirmed

13. SPEN Cross Border Connection

Deadline for objections to the plans was 4th May 2025. The Ettrick and Yarrow Pylon Action Group (EYPAG) provided an update:

- Latest steering group meeting is on 28th May with the focus being on priorities for the next three months.
- Work is being done on partnerships and collaborations. Aim is to join up opposing voices at a political level (MPs & MSPs regardless of party), councillor level, community council level (as has happened very successfully in the Highlands) and at action group level across Scotland.
- Official objection has gone in to SBC from the group, stating the breaches of law that SPEN has undertaken. A response has been received acknowledging receipt.

The concern is that there are small, isolated applications which are associated with the connection e.g. battery storage, across the whole of the Borders which could be overlooked if not considered as part of the bigger picture. As with the pylons in the local area you don't have to be part of the community to object so it's helpful to be aware of these.

It was suggested that a meeting with the National Energy System Operator (NESO). It was confirmed that EYPAG are dealing with this

14. Correspondence

None received

15. AOCB

University of the West of Scotland has received funding to monitor the water quality in St Mary's Loch and the Loch of the Lowes as part of the Citizen Science project. Dr Elysha Ramage is running the project and is keen to connect with local groups. Dr Ramage can be contacted at elysah.ramage@uws.ac.uk further information can be found at www.uws.ac.uk.

The issue of vandalism to the AA box was raised. It was stated that this is a listed building belonging to the AA who have been notified with no response received. AR agreed to raise this with the AA on an official basis once she has the contact details.

A resident of the upper Ettrick has been in communication with a variety of people in relation to the timber transport activity at Potburn and Nether Phawhope.

- Concern over timber transport traffic passing close by residences in the very early morning.
- Damage from previous extraction not yet repaired.
- Ongoing and increasing damage to verges and drains. Increase in the number and size of potholes

Responses received have stated that the timings would be raised but there were no restrictions due to it being a public road.

Confirmation that the road should be adequately monitored and defects be reported to SBC although this doesn't seem to be happening.

ET-N confirmed that the SBC Timber Transport Group was being re-established and that she would be a member. It was agreed that she would pass the relevant information on as soon as it was available.

A request for more passing places on the Tima road was made since the existing ones are quite far apart. ET-N said that she would raise this question.

It has been confirmed that the road between Gordon Arms and Tushielaw (top Swire) is being closed for at least three weeks – one in early July and two in late July – from 8am to 6pm. Scottish Woodland has requested the closure for harvesting. Can SBC look at this issue due to the impact of this on the local community?

The issue of the plans for commercial forestry at Todrig over near Ashkirk was raised. The plan was initially refused due to issues removing timber via Ashkirk. They have applied again this time suggesting they would bring timber out at the Hindhope bridge and onto the Ettrick road. Issues already exist with the having been damaged several times by timber lorries. ET-N confirmed that the Ashkirk and Midlem community councils are working hard to obtain a judicial review. It is felt that there have been breaches of the planning process and a lack of transparency

and suggested that EYCC feed into that process. ET-N agreed to provide relevant details.

16. Date & Location of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Monday 4th August 7pm at Boston Hall, Ettrick.