

Skirling Community Development Trust

Land Acquisition Feasibility Study & Business Plan

First Stage Report

9 April 2026



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I Executive Summary

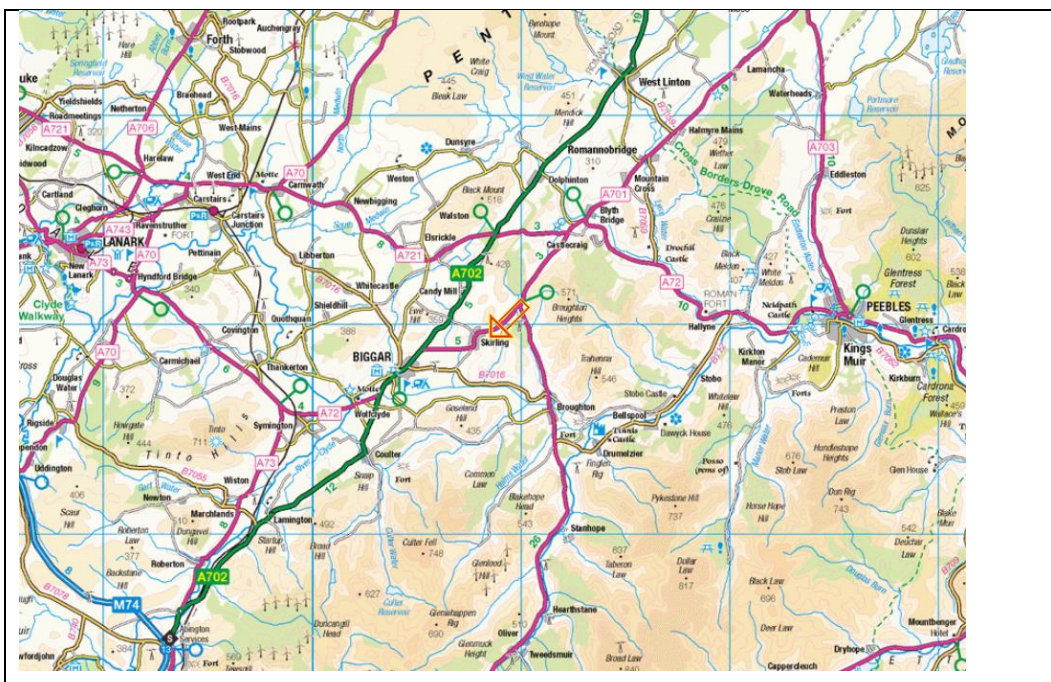
Skirling is a conservation village and community council area in the Scottish Borders, situated 4km north-east of Biggar, with a population of 191. Skirling Community Development Trust (SCDT) is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), incorporated and registered on 1 October 2024. SCDT was set up to facilitate and support the achievement of the priority projects set out under the Skirling Community Action Plan (CAP) 2024-2029, and as appropriate to hold any land or assets on behalf of the village for the benefit of the local community.

The CAP was developed by the residents of Skirling and the surrounding area; it sets out the actions needed to ensure Skirling continues to develop and thrive as a vibrant and sustainable community. A number of actions in the CAP, including a play-park, community growing, composting, enhancing amenity and developing community renewables, require access to suitable land.

Three separate landowners in Skirling have expressed interest in transferring ownership of certain areas of land to SCDT, which has commissioned this feasibility study and business plan to assess the viability and potential options for developing these and any other parcels of land around the village to achieve a range of long term environmental and community benefits.

This first stage report includes a detailed description of the various parcels of land, an outline of the community's objectives and an options analysis, assessing the potential of the various parcels of land to deliver the range of environmental, recreational, economic, educational and heritage benefits sought by SCDT and the wider community. The report includes recommendations on the viability of acquisition and notes on the costs and potential funding and income sources for acquisition, post-acquisition development projects and on-going maintenance and management.

The final report will incorporate feedback on the draft report from SCDT, the local community and other stakeholders, and will make recommendations as to the acquisition of land and preferred development options. It will contain a business plan which includes detailed income and expenditure figures for five years, with indicative income and expenditure costings for the following twenty years, as well providing a funding strategy and delivery plan and advising as to what additional resources or capacity will be required to ensure SCDT's proposals to take ownership of the land are financially realistic, achievable and sustainable.



Map I: Location map

2 Introduction

2.1 Skirling

Skirling is a conservation village and community council area in the Scottish Borders, with a population of 191.¹

The village lies alongside the A72 Peebles-Biggarr road. The D33 minor road runs north-west to join the A702 primary road which links Edinburgh and the M74, whilst the D39 runs south to join the B7016 Biggar to Broughton road.²

The Skirling Community Council area includes the village of Skirling, the small nearby settlements of Skirling Mill and Muirburn, and the surrounding farmland.³ It is included within the Tweeddale locality of Scottish Borders Council and lies at the very western edge of the Scottish Borders Council area. The nearest town, Biggar (population 2,742),⁴ which is 4km to the south-west, is in South Lanarkshire.

2.1.1 Housing

The Skirling Community Action Plan estimates that there are around 110 houses in the Skirling Community Council area. There is a relatively high level of owner occupation and a low level of private rented housing compared to the Scottish Borders. Social rented housing is on a par with the Scottish Borders, thanks to the mix of Scottish Borders Housing Association and Eildon Housing properties providing 20 houses between them.

2.1.2 Schools and education

Nursery and primary schooling is at Broughton Primary School. There are currently 40 pupils in the school (with approximately 10 of these from Skirling) and a further 15 children in the nursery. The main High School for the catchment is in Peebles. Some Skirling children go to Biggar High School which is much closer but there are no school transport arrangements as it is outwith Scottish Borders Council.

2.1.3 Health

Resources and facilities in the local area include:

- GP Services in Biggar
- Cottage Hospitals at Biggar and Peebles
- Main hospitals in Melrose, Wishaw, Livingston.

2.1.4 Local economy

Important local employment sectors include Education, Health and Social Work, as well as Agriculture and Forestry, Manufacturing, Construction and Accommodation and Food Services. There are 13-15 farms in the Skirling area; most are family owned and relatively small, and many farmers have diversified through contracting businesses, visitor accommodation and forestry etc.

Previous assessments of the local economy showed that compared to Scottish Borders and Scotland there was a high rate of economically active persons in Skirling with higher rates of self-employed and part time employment and a lower rate of full-time employment. The area has been popular with people commuting as far afield as Edinburgh, with good road links and a bus service. Post-covid there is now a significant increase in people working most of the week from home in the village.

¹ 2022 census

² <https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/download/379/list-of-public-roads>

³ <https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/directory-record/7736/skirling>

⁴ <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/search-the-census#/explore/snapshot>

2.1.5 Public transport

Scottish Borders Council bus service #91 runs 4 times a day each way between Peebles and Biggar (Monday-Saturday only), stopping at Goatfoot and the village green.⁵

2.1.6 Climate

The nearest weather station is at Drumalbin,⁶ which is 15km to the west at a similar altitude. This averages 930mm annual rainfall and 59 days of air frost.

Annual rainfall at Drumalbin is considerably lower than at hillier sites to the south and south west: Camps Reservoir, 18km to the south at higher altitude (350m above sea level) averages 1353mm rainfall and 86 days of frost, whilst Eskdalemuir receives 1827mm of rainfall.

Forest Research's Environmental Site Classification for Forestry decision support tool indicates that sites around the village have a cool, sheltered and moist climate, and records DAMS (a measure of exposure) scores of 14 and 15 across the various sites, which is relatively low.⁷

2.1.7 Fauna and flora

No formal surveys have been undertaken and no information on protected species or habitats has been provided.

Roe deer are resident in Gallows Knowe Wood.

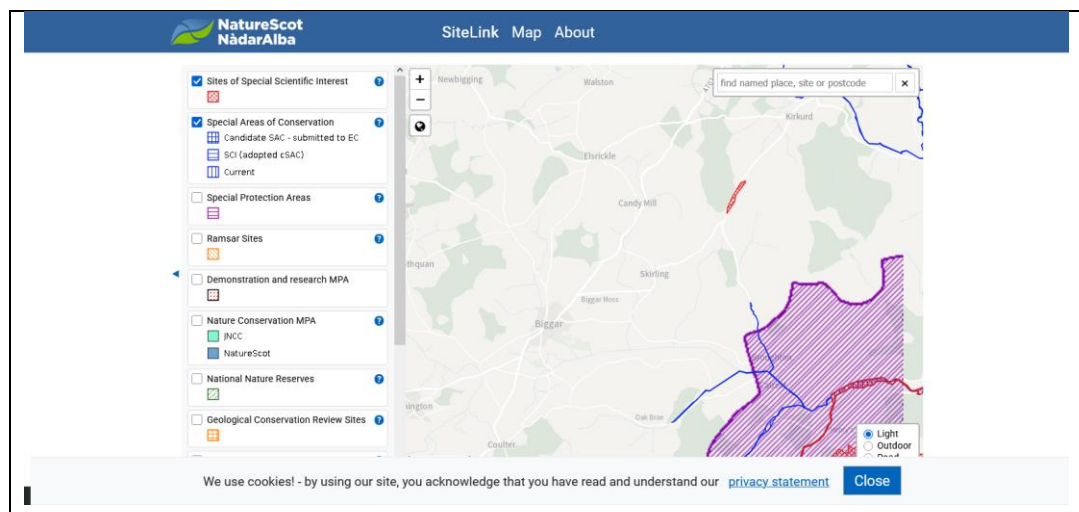
2.1.8 Environmental designations

There are no environmental designated sites covering or adjacent to the village

Nearest SSSI is Mount Bog⁸ ~3km to the north-east

River Tweed SAC⁹ ~3km to the east

Upper Tweeddale NSA¹⁰ to the south-east



Map 2: Environmental designations

The Tweedsmuir Uplands Special Landscape Area extends to ~2km south and south-east of the village but should not impinge on any of SCDT's likely activities.

⁵ https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/download/1340/bus_service_-_timetables

⁶ <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/climate/maps-and-data/location-specific-long-term-averages/gcvk7n86b>

⁷ <http://www.forestdss.org.uk/geoforestdss/>

⁸ <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/1203>

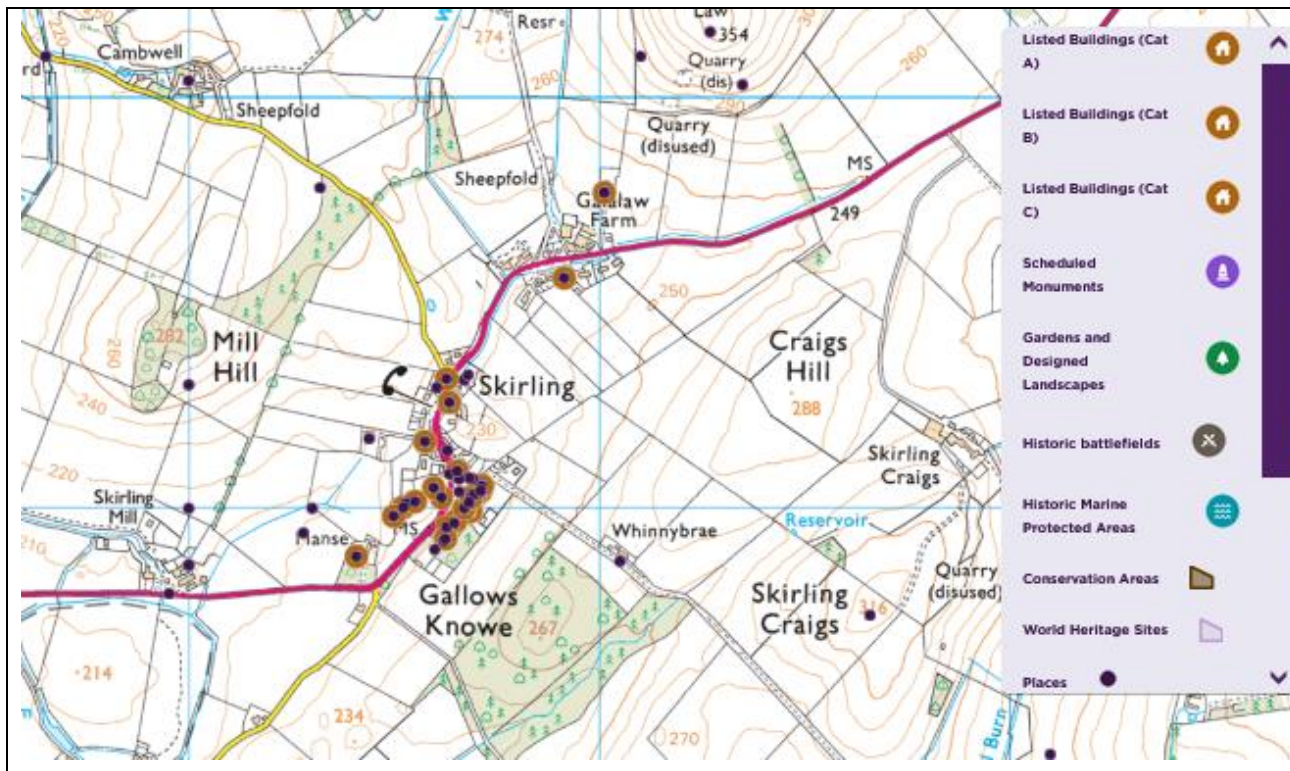
⁹ <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/8369>

¹⁰ <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/9157>

2.1.9 Historic environment

Historic Environment Scotland has numerous records of historic and archaeological sites in and around Skirling, as shown on the map below. A full list is included as Appendix 2.

The site of Skirling Castle, demolished and burnt in 1568, is just to the south-west of the village.



Map 3: Historic Environment Scotland records around Skirling¹¹

2.1.10 Land use

Land use is primarily stock grazing: cattle and sheep. In addition to Gallows Knowe Wood there are small areas of woodland on Mill Hill to the north-west of the village.

2.1.11 Windfarms

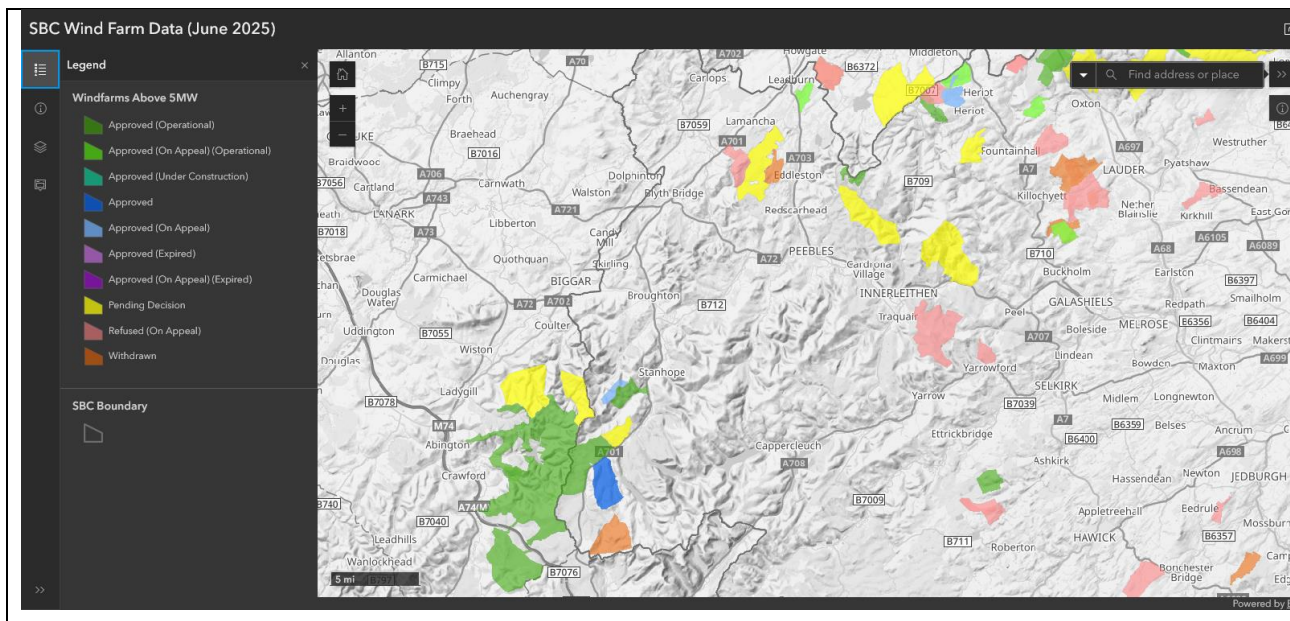
The South of Scotland has seen very substantial windfarm development in recent decades, with more sites currently in planning.

Currently the closest windfarm to Skirling is the 11 turbine Glenkerie site, 10km to the south of the village, with much larger Clyde windfarm (originally 152 turbines but extended to 206 in 2017) 14km to the south-south-east.

Additional schemes are currently in planning at Grayside (21 turbines, 10km south-south-west) and Cloich forest (12 turbines, 12km north east).

Whilst the proliferation of windfarms has been controversial in some quarters the associated community benefit funds delivered by some windfarm developments have proved valuable for many community projects.

¹¹ Screenshot from <https://www.trove.scot/search/map>



Map 4: Windfarm developments in the Tweeddale area¹²

2.1.12 Tourism

The Scottish Borders has a well-developed tourist industry, with a wide range of attractions from hills and beaches to museums and mountain bike centres, but the growth of tourism in recent years has had limited impact in Skirling.

2.1.13 Local attractions

The nearby town of Biggar has a number of tourist attractions:

- Biggar & Upper Clydesdale Museum,¹³ run by the Biggar Museum Trust;
- Biggar Gasworks Museum¹⁴ is the only preserved gas works in Scotland;
- Biggar Puppet Theatre,¹⁵ which is run by the Purves family, is Scotland's only permanent puppet theatre;
- Biggar Corn Exchange,¹⁶ completed in 1861, is now also used as a theatre and cinema.

Biggar hosts an annual arts festival, the Biggar Little Festival¹⁷ and has traditionally held a huge bonfire at Hogmanay.¹⁸

The renowned arboretum of Dawyck Botanic Garden,¹⁹ an outpost of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, is ~12km to the south-east.

Ian Hamilton Finlay's home and garden at Little Sparta²⁰ is approximately 12km to the north in the Pentland Hills.

