

**Minutes of the Gifford Community Council Meeting
held on 9th June 2025 at Gifford Bowling Club**

Participating Adam White (Chair), Richard Austin, Paul Smith, Dave Griffiths, Wendy Ferguson and Jill Hyslop

In Attendance Councillor John McMillan, Councillor Tom Trotter, Councillor Shamin Akhtar, Mandy Harrington (VCEL) and 7 local residents

Apologies Eleanor Hulme, Nev Kilkenny, Alan Fortune and Councillor George McGuire

1 Minutes of last meeting

The meeting approved the minutes of 12th May 2025 (proposed by Wendy and seconded by Dave).

2 Items completed since last meeting

Nothing to report.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Thermal Imaging Surveys

Adam, Richard, Paul Smith, Paul Hurd and Dougal volunteered to be trained to use the thermal imaging camera. Jill to contact Andy Crick about the training. The East Lothian Climate Hub might be able to cover the cost. Jill will also ask Andy Duncan if the Garvald/Morham project included any council housing to find out how recommendations from the survey were dealt with. **ACTION: JH**

3.2 Renewable Energy Projects

Borders Council have decided not to object to the Dunside windfarm application. This will feed into the Energy Consents Unit's decision making process. See planning report for current status of other renewables projects. Paul Hurd asked whether solar panels were now 'permitted development'. Councillor McMillan offered to check this with the council.

3.3 Smart Meter Connectivity

Several local residents are pursuing requests for cellular hubs. Currently these need to be approved by the DCC on a case-by-case basis. Richard will write to Douglas Alexander MP, asking for help to make this known solution easier and faster to implement. Garvald and Morham CC and Humbie CC are also looking at this issue. Richard to speak to Gary Macgregor. Noted that a local resident was able to get their smart meter to work using their home wifi. **ACTION: RA**

3.4 Graveyard extension

No update since last month. The matter is currently with SEPA who are assessing the site. This is a 2-year process.

3.5 Village businesses

The Premier store's licence application has been granted by East Lothian Council. The store owner and agent will be invited to the August meeting to engage with local residents and rebuild relations. **ACTION: JH**

Nothing was known about the Goblin Ha'.

3.6 Airfield Memorial Plaque

Jill had written to the airfield trust to ask whether the airfield was ever used. They replied to say that the airfield is documented in the National Archives as an airfield and should be commemorated on that basis. Dave visited the site and was concerned that it is difficult to access and there is nothing to see. The meeting decided that the plaque should be sited in the village. Wendy will put the plaque in the churchyard where people can view it and think about the best location. **ACTION: WF**

3.8 Fire Safety

The issues relating to the maintenance of the Fire Hydrant signs on the streets adjacent to the woods have been logged on the Scottish Fire Service website. The suggested fire safety improvements raised at last month's meeting will be considered by the woods.

4.1 Police

Between 1st – 31st May 2025 there were 7 calls to the area, which resulted in the police recording 5 crimes: 1 x antisocial behaviour, 1 x crime of dishonesty and 3 x road safety. There was another

‘Coffee with a Cop’ session in Lanterne Rouge on 20th May. These are informal drop-ins to give residents an opportunity to speak to the community police officer.

4.2 Yester Estate

No update.

4.3 Gifford Community Woodland

The woods AGM is booked for Sunday 24th Aug in the Village Hall 4 - 6pm. For details of all events and volunteer days, please visit: <https://giffordcommunitywoodland.com/events/>

4.4 East Lothian Council

ELC is consulting on changes to parking in Haddington. Details of the consultation and a survey being run by Haddington & District CC have been shared locally.

Councillor McMillan was pleased to share the news that Adam won the ‘Community Champion’ Award at the East Lothian Courier’s Community Champion Awards 2025. The meeting congratulated Adam, who thanked all the volunteers who support community initiatives.

Councillor Akhtar had visited the 2-acre community farm at Tynninghame (a CIC incorporated in 2023). Gifford residents interested in this concept can speak to volunteers at Tynninghame for information. Information is also available from the East Lothian Food Growers Collective (see <https://eastlothianclimatehub.org/food-collective-action/>.)

