

Skirling

community council

Minutes

Thursday 28th November 2024, 7.30pm, Village Hall

Attendees: Andrew Clark, Esther Daborn, Robert Laird, Ross McIntyre, Councillor Eric Small, Alison Leite, PC Gary Beaumont, Hannah Crow, Molly Jardine (Skirling Mill), Mary Dunlop, Andrew Dunlop (Corstane Farm)

Apologies: Paul Barlow, Isobel Hunter, Sara Van der Vat, Katy Miller.

Approval of Minutes of 26th September proposed Robert Laird seconded Eric Small

Residents' business Skirling to Broughton path - Mary Dunlop, Hannah Crow, and Molly Jardine were in attendance to discuss Broughton/Skirling path ideas.

a) Following the 2nd Nov recce walk from Skirling to Broughton, Hannah has been putting together a schedule of works so we can better understand how work could be divided up between volunteers, contractors and council.

Action AL will follow up with HC when it is completed.

b) Regarding the route, Mary Dunlop has been talking to the farmers regarding public access between Skirling-Broughton as well as Broughton-Biggarr via old railway. It is the general opinion that farmers are cooperating with the regeneration of the path. However MJ made the strong point that dog walkers and children will not use the path unless fenced. Fencing the current route through fields would be impractical. Water supply for some farms is an issue. Rerouting the path was suggested but it was agreed this is a huge job.

c) CC members are in agreement that focussing on better signage and repairing certain areas of the path may be a more realistic short-term goal.

d) The other suggesting is connecting Skirling to the Broughton/Biggar railway. Broughton CC has been working on improving access to Broughton Knowe via The Loan. MD advised that railway gates for vehicles may be needed and a small pedestrian gate would be useful. A footbridge across Biggar Water would be required. Funding may be available from the Clyde Walkway.

e) Any path will need a volunteer maintenance team and possible badger set licences (which HC has volunteered to assist with).

Action: RL, AC, MJ, HC, MD and AD will meet to discuss Broughton/Biggar path.

Police matters

- PC Gary Beaumont attended in order to introduce himself as he is new to the Community Policing Team. He wants to reassure small villages that he is committed to helping regarding the issue of speeding, but he acknowledged his hands are tied a lot of the time unless the roads in question have high injury and collision statistics.
- It was agreed that resources are stretched, as discussed in the online meeting with Sgt Crawford Laing October 24th 7-8.30pm, attended by RMc and ED. At least the meeting had given the opportunity for communities to air concerns.

- PC Beaumont believes speed guns are the only effective deterrent and he is trying to get a speed van in the Skirling area. RMc reported on the Joint Community Councils group he is working with the purchase of Speedspy as a tool for generating traffic speed data. It was agreed this data would help garner police support and result in a higher police presence.

Action: RMc will message PC Beaumont the Speedspy minutes to get him up to date.

- ES commented the national speed limit may be reducing to 50mph.
- ED enquired about the Community Speedwatch initiative. There was also discussion about having speed camera signs beside the speed limit signs.

Action: PCB will follow up on these questions.

- Police Report for October – no matters arising
- ED thanked PC Beaumont for attending

Funding (ED for SV)

- Current balance: £10,812.15
- Clyde Windfarm Total = £8,465.66**
- £6,132.00 (tree fund)
- £1,083.66 (micro-grants)
- £1,250.00 (YBF)
- Glenkerie Windfarm Total = £1,873.92 (micro-grants)**
- Scottish Borders Council Total = £472.56**
- UT Community News has been funded and delivered

Community Action Plan

Community Development Trust: Application approved. Thanks to all involved in putting this together. The success was announced in Skirling Newsletter with an invitation to complete a form to join and offer to work as a trustee. Completed forms to Hall porch

Progress reports from subgroups

1. Safe Skirling – RMc / ED / AC

- Pavements - (ED)
 - Gary Haldane – ED checked re seeding and levelling.
 - There never an offer to level. Seeding will continue to be monitored and if it is necessary request the contractor to do again.
 - Request for more pavements led to the offer to do the missing link from the end of the Skirling Mill Path to the Schoolhouse / opposite the island at the end of the green where the tar starts the other side.
 - It was agreed that is would be useful to tar from the end of the Skirling Mill Path to Kirkbrae and to tar from Burnside up towards Don Maree. This will require consultation with residents a) School House and b) at Burnside.