2.1.14 Outdoor recreation

Scottish Borders Council has designated the following core paths:

¹² From <https://borders.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/sidebar/index.html?appid=78532d2c6adc4d06915d8c350efe82c6>

¹³ <https://www.biggar-museum-trust.co.uk/>

¹⁴ <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/places/biggar-gasworks-museum/>

¹⁵ <https://purvespuppets.com/>

¹⁶ <https://www.biggar-corn-exchange.org.uk/>

¹⁷ <https://www.biggar-little-festival.com/>

¹⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/BiggarBonfire>

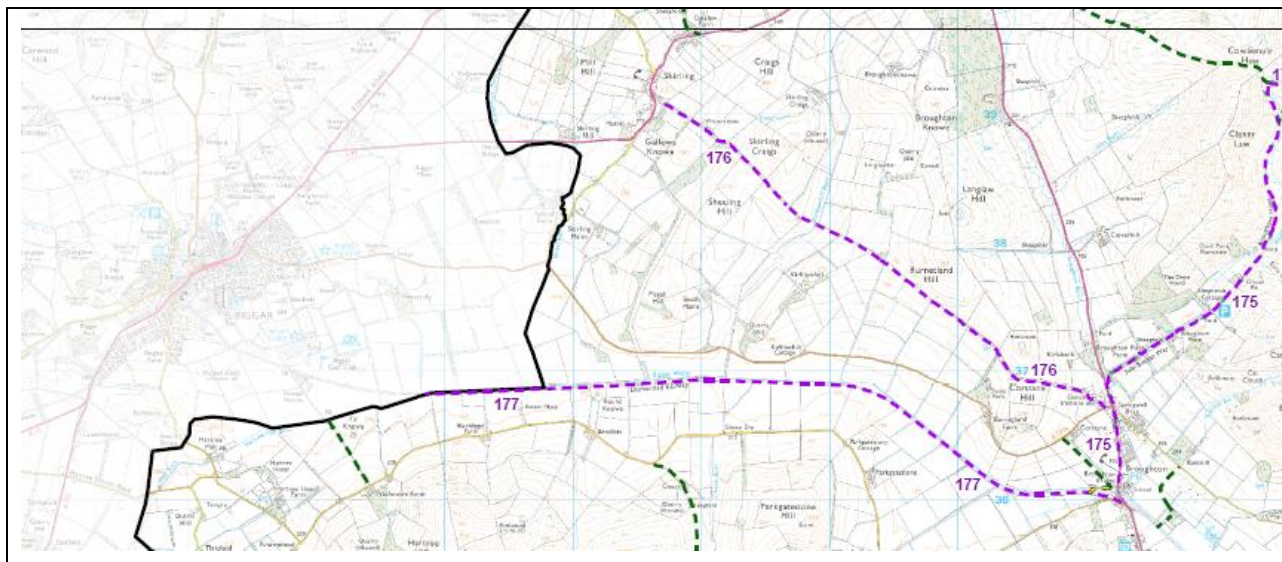
¹⁹ <https://www.rbge.org.uk/visit/dawyck-botanic-garden/>

²⁰ <https://www.littlesparta.org.uk/ian-hamilton-finlay-his-work/>

Core path 176 links Skirling and Broughton, running just over 4km from the north-east corner of the village green and passing along the northern approach to Gallows Knowe Wood.

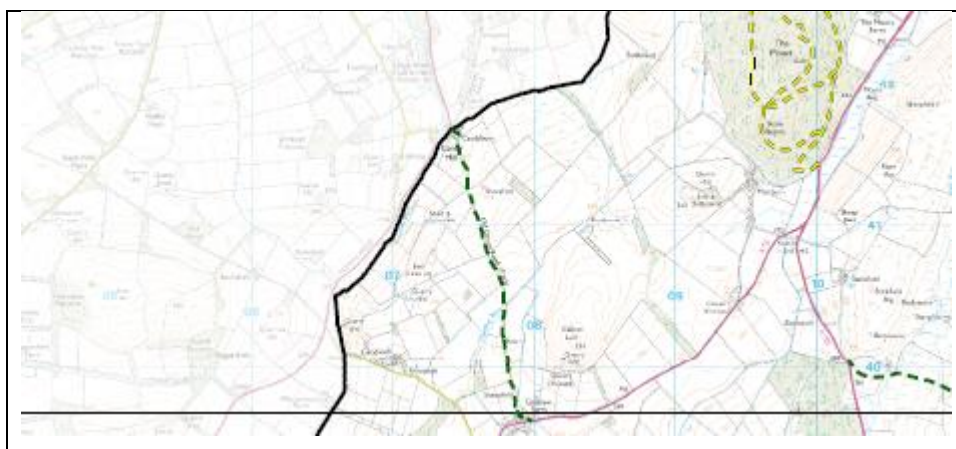
Core path 175, the John Buchan Way, runs for 22km from Broughton to Peebles.²¹

Core path 177 runs along the disused railway line between Broughton and Biggar for approx. 8km, the western 2km of which is in South Lanarkshire (ref CL/3483/1).²²



Map 5: core paths²³

Scottish Borders Council maps show the Old Drove Road which runs ~2km north of Skirling to Candy Mill as a right of way, but not a core path



Map 6: Old Drove Road right of way²⁴

Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping shows a path following the southern approach to Gallows Knowe Wood. The 1:50,000 OS map, but not the 1:25,000 edition, shows this continuing to South Mains and thence to the B7016.

2.2 Regional and local demographics

The population of Scottish Borders was 116,900 at the 2022 Census,²⁵ an increase of 2,941 (2.6%) since 2011, compared with a 2.7% growth for Scotland.

²¹ <https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/borders/john-buchan-way.shtml>

²² <https://southlanarkshire.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=ea777bba61f94767a4a801f2f1d65e8b>

²³ From map at <https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/directory-record/20677/broughton-area-28->

²⁴ From map at <https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/directory-record/20668/blyth-bridge-west-area-19->

²⁵ Data from <https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/council-2/research-data/6>

There were 60,059 females (51.4%) and 56,262 males in Scottish Borders in 2022. This is similar to the Scottish sex distribution.

Scottish Borders has the 5th-highest proportion of over-65s of all the Council regions in Scotland. The 2022 Census recorded 30,721 people aged 65 and over in Scottish Borders. For the first time, the number of over-65s was higher than the number of children and young people aged under 25 (27,615).

The NRS mid-year estimate for 2024 for the Scottish Borders population was 116,980.²⁶

The population of Scottish Borders is projected to increase to 118,723 by 2032. This is an increase of 1.6% over 10 years, which compares to a projected increase of 4.4% for Scotland as a whole.²⁷ Older age groups are projected to comprise an increasing proportion of the population.

2.2.1 Locality: Tweeddale

Tweeddale is the second largest of the five localities in the Scottish Borders, in terms of both its land area and its population. The population of Tweeddale was 21,349 at the 2022 census, an increase of 5.5% since 2011.

The main town in Tweeddale is Peebles, with a 2022 population of 9,117. Other towns and villages in Tweeddale with a population of 500 or more are Innerleithen (3,152), West Linton (1,757), Cardrona (868), Clovenfords (749) and Walkerburn (712).

2.2.2 Electoral Ward: Tweeddale West

The Tweeddale locality covers two electoral wards: Tweeddale West and Tweeddale East; Skirling is within the former ward. The 2022 census recorded a population of 10,407 for the Tweeddale West ward, a 4.2% increase on the 2011 figure.

Tweeddale West has a very similar demographic profile to the wider Scottish Borders Council area, with 0-15 year olds comprising 16.8% of the population (SBC 15.6%) whilst more than half of the population is in the 50-64 (25.5%) and 65 and over (25.1%) categories (cf. SBC 24.4% and 26.3% respectively).

2.2.3 Community Council

Data from the Scottish Borders Council²⁸ suggests that the population of the Skirling Community Council area fell slightly from 194 to 191 between 2011 and 2022. There were reductions in the numbers of both under 16s and 65 and overs.

Age group	2011	2022
0-15	40	31
16-64	117	128
65 and over	37	34
Total	194	191

Table 1: Skirling Community Council demographics

2.2.4 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is a relative measure of deprivation across 6,976 small areas (called data zones). It combines seven different domains (aspects) of deprivation: income;

²⁶ <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/council-area-profiles/scottish-borders/>

²⁷ <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/council-area-profiles/scottish-borders/>

²⁸ <https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/council-2/research-data/3>

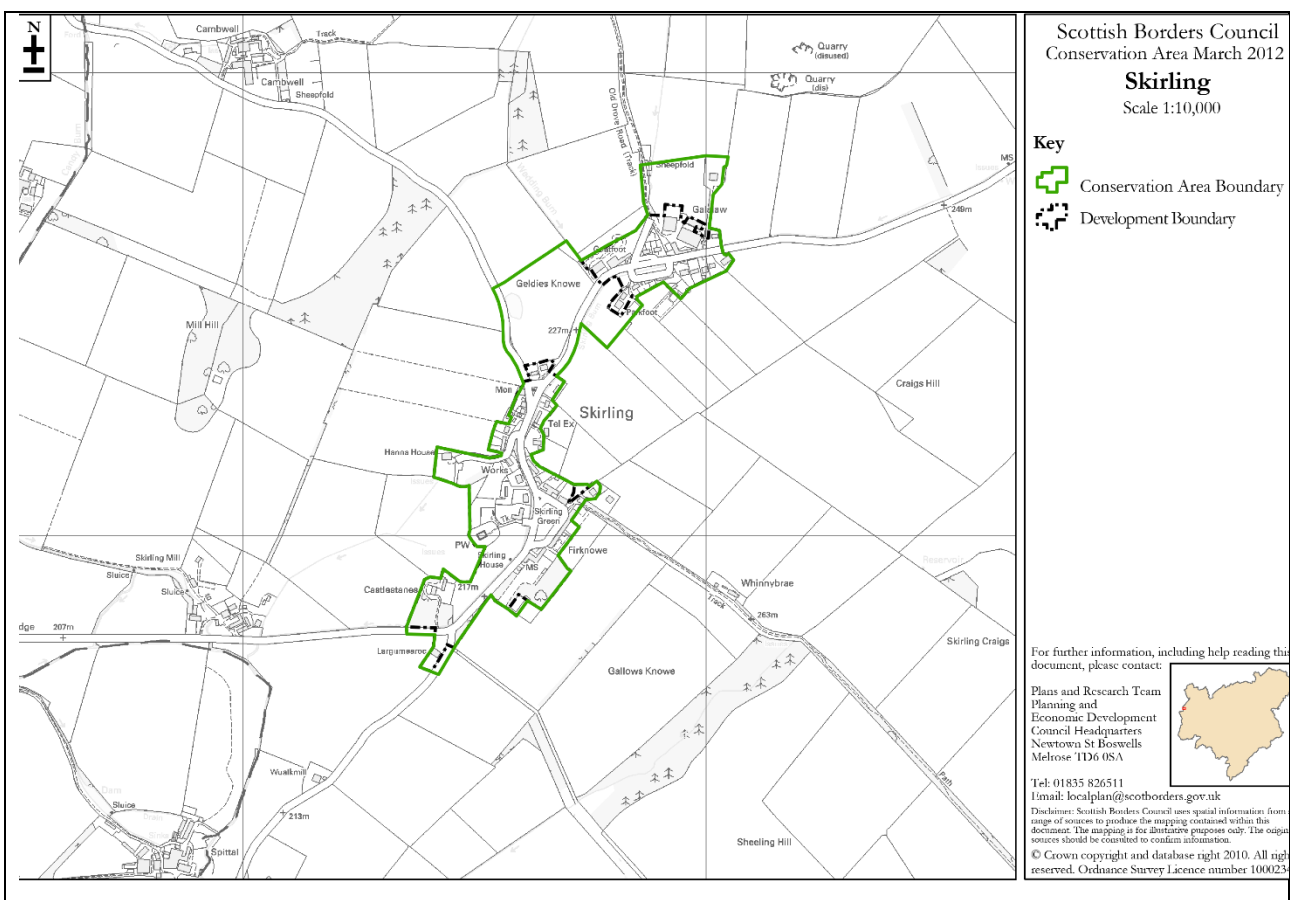
employment; health; education, skills and training; geographic access to services; crime; and housing, which are measured using a number of indicators for each domain, which are ranked from 1 (most deprived) to 6,976 (least deprived).

Data zones in rural areas tend to cover a large land area and reflect a more mixed picture of people experiencing different levels of deprivation. This means that SIMD is less helpful at identifying the smaller pockets of deprivation found in more rural areas, compared to the larger pockets found in urban areas.²⁹

Skirling falls within Data Zone S01012248, which has a population of 803 in the 2020 iteration of SIMD. This data zone had an overall rank of 4834, putting it in the 7th decile. It scored relatively highly in most domains, notably Employment (ranked 6399 - 10th decile) and Health (6059 - 9th decile), but low in geographic access (172 - 1st decile).³⁰

2.3 Skirling Conservation Area

Skirling is designated as a Conservation Area.



Map 7: Skirling Conservation Area.³¹

The Conservation Area Statement describes the village as follows:³²

- The village of Skirling is linear in shape and originally comprised five small farms on the valley floor next to Skirling Burn.

²⁹ <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/1102bf85-ed49-440a-b211-da87e8d752eb/scottish-index-of-multiple-deprivation-simd-2020>

³⁰ <https://simd.scot/#/simd2020/BTTTTFTT/14/-3.4558/55.6325/>

³¹ https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/file/1095/skirling_conservation_area

³² <https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/directory-record/26011/skirling>

- *Other buildings include farm workers cottages, two churches, a village hall and a school as well as a few other small activities such as a blacksmith and a small general store.³³*
- *Skirling Conservation Area has a distinct identity. The importance of the water source to the development of the village can be seen in the pattern of building back from the road and above the level of the burn.*
- *This is reflected in both the northern and southern parts of the village.*
- *One of the most important properties of the Conservation Area is Skirling House, built by Lord Carmichael and designed in 1905 by Ramsay Traquair.*
- *Constructed around an existing farmhouse this property has a pleasant appearance, with weather-boarded upper floor along with some attractive wrought iron work by Thomas Hadden of Edinburgh.*
- *The Arts and Crafts movement is evident throughout Skirling House – beautiful ornate wrought ironwork and decorative carvings.*
- *Properties tend to range from single to two storeys in height.*
- *Traditional building materials prevail with ochre and red coloured sandstone, harl and slate.*
- *The houses also have a number of architectural details - sash and case windows, skewes, rybats, margins and quoins. These details collectively form the character of the Skirling Conservation Area.*
- *They should all be protected and any alterations or new build should seek to respect the individual buildings and the wider Conservation Area.*
- *There are 17 listed properties with the amended Skirling Conservation Area.*

2.4 Skirling Community Action Plan

The Skirling Community Action Plan (CAP) 2024-2029³⁴ was developed by the residents of Skirling and the surrounding area. The Plan was informed by extensive community engagement carried out between May and September 2023. This involved:

- stakeholder conversations - with community organisations, volunteers, residents, church, local businesses, landowners, service providers and public agencies;
- carrying out a community views survey of all households;
- preparing a community profile detailing facts and figures about the community;
- organising a Community Futures Event.

The preparation of the plan was organised by the Skirling Community Action Planning Steering Group which was supported in carrying out the work by the STAR Development Group.³⁵

It was set up by Skirling Community Council, with support and involvement from representatives from a range of local groups and interests. Funding was provided by SSE Clyde Borders Community Fund.³⁶

The Community Action Plan summarised community views with respect to:

- Skirling now, and how it is changing;
- The vision for the future of Skirling;
- The issues that matter most to the community;
- Priorities for projects and actions.

The community survey recorded strongly positive opinions with respect to Community spirit, Village character and feel, and Environment and countryside; whilst the strongest negative aspect was Traffic and roads. Categories such as Access to services, Community events, Activities and facilities and Local amenities generated more mixed opinions, with some positives but also concerns with respect

³³ Note that this is the text of the Conservation Area Statement and some of these buildings have been converted to domestic properties.

³⁴ https://skirlingvillage.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Skirling_CAP_FINAL_web.pdf

³⁵ <https://stardevelopmentgroup.org/>

³⁶ <https://www.sserenewables.com/communities/community-fund-locations/great-britain/clyde-borders/>

to the lack of a pub, school, shop or post office, the limited bus service to Biggar (and elsewhere) and the poor internet and mobile service.

The CAP's "Vision for future" is:

- Remain as a small, peaceful, and safe community
- A thriving and mixed age population
- Well connected to surrounding towns and villages
- Continue to be a community with a heart
- Greener and carbon neutral

The Plan sets out the actions needed to ensure Skirling continues to develop and thrive as a vibrant and sustainable community. These are gathered under five themes:

- 1) Safe Skirling: traffic, roads and pavements
- 2) Well-connected Skirling: improving access
- 3) Skirling community life:
- 4) Skirling environment and heritage
- 5) Sustainable and resilient Skirling

Each theme contains a number of priorities and actions. Those which are relevant to this study are discussed in detail in chapter 4 below, whilst the full list is presented in Appendix 4.

Actions are intended to be taken forward by local community groups working together with interested volunteers, other Community Councils, relevant Community Groups, local Councillors and Council Officers (Scottish Borders Council and South Lanarkshire Council). The Community Council agreed to organise a Community Action Plan Annual Review meeting to report back to the Community on the progress of the plan, to see what has been achieved and what more needs to be done.

2.4.1 New community body

Several of the actions identified in the CAP require access to land. The CAP identified a need for a new organisation to purchase land or buildings and to develop, manage and raise funding for community projects, and noted that work was underway to establish a Community Development Trust to fill this role and work alongside the community council.

Three separate landowners in Skirling have expressed interest in transferring ownership of specific parcels of land to the community, and there are several other plots of land in and around the village which have been identified for potential purchase to help deliver the objectives of the CAP. The individual areas are listed and described in more detail in chapter 3.

2.5 Skirling Community Development Trust

Skirling Community Development Trust (SCDT) is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, SC053682 incorporated and registered on 1 October 2024.³⁷

SCDT was set up principally to facilitate and support the achievement of the priority projects set out under the Skirling Community Action Plan (CAP) 2024-2029, and as appropriate to hold any land or assets on behalf of the village for the benefit of the Skirling Community Council area inhabitants.

It is also intended to have a small Community Fund to support social inclusion and the relief of circumstances of poverty within the Skirling Community Council area.

³⁷ <https://www.oscr.org.uk/about-charities/search-the-register/charity-details?number=SC053682>

2.5.1 Community area, membership & directors

Membership is of SCDT open to any individual aged 16 or over who is resident in the Skirling Community Council area. Employees of the organisation are not eligible for membership.

Individuals and groups who support the Trust's purposes who are not or no longer residing in the Skirling Community Council area may become associates of the organisation. Associates may attend and speak at member meetings but may not participate in such meetings for voting or quorum purposes.

SCDT is governed by a Board of up to 8 trustees, of whom up to 5 can be elected by the members or appointed by the Board, and up to 3 who may be co-opted by the board.

SCDT currently has 58 members and 7 Trustees.³⁸

2.5.2 Trust purposes

SCDT's purposes, as formally defined by its constitution, are:

To promote the advancement of citizenship and community development, and the prevention or relief of poverty, for the benefit of the inhabitants of Skirling and its environs in the Scottish Borders, as defined by the Skirling Community Council area, without distinction of political, religious or other opinions, and with the object of improving the conditions of life of the said inhabitants.

2.5.3 Constitutional issues

Whilst the SCDT constitution is competent and functional for the Trust's current activities, the Trust is not currently eligible to use the Community Right to Buy or Asset Transfer mechanisms to acquire land, or to receive funding from the Scottish Land Fund, which may limit the future activities of the Trust. Consideration should be given to constitutional amendments to ensure eligibility for some or all of the above mechanisms.

