

MELROSE & DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING

7.45 PM, TUESDAY 22 July 2025, The Smith Hall, Darnick

Apologies:

Crawford Laing (Community Police Sergeant), Ian Porter (Community Police), Cllr David Parker(SBC), Cllr John Paton Day (SBC), Catherine Bauer (Traders), Val Millar (Melrose in Bloom), Lorna Paterson (CC)

Attendance:

Mike Sherlock (CC Chair)
Willie Kerr (CC)
Bruce Wilson (CC)
Jane Bell (CC)
Simon Harris (CC)
Ben Douglas (CC)
Martin Baird (CC)
Dougal Stewart (CC)
Cllr Jenny Linehan (SBC)
V Antcliff (Minutes Clerk)
Alasdair Wright

Mark Latto (Melrose Caravan Park)
Evelyn Oliver
David Reilly (Melrose Rotary)
Peter Carter
Roderick Ballantyne
Angela Stormont
Eric Marshall
Alison Smith
Eileen Johnson

1. Welcome, Apologies, Attendance, Declaration of interests

Bruce Wilson made a declaration of interest – he has agreed to represent the Melrose Pipe Band at the Community Council Forum.

2. Co-opting of new member Alasdair Wright

Alasdair Wright was co-opted as a member by Bruce Wilson and Willie Kerr.

3. Police Reports May & June 2025

Community Police representatives were unable to attend but provided their reports for both May and June.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting, matters arising & Action Points

The minutes from the previous meeting were approved. Matters arising and action points were reviewed, with updates provided and noted.

5. Agreement to Council's code of conduct & agreeing Annual accounts

MCC accounts had been distributed to councillors. Agreement to the Council's code of practice was confirmed by all councillors in attendance, and it was agreed that Dougal can now apply for a grant.

6. Twinning debrief

Melrose is now twinned with Teba. The Teban council had left a small token of their gratitude and this was distributed to Council members. Melrose FC has been in touch with Teba's children's football club, and the Rotary Club has also established contact. Dialogue between Teba and Melrose is ongoing as a result of the twinning.

7. Darnick Village Trust Concerns

The poor state of the football pitch was discussed, which is maintained under a 30-year agreement with SBC, ending May 2026. The future of this agreement is uncertain and requires review. Current concerns include old and damaged equipment, irregular grass cutting affecting use, and the need for a new bench, which might require relocating to a better place. Darnick does not yet have a Community Action Plan; requests for support from SBC have been unsuccessful due to resource limitations. Although a local builder's proposal to develop adjacent land was rejected, there are worries that neglect of the football field could impact future land use. Funding for large-scale projects, including land acquisition, remains unresolved.

AP77: Cllr Linehan to review the maintenance agreement and follow up on related issues.

8. Withdrawal of Number 51 bus from Newstead

The Number 51 bus now bypasses Newstead, having been rerouted. The bypass can be prone to flooding, lacks disabled access, and paths are overgrown. Only around seven Newstead residents used the service weekly, leading to the change. The Number 60 bus continues with limited service. Safety and accessibility concerns persist. A meeting is scheduled in September in Newstead to address access, and options such as adding a bus shelter and securing funding which are under consideration. Communication with the public about bus services is currently inadequate.

AP78: Cllr Linehan to invite Gordon Grant (SBC) to the September MCC meeting in Newstead to discuss this issue.

9. Live Borders update from SBC

There are concerns about potential funding cuts or possible asset sales due to Live Borders financial situation. Community asset transfers were discussed but are seen as potentially burdensome. There are questions about the trust status of certain properties, such as Ormiston, which is held in trust and cannot be sold.

AP79: JL is seeking legal advice on these matters.

10. Borders Community Action – support fund

MS provided information about available grants. Some funds may benefit Melrose in Bloom, but not the Festival Committee, as it does not meet criteria. MS will continue to check for relevant funding opportunities.

11. Chain Bridge – Bi-centenary celebration 2026

Suggestions are being sought for events to celebrate the Chain Bridge's bicentenary in October 2026. SBC would be responsible for maintenance and refurbishment of information boards. The 500th anniversary of Skirmish Hill, in July 2026, is also being considered by Darnick Village Trust.

AP80: Cllr Linehan to explore funding options for these projects.

12. AOCB:

St Aidans: The building is in poor condition and remains an eyesore.

AP81: JL will review potential actions that can be taken.

Antisocial Behaviour: Incidents involving several men behaving in a threatening manner between the church and the river and approaching schoolchildren were reported.

AP82 - JL will discuss this issue with Police.

Questions arose whether the cleaning schedule for drains was being adhered to (they are supposed to be cleaned quarterly).

AP83: JL will seek records or submit a Freedom of Information (FOI) request if necessary.

A group of travellers recently visited Melrose, engaging in antisocial behaviour, including galloping down the A68, the bypass and in the Market Square on horses and carts. There was no police presence or intervention.

13. Questions from the floor

Questions were raised about how the MCC communicates its activities to the public. Various options for increasing outreach, such as a newsletter, website, or new Facebook page, were discussed, however, the existing Facebook page is currently inaccessible. The possibility of younger council members assisting with new methods of promoting MCC's work was considered, but no final decisions were made at the meeting.

Someone asked about the Abbey, which remains fenced off to paying visitors.

AP84: JL to request an update from Historic Scotland and consider contacting the South of Scotland Destination Alliance for help with making the abbey more accessible.

14. Date, venue and time of next meeting

Wednesday 20 August 2025 at 7.30pm, The Village Hall, Gattonside

Apologies: Victoria Antcliff, Cllr Linehan