Yester Primary School Parent Council held its AGM recently. A number of changes have been implemented at the school recently. If parents/carers have any queries, they should contact the Acting Head Teacher, Mr Orr, or they can contact a local councillor who will direct their query to the best person.

5 Internal Reports

5.1 Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs)

Eleanor reported before the meeting that the AEDs at the Garage and the Bowling Club have been checked and are working. Eleanor is waiting to hear back from Yester Estate about their defibs. Wendy is looking at the approximate cost of an AED and cabinet for the phone box at Longnewton, so that a funding application can be made. **(ACTION: WF)**

5.2 Roads and Footpaths

Bablins Wynd will be shut for one week from Thursday 26th June. Scottish Power is laying new cables at Park Road.

5.3 Lighting, Drains and Signs

When verges are being cut, the foliage directly around signs and lampposts is left, as this needs to be done by hand. Some lampposts and signs are becoming obscured and Dave asked who was responsible for this. *After the meeting, Alan Stubbs confirmed that the responsibility for cutting back hedges/vegetation on a public road falls on the landowner of the land where the hedge/vegetation is situated. Specifically, landowners are required to prevent hedges/vegetation from overhanging the road, obscuring streetlights or road signs, and to clear debris after cutting. East Lothian Council as the Roads Authority is responsible for maintaining the road verges and they cut the road verges two or three times per year, in order to define the road edge, but only the first metre of verge is cut. The contractor used to cut the road verge will not be the same person cutting/trimming back vegetation around a sign/lighting column. ELC will look at the specific locations Dave has raised.*

5.4 Planning

Please see attached report for planning applications within and outwith GCC Area.

5.5 Finance

Wendy was pleased to report that CC has received its annual grant (£2,089) from ELC. Wendy asked for approval to make two donations: (1) £110 to Gifford Community Association (which runs the Village Hall) to cover the cost of the licence needed to screen the recent Grease sing-along event; and (2) £250 towards the cost of a fundraising ceilidh being run by the village hall team. It is hoped this

will become an annual fundraising event. The meeting approved both these donations. NB The Village Hall will be closed throughout July for maintenance work.

5.6 Resilience

Soup & Smile is on hold over the summer, but will re-start in autumn. Fish & chips is still being delivered on the last Friday of each month. 25 people attended this month's Lunch Club. Wendy spoke about a new resilience idea being considered which could help people enjoy some 'pet company' in circumstances where they are no who are no longer able to keep their own pet. The idea is at an early stage.

6 Correspondence

6.1 ScotWays Renewal

The meeting approved this annual renewal. ScotWays (The Scottish Rights of Way and Access Charity) is the independent charity which upholds and promotes public access rights in Scotland.

6.2 East Lothian Partnership - Local Outcome Improvement Plan

East Lothian Partnership are developing their new Local Outcomes Improvement Plan. Local opinions can still be fed into this plan until the end of June.

6.3 East Lothian Open Space Strategy

ELC has launched a consultation on the Draft East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2025. Details of the consultation, which closes on 16th July, have been shared locally.

7. AOB

The meeting thanked Rita Buchan, James and Charlotte Gibson for their beautiful work on the planters at the entrances to the village. Jill to arrange thank you cards (and to check if anyone else should be thanked).

Date of next meeting: Monday 11th August (NB THERE IS NO JULY MEETING)

APPLICATIONS WITHIN GCC AREA

	Date Validated	GCC first discussed	Comments	Status
25/00402/CLU Certificate of lawfulness for an existing use - Domestic garden ground The Heddle The Square Gifford Haddington EH41 4QJ	17/04/25	May 2025	Change of use of the whole of the grassed paddock field behind The Heddle (overlooking the Bowling Club) to domestic garden ground, based upon its use as such for the past 10 years. Reference also the approved application 21/00615/P of July 2021 for erection of a summerhouse and change of use for a small part of the field.	Awaiting decision
25/00257/P Extension to house Lime Grove High Street Gifford East Lothian EH41 4QU	14/03/25	Apr 2025	Single storey 2m extension to rear, clad in weathered larch.	Approved
25/00219/P Replacement doors 5 Walden Place Gifford East Lothian EH41 4RA	17/03/25	Apr 2025	Replacement of front and rear doors in similar style and colour.	Approved
25/00098/P Conversion of derelict farm buildings to form a short term holiday let Skedsbush Farm Yester Gifford East Lothian	06/02/25	Feb 2025	Conversion of derelict farm buildings to create a two-bedroom holiday let.	Awaiting decision. Determination date has been extended to allow drawings to be amended and submission of an Ecological Survey.
24/01273/P Change of use of grass verge to form vehicular access and agricultural land for the siting of 4 glamping units for holiday let and associated works Land South East Of Redshill Farm Gifford East Lothian	18/12/24	Jan 2025	Off-grid glamping development comprising four re-purposed horse lorries at land south of Redshill Farm. Application includes details of improved access from the public road and the proposed drainage provision.	Approved, subject to use only as holiday accommodation and submission of a landscaping plan.