Additionally, there are a couple of other anomalous clauses which could be revised. Consideration should also be given as to whether additional charitable purposes are required to ensure coverage for SCDT's potential future activities.

A separate document describing these issues in more detail has been prepared for the Board.

The next Annual General Meeting (scheduled for April 2026) provides an opportunity to present and adopt a revised constitution.

2.5.4 Staffing and communication

SCDT has engaged a co-ordinator who works two days per week as an independent contractor (rather than an employee). The role is funded by SSE Clyde Borders Community Fund. The remit of the role is to help with the efficient administration of the trust, implement the CAP and engage the local community by increasing its membership and promoting its presence in Skirling.

SCDT does not have currently have its own website; progress updates are posted on the Skirling Community website.³⁹

2.6 Feasibility Study remit and outline

SCDT has commissioned Jon Hollingdale to produce a comprehensive feasibility study and business plan for community ownership and management of the various parcels of land.

The initial Draft Report is intended to:

³⁸ Brief biographies of Trustees are presented in Appendix I

³⁹ <https://skirlingvillage.co.uk/community/>

- assist the Trustees in assessing the benefit to the community of acquiring the various parcels of land;
- help SCDT to assess the viability and potential options for developing the land to achieve a range of long term environmental and community benefits;
- identify any other areas of land within the community area which may also be suitable in context of the aims and aspirations of the Skirling Community Action Plan;
- assess the risks associated with community ownership and management of the asset(s) and recommend mitigation;
- review the available funding and outline the costs of running and managing the asset(s) and opportunities to generate income from the asset(s).

The Final Report will incorporate feedback from consultation with Skirling Community Development Trust and the community, and will:

- describe the preferred option(s) for asset acquisition and development;
- contain a full financial model for the first five years which incorporates initial revenue costs and capital costs and ongoing maintenance and development costs for the project.
- provide an outline for the following 20 years including development costs, and ongoing income and expenditure plans.

A two-page summary of the Final Report will be prepared for the purpose of informing the public and members of the Trust.

2.7 National and regional policy

Community ownership and management of land and built assets is supported by various national and regional policies.

2.7.1 Community ownership and the National Performance Framework

Community ownership of land and built assets has been encouraged in Scotland by a range of policy initiatives and legislation, and is recognised in the Scottish Government’s National Performance Framework,⁴⁰ which includes “Increasing the number of land and built assets in community ownership” as an indicator to measure progress against the national outcome “We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe”.

Legislation including the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003⁴¹, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015⁴² and the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016⁴³ has introduced a suite of community rights to buy land and other assets; these have been underpinned by the Scottish Land Fund, which has an annual budget of £10 million to provide technical assistance to community bodies and support capital costs (and some revenue costs) of community acquisitions.

Part 5 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 gives eligible community bodies the right to make requests in relation to purchase, lease or other rights over land owned or managed by Scottish public authorities.

In addition to the formal mechanisms for community acquisition, there is encouragement and support for negotiated purchases from landowners outwith the formal mechanisms.

2.7.2 Scottish Borders Local Development Plan

The Scottish Borders Local Development Plan (LDP2) was adopted on 22 August 2024.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>

⁴¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2003/2/contents>

⁴² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2015/6/contents>

⁴³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/18/contents>

⁴⁴ <https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/plans-guidance/local-development-plan>

The Local Development Plan (LDP) sets out land use proposals and planning policies intended to guide development and inform planning decisions within the Scottish Borders.

The Delivery Programme 2024 sets out how Scottish Borders Council (SBC) proposes to implement the adopted Scottish Borders Local Development Plan 2024 (LDP).

The main aims of the LDP are gathered under three headings:

Communities

- Provide adequate land for mainstream and affordable housing;
- Build sustainable communities which are attractive and distinctive;
- Create places to live in accordance with good place-making and design principles;
- Encourage better connectivity by transport and improve digital networks.

Growing Economy

- Provide an adequate range of sites and premises for business/industrial uses;
- Promote economic development opportunities along the railway corridor;
- Promote the regeneration of town centres to make them vibrant and viable focal points within our communities;
- Maximise and promote the Scottish Borders' tourism potential and build a strong visitor economy;
- Ensure the delivery of adequate infrastructure to satisfactorily serve developments.

Sustainability

- Protect and enhance the built and natural environment;
- Promote development of brownfield sites;
- Make provision for waste management;
- Deliver climate change mitigation while ensuring climate change adaptation;
- Protect key greenspaces within built up areas;
- Encourage better connectivity;
- Extend and improve green network opportunities and links.

2.7.3 Local Settlement Profile for Skirling

The local settlement profile for Skirling⁴⁵ notes the conservation area status and identifies three key greenspace areas for safeguarding: the village green and two areas of roadside verge: the war memorial triangle and the verge at Howes Brae at the northern end of the village.

Two key policies for Skirling are EP9 (conservation areas) and EPI1 (protection of greenspace): these are reproduced in Appendix 3.

2.7.4 Local Place Plan

A Local Place Plan (LPP) is a community-led plan which allows community bodies to propose ideas and priorities for the development and use of land in their local area. These plans are intended to:

- reflect local aspirations;
- influence the Local Development Plan (LDP) prepared by planning authorities;
- support community-led regeneration and place-making.

Once registered with the local planning authority, LPPs must be considered during the preparation of the LDP.

⁴⁵ Local Development Plan pp502/3

In July 2025 SBC issued a formal invitation to communities to create a LPP. For LPPs to be taken into consideration during the development of the next Local Development Plan, LPPs need to be submitted for registration by 30 September 2027.

Consideration should be given as to whether the achievement of the objectives of the Skirling CAP could be advanced by converting and/or developing it into an LPP in time for it to be taken into consideration during the development of the next Local Development Plan.

2.7.5 Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019–2029

Scotland's Forestry Strategy⁴⁶ presents a long-term framework for the expansion and sustainable management of Scotland's forests and woodland. There are three objectives for the current period:

- Increase the contribution of forests and woodlands to Scotland's sustainable and inclusive economic growth;
- Improve the resilience of Scotland's forests and woodlands and increase their contribution to a healthy and high quality environment;
- Increase the use of Scotland's forest and woodland resources to enable more people to improve their health, well-being and life chances.

The Strategy has 6 priorities, including:

- Enhancing the environmental benefits provided by forests and woodlands, which includes identifying and managing the cultural and historic value associated with forests and woodlands;
- Engaging more people, communities and businesses in the creation, management and use of forests and woodlands, which includes increasing the use of forests and woodlands to improve people's health and well-being, and supporting the provision of appropriate education and skills training to encourage wider participation in forest- and woodland-related employment.

2.7.6 Scottish Borders Woodland Strategy

The Scottish Borders Woodland Strategy,⁴⁷ is designed to

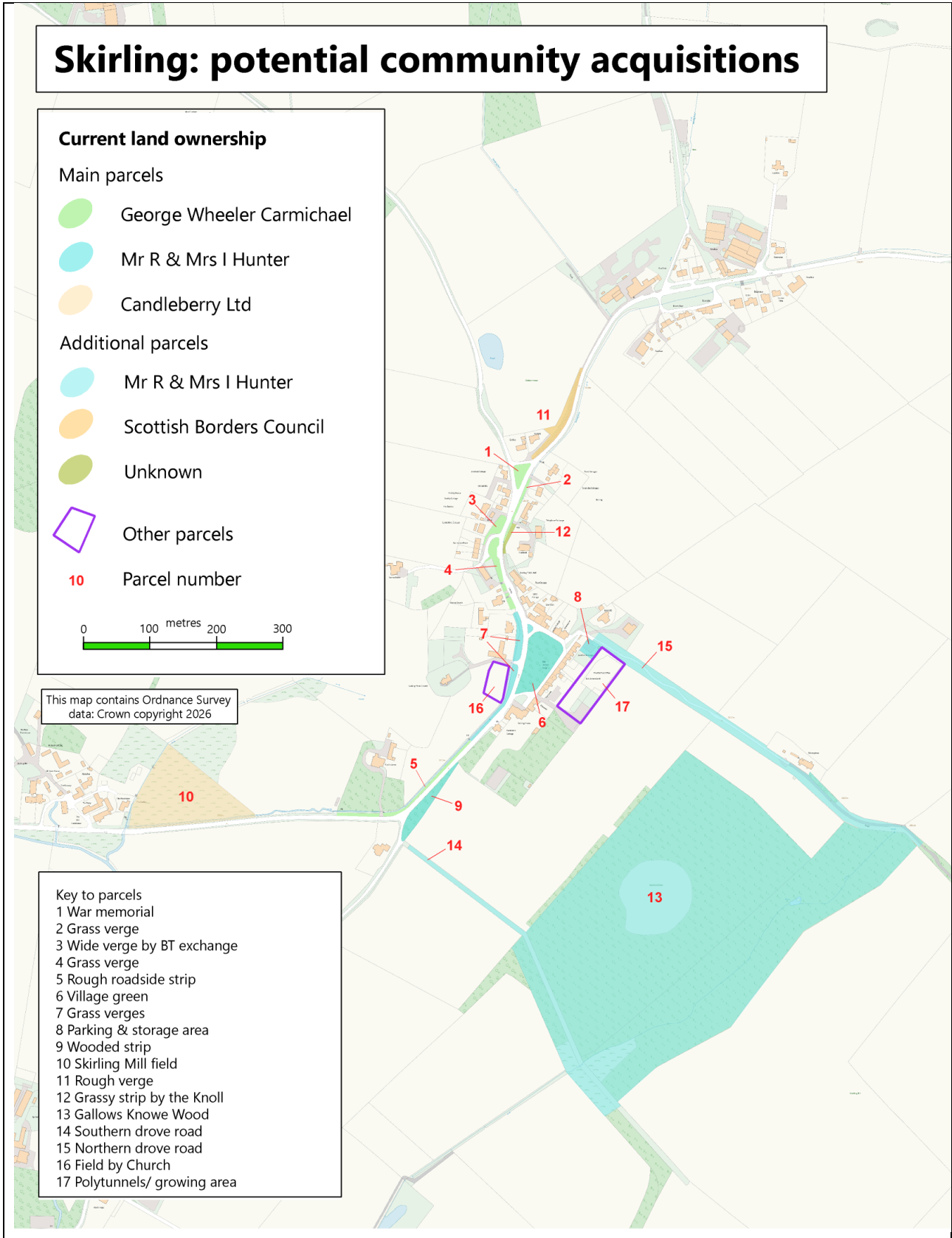
- provide a planning tool and policy guidance for Scottish Borders Council for use in conjunction with its New Way Forward Structure Plan;
- provide a framework policy document for the development of forestry in Scottish Borders that will be widely supported and will help secure financial resources to deliver the Strategy's vision/to provide a regional expression of the Scottish Forestry Strategy, and
- assist the Forestry Commission in considering the suitability of applications for Grant assistance for planting and management of woodlands.

⁴⁶ <https://www.forestry.gov.scot/forestry-strategy>

⁴⁷ <https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/directory-record/7447/scottish-borders-woodland-strategy->

3 Potential Acquisition Sites

Three separate landowners in Skirling have expressed interest in transferring ownership of certain areas of land to the Skirling Community Development Trust (SCDT). Collectively these comprise a total of ten parcels of land in and around Skirling village, whilst a further seven parcels have been identified as potential areas for community activity. These seventeen parcels are shown on Map 8.



Map 8: potential acquisition sites

The majority of parcels are not listed on the modern map-based Land Register and in some cases the extent of parcels is unclear. The mapping above and text descriptions below are based on the author’s understanding of the situation; detailed scrutiny of title deeds will be required to confirm parcel boundaries and extent prior to any acquisition by SCDT.

3.1 Land belonging to George Wheeler Carmichael

This package comprises five parcels of land adjacent to the A72, three which are relatively narrow roadside verges. The primary development interest is the potential for a play-park in parcel #3. It is understood that these five parcels come as a single package; they would be gifted but a contribution to legal fees would be expected.

3.1.1 Parcel #1: Triangular area with the Village War Memorial

This parcel of land comprises a roughly triangular area of grass at the north end of the central part of the village, on which stands the Village War Memorial. The total area⁴⁸ is ~550m². This area is recognised as a key greenspace area for safeguarding in the Local Development Plan.

The parcel is surrounded by public roads, with the A72 to the south east and the D33 minor road to Cambwell to the west and north. There is a pavement alongside the A72, but not along the other two sides of the site.

The War Memorial, designed by Sir Robert Lorimer,⁴⁹ has a wide stone plinth with a paved surround, which supports a column topped with a cross. It is understood to be owned by Scottish Borders Council, and appears to be in good condition. There is an iron and wooden bench by the memorial, which is flanked by two well maintained shrubberies and there is a cluster of three planters in each corner of the site. The grass in this parcel is mown by the Council. There are two streetlights on the pavement and overhead lines cross the site just north of the memorial.

There is very little development potential at this parcel given its location at the road junction. The main liabilities are the maintenance of the war memorial and the care of the surrounding ground, which are currently carried out by Scottish Borders Council.



3.1.2 Parcel #2: Burn-banks in front of Scravellyn Cottages, Kirkcroft and the Knoll

This parcel (area ~330m²) comprises a linear strip along the east side of A72, with the northern tip opposite to parcel 1 and the southern tip adjacent to parcel #4. There is no pavement. It is assumed

⁴⁸ Parcel dimensions are based on OS mapping unless stated otherwise. For all parcels alongside the A72 the areas quoted include pavements where they exist but not the roadway.

⁴⁹ <https://www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorial/177076>

⁵⁰ Image from Google Street View

that the eastern boundary is the centre line of the burn. It is understood that the grass is cut by the Council.

The parcel runs in front of four properties: Scraellyn Cottages, Kirkcroft and the Knoll, and is crossed by two driveways. There is a road sign in front of Kirkcroft and a wooden rail fence at the southern end of the parcel which protects the burn where it passes under the road.

At the southern end of the parcel the burn turns sharply westwards to pass under the road (the culvert appears to be curved); this promotes turbulence and is an obvious chokepoint for debris, which could cause flooding into the road, affecting properties downstream, especially on the east side of the road. It is unclear why the culvert wasn't routed diagonally under the road to maintain a straight line flow, but rectifying this would require significant investment.

There is minimal development potential in this parcel, unless it was considered desirable to construct a pavement along this side of the road.



Parcel #2 from the south.⁵¹ Note wooden fence above burn / culvert entrance.



Parcel #2 from the north.⁵² Note abundant summer vegetation in the burn.

3.1.3 Parcel #3: Land by the telephone exchange and Carmichael Bank

This parcel of land (area ~480m²) comprises an area of grass on the west side of A72 and north and west of the minor D35 road of Carmichael Bank. The northern section is a wider, roughly rectangular block (approx. 30m long by 10-15m wide) between the BT telephone exchange and the northern part of Lennoxlove Cottage, to the west, and the A72.

The parcel continues southwards beyond the driveway for Lennoxlove Cottage as a narrow strip in front of the southern part of Lennoxlove Cottage and Number 4 Carmichael Bank, with a wooden rail fence between the two. The boundary with Lennoxlove Cottage is a dense beech hedge ~2m high, whilst that with Number 4 Carmichael Bank is a lower (~1m) stone wall fronted by a narrow flower bed. There are a number of beech trees on the rough bank that forms the boundary with the telephone exchange (presumed to be part of the BT property) which overhang the northern part of the area at ~2-2.5m.

There is a streetlight at north end of the pavement, a water hydrant adjacent to the pavement at the S end and a street sign for Carmichael Bank. There is an electrical (telephone?) cabinet at the north-west corner of the site and a group of planters in the south-east corner of the grass. Current management liabilities are limited to mowing the grass, which is understood to currently be carried out by the council.

This parcel has been identified as a potential site of a play-park. A pre-application enquiry to Scottish Borders Council received a cautiously positive response and a potential design and layout has been produced by Sovereign Design Play Systems Ltd (see section 4.2.2).

⁵¹ Image from Google Street View

⁵² Image from Google Street View



3.1.4 Parcel #4: Verge and burn-banks by Carmichael Bank, Hannah Church and Kirklea

This parcel comprises a wide grassy verge and burn-banks to the west of the A72 between Carmichael Bank and the access road to Skirling Kirk. The parcel covers ~ 950m².

It is understood that the parcel covers both side of the burn. The western boundary is demarcated by various hedges which are assumed to be sited on neighbouring properties.

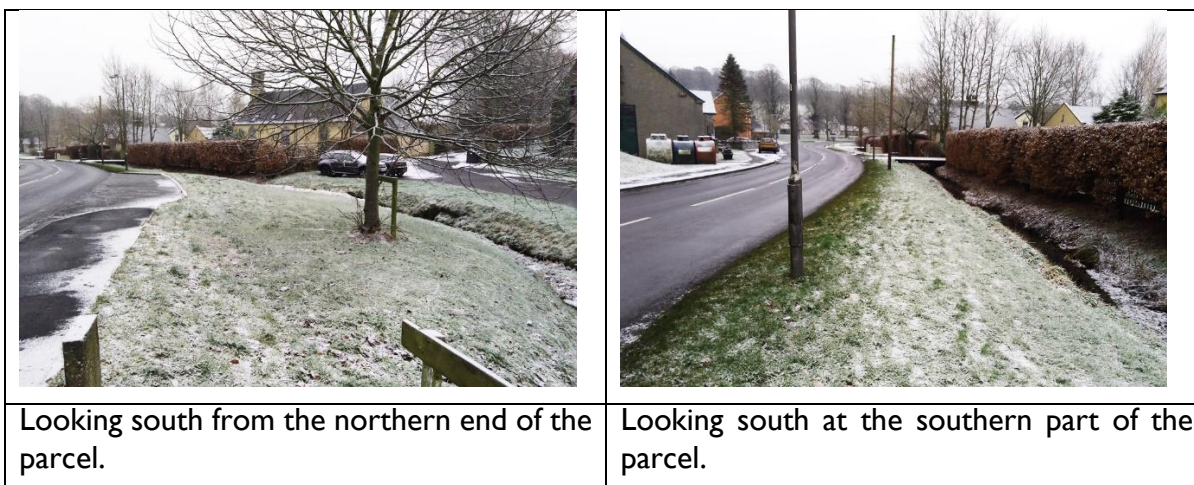
The burn emerges from the culvert under the A72 in the northern portion of the parcel ~3m from the road, beneath a short length of wooden fencing, and turns south (left) to flow approximately parallel to the road.

There is a very short length of pavement, a street sign for Carmichael Bank and a concrete marker post at the north end of the parcel and a road sign at the southern tip. There is one streetlight on the pavement, and two further streetlights on the grass in front of the old church.

There are two telephone poles on grass adjacent to A72 and one more on the small portion S of Carmichael Bank, with various telephone lines crossing the parcel. Power lines cross at the north part of the parcel.

The grass is interrupted by three driveways leading to neighbouring domestic properties. There is a small tree at the north end of the parcel and a willow tree on the west side of the burn outside Kirklea. There is significant summer vegetation in the burn. It is understood that the grass is cut by the Council.

The potential to construct a pavement along this section of verge (and parcel #7, to the south), to fill the pavement gap along the west side of the A72, has been discussed, but was not taken forward (see section 4.1.1). Otherwise, there is minimal development potential in this parcel.



