

**Minutes of the Gifford Community Council Meeting
held on 12th May 2025 at Gifford Bowling Club**

Participating Adam White (Chair), Eleanor Hulme, Richard Austin, Alan Fortune, Dave Griffiths
Nev Kilkenny, Wendy Ferguson and Jill Hyslop

In Attendance Councillor John McMillan, Councillor Tom Trotter, Councillor Shamin Akhtar, Andy
Duncan and 6 local residents

Apologies Paul Smith, Councillor George McGuire and Mandy Harrington (VCEL)

1 Minutes of last meeting

The meeting approved the minutes of 14th April 2025 (proposed by Alan and seconded by Richard).

2 Items completed since last meeting

- Eleanor has put up a sign on the outside fence at the bowling club to highlight the location of the defibrillator.
- Adam thanked Paul Hurd for continuing to water the new trees that were planted in front of the Tweeddale Arms.
- The council has removed the damaged tree from the grassed area at Park Crescent.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Thermal Imaging Surveys

Andy Scott joined the meeting to talk about a project that has been running in Garvald to help people improve their energy efficiency by using a thermal imaging camera supplied by the East Lothian Climate Hub. The project was run by volunteers who received training on how to use the camera. They sent fliers to residents and advertised on facebook. People could either use the camera themselves or get one of the volunteers to do a survey. The images show where heat is being lost. It is then up to the homeowner to decide if they want to arrange for any retrofitting to be done. Planning restrictions may apply. Adam would like Gifford CC to run a similar project locally. The first steps will be to put together a volunteer group and arrange training. Andy will pass on contact details for Tim Crick who may be able to do the training.

3.2 Renewable Energy Projects

The Dunside application is being considered by Borders Council Planning Committee on 2nd June and their recommendations will feed into the Energy Consents Unit's decision. See planning report for current status of other renewables projects. Adam has been told by EDF that the Dunside community benefit fund will not need match funding.

3.3 Smart Meter Connectivity

Local resident John Scott has received a reply from the Ombudsman. As a result, Octopus has requested permission from the DCC to fit a cellular hub at his property. If that request is successful, Richard suggested that CC should speak to our local MSPs and ELC's Billy Agnew to push for the introduction of a standard procedure which will enable residents to request cellular hubs without having to resort to the Ombudsman.

3.4 Graveyard extension

No update since last month.

3.5 Village businesses

The store's licence application will be held this month. CC agreed to contact Premier HQ to ask for confirmation of the leaseholder for the Gifford store. Rumours have been spreading about a change in leaseholder, which is further reducing consumer confidence. It was suggested that a Premier representative should be invited to visit the store.

3.6 Airfield Memorial Plaque

Jill wrote to the airfield trust asking for details about whether the airfield was used, but hasn't received a reply yet. Doubts were expressed about whether the plaque should be sited at the field, if it was never used. To be discussed further once we hear back from the charity.

3.7 Taxi Fare Increases

Local residents have expressed concerned about proposed taxi fare increases reported in the local press. ELC is currently reviewing the fare and will be inviting feedback. Jill to get details from the council to share on our facebook page. **ACTION: JH**

3.8 Fire Safety

Paul Hurd met with a member of the Scottish Fire Service. They were offering fire safety advice and, in view of the current risk of wildfires, Paul invited them to walk round the community woods. Paul passed on details from the meeting.

- Fire Hydrant Signs. As none of the natural water sources in the woods would be sufficient for tackling a fire, the fire service would need to connect to mains water. There are several hydrants on Tweeddale Grove and Tweeddale Avenue. Some of the signs highlighting the locations have, over time, become hidden by garden foliage. The fire service has a log of hydrant locations, but the signage could still be useful and should be clear and maintained. There were no obvious hydrant signs in the part of Station Road within the woods and this should be investigated in case signs have been lost. CC will speak to neighbours about clearing garden material from signs. Jill to speak to Scottish Water about cleaning and maintenance of the signs. **ACTION: JH**
- Fire Engine access. There is a new type of fire engine based at Musselburgh which can access more difficult areas. It would be useful to find out if it would be able to get over the bridges to access the woods.
- Suggested fire safety improvements. The fire service suggested 4 things that could improve woodland fire safety: (1) Fire safety signs; (2) Fire beaters; (3) Potentially creating a more substantial stone/metal firepit and clearing any combustible material; (4) having a water container at the firepit. It was suggested that the community orchard IBC could be moved.

Paul has drafted a letter of thanks to the Fire Service, which will be signed on behalf of Community Council and the Community Woods. CC thanked Paul.

4. External Reports

4.1 Police

Between 1st – 30th April 2025 there were 10 calls to the area, with no crimes were recorded. PC Marco Crolla will be in Lanterne Rouge on Tuesday 20th May 10am – 11am for a second ‘coffee with a cop’ drop-in session. *(After the meeting PC Edmond confirmed that only 1 person came to the 1st drop-in, but PC Edmond also spoke to a number of customers already in the café.)* Nev agreed to join the next CAPP meeting, also on Tuesday 20th May. Adam to pass details to Nev.

4.2 Yester Estate

No update.