Action: ED and AC to speak with residents to get agreement to these two sections being tarred.

- Donald Scott – ED requested tarring of gravel paths. The response is that Roads Asset have no budget for improvement works to these sections of unbound footways. Essential maintenance only at this time. However, the Roads Inspector reviewed the areas of wash out

on Skirling Mill path and identified the raised manhole cover as an issue to be fixed. The pathway has now been built up in this area. ED has thanked DS and his team.

- Request for weedkilling was too late for this year's programme. DS has passed details of the unbound sections of footway to Parks & Environmental to ensure that these are addressed next year.
- ED requested consideration of tarring unbound footways in future budget.
- Quote for Skirling Mill path – Grant Erskine £3,500.00 / Graham Irvine – Steven Irvine will give us a quote. Perhaps a windfarm grant plus £600 path grant money will cover this.
Actions: ED will follow up with SI.

2. Well connected Skirling

- Path to Broughton
- a) Joint Walk with Broughton (AL) – took place on 2nd Nov. The walk enabled us to get more support and feedback from Skirling residents – as reported above at the start of the meeting.
- b) Signage and maintenance update - Style has been repaired, a temporary footpath has been put down to Cross burn.
- Bus services: ED reported that the 22nd October meeting of CCs with SBC Transpost Manager, Gordon Grant, and the Tweeddale West Councillors about the 91 bus service after April, had been very constructive. The proposals outlined consisted of retaining an essential regular service for work / school, supplemented by an on-demand service booked by 4pm the day before. This has been advertised on Facebook and in the Skirling Newsletter, with requests for info about use from residents. More detailed info is now required
Action: ED to collect results and send to Councillor Thomson for onward transmission to Gordon Grant (Transport supervisor) within 3 weeks.
- Declining mobile phone coverage in the area. (ES) cannot get any advice on the issue-suggested asking David Mundell. **Action: RMc will contact.**

3. Skirling Community Life (KM)

- Events – Soup and a Story with Braw Clan February 13th 2025 announced in newsletter.
- Request funding for playpark equipment - ES will keep us informed and make sure we are considered for next round of funding.

4. Environment and Heritage (IH) - No update.

- Putting up bird boxes – No update.
- 14th June 2025 – 750 years celebration / Carmichael - No update.
Action: AC has Slabs for flower tubs by speed signs. They will be put down for spring at 40mph and one at the 20mph and the 30mph raised bed.

5. Sustainability and Resilience

- Membership of subgroup (PB) - no update
- ED sent a request to Paul Grigor// Duncan Morrison for maintenance of congested parts of the burn and removal of silt under the road. ES had called on our behalf and was told there is no issue.

The email response to ED was a watercourse inspection report prepared by Calum MacDonald following his recent visit (circulated to CC members before the meeting). The report leads officers to consider there to be no concerns over increased flood risk within

Skirling. Vegetation in the channel was noted but not deemed a significant issue. That being said, it will be reviewed in the Spring and a decision will be taken then as to whether to clear a section of the burn during the next in-river working period from the 1st May 2025.

AC cleared several parts of the burn voluntarily- ED thanked him for his effort. HC suggested building resilience at the top of the village to divert water and reduce risk of flooding. AC felt this would be very difficult. The matter remains unresolved.

- Thermal Heat Surveys – ED reported the offer from Tweedsmuir who have secured funding to offer 40 free surveys in Tweedsmuir Community Heat Team project.

Details via Lesley Mason from Tim Crick circulated to CC members before the meeting.

There is a fully funded opportunity for a project to set up a local Community Heat Team for Skirling and Broughton, which is supported by Scottish Borders Council through CLLD/LAG funding, with a Heat Survey kit bag available now if there is interest from the community.