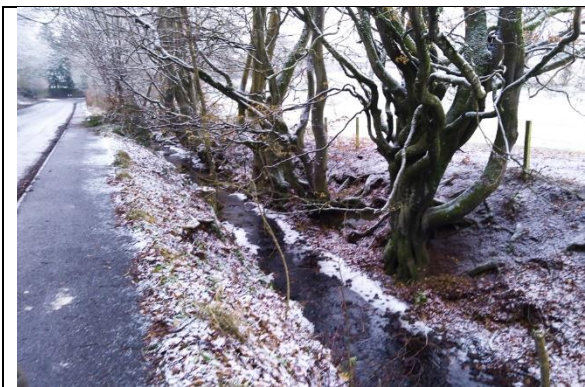
3.1.5 Parcel #5: Roadside strip by Castlestanes

This parcel comprises a narrow verge and burn-bank to the west and north of the A72 at the south end of the village. Total area is ~960m². A pavement runs along the full length (~250m) of the parcel – it is tarred for most of this length but changes to bound gravel at the south-western end.

The northern section is bounded by a field with a post and wire fence, the southern portion by the grounds of Castlestanes House. The driveway to Castlestanes House crosses the parcel, this has low stone walls to either side. The northern section was formerly crossed by footbridges: bearers can still be seen but planking has disappeared/been removed.

The burn is deeply incised in the northern section, and runs close to the pavement (~1m) here. It sits slightly further back from the road outside Castlestanes House where there is a narrow strip of grass beside the pavement. It is understood that centre of the burn forms the western boundary of the parcel, in which case most but not all of the trees are outwith the parcel. The burn is culverted at the Castlestanes corner for ~30m, so the boundary is undemarcated along this section.

There are intermittent trees and shrubs, some mature (including ash and sycamore) within this area, the majority are on the western bank, i.e. outwith the parcel, but there are some on the eastern bank which could prove to be liabilities. There is one telephone pole above culverted section and there are road signs (20mph countdown) on the verge. There is no development potential in this parcel.



Looking south from north end of parcel: note drop to burn and trees on west side.⁵³



North-east end of culvert on Castlestanes corner, mature ash on west side of burn.⁵⁴



Looking west along south-west part of parcel: burn further back from road.



Entrance to Castlestanes House.⁵⁵

⁵³ Note that it is understood that trees on the west side of the burn are not within the parcel

⁵⁴ Note that it is understood that trees on the west side of the burn are not within the parcel

⁵⁵ Image from Google Street View

3.2 Land belonging to Mr B and Mrs I Hunter

This package comprises four parcels, including the village green, a small area used for parking and storage and two roadside verges. It is understood that these areas would be gifted but that a contribution to legal fees might be expected.

3.2.1 Parcel #6: The village green

The village green occupies a prominent position in the centre of the village on the east side of the A72. Historically the venue of the Skirling Horse Fair, it is now used for events such as the Skirling Green Christian Aid Car Boot Sale.

The green is an irregular quadrilateral with rounded corners, approximately 95m long, 55m at the widest part (near the north end), narrowing to ~25m at the south. The area of the green itself is ~3,715m², the parcel also includes a small triangular area of grass to the northwest covering ~85m². The A72 lies to the west, with the other three sides formed by the D38 Skirling Green road. Housing abuts the road on the north and east sides, whilst to the south a separate grassy area (not part of the parcel) lies in front of Skirling House. There are no pavements around the green.

There are ten mature and over-mature lime trees and several younger trees scattered across the Green. A tree safety survey covering the village green and parcel #7 was commissioned by the current owner in November 2023, with an aerial survey in November 2024, and remedial work was carried out. Whilst any immediate issues should have been addressed, regular inspections will be required, given the high profile location. Some of the trees show evidence of mower damage and might benefit from physical protection, and some may be approaching the end of their lifespan and will require replacement.

There are various elements of utility infrastructure around the green, including poles and overhead lines, a water hydrant, manhole covers and a grit bin. A water main and electricity services run under the south-eastern edge of the green. There are two park benches and two picnic benches in a cluster in the middle of the grass, which, whilst cut by the Council, is not manicured.

Physically the green could accommodate a number of the developments suggested in the Community Action Plan, including a play-park, a covered shelter, interpretation, etc., and it would be possible to add a pavement alongside the A72 (or around the remainder of the green), but it is unclear the extent to which any of these would meet approval. Development potential is limited by conservation area status, the need to accommodate existing activities and community concerns as to the appropriateness of development. The green is recognised as a key greenspace area for safeguarding in the Local Development Plan.



Looking south from the north-eastern corner of the village green.⁵⁶



Looking south from the north-western corner of the village green.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Image from Google Street View

⁵⁷ Image from Google Street View



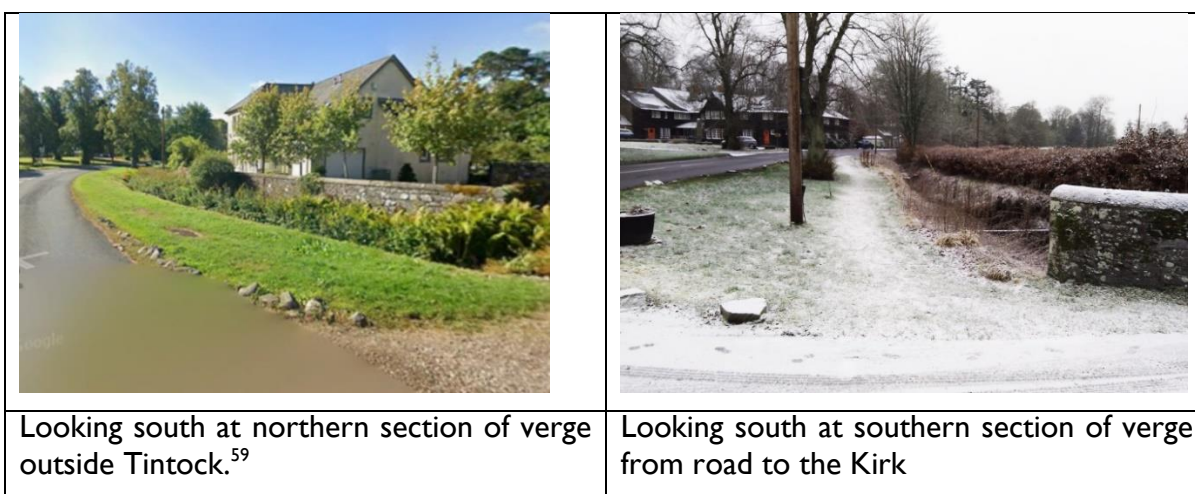
3.2.2 Parcel #7: Verges opposite village green

This parcel lies on the west side of the A72, in the gap between parcels #4 and #5 discussed above. It comprises two sections separated by the D37 minor road to Skirling church. The total area is ~1,845m².

The northern section is 75m long and between 8-11m wide, with the burn running close to domestic property boundaries (stone wall ~1.2m high) and containing significant summer vegetation. There is a known erosion issue here, with some ground settlement into the burn, which is eroding near boundary walls. There is no pavement along the northern section. There are overhead lines and a mature sycamore tree outside the Old Schoolhouse.

The southern section is ~145m long, with the western boundary with the neighbouring field formed by a hedge and stock fence. The northern part of this section is roughly triangular and grassy, narrowing from ~12m wide at the Kirk road to ~6m wide the southern end of the Village Green, at which point a pavement begins. There is a mature lime tree on the grass ~20m south of the Kirk road. Seven ash trees were felled in 2024 following the tree survey which covered this parcel and the village green. There is a telegraph pole just south of the Kirk Road, and planters on the grass either side of the Kirk road. It is understood that the grass is cut by the Council.

The potential to construct a pavement along this section of verge (and parcel #4, to the north), to fill the gap in pavement gap along the west side of the A72 between Carmichael Bank and the south of the village green, has been discussed previously, but was not taken forward (see section 4.1.1). There is minimal other development potential in this parcel.



⁵⁸ Image from Google Street View

⁵⁹ Image from Google Street View

3.2.3 Parcel #8: Carpark area behind Loanfoot Cottages

This parcel comprises a roughly square area (~555m²) on the east side of the village behind Loanfoot Cottages and the village green, accessed from the Skirling green road via the lower section of the northern drove road. This short section is in separate ownership over which there is a right of access.

The central part of the site is a hardstanding with a compacted, unbound stone surface, with grassy banks, with some trees, around the perimeter. There is parking for 6-8 vehicles on the hardstanding, it is unclear how many bays are typically occupied by local residents. The parcel holds one medium sized shed in the eastern corner, and three smaller sheds to the north-west; these are understood to be storage sheds for Resilient Skirling's community equipment, including floodgates, fete tables and gazebos.

This potentially useful utility space is outwith the Skirling Conservation Area. There is limited scope to add more parking space but if SCDT or other community organisations are intending to host more events (e.g. on the village green) then it is a potential storage site for materials.



3.2.4 Parcel #9: Verge on south side of road between Skirling House and Castlestones

This parcel comprises a small area of woodland extending for ~120m along the unpaved, south-eastern side of the A72 at the southern end of the village between Skirling House and Castlestones corner, and a further ~30m along the D39 minor road to the junction with the southern drove road. The south-east side of the wood is stock fenced and borders a field used for stock grazing. The block has an approximate area of 1,680m² and is ~18m wide at its broadest point by the A72/D39 junction, narrowing to 2-3m wide at the northern tip. There is a telephone pole, a water hydrant marker and a road sign (20 mph countdown) adjacent to the A72/D39 junction.

The woodland is not recorded on the Ancient Woodland Inventory, but is depicted on 19th Century Ordnance Survey maps, which also mark a well. There is a range of mostly deciduous tree species of varying ages with a line of conifers at the northern end, one of which has suffered recent wind damage. There is no evidence of recent management, other than windblow clearance.

No detailed woodland survey was undertaken but it can be assumed that there is no timber value in the trees (more precisely, the marketable value will be considerably less than the cost of harvesting and extraction) and this is unlikely to change. There were no immediate high risks noted but a walkover arboricultural survey is recommended before any acquisition and there will always be residual risks of windblow damage (as demonstrated by the broken tree at the northern end of the block).

The primary interest in this parcel is to improve safety for the circular route from the village to Gallows Knowe Wood via the drove roads, particularly for those travelling anti-clockwise, as visibility at Castlestones corner when crossing from the existing pavement on the NW side of the road is very poor. Currently some walkers avoid this section (when livestock isn't present) by cutting

across the field from the polytunnels; there is an obvious “desire line” leading to the gate at the east corner of the field.



The northern tip of the parcel from across the A72. This is the potential crossing point.



Looking south from the northern tip of the parcel.⁶⁰



Looking north from the A72/D39 junction⁶¹



The field side of the woodland strip

3.3 Land belonging to Candleberry Ltd

It is understood that payment would be expected for the field, but the valuation basis is not known.

3.3.1 Parcel #10: Triangular Field at Skirling Mill

This parcel consists of a field adjacent to the Skirling Mill development, to the south-west of the village. The field covers ~1.29ha and forms a right triangle, with the longest side to the south, bordering the A72. Much of the field is rough grassland, which does not appear to have been grazed or mown recently, whilst the north-western section is noticeably wetter and is dominated by rushes. The Skirling burn runs along the southern edge, and there is a drain along the north-west edge.





The north-eastern boundary has a newish stock fence with a stock gate, there is a post and wire fence along the southern boundary (between the burn and the roadside footpath), with fences to neighbouring properties on the southern part of the north-western boundary and no fence on the northern section. An 11kV overhead power line crosses the western corner: a strip under the lines would need to be kept clear. There is a small triangle of land to the west of the lines which is adjacent to housing and lies wet, so is unsuitable for much development.

The location outwith the Skirling Conservation Area and adjacent to the existing cluster of houses at Skirling Mill should mean that a wide range of development options is possible, although there would be a need to assess and mitigate any flood risk. One significant constraint is that there is currently no direct access to the site from the A72 as there is no bridge or culvert across the Skirling burn. There is good visibility for forming a road access here (particularly at the eastern end of the

⁶⁰ Image from Google Street View

⁶¹ Image from Google Street View

site) but this would be expensive and would only be justified if significant developments are planned. Establishing pedestrian access by means of a footbridge or culvert would be less costly but limits the scope of site development. There is a culverted entrance at the east end of the adjacent field (next to Castlestanes House), so occasional vehicle access for management purposes may be possible by arrangement with the landowner. It may also be possible to negotiate access via Skirling Mill or from the village.

	
<p>The field from the south-east corner.⁶²</p>	<p>The field from the south-west corner.⁶³</p>
	
<p>Looking south-west across the field from the stock gate on the north-east side.</p>	<p>Looking west across the western, rushy section of the field.</p>

3.4 Additional areas previously identified as possible acquisitions

A number of other parcels of land around the village have been identified which the community may consider acquiring.

3.4.1 Parcel #11: Verge north-east of Solstice

This parcel, which is understood to be owned by Scottish Borders Council, comprises a wide verge on the northwest side of the A72, north of the War Memorial and the junction with the D33 minor road. A pavement runs along the full length of the parcel. The parcel is approx. 160m long and has a total area of ~1,470m². The parcel is ~20m wide where a small triangle extends west just north of Solstice, but ~10m for most of its length. It narrows to ~3m at the northern end, where there is a decorative rockery/flower bed.

The southern-most part is separated for housing by a driveway, and is more or less flat and comprises mown grass with a planter near the southern tip. The remainder has a mown strip of ~1m adjacent to the pavement, with rougher grassland rising up a bank to a drive at the south end and to a field for the remainder of the parcel. There are a few small hawthorn trees in the central part of the parcel and a road sign (20/30mph) and a streetlight near the northern end. The grassy bank appears to be relatively fertile and well drained and would be suitable for planting a range of flowering and fruiting trees.

⁶² Image from Google Street View

⁶³ Image from Google Street View

<p>Looking north from the southern tip of the parcel.⁶⁴</p>	<p>The widest part of the parcel, just north of Solstice.⁶⁵</p>
<p>Looking south from the northern tip of the parcel.</p>	<p>The rockery/flowerbed at the northern tip of the parcel.</p>

3.4.2 Parcel #12: Land adjacent to the Knoll

This parcel is immediately adjacent to Parcel #2 and comprises a strip of grass in front of the Knoll on the east side of the burn. The owner is unknown. The block is ~50m long and the total area is ~250m². It includes a short length of pavement at the southern end of the block. If it was desired to extend this pavement northward, it would be preferable to do so through this parcel initially as parcel #2 is very narrow at its southern tip.

<p>Northern part of parcel from across the road.</p>	<p>Southern part of parcel from the A72.⁶⁶</p>

⁶⁴ Image from Google Street View

⁶⁵ Image from Google Street View

⁶⁶ Image from Google Street View

3.4.3 Parcel #13: Gallows Knowe Wood

The Gallows Knowe Wood occupies a prominent site on top of a small hill (OS 1:50,000 gives a spot height of 267m above sea level) to the south-east of the village. It is owned by Mr B and Mrs I Hunter.

The woodland comprises three main areas, as tabulated below.

Block	Area (ha)	Planted	Main Species
1	9.41	2001/2	Mixed broadleaves and conifers
2	5.20	Restocked 2013-15	Sitka spruce and mixed broadleaves
3	0.86	1900?	Beech, some Scots pine
Total	15.47		

Table 2: Gallows Knowe Wood blocks⁶⁷

Block 1 occupies the north-west section of the wood, closest to the village, and includes the highest ground. It was planted in 2001/2 under the Forestry Commission Woodland Grant Scheme.

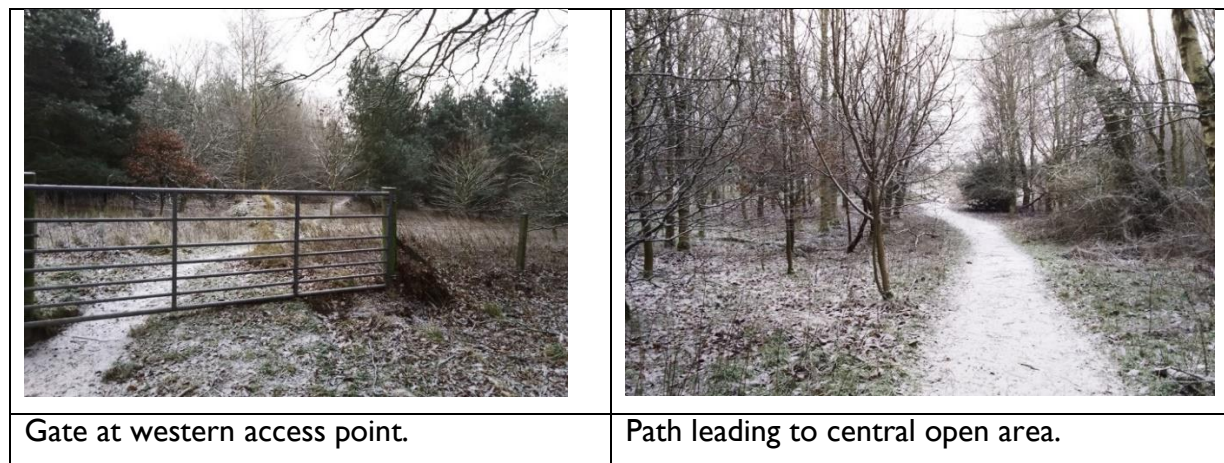
A range of species was utilised, planted mostly in small, single species blocks. The most common appear to be ash and Douglas fir, the latter predominantly along the south-eastern side of the block. Other species present include Birch, Scots pine and larch. The Scottish Forestry map viewer gives a breakdown of 34% conifer, 66% broadleaves.

A well-made path runs diagonally through the block from access points at the western and eastern corners, with a subsidiary path linking to the southern corner. This forms part of an attractive circular walk from the village. There is a large (~0.8ha), roughly circular, open area in the middle of the plantation, which occupies the top of the hill and includes a seating area. There are smaller areas of open ground, notably along the south-eastern boundary. Most areas visited appeared well drained.







The trees appear in good health, although the high proportion of ash gives concern with respect to Chalara ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*). The occasional tree has blown down but this is perhaps to be expected given the relatively exposed location.

The Douglas fir blocks are currently often impenetrable but sheltered access could be facilitated by some stem brashing. The Douglas fir is approaching the age for first thinning but the relatively high exposure / wind throw risk means that any intervention will have to be done very carefully, with small volumes felled by motor manual (chainsaw) methods.

Ash and other broadleaf stands are not yet ready for thinning, but will in due course generate small volumes of firewood, or alternately, felled material could be left for deadwood habitats.



⁶⁷ Areas from Scottish Government Rural Payments and Services mapping. Land Parcel Identifiers (LPID) are: Block 1 NT/07841/38655, Block 2 NT/07988/38599, Block 3 NT/07698/38481



	
<p>Seating and pillar at top of hill.</p>	<p>Looking west from the highest point.</p>
	
<p>Ash stand.</p>	<p>Scots pine stand.</p>
	
<p>Glade within Douglas fir stand.</p>	<p>Looking southwest along boundary of block 1 (to right) and block 2.</p>

Block 2 is a linear strip of uneven width approx. 500m * 100m along the SE side of the wood. It was clearfelled c. 2013 and restocked with a mix of Sitka spruce and broadleaves.

