

**GOREBRIDGE & DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL
DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING
18 AUGUST 2025, 7PM, BIRKENSIDE PAVILION**

IN ATTENDANCE:

Community Council Members

Chair Gael Robertson (GR), Secretary Richard Horsburgh (RH) Alice Drever (AD), Lorraine Amedro (LA), Heather Webb-Nelson (HWN), Jac Frankitti (JF), Mary Davidson (MD) John Campbell (JC)

Midlothian Councillor

Cllr Ellen Scott (ES), Cllr Kelly Drummond

Police

PC F Porteous, PC A Livingstone

Visitors

R Rafferty, S Gabowski, L Tait, E Moffat, M Cowie, R Mackie, S Skelton, J Paget, A Amedro

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and expressed her pleasure at seeing so many new faces.

APOLOGIES:

J Bruce Dickie, I Hewitson, Cllr D Bowen

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Approved – L Amero

Seconded – J Frankitti

MATTERS ARISING

None.

MIDLOTHIAN PLANNING & MDLP2 ISSUES

- **Local Review Body (LRB)** – The Local Review Body recently considered the application for the Main Street property. Despite the objection submitted by GDCC and our follow-up correspondence, the decision was not upheld, and approval has been granted for the office to be converted into a residential property. Gael attended the LRB meeting at Midlothian Council Chambers and reported that the proceedings lacked professionalism, with no reference made to the Local Place Plan. During the discussion, the Midlothian Planning Officer stated that there is interest from around 150 commercial companies wishing to open businesses in Gorebridge. Considering this, GDCC has written to Peter Arnstoff to highlight the inconsistency between this expressed commercial interest and the decision to reduce available town centre business premises. We also requested a meeting with the Planning Department to discuss these issues, but to date no response has been received.

Action to be taken:

- GDCC to follow up with the Midlothian Planning Department regarding the lack of response to our meeting request and seek clarification on the inconsistency between commercial interest in Gorebridge and the decision to reduce available town centre business premises.
- **Gorebridge Local Place Plan** – GDCC questioned the legality of the Local Place Plan (LPP) and agreed to seek clarification with other planning bodies. Concerns were also raised with the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, noting that other Community Councils share similar issues. GDCC wrote to Peter Arnstoff requesting a meeting with the Planning Department, but no response has been received.
- A reply from Midlothian Council (via Emma on behalf of Peter Arnstoff) confirmed that MLDP2 will include Place Statements for all settlements, with LPPs influencing these where they exist. Engagement meetings are planned for mid-September to mid-October.
- GDCC expressed concern that the response from Midlothian Council appears to deflect the issues raised. There is a risk that the LPP will be diluted within wider planning documents rather than being given proper weight. This matter will be discussed further at the next meeting.

Action to be taken:

GDCC to follow up with Midlothian Council regarding the Local Place Plan, seek clarification from planning bodies, and prepare for engagement meetings to ensure the LPP is given proper weight within MLDP2.

MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL ISSUES

- **Gorebridge High School & FOI Response Update** GDCC submitted a Freedom of Information request to Midlothian Council in January 2025 seeking School Roll Projections. The Council withheld this information, and GDCC subsequently referred the matter to the Scottish Information Commissioner.
- On 1 July 2025, the Commissioner confirmed that GDCC's application is valid and will be investigated. Midlothian Council has been asked to provide the requested information to the Commissioner, after which an Investigating Officer will be appointed and will contact GDCC. GDCC are still awaiting a response from Midlothian Council with the figures.

Action to be taken:

GDCC to monitor the Scottish Information Commissioner's investigation, follow up with Midlothian Council for the requested School Roll Projections, and report updates at future meetings.

- **Crawlees Road Safety**– Gael Robertson and Richard Horsburgh met with Barratt Homes to discuss ongoing safety concerns at Crawlees Road and the junction with Suttieslea Road. Key issues raised included high daily traffic volumes (estimated at over 1,200 vehicles per day during peak hours), frequent HGV movements from the Mayfield Industrial Estate, road width inconsistencies, and the dangerous Z-bend at Smithy Cottages. Barratt Homes confirmed that they will be commissioning a new traffic survey in September to provide updated data for the area. Gael and Richard will be briefing the Midlothian MP's constituency office on these matters, with Robert MacKie also in attendance, to ensure wider awareness of the safety concerns and potential impacts on the local community.

