

Gifford Community Council – July Meeting Minutes

Time: 7.30pm Gifford Bowling Club

Attendance: Adam White (Chair), Anne Stunzner, Nicola Clayson, Wendy Ferguson, Alan Fortune Nev Kilkenny, Cr Tom Trotter

Apologies: Cr Shamin Akhtar, Cr Paul Smith, Cr John McMillian.

1. Opening and Previous Minutes

The meeting opened with approval of the previous minutes. It was noted that attendance had not yet been added to the previous minutes and would be updated. Nicola and Alan confirmed the minutes from the previous meeting. Matters arising were to be covered during the agenda.

2. Project Updates

2.1 Renewable Energy Projects

Richard reported that further information had been included in the planning report about the public inquiry process. Oral sessions for the public inquiry are scheduled to take place in the village hall during the week beginning 12 October. The main issues expected to be dealt with orally are landscape and visibility impacts, and the construction route for large loads. Other matters will be handled through written submissions between the relevant bodies.

All members of the public may attend, but only those who registered earlier in the process to take an active part will be invited to speak. Closing submissions are expected by 6 November, with a final decision may take around nine months.

2.2 Graveyard Extension and Graveyard Maintenance

There was no update on the graveyard extension. Concerns were raised about the state of the existing graveyard and the distress caused to people visiting relatives' graves. Although recent work had improved the situation, the recurring annual problem remains a concern. Tom asked for an email outlining the issues so that he could follow up with the Council, noting that other graveyards did not appear to be in the same condition.

2.3 Memorial Plaque

The memorial plaque issue was considered resolved and is to be removed from future agendas.

3. External Reports

3.1 Police Report

One count of fraud was noted. Questions were raised about a recent incident involving a visible police presence in the village, including several police vehicles.

3.2 Yester Estate

An issue was raised regarding visibility constrictions caused by fencing, ivy, and an area connected with Yester Estate. As Josh was not present, the information will be passed on to him.

3.3 Community Woodland

Nev reported that there had been a couple of volunteer days and that logs were available for sale. The AGM is due in September, and work continues on the long-term management plan, which will be shared for consultation when ready.

3.4 East Lothian Council Report

Tom reported that Council business was quieter during the summer recess, although some meetings continue. Parking remains an issue, but no papers or proposals had yet come forward, so no decision could be made. Concerns were raised about the consultation process, particularly in relation to parking and the public perception that decisions may already have been formed before consultations take place.

Members discussed a visitor bed levy proposal and requested more information about its implications, including whether funds could be used to support tourism-related improvements in the village.

There was further discussion about parking, North Berwick, the role of councillors, and the importance of council decisions reflecting local views. Tom stated that, in relation to the forthcoming parking proposals, his party would have a free vote. He also acknowledged that the North Berwick process had been unsatisfactory and said lessons needed to be learned.

4. Internal Reports

4.1 Defibrillators

The defibrillators were reported to be in good order. Eleanor had recently changed a battery at the golf club. A further check will be arranged so that others can become familiar with the full inspection process. The golf club has asked for help to locate its defibrillator outside the building rather than inside, and support has been offered, including potential assistance from the electrician previously used.

4.2 Roads, Footpaths, Lights and Drains

Alan reported that trees on Old Duns Road had been cut back, including branches affecting streetlights and the roadside. Some streetlights remain problematic, including old lights left dangling after replacements were installed.

Other road-related concerns included missing railings near the park, ivy connected with Yester Estate, a single ramp, overhanging branches at a dangerous junction, paint spilled on the road, and fly-tipping involving paint and waste materials.

4.3 Planning

Richard reported that there were no new planning applications. All but one existing application had been approved or removed from the active list. The remaining item is for additional farm buildings at Yester.

A pre-application inquiry has been submitted in the name of the Community Council regarding the possibility of installing solar panels on the village hall roof, specifically on the mansard roof behind the clock tower rather than on the visible front pitches.

4.4 Treasurer

The Treasurer reported that the accounts were in good order.

4.5 Resilience and Community Support

It was reported that coffee with dogs continues successfully once a month, and the fish and chips delivery remains popular. The lunch club had 26 attendees and continues to be well supported, with Tweed doing a strong job in supporting both the lunch club and fish and chips arrangements.

5. Correspondence

5.1 Bus Shelter

Correspondence was received about the bus shelter. The Council response indicated that proposed locations were unsuitable because of pavement width, access, street furniture, hanging baskets, parking spaces, and the need for bus access. It was agreed that Simon Law would be contacted to reactivate discussion of the issue.

5.2 Scottish Forestry Application

An application relating to the Hopes was circulated. It was noted that the haulage route was not clear from the information provided, and that this should be requested as it may be relevant to residents in the area.

5.3 Speeding on Park Road

A complaint was received from Graham Walker about speeding on Park Road.

5.4 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Information was received about a landscape sensitivity assessment for wind energy, solar photovoltaic development, battery energy storage systems, substations, data centres, and other large-scale developments. The assessment will help guide where such developments may be appropriate. The consultation information will be circulated to the community.

5.5 Beautiful Scotland

Roger Wilson and Rosemary have prepared the application information. Judging is scheduled for Wednesday 5 August at 2.00 pm. The approach remains that the village should be judged as it is normally found, rather than making special changes solely for judging. Members noted the contribution of volunteers, the Council, the school, sports groups, clubs, and local organisations in maintaining and improving the village environment.

5.6 Scottish Endurance Riding Club

The Scottish Endurance Riding Club's 44th race will come through the village on Sunday 16 August. Route details have been provided and will be posted on Facebook so residents know where horses will pass through.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 Premier Store

An update was received after a visit to the shop. The new operators were described as a family-run business and open to engaging with the village. Feedback from the survey has been shared with them. They are considering a suggestion book, fresh fruit and vegetables, Facebook updates, reinstating the community notice board, and bringing in products from other East Lothian businesses. Their alcohol licence has been renewed.

Concerns remain about the condition of the building, the stock offer, accessibility, ownership and lease arrangements, and whether commitments made in support of the licence are being met. Tom suggested that, if concerns continue, the Community Council may wish to write directly to the licensing board and copy councillors in.

6.2 Newton Hall

Following the previous meeting, a letter was sent to the landowner. The landowner has acknowledged receipt and will respond after returning from being away. Further local concerns have been raised about access through the estate, and the access officer has also received correspondence from residents.

6.3 Secretary Role

The secretary reported that she is moving to Florence for a year and was willing to continue supporting the role remotely using AI transcription tools until a replacement is found. The Chair thanked Anne for her contribution to the Community Council.

7. Action Points

Action	Owner	Status / Notes
Add attendance to previous minutes.	Chair / Secretary	To be updated.
Email Tom about graveyard maintenance concerns, including previous correspondence.	Chair / Anne	Tom to follow up with Council.
Pass Yester Estate fencing and ivy issue to Josh.	Chair	Pending.
Seek further information on visitor levy proposal and implications for local funding.	Tom	To report back.
Follow up with Simon Law regarding the bus shelter.	Correspondence lead	To reactivate discussion.
Request haulage route information for the Scottish Forestry application.	Correspondence lead	To request further detail.
Circulate landscape sensitivity assessment consultation details.	Correspondence lead	To circulate to community.
Post Scottish Endurance Riding Club route information on Facebook.	Correspondence lead	Before 16 August.
Consider writing to the licensing board about Premier Store concerns if issues continue.	Community Council	Copy councillors in.
Await response from Newton Hall landowner.	Anne	Landowner has acknowledged letter.