A small stream runs north-east to south-west through the block, passing through a small pond.

The main path runs through the north-west corner of this block, linking block 1 with the northern drove road. A secondary path joins the main path at the corner of block 1 and runs through block 2 to the southern drove road. A further path runs from the north-east corner.

Block 3 occupies the south-west side of the wood and is comprised mainly of mature beech, with some mature Scots pine. This block of woodland is not recorded on the Ancient Woodland Inventory, but is depicted on 19th Century Ordnance Survey maps. A rough vehicle track, the continuation of the southern drove road, runs through this block.

	
<p>Continuation of southern drove road through block 3 from northern corner.</p>	<p>Small path leading into block 3 from northern corner.</p>

The landowner has an arrangement for on-going supervision and maintenance of the wood with a local arboricultural specialist firm with the additional intention of promoting ground flora to enhance wildlife habitats.

There are no immediate apparent silvicultural or other management imperatives in the woodland. The distance from the village and the lack of road access limits the scope for development, however, under community ownership management might be expected to focus on enhancing the biodiversity value of the wood and maintenance and enhancement of public access and amenity: provision of seats and benches, additional paths (if required), and the use of woodland for community volunteering.

3.4.4 Parcel #14: Southern drove road

This parcel comprises an unbound vehicle track and grassy banks with a few large trees, leading from the D39 minor road just south of its junction with the A72 to the southern corner of Gallows Knowe Wood. The block runs for ~225m and is ~8m wide. This parcel is registered with Scottish Government Rural Payments and Services (LPID: NT/07549/38683), the registered area is 0.16ha.

The parcel is stock-fenced on the long sides, and gated at the north-west end. At the south-east corner of the parcel the track continues through Block 3 of Gallows Knowe Wood. The track forms part of the circular route from the village through Gallows Knowe Wood, although it is often bypassed by those wishing to avoid the road-crossing at Castlestanes corner.

	
<p>Looking up the southern drove road from the south-west.</p>	<p>Gate into field at north-east junction with Gallows Knowe Wood.⁶⁸</p>

⁶⁸ Note that the large beech trees on the earth bank are outwith the Gallows Knowe Wood

3.4.5 Parcel #15: Northern drove road

This parcel comprises an unbound vehicle track and banks, leading from just north-east of the village green to the north-eastern corner of Gallows Knowe Wood. The parcel is 585m long and between 10 and 20m wide, with a total area of ~0.89ha. It has not been registered with Scottish Government Rural Payments and Services.

The track is a semi-bound stone road, winding and steep in places, leading to the house at Whinnybrae, after which reverts to more natural surface vehicle track. There are some very large beech trees on the banks near village and younger, scrub woodland at the eastern end. The track is designated as part of Scottish Borders Council core path 176 from Skirling to Broughton and forms part of the circular route from the village through Gallows Knowe Wood.

A waymarker post and sign at the village end identifies this as a Heritage Path.⁶⁹ It reads: “*Skirling Fair Drove Roads: This path to Broughton was shown on Armstrong’s 1775 map of Peeblesshire. It is believed to have been used for driving sheep and cattle to and from Skirling Fair in the 18th and 19th centuries.*”



Looking up the northern drove road from the north-west.

3.5 Further areas of land

The main focus of this report is the parcels of land which have been offered to SCDT, or otherwise previously identified as potential community acquisitions, however, it is possible that other plots of land around the village might be as well or better suited to delivery of CAP objectives.

3.5.1 Parcel #16: Field by Church

Skirling Parish Church lies to the west of the village, on a small hill, ~100m from the A72. The D37 minor road, maintained by Scottish Borders Council, leads to the church from a point opposite the village green, crossing the Skirling burn (and bisecting parcel #7).

There is housing to the north of this road, and a field, used for grazing, to the south, the northern portion of which is understood to be owned by Mrs Margaret Sommerville.

This field, which is within the Skirling Village Conservation Area, has been used in the past for parking and for the village bonfire. This plot has several advantages, notably that it is centrally located, being adjacent to the church and village green (albeit across the A72) and there is existing road access.

A section of this field could accommodate several potential activities and development projects:

- Car parking for events on the village green;
- Additional recycling facilities;
- Community composting;
- Electric vehicle charging;

⁶⁹ <https://scotways.com/heritage-path/HP22/>

- Play-park.

Well designed and sensitive development incorporating some screening would ensure that there was limited negative impact on neighbouring housing.

The field is in private ownership, so it would be possible for SCDT to register an interest through the community right to buy provisions,⁷⁰ however this process would only be taken forward if and when the present landowner decided to sell the land. SCDT would therefore be better advised to seek a negotiated transfer of the land from the landowner, outwith the formal community right to buy mechanism.

3.5.2 Parcel #17: Polytunnels and horticultural site

Community growing features amongst the objectives of the Skirling Community Action Plan. Whilst it would be possible to develop a growing site from scratch at one or two of the parcels identified previously, it should be noted that there is already a substantial horticultural growing site in the village, so if this is a theme which the Trust wishes to pursue, one option would be to negotiate to take on part of this site for community use.

The current site is on the eastern edge of the village, adjacent to the car parking area (parcel #8) and extends to ~0.5ha. It is not within the Skirling Conservation Area. The land is owned by the Hunters and is leased to local resident Mike Thompson. The site contains two large polytunnels, both ~22m * 9m, one of which is owned by the Hunters, and an outdoor growing area. There is vehicle access via a track leading from Skirling Green, and pedestrian access from the northern drove road.



Parcel #16: the northern end of the Church field, looking west from the A72/D38 junction.



Parcel #17: the polytunnels and outdoor growing area from the north.

3.5.3 Other parcels

Other portions of the fields around the village might be considered for potential acquisition, including on the north and south sides of the northern drove road, and on the northern side of the southern drove road, where a strip of field is considered for acquisition to create a new path to facilitate a circular route around the village.

Whilst all of these are outwith the Conservation Area and have some merit they are generally inferior options to the field by the Parish Church, as they are further from the village and have poorer access.

Delivery of the CAP objectives does not generally require the acquisition of buildings, and there appears to be limited scope for such acquisitions within the village, with no evidence of derelict or underused commercial property.

⁷⁰ Once SCDT has amended its constitution to allow it to do so

4 Skirling CAP: Land-based Priorities and Actions

This chapter highlights the priorities and actions within the Skirling Village CAP⁷¹ which are relevant to this report, i.e. that community acquisition of land might help facilitate; outlines the background and current situation; and assesses the extent to which acquisition of the parcels of land identified in chapter 3 might contribute to delivering these elements of the plan.

It therefore focusses on the functional mapping of parcels of land with specific development projects to deliver the CAP, however, there may also be longer term and less tangible benefits arising from community ownership including the capacity to take advantage of future opportunities as yet unforeseen. Additionally, community acquisition of this land is a possible means of preserving the village environment and for safeguarding its use for recreational, conservation and amenity purposes for the community and future generations.

Generally speaking, external funders for community asset acquisition, such as the Scottish Land Fund, seek to focus on development projects which offer clear community benefits in the short and/or medium term, and are reluctant to support projects which only seek to safeguard assets for the future. Of course, where assets are gifted to the community this is not an issue, but there is still a need to consider any on-going risks, costs and liabilities arising from taking on ownership.

4.1 Theme 1: Safe Skirling – Traffic, pavements and roads

“Skirling’s location on the A72 makes it important to slow traffic going through the village. Speeding traffic and lack of safe pavements in some parts of the village can hamper residents moving freely around their own village and can reduce their ability to connect with others and participate in community life.

Making Skirling a safer place for residents of all ages to walk or cycle in would include – village ‘gateways’, a 20 or 30mph speed limit throughout the village, and crucially new pavements that help connect up housing with the village hall and church.

Repairs to the pavement out to Skirling Mill were also highlighted.”

4.1.1 Priority 1B Village pavements and roads

Actions

- IB1 Develop plans for pavements/safe routes from the top of the village down to the village hall and church
- IB2 Improve path out to Skirling Mill

Background

There is no consistent pavement though the village: someone walking the length of the village will encounter four lengths of pavement requiring three road crossings (there is no formal crossing infrastructure) and the negotiation of several gaps without pavement. Similarly, there are three zones with different speed limits. If travelling through the village from the north-east (i.e. from Peebles) a 30mph zone is entered just before the first house. There is no pavement on either side of road for first 125m (covering several houses and Galalaw Farm).

There is then an 80m section of pavement on the south-east side of road, along the grassy area outside Howes Brae / Burnside. The pavement then switches to north side of road (starting adjacent to bus shelter) and runs for ~390m (with a break of ~25m outside Goatfoot) to the triangle of grass which hold the war memorial. Midway through this section the speed limit on the road becomes 20mph. South of the war memorial there is a break of ~50m without a formal pavement where the D33 minor road joins the A72 and there is parking for housing.

⁷¹ Text in italics is taken directly from the Skirling Village CAP. Appendix 4 has a full list of Themes, Priorities and Actions.

The pavement restarts at the Telephone exchange and runs for 50m (with a break for the entrance of Carmichael Bank) before crossing to the south-east side of A72, where it continues for 120m, past the Village Hall, to just before the village green. There is no pavement on either side of the road for 125m at the village green. At the south end of the village green the pavement reappears on the north-west side of the A72 and continues south for 710m to the entrance to Skirling Mill.

About 100m south of the village green the speed limit increases to 40mph, and 150m beyond the end of the pavement at Skirling Mill (and about 40m beyond the last house) the 40mph zone ends and the limit reverts to national speed limit. Most of the pavements described above are tarred and have a hard kerb, but the western-most section of ~380m to Skirling Mill is a well-bound cinder path with a narrow grass verge between road and pavement.

Update

Several of the parcels under discussion could be used for extending or creating new pavements, however, it is unclear whether there is community support for such projects.

The 2025 CAP Progress Report noted that *“In February 2024 Skirling was offered £75,000⁷² to fund a tar path from the end of the Skirling Mill path to the War Memorial. The planned route between the end of Skirling Mill Path and the end of the Green raised flooding concerns among residents. Therefore, the offer of a tar path along the Village Green for that section was declined.”* This funding was not lost, however, as it was redirected to create the new section of path running in front of Burnside Farm.

The 2025 report also noted that *“In September 2024 a further offer of tar paths has been made. The Community Council would like to request tar-surfacing from the end of the Skirling Mill Path to Kirk Brae, and from Burnside to the top of the village. Discussion with residents remain to be completed and further options are still being explored.”*

Whilst the Skirling Mill path has not been tarred, recent maintenance work to replace a manhole cover and scrape back encroaching vegetation has improved its condition.

Delivery: Parcels #4 and #7

These parcels could be used for a new pavement on the western side of the A72 between the village green and Carmichael Bank, however, funding for a similar project was declined in the face of local opposition on amenity and privacy grounds, as well as concerns that adding a kerb along the western side of road would inhibit drainage from the carriageway and exacerbate flooding of properties on the other side of the road.

Delivery: Parcel #6

It would be possible to establish a new path along the western side of village green side, or around the full extent of the green, but this might also raise concerns about appropriateness of development.

A further issue is that during events on the green such as car boot sales, vehicles access the green directly from A72, so dropped kerb sections would be needed (or it would be necessary to make other arrangements for access).

Delivery: Parcels #2 & #12

There is scope for a potential extension northwards of the existing pavement on eastern side of A72, and there is a short section here where there is no path on either side of road, but this does not appear to have been raised previously, suggesting there is little demand.

Delivery: Parcel #10

Recent maintenance of the cinder track section of Skirling Mill path means that it is currently in good order, so there is no short term imperative for an upgrade to tarmac. In the longer term the

⁷² This money offered was from a Scottish Borders Council budget: SBC would have been doing the work.

maintenance and potential upgrading of the path are likely to be connected to any future development of field by Skirling Mill.

4.2 Theme 3: Skirling Community Life

“The Village Hall, Village Green and the Church all provide opportunities for people to come together in the community and enjoy activities and events.

Ways of developing these resources were suggested including ... creating more parking space for people using these facilities.

In addition, the creation of an outdoor play and picnic area was seen to be a valuable addition – particularly with the recent increase in the number of children and young families. A place where children can play and adults can gather to meet and socialise.

In general people enjoyed the activities and events held in the village and suggested that more would also be welcome.”

4.2.1 Priority 3A: Village Hall & Church.

Actions

- 3A1 Support ongoing plans for improvements to Village Hall and Church that will help with energy efficiency, community use, storage and parking.

Background

There is no designated public parking within the village: it is unclear (to visitors) whether parking around the village green is for residents only, and there is only a very small layby outside the Skirling Village Hall. Ad hoc parking is possible at the Church and in the informal area behind Loanfoot Cottages, but neither of these sites is obvious or signed from the A72.

The village green is used for events such as the annual Skirling Green Christian Aid Car Boot Sale, but there is potential to host a wide range of additional events. There is however limited scope for parking.

Delivery: Parcel #16

Additional parking for the Village Hall, Church and events at the village green could be created in the field in front of the Church, opposite the village green.

4.2.2 Priority 3B: Play area and picnic area

Actions

- 3B1 Agree best site and most suitable design – building on the existing plans and funding efforts
- 3B2 Work to develop the play and picnic area.

Background

There is currently no designated play area in the village.

There are benches and picnic tables at the village green.

Play-park pre-application enquiry

A pre-application enquiry was submitted to Scottish Borders Council with respect to creating a new play-park on parcel #3. The enquiry comprised the text and photo below (*italics*).

The proposed site for the play-park is a piece of land adjacent to Skirling's telephone exchange and Carmichael Bank, Skirling ML12 6HD. The proposed site (OS Grid Reference NT 07592 39240) is marked red on the attached map. There are no buildings or structures on the current site and no indications or information to suggest that any buildings have been erected on the site.

SCDT is not aware of any planning history on the site and does not have any records of how the site has been previously used, if at all. It is believed that historically the land was retained incidentally by previous owners in the process of transferring pieces of land to others.

SCDT seeks advice on the probability of planning permission being granted for a play-park on this site, the merits of the application generally and possible obstacles to obtaining planning permission.

SCDT does not currently own the land on which the proposed site is situated; however SCDT is in the process of acquiring this land as its owner has expressed a longstanding and deep interest in gifting it to Skirling village. One of SCDT's central tasks is to facilitate the transfer of land in the village to be held in trust for the benefit of the community.



Example photo supplied with pre-application enquiry

SBC Response to pre-application enquiry

The SBC response to the pre-application enquiry was as follows:

Principle The proposed development is small scale and would help increase access to outdoor activities to a wider sector of the community. On the basis of the information submitted, the principle of this proposal sounds acceptable.

Visual impact There would be no buildings proposed although the introduction of play equipment would be a significant change from the current position. That is not to say that those elements would not be acceptable.

Neighbouring amenity There may be an impact on neighbouring amenity from noise through the introduction of a new activity. Any lighting columns associated with the new play area could similarly result in a detriment to amenity. Lighting would need to be designed to account for that and timers included in order to ensure automatic cut outs.

Road safety/parking Roads commented that the site is largely not included within the road boundary, although it is their opinion that the first 2m from the A72 carriageway and the D35-1 Carmichael Bank carriageway is included within the road boundary. As a result, provided the play-park does not encroach on the public road boundary and does not interfere with visibility from Carmichael Bank, an objection is unlikely. A detailed application should show the full extents of the play-park boundary, including the line (and height) of any fences, to allow the Roads Planning Service to discern whether the proposal has any negative impact on road safety. The provision of a dedicated parking at this facility is unlikely to be a requirement.

Ecology There is a requirement that proposals for local development will include appropriate and proportionate measures to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, in accordance with national and local guidance. A condition would be imposed were permission to be granted if the information was not submitted

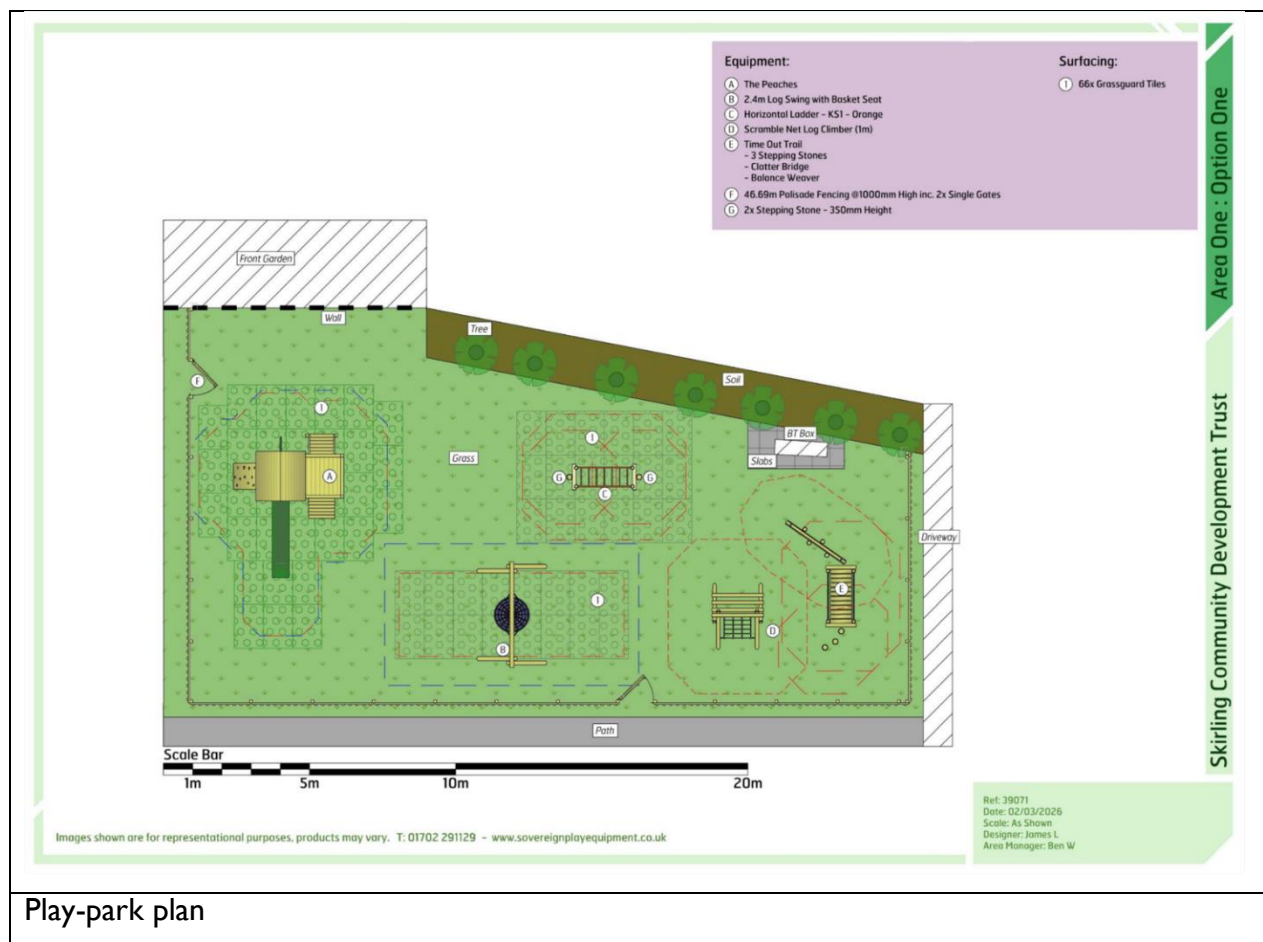
with the application. In formulating a programme of ecological enhancements, you may wish to refer to NatureScot’s document “Developing with Nature” which is available on that organisation’s website.