There is a group of volunteers already engaged in Broughton, with a potential opportunity to set up a Community Heat Team to cover both Skirling and Broughton, working alongside the teams being set up in Tweedsmuir and elsewhere in the Borders. The project is supported by the Community Heat Team from West Linton which has been running for the last two years and is willing to share learning and experiences to date.

The meeting felt that our CC is overcommitted at the moment. It was suggested that we will refer any interested people and they can contact the Community Heat Team directly.

Action: ED will speak to Tim Crick and formalise a plan.

Village Maintenance

- Graveyard Gravel – ES confirmed that following discussion between Douglas Ford and TW Councillors, the work we requested will be carried out.

AC and ED reported that they had found other maintenance issues to deal with: broken metal fence joints and wall coping and loose from the ground. ES optimistic this will be done. **Action: ED to send photos to Douglas Ford**

- Repair of footbridge on Splash Road – under discussion. Apparently it's on the border of the 2 regions. RL said last 2 times was the SBC. **Action: ED will email and remind them.**

- Waulkmill (ED / AL) It appears there has been activity in the abandoned house as a window was wide open. The Empty Homes Officer (Rachel Whale) is aware and we should contact police if we have concerns. A photo of the house has been sent to the solicitors acting on behalf of the estate and RW will ask for an update. ED also sent the Post Code so that checks could be made regarding payment of Community Charge. No response yet, so perhaps this is a GDPR matter.

- Dilapidated caravan - There have been complaints from residents about a parked caravan outside Loanfoot Cottages at the foot of the Brae. No cooperation from owner.

Action: IH has offered to deal with it when she returns from holiday.

Correspondence received

- **50 mph trial on some Borders Roads** – ED reported a briefing email from Philippa Gilhooley to announce that Police Scotland, Scottish Borders Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council are working together with the overall aim of improving general road safety on routes that

unfortunately have a history of motorcycle casualties. So for an 18 month trial period from April 2025 there will be a 50mph limit on selected sections of A6088 (Hawick to Border), A708 (Selkirk to Moffat), B6357 (Bonchester to Newcastleton) and A7 (North of Galashiels to boundary) This will be using external Transport Scotland funding that can only be used on road safety schemes (cannot be used to fill potholes or other revenue maintenance activities).

At the end of the trial period there will be a formal evaluation of traffic data, and communities and the public will have the opportunity to provide their views before any final decisions are made on whether to make any of the routes permanent or if they revert back to national speed limit. **Action: ED to forward briefing email with map to CC members for info.**

- **Neighbourhood support fund** - Applications are currently open for the next round of the Tweeddale Neighbourhood Support Fund. The next Area Partnership will be held on the 4th February 2025 and the closing date for applications will be **Friday 13th December 2024**. Further information as well the guidance notes and the application form can be found on our website [Tweeddale Neighbourhood Support Fund | Neighbourhood Support Fund | Scottish Borders Council](#). Guidance available from Hannah.Lacon@scotborders.gov.uk or if on annual leave the team at communitygrants@scotborders.gov.uk will be able to assist.
- **ASDA** has announced they are making efforts to help tackle loneliness and isolation this winter. funding groups with £600,000 in Grassroots Grants that have been nominated by our Community Champions to boost group activities in our local communities. They have a ‘Winter Warmer’ meal deal is available now, which offers people aged over 60 a choice of hearty soups, a roll and unlimited hot drinks for only £1, and the chance to enjoy a safe and warm place to chat to others (will run until the end of the year at Livingston, Wishaw, Straiton Stores). Asda colleagues will also be encouraged to wear ‘Happy to Chat’ badges, so customers know they can strike up a conversation in store or on the doorstep, and our Grocery Home Shopping drivers will be checking in on older customers when delivering their orders **Action: BH and IH can monitor this.**

AOB

- AC reported on strong and unusual fumes from chimney near the Hall. **Action: CC will monitor.**
- AC made the CC aware a Skirling resident who has a new heating system that is not working. ES suggested calling the Housing Association. **Action AC will contact ES and assist.**
- Rory Darling in the Smiddy House has gained £5,000 Clyde Windfarm Sponsorship funding for those studying Science subjects.

End 21.25

Meeting Dates 2025: 30th January, 27th March, 29th May