APPLICATIONS OUTWITH GCC AREA

None

OTHER PLANNING MATTERS

Newlands Hill Wind Energy Hub (Belltown Power)

The S36 application for the Newlands Hill project was submitted in November 2023 and is under consideration by the Energy Consents Unit (ECU). The full application is available on the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit website www.energyconsents.scot, reference ECU00004603.

On 3rd September 2024 the East Lothian Planning Committee met to discuss the report prepared by their Planning Department into the proposals. This report recommended that East Lothian Council should object to the granting of consent for reasons of adverse landscape and visual impact, adverse impact on the historic environment, adverse impact on the mountain hare population, impact on core paths and unacceptable access route for exceptional loads during construction. The Planning Committee voted to accept the report in full as East Lothian Council's consultation response to the ECU. Given the fundamental conclusions of the report, it seems unlikely that any modifications to the development scheme would be sufficient to cause ELC to withdraw its objection. In the event that the ECU wishes to grant consent against the recommendation of ELC, then the matter may be determined by a Public Inquiry.

The earliest Belltown expect a decision from ECU is mid 2025 and this would slip considerably if a Public Inquiry were to be called. As previously advised, GCC have been told by the ECU that public representations, either for or against the development, will be considered right up until the point at which a decision is made.

A consultation event was held in the Village Hall on 4th October 2024 on behalf of SP Energy Networks regarding the grid connection from Newlands Hill to the Fallago Rig substation. This would be a 132kV connection over approximately 6km, supported on 'double H' wood poles. The poster boards from this event can be viewed at <https://www.spenergynetworks.co.uk/userfiles/file/Newlands-Hill-Wind-Energy-Hub-132kV-Connection-Project-I-Consultation-Board.pdf>. Presumably, the grid connection would not be required were the Newlands Hill Wind Energy Hub not be consented.

Dunside Wind Farm (EDF)

Proposals were submitted to Scottish Government in July 2023 and are being considered. The full application is available on the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit website, reference ECU00003436. On 7th August, EDF submitted supplementary environmental information based upon feedback from consultees. This information can be viewed on the ECU website and the EDF project site. The application is being considered by Borders Council Planning Committee on 2nd June and their recommendations will feed into the Energy Consents Unit's decision.

Crystal Rig Wind Farm (Fred Olsen Renewables)

Crystal Rig Solar. Plans for this solar array within the existing Crystal Rig windfarm have now been submitted to the Energy Consents unit and can be viewed under application reference ECU00004759. All information, including additional submissions made on 8th April, is also available on the project website at www.crystalrigwindfarm.com.

Crystal Rig I Repower. The earliest phase of Crystal Rig has been operational for over 20 years and the operator is now exploring the opportunity to repower the site and use better, more modern technology. The existing Crystal Rig I wind farm comprises 25 turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 100m and the proposed repowering would involve replacing them with up to 10 much larger turbines each with a tip height of up to 250m. An Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report has been submitted to ECU (application ECU00005089).

Crystal Rig IV Construction. In 2021 the developer was granted consent for an 11 turbine extension to Crystal Rig. Construction of this extension will start soon.

Longcroft Wind Farm (Renewable Energy Systems)

This proposed development of 24 turbines would be approximately 9km north of Lauder in the Scottish Borders, lying to the south west of the existing Fallago Rig Wind Farm and to the west of the proposed Dunside Wind Farm. The northern edge of the development is some 15km south of Gifford. Project website is www.longcroft-windfarm.co.uk. The full application is available on the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit website, reference ECU00004774.