Trees There are trees within the vicinity of the site. Any proposal would have to take account of those and be supported by an arboricultural impact assessment and method statement.

Public art Policy 31 of NPF4⁷³ requires that proposals that involve a significant change to existing or the creation of new public open spaces will make provision for public art. In order to comply with this policy, as there would be a significant change to the existing public open space, there should be some public art provided. Details of that should be included in any planning application.

Design and layout proposal

Subsequent to this broadly positive response from SBC, SCDT invited Sovereign Design Play Systems Ltd to produce a costed design proposal for a play-park at this site, which was delivered in March 2026. The plan and “artist’s impression” are reproduced below.



Key elements of the design and layout are:

- “The Peaches” (house with slide, climbing wall, etc)
- Log swing with basket
- Horizontal ladder
- Scramble net log climber
- Time-out trail with stepping stones, clatter bridge, balance beam
- Grassguard tiles
- Palisade fencing on three sides

⁷³ National Planning Framework 4 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/>



Play-park artist's impression

Delivery: Parcel #3

Parcel #3 has been identified as the preferred site for the play-park, a pre-application enquiry has been submitted and a design proposal received which demonstrates the potential for the site.

Once the design and layout of the play-park are agreed it will be necessary to apply for planning permission, which will entail providing details of appropriate and proportionate measures to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, an arboricultural impact assessment and method statement, and details of the proposed public art.

Delivery: Alternative sites

If, for whatever reason, it is not possible take forward the play-park at parcel #3, it could be delivered at other sites, although these are very much fall-back options.

- There is more space for a play-park at the village green (parcel #6) and also for any associated adult seating and public art required by Scottish Borders Council as part of the development, however there are concerns about the appropriateness of any development at the village green.
- There is plenty of space for a play-park at the Skirling Mill field (parcel #10), although the distance from the village means that this would probably not meet community requirements for an easily accessible facility.
- It would also be possible to install a play-park and any associated adult seating and public art at the Church field (parcel #16).

Picnic area

There is very limited scope to deliver a picnic area alongside the play-park at parcel #3, as the proposed design occupies almost all of the available space.

Other potential locations for a picnic area include the Church field (parcel #16), the Skirling Mill field (parcel #10) and Gallows Knowe Wood (parcel #13), although the latter two sites are some way from the village.

4.3 Theme 4: Environment and Heritage (1)

“Skirling is surrounded by lovely countryside – farmland, woodlands and rolling hills. People would like to see the access out into the countryside maintained and developed, to continue to encourage the development of ‘community woodlands’ and walks, and to look at ways of encouraging biodiversity and wildlife.

People would like to continue the good work of village enhancement and also to create opportunities for growing produce and planting fruit trees.”

4.3.1 Priority 4A: Local path networks

Actions

- 4A2 Improve existing paths e.g. to Broughton
- 4A3 Investigate how paths/routes can be expanded to link to other paths networks and places e.g., in Biggar.
- 4A4 Develop, sign and promote a circular walk for the village.

Background

The path from Skirling to Broughton via the northern drove road (parcel #15) is designated a core path (176) by Scottish Borders Council. The section covered by parcel #15 is currently in good condition.

The southern drove road could potentially provide a link to core path 177 which runs along the dismantled railway on the south side of Biggar Water. The section of southern drove road under consideration here (parcel #14) is currently in good condition. OS 1:50,000 mapping shows a path continuing to South Mains Farm and thence to the B7016 but this is not shown on larger scale maps and does not exist on the ground. A little way to the east there is a mapped rough farm track (visible on Google Street View) running from the south side of the B7016 to the north bank of Biggar Water, although there is no bridge across the stream.

There is a well-used circular route from the village to Gallows Knowe Wood via the drove roads, however, visibility at the A72 road crossing at Castlestanes corner when crossing from the existing pavement on the north-west side of the road is very poor.

Delivery: Parcel #9

Parcel #9 is of interest for the development of a safer circular walking route from the village via Gallows Knowe Wood. There are two possible options for improvement:

- A) Create a new pavement (~150m) alongside the A72 and D39, allowing pedestrians to cross the A72 closer to the village where there is better visibility. This could be tarred or bound cinders: the latter might be cheaper but it is understood that SBC would likely favour the former. The road crossing could be formalised but may just need some extra “pedestrians crossing ahead” signage. Whilst viable, this option requires significant Council involvement and engagement, and it is unclear whether they would support further investment in pavement infrastructure here; it is likely also that concerns about maintenance budgets would be raised.
- B) Using the same crossing point, creating a pedestrian route running through the parcel at the northern tip and then continuing inside the field to join the southern drove road, near to where it meets the D39. This option requires buying an additional ~3m strip of the field, creation of a new stock fence to separate the path from livestock in the field, re-siting of a water trough, and path construction, which whilst costly would be much cheaper than a new pavement, and entail considerably less road disruption.

4.3.2 Priority 4B: Biodiversity and wildlife

Action

- 4B1 Involve people in study, enjoyment and enhancement of local biodiversity and wildlife.

Delivery: Parcel #10

The Skirling Mill field could be developed as a wildlife habitat and informal recreation area, with pond(s), woodland creation, including flowering and fruiting species, wildflower areas etc. Options for this site are discussed in more detail in section 4.5 below.

Delivery: Parcel #13

Gallows Knowe Wood could be acquired and managed as a community woodland with a focus on biodiversity study and enhancement alongside access and amenity. Biodiversity-focussed projects might include environmental monitoring, small scale silvicultural intervention, with some material from thinning left as dead wood, and additional planting to favour native species.

Some of the actions under priorities 4C and 4D below would also contribute to biodiversity and wildlife objectives.

4.3.3 Priority 4C: Village enhancement

Actions

- 4C1 Continue programme of village enhancement.
- 4C2 Look at how planting can be linked to productive growing.
- 4C3 Look at how planting can help with the development of 'gateways' at village limits.

Background

The 2025 Interim report states that "Planters have been ordered to place beside the speed signs at points in the village where verge width allows." It also notes that "Throughout summer 2024 various residents of Skirling identified appropriate areas for tree planting; a specific day was set aside during which said residents organised a tree-planting day, ensuring that the trees planted were protected from deer-grazing through use of plastic tree-protectors."

Delivery: Parcels #1, #2, #3, #4, #7 & #12

It would be technically possible to e.g. plant fruit trees or do some community growing on all the grassy roadside verges, but this might raise a number of concerns, not least with respect to safety.

Additional planters could be installed along verges if this was felt to be necessary / desirable.

Delivery: Parcel #6

Similarly, it would be technically possible to plant fruit trees, institute community growing, etc., on the village green, but this is unlikely to be seen as appropriate or compatible with other uses.

Delivery: Parcel #11

There is potential to plant a range of tree species, including fruit trees, along the bank in this parcel. They would be set a little back from the road, in an area where they are unlikely affect visibility or to be a distraction / safety issue for drivers.

Delivery: Parcels #14 and #15

There is considerable potential to plant a range of tree and shrub species, including flowering and fruit trees, along the banks of these two parcels.

4.3.4 Priority 4D: Community growing

Actions

- 4D1 Explore how other communities have developed community gardens and orchards and productive growing in 'gap' sites.
- 4D2 Identify and progress opportunities for community growing in Skirling

Background

“Community growing” covers a wide range of activities and projects seeking to deliver against a variety of objectives. Some community growing projects are primarily output-focussed - about provision of healthy produce - whilst others are more input-focussed – about the therapeutic value of the growing process. Similarly, some project concentrate on collective activity, others are designed to provide space for individual growers. In many cases these differences are a matter of emphasis; larger, and longer established projects, such as the Broadford Growers Hub,⁷⁴ will seek to do all of these and more.

Access and good drainage are important, but soil conditions less so as the soil can always be improved, with polytunnels and raised beds likely to use an imported growing medium.

Delivery: Parcels #10 & #17:

There is scope to take forward a wide range of community growing projects at the Skirling Mill field. There is however already a substantial horticultural facility in Skirling, comprising two polytunnels (22m * 9m) and an outdoor growing area of ~0.15ha, run by a local resident, Mike Thompson. Rather than attempt to set up an alternative site (which might cause difficulties with funders who are usually keen to avoid displacement) SCDT could seek to negotiate use of part of the existing site for community projects. This would have the added advantage of allowing use to develop gradually

The land (and one of the polytunnels) is owned by the Hunters. It would probably not be necessary to buy the land (or polytunnels) in order to take a community growing project forward.

4.4 Theme 5: Sustainable and Resilient Skirling

“Increasingly, in light of climate change, communities have to keep an eye on the future and act today to mitigate and adapt. Some of the priorities already identified will help with this e.g. encouraging more walking and cycling, local growing and encouraging biodiversity. Other priorities noted included looking after the Burn that flows through the village to reduce the danger of flooding in the future; doing more to recycle, and to look at ways of reducing dependence on fossil fuels (e.g. use of electric transport, supporting energy efficiency in homes and community buildings, and looking at opportunities for community renewables).”

4.4.1 Priority 5B: Recycling

Actions

- 5B1 Improve recycling facilities
- 5B2 Look at ways of developing community composting

Background

In the Scottish Borders Council area domestic households have a single recycling bin, collected every two weeks, which accepts the following items:⁷⁵

- aerosol cans;
- aluminium foil and foil trays;
- cardboard boxes;

⁷⁴ <https://www.broadfordandstrath.org/project/growers-hub/>

⁷⁵ <https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/bins-rubbish-recycling/goes-bin-bag>

- cardboard packaging – cereal boxes, kitchen and toilet roll tubes, ready meal sleeves etc.;
- food and drinks cans;
- food and drinks cartons – fresh juice cartons, milk cartons;
- paper – catalogues, brochures, magazines, newspapers, envelopes, leaflets, scrap paper;
- plastic bottles (all types) – drinks bottles, shampoo bottles, hand wash bottles;
- plastic tubs – margarine tubs, yogurt pots, fruit tubs;
- plastic bags and wrappers – carrier bags (no black bags), fruit and veg wrappers, bread bags, cling film, bubble wrap.

The following items can't be recycled in kerbside bin or bags:

- glass bottles and jars – these can be recycled at recycling points;
- clothing and shoes – these can be recycled at textile banks;
- polystyrene – this cannot be recycled at the present time and must go in general waste bins;
- garden waste – this can be recycled at Community Recycling Centres or composted at home.

There are three receptacles for glass recycling located beside the Village Hall, whilst the Recycle Now website⁷⁶ suggests the nearest locations for textile recycling are Bigger and Broughton.

Scottish Borders Council has seven community recycling centres for waste from domestic properties, the nearest is Eshiels community recycling centre (25km).

Community composting projects vary significantly in scale and nature, and in particular as to which waste streams (garden, food, other brown waste) are used, the methods used (piles, vessels, wormeries) and where the compost is used.⁷⁷

Delivery: Parcel #8

A textile recycling container could be located at the small car park behind Loanfoot Cottages.

Delivery: Parcel #10

The Skirling Mill field could host recycling facilities for textiles and a community composting project as part of a more comprehensive development of environmental facilities.

Delivery: Parcel #16

A textile recycling container could be located in the Church field.

Delivery: Parcel #17

Community composting also could be developed at the existing growing site, if the likely scale of the project was relatively small.

4.4.2 Priority 5C: Reducing fossil fuel use

Actions

- 5C2 Support use of Electric Vehicles
- 5C3 Explore opportunities for community renewables

Background

The development of Scotland's electric vehicle network has until recently been led by ChargePlace Scotland, owned developed by the Scottish Government, and funded in partnership with Local Authorities and other organisations, which has nearly 3,000 publicly available charge points.

However, Transport Scotland has decided to transition away from the network, with future developments being led by the private sector. Public funding through the Electric Vehicle

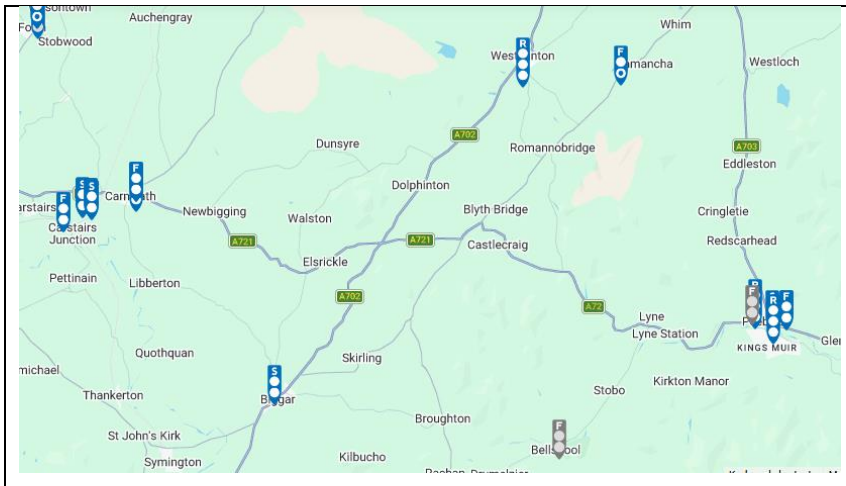
⁷⁶ <https://www.recyclenow.com/>

⁷⁷ See <https://highlandcompost.scot/decision-tree/> for a more detailed overview.

Infrastructure Fund is targeted at areas, including include more rural and island communities, where commercial investment alone is not currently viable.⁷⁸

Eight Local Authorities across the south of Scotland have jointly launched a new Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy⁷⁹ to deliver a high-quality, accessible, and sustainable public charging network across the region.

There is no public Electric Vehicle (EV) charging point in Skirling. There is a Chargeplace Scotland site in the Kirkstyle carpark at Biggar with 2 Type 2 7kW connectors, and other sites at Carnwath, West Linton, Lamancha and Peebles.



Map 9: EV charging points

Delivery: Parcel #8

It is probably technically possible to install a public EV charger in the small car park behind Loanfoot Cottages, but it does not seem a particularly suitable location, as access from A72 is not obvious and operation is typically 24/7/365 which may not be welcomed by adjacent householders.

Delivery: Parcel #10

Public EV chargers could be installed at the Skirling Mill field as part of a more comprehensive development of environmental facilities.

Community renewables - a wind turbine or solar panels - could be developed at the Skirling Mill field as part of a more comprehensive development of environmental facilities. Such a project would need considerable specialised feasibility and development work.

Delivery: Parcel #16

Public EV chargers could be installed at the Church field in association with a new car park.

⁷⁸ <https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/environment/electric-vehicle-infrastructure-fund/>

⁷⁹ <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/86866/South-of-Scotland-Electric-Vehicle-Charging-Strategy>

4.5 The Skirling Mill field

The field by Skirling Mill has potential to host a wide range of projects delivering several of the objectives of the Skirling CAP. A key constraint is the current lack of access: some projects could be taken forward with only pedestrian access (if intermittent vehicle access through neighbouring properties can be negotiated), but larger scale developments would require the construction of road access from the A72.

A second constraint is likely to be drainage and potential flooding risk, which would need detailed assessment prior to significant development, and may require mitigation works. Ground vegetation (rushes) indicates that the western portion of the site is particularly wet, whereas the eastern part of the site appears to be relatively dry.

Inevitably any developments will be phased over time, and be dependent on availability of funding and investment capital. A long term masterplan for the development of the site should be produced, and a detailed environmental survey should be undertaken prior to any development to ensure that the existing flora and fauna is fully taken into account.

4.5.1 Pedestrian access

The field could be developed as wildlife habitat and recreation area, with pond(s), woodland creation, including flowering and fruiting species, wildflower areas etc.

Paths, benches and picnic tables could be installed, along with interpretation, a simple unserviced shelter, compost toilet, children's play equipment and installations of sculpture and environmental art.

Intermittent vehicle access through neighbouring property would be required for e.g. a digger to create the pond and to deliver materials (stone for paths) but day to day access would be by footbridge or culvert.

No local car parking is available (unless this can be arranged at Skirling Mill); the south-east corner of the parcel is ~500m from the village green which is not an excessive walk for many, but may be too far for some.

4.5.2 Vehicle access

Creating a new vehicle access, probably near the south-east corner of the site, would facilitate a much wider range of development options, including the development of a range of eco-focussed projects, including:

- Community composting
- Recycling
- Electric chargers
- Community growing

There could be more significant development of visitor services, such as a standard toilet block, a hardstanding for camper vans with grey water disposal or a seasonal campsite.

Electrical power could be provided by solar panels or a wind turbine

The field could potentially, if flood risk could be mitigated, host larger scale built developments, including a heritage/visitor centre with retail facilities, affordable housing, workshop space, or light industrial units, although it should be stressed that these sorts of developments are not currently identified as objectives in the Skirling CAP.

5 Summary analysis

5.1 Summary by site

The table below summarises the potential for the various parcels of land to contribute to development projects to deliver elements of the Skirling CAP. It does not cover the potential longer term and less tangible benefits arising from community ownership including the capacity to take advantage of future opportunities and of safeguarding its use for recreational, conservation and amenity purposes for the community and future generations.

#	Site	Skirling CAP project development
1	War memorial	No apparent development value.
2	Grass verge	Possible additional pavement, little development value otherwise.
3	Wide verge by BT exchange	Identified as preferred site for play-park.
4	Grass verge	Possible additional pavement, little development value otherwise.
5	Rough roadside verge	No apparent development value.
6	Village green	Event hosting, other potential limited if community want to keep village green unchanged.
7	Grass verges	Possible additional pavement, little development value otherwise.
8	Parking & storage area	Useful space for parking, storage, recycling, EV charging (but not space for all)
9	Wooded strip	Potential to facilitate safer route for circular walk via Gallows Knowe Wood.
10	Skirling Mill field	Wide range of potential projects: wildlife habitats, recreation, community growing, play-park, EV charging, recycling, composting, plus potential income generation initiatives.
11	Rough verge	Village gateway enhancement: flowering and fruiting trees, could be taken forward by agreement with SBC.
12	Grassy strip	Possible additional pavement, little development value otherwise.
13	Gallows Knowe Wood	Range of possible environmental and amenity projects.
14	Southern drove road	Useful for securing access to Gallows Knowe Wood (largely depends on intentions in wood). Potential for additional tree planting / habitat enrichment along boundary banks.
15	Northern drove road	Useful for securing access to Gallows Knowe Wood (largely depends on intentions in wood). Potential for additional tree planting / habitat enrichment along boundary banks.
16	Field by Church	Potential for parking, plus possible EV charging, recycling, composting, play-park.
17	Polytunnels/ growing area	Potential for community growing projects.