4.3 Gifford Community Woodland

A Forest Church was held in the woods on 2nd May. Forest School sessions have re-started with children at Yester P2 and other groups. There have been volunteer days for tree weeding and Nev was pleased to report on the good success rate of new trees. Future volunteer days will cover some work to tackle rhododendron re-growth before moving onto wood fuel. The woods have received funding from Loganair’s Greens Skies Fund, which will be used to clear an area ready for replanting. A Forest Therapy session is running on 26th May. Ben and Alison Avery will be doing a guided botanical walk around the woods. They would like to gather input from the community as part of the event, which will feed into the woodland plan. Details of all events and volunteer dates can be found at: www.giffordcommunitywoodland.com/events

4.4 East Lothian Council

Colin Boyd, formerly the Community Police Officer for Gifford, has taken on a new role as a Community Protection Officer. Yester Primary Parent Council would like to recruit a community rep. Previously a member of community council has taken on this role. The Area Partnership AGM will take place on Thursday 15th May. The council has adopted a new Climate Change Strategy. Nev asked whether funding had been found to support the tree planting targets in the strategy. Wendy asked if there was any update about improvements to rural wifi. Councillor McMillan said there was

no specific update yet, but there were some new UK Government initiatives in the pipeline. A resident at the meeting spoke to Councillor Trotter about an ongoing housing issue.

5 Internal Reports

5.1 Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs)

All 6 local AEDs are live on the Circuit (the online database which the emergency services use). Eleanor has checked the AEDs at the Garage and the Bowling Club and they are working. Eleanor has contacted Josh to ask for details of the Yester Estate's defibs. The meeting approved making a small payment to Alistair at the Gifford Garage to contribute to the cost of the electricity used by the AED cabinet. **(ACTION: WF)**

A Longnewton resident has proposed using the old BT Telephone Box to house an AED. The meeting supported this idea and suggested that we could apply to the Fallago Rig Benefit Fund. The next deadline for funding applications is 1st September. Wendy agreed to look into this. **(ACTION WF)**

CC was asked if there would be any further AED training. Eleanor said there were no immediate plans, but this could be reviewed in the autumn if there was sufficient demand.

5.2 Roads and Footpaths

Dave gave a detailed summary of why there were traffic lights on the Duns Road for 2 weeks. The traffic lights were installed on Monday 28th, but Scottish Water weren't on site until the following day when they dug a hole in the pavement. They had said the water to the graveyard would be switched off, but it wasn't, which caused water to run down the street. Scottish Water came back on Tuesday 6th, but they did not fix the leak on the churchyard pipe, as it was located just inside the churchyard. A new contractor came to fix the pipe. The pavement was then backfilled and tarred by the end of the week, but the traffic management company wasn't informed so the lights weren't removed until Monday 12th. It was an unfortunate situation, which was annoying for residents. Dave asked why residents hadn't been notified in advance. Councillor McMillan explained that Scottish Water was a 'registered undertaker' which meant that a TTRO was not required for the work.

Scottish Power is carrying out laying new cables at Walden Terrace. The new path at Walden Terrace has been completed.

Dave is speaking to Bruce Allison about the path at the back of the churchyard, which is becoming very narrow.

5.3 Lighting, Drains and Signs

Nothing to report.

5.4 Planning

Please see attached report for planning applications within and outwith GCC Area. The agritourism application at Redhill has been approved. There has also been an application for 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.

5.5 Finance

There is £2,300 in the bank, but some of that is reserved for Soup & Smile.

5.6 Resilience

Soup & Smile is on hold for summer, but will re-start in the autumn. Nicola from Lanterne Rouge is happy to continue to donate her time towards the service. Nicola has very generously offered to donate ingredients as well, but there is still funding left to put towards the service. Fish & chips is still being delivered monthly. 30 people attended Lunch Club this month.

6 Correspondence

6.1 Home Energy Scotland Training

Eleanor received details of some online training courses designed for people who are working or volunteering in areas which involve giving home energy advice. Jill to advertise the courses on Facebook.

6.2 BESS Petition

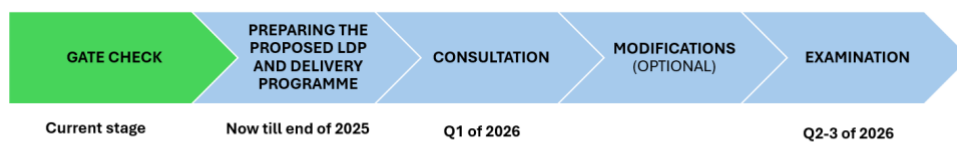
Cockenzie and Port Seton CC circulated details via the AELCC of their petition to request legislation from the Scottish Parliament on the suitability of location for Battery Energy Storage sites (BESS).

7 AOB

7.1 Village Expansion

A local resident came to the meeting to start a discussion about future expansion of the village. He was concerned about the closure of local businesses and that the primary school roll was falling. He suggested that bringing new families to the village through the provision of new housing would benefit the village. Councillor McMillan referred to the process of Local Development Planning. The timeline for the next Local Development Plan for East Lothian (LDP2) is below.

ELC LDP2 PROCESS TIMELINE



Councillor McMillan explained that local opinion is an important part of the process, but ideas will be subject to the planning process. Gifford is in a conservation area and there are additional recommendations/guidelines relating to developments in rural areas. Community Councils can feed ideas into the Local Development Planning process by means of a Local Place Plan. East Lammermuir CC has recently produced a detailed place plan. It was noted that they used external consultants, paid for using wind farm benefit money. Pencaitland has also produced a Local Plan Place.

Date of next meeting: Monday 9th.June

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.