Table 3: Summary analysis of scope to deliver Skirling CAP by parcels.

5.2 Summary by project

5.2.1 Safeguarding village amenity

Acquiring parcels #1-7 and #11-12 would safeguard these areas for recreational, conservation and amenity purposes for the community and future generations, and give the community the capacity to take advantage of any future opportunities arising.

5.2.2 Village enhancement

Fruit trees and other flowering shrubs could be planted along the grassy banks of parcels #11, #14 and #15.

There may also be some limited scope for additional planting (or planters) on various other roadside parcels, including #1, #2, #3, #4, #6 and #7.

5.2.3 Pavements

Acquiring parcels #4 and #7 would facilitate the construction of a continuous pavement along the western side of the A72, whilst parcels #2 and #12 would fill a gap in pavement provision on the eastern side of the A72. However, it appears that there is considerable local opposition to such developments and unless there is a consensus within the village it does not seem worth pursuing.

5.2.4 Play-park

Parcel #3 has been identified as the preferred location for a play-park and a pre-application to the Council submitted. A design proposal has been produced by Sovereign Design Play Systems Ltd which demonstrates how the site could be utilised.

The next step will be to agree the desired design and layout of the play-park and then, if the proposal is to proceed, to submit an application for planning permission to Scottish Borders Council.

If parcel #3 does not prove a feasible site the most likely alternative is parcel #16, in front of the church. The Skirling Mill field (parcel #10) has plenty of space but is probably too far from the village, and there may be opposition to siting a play-park on the village green (parcel #6).

5.2.5 Circular route

As per section 4.3.1 above, there are two options for a new path to facilitate a safe circular route from the village through Gallows Knowe Wood, both involving parcel #9. Unless the Council are willing to fund a pavement alongside the road, option B, running along the field, is likely to be cheaper and will be more attractive for pedestrians.

5.2.6 Parking

Additional parking (e.g. for events on the village green) could be provided at parcel #16, the field in front of the church.

There is very little scope to increase the number of parking spaces at the existing small car park behind Loanfoot Cottages (parcel #8)

5.2.7 EV charging, recycling

These two items could be sited together or separately at several sites. Perhaps the most suitable is the Church field (parcel #16), where they could be combined with a new parking area.

There would be plenty of space at Skirling Mill field (parcel #10) although this is some way out from the village.

They could possibly be located on the village green (parcel #6), but this would bring concerns about inappropriate development or in the car-park behind Loanfoot Cottages (parcel #8), but there is very little space here.

5.2.8 Community composting

Potential sites for a community composting project include the Skirling Mill field (parcel #10) and the existing growing site in the village (parcel #17) if community growing is taken forward here, with their relative suitability likely dependent on the nature and scale of the project.

5.2.9 Community growing

It would be possible to develop a community growing project at Skirling Mill field (parcel #10) although if a community growing project is desired then first option should be to discuss / negotiate with the existing growing site in the village (parcel #16).

5.2.10 Biodiversity and wildlife

Environmental enhancements could be taken forward at several sites; unlike, say, the play-park or provision of EV chargers, this is not a decision about selecting the single “best” site.

The greatest scope for biodiversity enhancement is at the Skirling Mill field (parcel #10), which could be developed as a wildlife habitat and informal recreation area, with pond(s), woodland creation, including flowering and fruiting species, wildflower areas etc.

Gallows Knowe Wood, already a haven for wildlife, could be managed with a continuing focus on biodiversity enhancement alongside access and amenity.

5.2.11 Skirling Mill field access

The Skirling Mill field is not currently directly accessible from the A72: some projects could be taken forward with only pedestrian access, but more significant developments require the construction of road access from the A72.

6 Funding and Finance

This chapter includes brief notes on the costs, potential grant funding and other income sources for acquisition, post-acquisition development projects and on-going maintenance and management costs.

A more detailed financial plan will be developed once the preferred options(s) have been agreed.

6.1 Acquisition

It is understood that parcels #1-5 and parcels #6-9 may be gifted to SCDT but that a contribution towards the current landowner's legal fees is expected. SCDT would also incur significant legal fees: the cost of this work generally reflects the complexity of the title, rather than the size of the parcel(s) of land to be transferred.

It is anticipated that parcel #10 will be purchased, rather than gifted, but the basis for the valuation is not known.

No discussions have taken place with respect to possible acquisition costs for parcels #11-17. It should be noted that the proposed tree planting activity on parcel #11 could be taken forward under agreement with Scottish Borders Council, whilst the development of a community growing initiative at parcel #17 would not require purchase of the site.

Funding for acquisition costs may be available from windfarm distribution funds, which might also support some potential development projects as part of the same grant award.

Funding to meet acquisition costs (including legal fees) is available from the Scottish Land Fund (SLF), which has supported a great many community asset acquisitions across Scotland. SLF can also provide small amounts of revenue funding to cover project management and initial costs such as insurance.

6.2 Development Projects

Most development projects will be grant-funded and essentially zero-sum (i.e. the grant funding covers the costs), at least in the short term. This means that, at least in the early stages of project development, whilst it's useful to have an idea of the magnitude of costs of various options, in practice awareness of funding options is more important than precise costings.

It may be possible, and indeed desirable, to combine various elements below into a single project for funding purposes, where the various components meet funders' objectives.

There is a wide range of potential sources of grant funding, some of the most prominent are listed in Appendix 5. The funding environment is dynamic, with existing funds closing and new ones opening on a regular basis, so it is impossible to be certain what funding sources will be available in one or two years' time.

Some projects will incur ongoing costs of insurance and maintenance which will not be covered by the initial grant award; funding options for these are discussed in section 6.3 below.

Many projects will require planning permission from the local authority: this will influence their design and specification, whilst local and national planning policy may bring additional requirements.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ E.g. NPF4 requires that proposals that involve a significant change to existing or the creation of new public open spaces make provision for public art. This has been referenced previously with respect to the play-park, but would be relevant to other projects, notably at Skirling Mill field.

6.2.1 Safeguarding village amenity

Acquiring some or all of the parcels offered to safeguard the amenity of the village, brings no direct development costs, but would incur longer term insurance and maintenance costs (e.g. tree safety surveys and remedial works).

6.2.2 Village enhancement

Planting trees and shrubs and installing new planters is likely to be relatively low cost (and proportional to the scale of the project), especially if the work is undertaken by volunteers. Project should factor in an element of replacement planting to cover initial losses. Similarly, maintenance will be relatively low cost.

This project might be included in a combined acquisition and development bid to windfarm distribution funds, but would not be eligible for SLF revenue funding.

6.2.3 Pavements

Installing new pavements is expensive, but usually undertaken by local authorities, who bear the costs. In 2024 £75,000 was offered by SBC for ~240m⁸¹ of pavement, equivalent to >£300 / linear metre; unit costs can be expected to have risen since.

6.2.4 Play-park

Development and installation costs for play-parks are dependent on size / number of items of equipment but can be substantial, typically in the tens of thousands of pounds. Price is also likely to be dependent on payment terms: the Sovereign Play Ltd quotation for installation was £35,550, paid up front, but £44,546 for a longer term payment plan.

The play-park initiative would probably be taken forward as a standalone project, incorporating installation and any additional costs such as arboricultural work on the trees overhanging the site. Potential funders include Awards for All, Community-Led Local Development Funds and windfarm distributors.⁸²

Several community groups have taken forward play-park projects, including:

- Appin Community Development Trust⁸³ in 2020: total funding ~£42,000, including £10,000 from Awards for All and £17,666 from Argyll and Bute LEADER.
- Stromness Development Trust⁸⁴ in 2021: total funding ~£70,000, support from Orkney LEADER and the local community and businesses.

6.2.5 Circular route

Two possible options were identified for a section of path to facilitate a safer circular route to Gallows Knowe Wood from the village.

Option A creates a new pavement alongside road: SBC usually build pavements but unclear if they would do so here, outside the main village envelope, when a pavement already exists on other side of road. 150m of tar pavement at >£300/m would cost in excess of £45,000.

It would be cheaper to create non-tarred path but an unsurfaced path unlikely to be successful, as it would lay wet and muddy due to surface drainage from the woodland and field above. An unbound

⁸¹ This is length of the “gap” on the western side of the A72, it is unclear whether there were additional works included in the budget.

⁸² NB Funders will require quotes from multiple suppliers.

⁸³ <https://www.appin.scot/projects/playpark>

⁸⁴ <https://stromnessorkney.com/southend-play-park/>

stone surface is possible but would probably still need a kerb and SBC is understood to be unwilling to support non-tarred pavements.

Option B involves a new path cutting through the northern tip of parcel #9 and runs inside field. Costs would be heavily dependent on the specification of the path, but assuming this is of a simple trench, membrane and unbound stone fill construction, approx. 800 – 1000mm wide, then ~145m of path plus stock fence, gates and (probably) finger posts, plus relocation of the water trough might cost in the region of £10,000, although volunteer involvement could reduce costs significantly.

NB Cost estimates draw on the Paths for All Estimating Price Guide.⁸⁵ Walking Scotland (formerly Paths for All) has also published various guidance documents on the design and construction of path and recreation infrastructure.⁸⁶

6.2.6 Parking

The costs of constructing a car park are inevitably related to the total area of parking and access created, and can range from £25 to over £100 per square metre, depending on the surfacing material, site preparation and drainage, and location.

A level site with minimal preparation required will cost less than one that needs significant excavation and grading; whilst drainage provision is critical to maintaining the longevity of the surface.

A variety of surfaces are available. Concrete is expensive but durable and needs the least maintenance. Tarmac is more expensive than gravel to install, but is cheaper to maintain, as gravel will require regular regrading to remove potholes. Alternatively, gravel surfaces can be stabilised by various modular grids.⁸⁷

Optional features, such as lighting, signage, and markings for parking spaces, can enhance the car park's usability and appearance but will increase the overall cost. Local regulations often require car parks to include specific features, e.g. accessible spaces.

6.2.7 EV charging, recycling

SCDT could seek to develop a charging point itself, or engage a private sector business⁸⁸ to develop and manage the process, in return for a royalty.

6.2.8 Community composting

Community composting projects have the following basic cost elements:

- Containers or vessels for composting
- Tool and equipment such as shredders to prepare garden waste.
- Running costs (staff, fuel/electricity, insurance etc.).

Equipment costs vary according to size and type. Simple composting bins cost a few hundred pounds, with insulated vessels more expensive, whilst rotating vessels (using electricity, applying heat etc.) cost several thousands of pounds or more, depending on size. Likewise, shredders could cost in excess of £1,000.

Similarly, running costs might be minimal for a small, volunteer-led, unpowered scheme, but very significant for one with staff and powered equipment.

⁸⁵ <https://walkingscotland.org.uk/resource/path-projects-estimating-price-guide/>

⁸⁶ <https://walkingscotland.org.uk/resource-type/technical-path-advice-guidance/>

⁸⁷ E.g. <https://www.nidagraveluk.co.uk/ocity-pav65-permeable-block-paving-grid-system~851>

⁸⁸ There are various options, e.g. <https://www.scottishpower.co.uk/business/ev-charging/public>

Compost can be sold to local householders to generate long term income, and could supply a community growing project.

6.2.9 Community growing

Setting up a community growing project from scratch (e.g. at the Skirling Mill field) might be expensive, depending on scale, but could be taken forward with funding from a range of sources.

Significant cost elements would include:

- Ground clearance and preparation;
- Polytunnels and/or raised beds plus growing medium;
- Tools and equipment;
- Water supply;
- Comfort facilities.

Developing community growing at the existing growing site would inevitably mean lower initial costs, but also might be harder to fund than a “new” project.

6.2.10 Biodiversity and wildlife

Developing the Skirling Mill field as a wildlife habitat and recreation area could encompass a wide range of different activities (as noted in section 4.5 above), which could be taken forward and funded as part of a large development project, potentially including other projects listed above.

If Gallows Knowe Wood were taken into community ownership and management then a much lower level of input is likely, although again there is a range of possible activities.

In either case a detailed management plan should be developed, outlining preferred activities and operations, which will allow more accurate financial planning. A few potential specific development activities are discussed briefly below.

Volunteer group

SCDT could establish and equip a regular volunteer group to undertake practical management tasks, including:

- Tree planting and maintenance;
- Fence inspection and repair;
- Path maintenance (including control of pathside vegetation);
- Control of invasive species if required;
- Management and enhancement of non-woodland habitats;
- Surveys of woodland and non-woodland habitats.

The volunteer group could also take forward specific projects, such as the installation of benches and a woodland shelter.

Experience from other community woodland groups suggests that establishing standard dates (i.e. same time / day of the week or month) is an effective way of encouraging regular attendance and fostering camaraderie amongst volunteers. Some potential volunteers will prefer weekends and others midweek opportunities: it may take some experimentation to find the most convenient dates for the greatest number of volunteers.

SCDT would need to acquire appropriate tools and personal protective equipment for volunteers, ensure that appropriate insurances are held and risk assessments made and arrange for promotion of opportunities and management and training of volunteers. There are various funding options for volunteer development projects, including the Scottish Forestry Community Fund.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ <https://www.forestry.gov.scot/forests-people/communities/community-fund>

Unserviced shelter

Experience from other community landowners suggests that construction of a simple roofed shelter is an effective means of increasing the recreational and community value of sites, providing a focus for activity as well as a shelter for volunteers and forest school participants during poor weather.

There is a wide range of possible designs and specifications: the expectation is that a shelter at Gallows Knowe would be towards the smaller / simpler end of the scale, potentially utilising timber from the wood. Such an initiative would be best taken forward as standalone project with specific funding, and be designed to minimise ongoing maintenance costs.

Compost toilet

Accessibility of recreation infrastructure and general amenity could be enhanced by installation of a compost toilet to cater for visitors and volunteers. Various designs are available: the NatSol⁹⁰ is widely used, including by a number of community woodland groups such as Evanton and Beechbrae.

6.2.11 Skirling Mill field access

Providing access to the Skirling Mill field from the A72 could incur significant costs. Installing a simple footbridge for pedestrian access would cost a few thousand pounds, whereas a roadway would be tens of thousands and would only be justified as part of a very significant development plan for the field.

6.3 Income for management and maintenance

Covering the longer term management and maintenance costs of assets can often be more challenging for community groups than finding development funding to make the projects happen. Whilst grant funding for development projects may cover such costs for a year or two it is rarely available for the medium or long term.

Key cost elements arising from land ownership are likely to be annual insurance and regular tree safety surveys, plus any necessary remedial work. Some specific development projects, such as a play-park, will bring additional insurance, inspection and maintenance costs.

Community asset-owning groups have used a variety of ways to generate income

6.3.1 Membership fees and donations

SCDT could establish an annual membership fee,⁹¹ or provide simple opportunities such as a donation button on a website for community members and others to donate to support ongoing management.

6.3.2 Business partnerships

Some community groups have established relationships with local businesses. These can take several forms:

- Direct funding from corporate social responsibility funds: many companies have a small grant fund for local charities and community groups and allow employees to decide where the funding goes.
- Free or discounted materials such as stone for paths, timber for construction, etc.
- Sponsorship of specific capital projects.
- Supply of volunteer labour.

⁹⁰ <https://natsol.co.uk/>

⁹¹ The constitution currently says “No membership subscription will be payable” but this could be amended

6.3.3 Fundraising events

Many community groups run successful fundraising events such as annual gala days, ceilidhs, etc. in or around their land and woods.

6.3.4 Income generation from projects

Several of the development projects listed previously have the potential to generate some income to help meet costs and potentially to support other projects: community growing and community composting may generate income from sales whilst EV charging may pay a royalty.

Renewables

Numerous communities around Scotland have developed a variety of renewable energy projects which in some cases generate very significant income streams.

- Huntly Development Trust⁹² is involved in three wind energy projects which generate a steady stream of income that is invested in projects and the running costs of the organisation.
- Mull and Iona Community Trust developed the Garmony Hydro scheme which was completed in 2015 and now donates its net profits to The Waterfall Fund; an independent charity which distributes grants to community projects on Mull and Iona.
- The Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust⁹³ has three hydro schemes, four small wind turbines and a 170kW photovoltaic array which collectively have provided around 95% of the island's electricity since 2008.

Small scale wind or solar generation might be possible at the Skirling Mill field, alternatively SCDT could seek additional land to develop a project. Renewable energy projects require substantial feasibility work, investment capital and long term project development; a considerable proportion of proposed projects do not make it through the planning process.

Tourist accommodation

Various Scottish community groups have developed tourist accommodation provision of a range of types.

- Broadford and Strath Community Company⁹⁴ has developed a campsite with 26 motorhome & caravan pitches with electric hook-ups, 20 terrace tent pitches, and toilets, showers, wash-up and laundry facilities.
- The Knoydart Foundation⁹⁵ owns a bunkhouse with three dorms (26 bed in total) plus a kitchen and separate dining area, as well as showers and toilets.
- Eigg Camping Pods,⁹⁶ which is run by a subsidiary of the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust, has three glamping pods, each sleeping up to four people.

It would be possible to develop tourist accommodation at the Skirling Mill field. Again, significant specific feasibility work, project development and capital investment would be required.

⁹² <https://www.huntlydt.org/what-we-do/energy>

⁹³ <https://isleofeigg.org/eigg-electric/>

⁹⁴ <https://www.broadfordandstrath.org/project/camping-skye/>

⁹⁵ <https://knoydart.org/knoydart-bunkhouse/>

⁹⁶ <https://www.eiggcampingpods.com/>

7 Analysis of Major Risks⁹⁷

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Withdrawal of sale offer(s)	Low	Project cannot proceed	SCDT maintain good relationships with landowners, strong community support etc.
Funding bid for acquisition costs unsuccessful	Low/Medium	Project v unlikely to proceed	High quality application, strong community support
Funding bids for development projects unsuccessful	Low/Medium	Delays, projects unable to proceed	Good quality applications, flexibility, potential resubmission
Lack of community involvement / volunteers	Low/ Medium	Delays in implementation, lack of community commitment or buy-in	Active communications and promotion of opportunities.
Lack of capacity within group / loss of key individuals	Low/ Medium	Delays in implementation, management failures	Robust governance systems, wider networking and support. Keep it fun and interesting for trustees.
Chalara in ash at Gallows Knowe	Medium	Will require additional felling	Very limited mitigation available other than early felling.
Severe windblow at Gallows Knowe	Low	Costs of clear-up, impact on amenity and other projects	Careful management, flexibility if needed. Cash in hand to respond in case of emergency.

Table 4: Major risks and mitigation

8 Abbreviations

CAP	Community Action Plan	SBC	Scottish Borders Council
EV	Electric Vehicle	SCDT	Skirling Community Development Trust
LDP	Local Development Plan	SCIO	Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation
LPID	Land Parcel Identifier	SIMD	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
NPF	National Planning Framework	SLF	Scottish Land Fund
OS	Ordnance Survey		

Table 5: Abbreviations

⁹⁷ The Risk table will be added to once preferred options for acquisition and development are agreed.

Appendix I SCDT Trustee Biographies

Derek Jardine Derek grew up in the village of Roxburgh, a close-knit rural community much like Skirling. After moving to Edinburgh for university, he gained broad professional experience across hospitality, advertising, and sales before beginning a career in banking in 2012. He has remained in the sector ever since and currently serves as a Bank Manager in Motherwell. Alongside his professional role, Derek is an active member of the Skirling Hall Committee. He acts as an important link between the Trust and the Hall, helping to support collaboration and community engagement.

Isobel Hunter has many years of experience in investment from her time working in the Financial Sector in Edinburgh. She also has a deep knowledge of hospitality since moving to Skirling to create Skirling House, a bed and breakfast inn with her husband. Now retired she is involved with several local community groups.

Dorota Donigiewicz (Chair) has worked in Financial services for the past 15 years and she moved to Skirling with her family in July 2024. She is a member of the Biggar Rugby Club, and enjoys singing with the Wednesdays, a local community choir.

Mike Thompson (Treasurer) Mike has been a resident of Skirling for over 20 years. He is a retired Chartered Surveyor having spent 35 years as a rural property manager and has broad experience of agricultural, residential, forestry and commercial property. He currently runs a small market garden business located in the village.

Andrew Fraser is a retired public health physician, working as a Director of a series of Scottish public sector organisations including Government. He remains involved with several voluntary organisations supporting groups across Scotland. Married to Barbara, who began life close to the village, he has lived in Skirling for 7 years.

David Gass (Secretary) David runs his own business consultancy, and was previously a Senior Director for Scottish Enterprise, responsible for operations in the South of Scotland. He specialises in strategy development, business planning, and Board development, and he currently works across Scotland and internationally.

Mark Bambridge Mark spent his career in the international oil and gas industry with BP, BG and Shell. An experienced Procurement/Supply Chain manager, he and his family spent time in Alaska, Azerbaijan, Trinidad, Australia and Aberdeen.

Appendix 2 Historic sites in and around Skirling

Listed Buildings

LB13865	C	Galalaw farmhouse	https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB13865
LB13864	C	Howes Brae farmhouse	https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB13864
LB15159	B	War Memorial	https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB15159
LB15160	C	Kirkcroft	https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB15160
LB15158	C	Former U.F. church	https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB15158
LB15161	B	Leven cottage and Loanfoot	https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB15161
LB19720	C	Former school and school house	https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB19720
LB15157	C	Small bridge at former school	https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB15157
LB15154	B	Churchyard entrance gate	https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB15154
LB15153	B	Skirling parish church	https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB15153
LB15155	B	Churchyard, minister's gate	https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB15155
LB15184	C	Cottages on E side of Skirling Green	https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB15184
LB15185	C	House on east side of Skirling Green	https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB15185
LB15186	C	Joiner's shop and store	https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB15186
LB15187	C	Firknowe farm	https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB15187
LB15188	B	Skirling House	https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB15188
LB15189	B	Sundials, in garden of Skirling House	https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB15189
LB15156	B	Manse	https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB15156

Other recorded historic sites

263500	Skirling, 2 Bank Cottages	https://www.trove.scot/place/263500
97981	Skirling, 1 Bank Cottages	https://www.trove.scot/place/97981
48626	Skirling, Smithy	https://www.trove.scot/place/48626
97988	Skirling, Rose Cottage	https://www.trove.scot/place/97988
263504	Skirling, Lauder Cottage	https://www.trove.scot/place/263504
263505	Skirling, Greenview	https://www.trove.scot/place/263505
97983	Skirling, The Green	https://www.trove.scot/place/97983
344221	House	https://www.trove.scot/place/344221
99106	Skirling House, Garden	https://www.trove.scot/place/99106
99104	Skirling Parish Church, Graveyard	https://www.trove.scot/place/99104
354208	Skirling Mill	https://www.trove.scot/place/354208
344212	Skirling House - carved stone	https://www.trove.scot/place/344212
344222	Howesbrae Farmhouse	https://www.trove.scot/place/344222
344219	Skirling Manse	https://www.trove.scot/place/344219

Appendix 3 SBC Local Development Plan Policies

Policy EP9: Conservation Areas

The Council will support development proposals within or adjacent to a Conservation Area which are located and designed to preserve or enhance the special architectural or historic character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This should accord with the scale, proportions, alignment, density, materials, and boundary treatment of nearby buildings, open spaces, vistas, gardens and landscapes. The Council may require applications for full, as opposed to Planning Permission in Principle Consent.

Conservation Area Consent, which is required for the demolition of an unlisted building within a Conservation Area, will only be considered in the context of appropriate proposals for redevelopment and will only be permitted where: a) the building is incapable of reasonably beneficial use by virtue of its location, physical form or state of disrepair, and b) the structural condition of the building is such that it cannot be adapted to accommodate alterations or extensions without material loss to its character, and c) the proposal will preserve or enhance the Conservation Area, either individually or as part of the townscape.

In cases a) to c) above, demolition will not be permitted to proceed until acceptable alternative treatment of the site has been approved and a contract for the replacement building or for an alternative means of treating the cleared site has been agreed. Design Statements will be required for all applications for alterations, extensions, or for demolition and replacement which should explain and illustrate the design principles and design concepts of the proposals.

Policy EPI I: Protection of Greenspace

(a) Key Greenspaces

Key Greenspaces as identified on Proposal Maps will be protected from development that will result in their loss. Development that protects and enhances the quality of Key Greenspaces will be supported.

(B) Other Greenspaces

Greenspace within the Development Boundary of settlements will be protected from development where this can be justified by reference to any of the following: a) the environmental, social or economic value of the greenspace; b) the role that the greenspace plays in defining the landscape and townscape structure and identity of the settlement; c) the function that the greenspace serves.

In both cases development that would result in the loss of greenspace, including outdoor sports facilities, will only be permitted if it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that, based on consultation with user groups and advice from relevant agencies: d) there is social, economic and community justification for the loss of the open space; or e) the need for the development is judged to outweigh the need to retain the open space; and f) where appropriate, comparable open space or enhancement of existing open space may be provided and/or paid for by the developer at an alternative location within or immediately adjacent to the settlement where this will provide adequate and acceptable replacement for the open space lost as a result of the development. In some cases, recreational provision in the form of indoor sports facilities may be a suitable alternative provided it is equally accessible and is judged to compensate fully for the loss of the open space resource. Development that would result in the loss of functional open space where a quantifiable demand can be demonstrated must in addition be justified by reference to: g) the levels of existing provision and predicted requirements for the settlement; h) the extent to which current or predicted future demand can be met on a reduced area.

Appendix 4 Skirling Community Action Plan Priorities and Actions

Themes and Priorities		Actions	
1	Safe Skirling: traffic, pavements and roads		
1A	Traffic calming and speed restrictions	1A1	Support and continue work to develop village gateways and other traffic calming measures.
		1A2	Continue to lobby Council for additional measures: Dragon's teeth, Roundels, Countdown signs for 40mph, advisory cycle lanes.
		1A3	Monitor effectiveness of existing speed reductions
		1A4	Lobby for uniform speed limit (20 or 30mph?) throughout the whole village.
1B	Village pavements and roads	1B1	Develop plans for pavements/safe routes from the top of the village down to the village hall and church
		1B2	Improve path out to Skirling Mill
		1B3	Improve road around the village green
2	Well connected Skirling: improving access		
2A	Develop and improve path links to Biggar and Broughton	2A1	Improve existing path to Broughton
		2A2	Research and develop safe all abilities path/ route into Biggar
2B	Better bus services/ community transport	2B1	Try to improve bus services in the area
		2B2	Explore with other communities the need for a community bus that could link a number of villages in the area to services and amenities in nearby towns.
2C	Improve access to health, education, childcare and other services	2C1	Document and represent issues raised by local residents
		2C2	Ongoing dialogue with service providers/local authorities/health boards to improve service delivery
		2C3	Lobby to maintain Broughton Primary School – increased teachers, wrap around childcare
		2C4	Encourage and support other childminders in the village once Katy retires!
2D	Improve broadband speed/mobile signal	2D1	Document current issues, weaknesses and gaps in existing provision and lobby for change.
2E	Partnership working with other communities in Upper Tweeddale and beyond	2E1	Support and continue to develop links with other neighbouring communities
		2E2	Make joint representation on service delivery and joint action on projects, and sharing ideas, information and resources.
3	Skirling Community Life		
3A	Village hall and church	3A1	Support ongoing plans for improvements to Village Hall and Church that will help with energy efficiency, community use, storage and parking.

3B	Play area and picnic area	3B1	Agree best site and most suitable design – building on the existing plans and funding efforts
		3B2	Work to develop the play and picnic area.
3C	Activities and events	3C1	Look at ideas raised in the CAP community survey, stakeholders’ conversations and event - and the best way to take them forward.
3D	Local amenities and hospitality	3D1	Explore how other small communities have opened up and run small occasional shops/cafes/markets/pubs in their village halls, greens or churches
		3D2	Build on existing initiatives and resources (local produce at hall, links with Broughton Community Shop, individual skills and interest locally)
		3D3	Trial/pilot some experiments.
4 Environment and Heritage			
4A	Local path networks	4A1	Produce small map and information about local walks
		4A2	Improve existing paths e.g., to Broughton
		4A3	Investigate how paths/routes can be expanded to link to other paths networks and places e.g., in Biggar.
		4A4	Develop, sign and promote a circular walk for the village.
4B	Biodiversity and wildlife	4B1	Involve people in study, enjoyment and enhancement of local biodiversity and wildlife.
4C	Village enhancement	4C1	Continue programme of village enhancement
		4C2	Look at how planting can be linked to productive growing
		4C3	Look at how planting can help with the development of ‘gateways’ at village limits.
4D	Community growing	4D1	Explore how other communities have developed community gardens and orchards and productive growing in ‘gap’ sites.
		4D2	Identify and progress opportunities for community growing in Skirling.
4E	Promoting and enhancing local heritage	4E1	Continue to provide information, interpretation and signage of local heritage
		4E2	Explore how Tweedsmuir and others have been developing eco-museums.
5 Sustainable and Resilient Skirling			
5A	Flood prevention	5A1	Monitoring and maintaining Burn – and making improvements as required to reduce flooding risk.
5B	Recycling	5B1	Improve recycling facilities
		5B2	Look at ways of developing community composting.
5C	Reducing fossil fuel use	5C1	Support increased energy efficiency and renewable energy sources in houses, village hall and church
		5C2	Support use of Electric Vehicles
		5C3	Explore opportunities for community renewables.

Appendix 5 Potential funders for SCDT projects

There is a wide range of potential funders for SCDT's proposed projects. Some of the key funders are highlighted below.

This section notes some of the larger or more obvious funders but is not intended to provide comprehensive coverage of a dynamic funding environment. Some funds are on-going, others annual, with relatively limited application windows, so not all are open to new applications at time of writing.

Several community intermediary bodies, including the Development Trusts Association Scotland and the Community Woodlands Association maintain funding webpages⁹⁸ and/or issue regular e-bulletins with funding news and updates.

Scottish Land Fund⁹⁹

The Scottish Land Fund (SLF) supports communities to become more resilient and sustainable through the ownership and management of land and land assets.

Stage 1 Technical assistance funding is available to help eligible community groups prepare to purchase an asset. These grants are normally between £2,500 and £30,000 and can fund specialist advice and/or professional fees including the preparation of feasibility studies and business plans, valuations and surveys as well as some costs towards community engagement.

Stage 2 grants can fund capital and some revenue costs associated with the acquisition of assets. The indicative minimum amount for stage 2 SLF acquisition grants is £5,000, and the maximum grant is £1,000,000. SLF will also fund reasonable professional, title mapping and legal fees associated with the purchase.

“Capital costs” means a grant towards the value of the land, land assets and buildings as determined by an independent open market valuation, which must be current, i.e. less than 6 months old. The purchase price may be higher than this. SLF can contribute up to 95% of the market value, so a minimum of 5% of the funding must come from other sources: this could include other funders, community shares, a negotiated discount on the valuation, or the community's own fundraising. Communities can usually also request a small amount of initial post-acquisition revenue funding.

Scottish Borders Council Community-Led Local Development Funding¹⁰⁰

Community Led Local Development funding is the successor fund for LEADER, which delivered support for rural development through implementing Local Development Strategies and was aimed primarily at small and medium sized community driven projects.

SSE Clyde Borders Community Fund¹⁰¹

The SSE Clyde Borders Community Fund makes around £150,000 per year available for community and charitable projects. It can support projects which:

- enhance quality of life for local residents;
- contribute to vibrant, healthy, successful and sustainable communities;
- promote community spirit and encourage community activity.

Projects in the Upper Tweed, Tweedsmuir and Skirling community council areas can apply. Groups must be constituted and not for individual profit but are not required to be charities.

⁹⁸ <https://www.communitywoods.org/current-funding-opportunities>

⁹⁹ <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/scottish-land-fund>

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/download/1695/community-led-local-development-clld-fund-2025-26>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.sserenewables.com/communities/community-fund-locations/great-britain/clyde-borders/>

SSE Sustainable Development Fund¹⁰²

The SSE Sustainable Development Fund operates in addition to local community funds and supports strategic projects in the regions where SSE Renewables is operating. The fund, which is directed to projects that can achieve significant impact, is estimated to be worth over £57 million over the next 25 years.

Ventient Nadara Glenkerie Wind Farm Community Fund¹⁰³

The Ventient Nadara Glenkerie Wind Farm Community Fund supports community projects benefiting those living within 15km of the Glenkerie Wind Farm. Although priority is given to applications from communities within 10km of the wind farm (which includes Tweedsmuir, Broughton, Drumelzier and Coulter) other communities within the 15km radius are eligible to apply including Stobo, Biggar, Symington, Robertson, Lamington, Wiston and Skirling.

National Lottery Awards for All Scotland¹⁰⁴

Awards for All Scotland supports community-led projects that:

- bring people together to build strong relationships in and across communities;
- improve the places and spaces that matter to communities;
- help more people to reach their potential, by supporting them at the earliest possible stage;
- support people, communities and organisations facing more demands and challenges because of the cost-of-living crisis.

Awards for All Scotland offers funding from £300 to £20,000 and can support projects for up to 2 years. Funding can be to deliver a new or existing activity or to support an organisation to change and adapt to new and future challenges.

National Lottery Community Action¹⁰⁵

The Community Action fund offers up to £250,000 for up to five years for projects that are open, inclusive and led by their community, and which will achieve at least two of the following outcomes:

- build positive relationships;
- support people's health or wellbeing;
- help people improve their access and connection to nature;
- make a positive difference to the environment.

Community Action can fund up to £50,000 of capital costs, and can support indirect project costs such as organisational overheads.

SEPA Scottish Landfill Communities Fund¹⁰⁶

The Scottish Landfill Communities Fund (SLCF) is a tax credit scheme, linked to Scottish Landfill Tax that encourages landfill site operators to provide contributions to Approved Bodies, who can then pass the funds onto community and environmental projects. There are 6 potential objectives of funding:

- A: Land Reclamation and Restoration
- B: Community Recycling and Waste Prevention
- C: Public Parks and Amenities
- D: Biodiversity Conservation
- E: Restoration of Historic or Religious Buildings

¹⁰² <https://www.sserenewables.com/communities/sustainable-development-fund/>

¹⁰³ <https://www.foundationscotland.org.uk/glenkerie>

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/national-lottery-awards-for-all-scotland>

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/community-action>

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.sepa.org.uk/environment/waste/scottish-landfill-communities-fund/>

F: Administrative Support for Projects

Projects under Objects C, D & E are usually only eligible for funding if the project site is within 10 miles of a landfill site or transfer station. Gallows Knowe Wood is just under 12 miles from the Eshiels Waste Transfer station.¹⁰⁷

NB The Scottish Government recently announced that there will be no further contributions to the SLCF beyond 31 March 2026. Approved Bodies, who distribute SLCF funds to projects, will have up to two financial years to pass on their remaining funds to projects, until March 2028. Once these funds are allocated, the fund will close permanently.

Scottish Forestry Community Fund¹⁰⁸

The Scottish Forestry Community Fund supports groups and organisations that encourage people to use woods more. Eligible projects include activities associated with woodland-based:

- school care clubs and play schemes;
- schemes that promote physical activity such as walking, safe routes to school, natural play and adventure play;
- volunteer group establishment and the induction of volunteers;
- volunteering facilitation focused on skills training, health improvement and community development;
- projects promoting Gaelic.

Walking Scotland (formerly Paths for all)

Walking Scotland's Ian Findlay Path Fund¹⁰⁹ is now in its fourth and final year, it is not known if there will be a replacement fund.

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation¹¹⁰

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation aims to improve the quality of life for people and communities throughout the UK both now and in the future. It is one of the largest independent grant-makers in the UK and supports a wide range of work within the arts, children and young people, the environment and social change.

The Robertson Trust¹¹¹

The Robertson Trust funds and supports charitable organisations of all sizes who are committed to achieving positive change for individuals and communities across Scotland.

Other potential charitable funders include:

- **The Henry Smith Charity** <https://www.henrysmithcharity.org.uk/>
- **The Dulverton Trust** <https://www.dulverton.org/>
- **The Mickel Fund** <http://www.mickelfund.org.uk/>
- **The Weir Charitable Trust** <https://weircharitabletrust.com/>
- **The Schroder Charity Trust** <https://schrodercharitytrust.org/>
- **The Mushroom Trust** <https://mushroomtrust.com/>
- **The Matthew Good Foundation** <https://www.matthewgoodfoundation.org/amplify-fund-grants-for-good/>
- **The Pebble Trust** <http://www.thepebbletrust.org/>
- **The Foyle Foundation** <https://foylefoundation.org.uk/>

¹⁰⁷ <https://informatics.sepa.org.uk/ScottishLandfillCommunity/>

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.forestry.gov.scot/forests-people/communities/community-fund>

¹⁰⁹ <https://walkingscotland.org.uk/our-work/path-funding/>

¹¹⁰ <https://www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk/>

¹¹¹ <https://www.therobertsontrust.org.uk/>

SafeDeposits Scotland Community Fund¹¹²

The SafeDeposits Scotland Community Fund will award grants up to a maximum value of £5,000 to organisations who commit to deliver a project that meets at least one of five criteria, namely:

- Sustainability and the environment
- Employability and career skills
- Social inclusion
- Technology and digital inclusion
- Improving the local community

Co-op Local Community Fund¹¹³

The Co-op Local Community Fund supports projects in its members' communities that provide access to opportunities and resources to help people thrive in one of the following ways:

- enables people to access food
- creates opportunities for young people
- improves people's mental wellbeing
- promotes community cohesion
- builds sustainable futures

Several other retailers run small grant schemes, including:

Morrison Foundation <https://www.morrisonfoundation.com/grant-funding-request/>

ASDA Foundation <https://asdafoundation.org/our-grants/>

¹¹² <https://safedepositsscotland.com/community-fund>

¹¹³ <https://causes.coop.co.uk/>