Action to be taken:

GDCC to monitor Crawlees Road safety concerns, including the forthcoming traffic survey by Barratt Homes, and to brief the constituency office to raise awareness of traffic, HGV, and road safety issues in the area.

- **Circular Bus Route** – The Gorebridge and District Community Council (GDCC) strongly urges and supports Midlothian Council in challenging local bus operators to reinstate a circular bus service for Gorebridge. Such a service is vital for ensuring that residents, particularly those without access to private transport, the elderly, and school or college students, have reliable access to essential amenities, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions. The absence of a circular route has limited mobility options, increased dependence on private vehicles, and reduced accessibility for vulnerable members of the community. GDCC stresses that reinstating this service is crucial to maintaining sustainable, inclusive, and connected local transport, and we call on Midlothian Council to actively advocate for its restoration.

MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL ISSUES (continued)

- **Midlothian Council 800 Bus** – GDCC recognises the importance of the 800 bus link between Gorebridge, Dalkeith, and other parts of Midlothian, providing access to work, education, and healthcare. Current usage is averaging 81 passengers per week. Members felt that introducing a small fare could improve sustainability and help secure a more frequent and reliable timetable. GDCC supports measures to maintain and strengthen the service to ensure it remains a practical and accessible option for residents.

Action to be taken:

GDCC to support and monitor the 800 bus service, explore introducing a small fare to improve sustainability, and engage with Midlothian Council and residents to maintain a reliable and accessible timetable.

- **Newbyres Care Home** – AD raised concerns about Newbyres Care Home and asked why one of the streets remains closed. Cllr Ellen Scott explained that, in the past, all streets around the care home had been open. However, due to issues that arose, it became necessary to close one street, and at times even two. At present, only one of the previously closed streets has been reopened, while the other remains closed to ensure stability for both residents and staff. Cllr Scott noted that the constant opening and closing of streets was having a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of residents.

Action to be taken:

- GDCC to seek clarification from Midlothian Council on the ongoing street closure at Newbyres Care Home and monitor its impact on residents and staff wellbeing.
- **Midlothian Council Surveys** – RH informed the meeting that there are currently two transport-related surveys taking place:
 - **Midlothian Bus Strategy** – conducted by SEStran. This survey is seeking views on how local bus services can be improved and better meet the needs of communities across the region.
 - **Midlothian Council's Draft Local Transport Strategy (LTS)** – Consultation Midlothian Council has published a new Draft Local Transport Strategy and is inviting feedback. The LTS sets out a long-term plan for improving transport across Midlothian, covering walking, cycling, public transport, driving and freight. It aims to support sustainable travel, manage the area's rapid population growth, and reduce carbon emissions. The consultation closes on Wednesday 17 September, and responses will help shape the final strategy which will be considered by Councillors later this year.

Action to be taken:

GDCC to review and respond to the SEStran Bus Strategy and Midlothian Council Draft Local Transport Strategy consultations, ensuring feedback reflects community transport needs before the 17 September deadline.

LPP Audit

- Gael informed the meeting that she was experiencing issues with the audit email and, in the process, discovered that she had received feedback from two organisations. All local organisations had been asked to complete a survey outlining what they do, as there appear to be gaps in provision for young people in Gorebridge. However, by the deadline at the end of June, no surveys had been returned. This matter will be raised again at the next Meet & Share meeting.

Action to be taken:

- GDCC to follow up on the LPP audit survey, raise the lack of responses from local organisations at the next Meet & Share meeting, and identify gaps in provision for young people in Gorebridge.

COUNCILLOR'S REPORTS

Chair requested that future Councillors report included Council activities as well as Councillor activities

Cllr Drummond:

- With the council in recess, little activity has taken place.
- A Section 42 planning application has been submitted to extend the period for transporting sand and gravel from the quarry until 28th December 2026, which may impact roads and traffic.
- Following a bid there is a good chance of a grant being awarded to repair Birkenside Pavilion.
- Melville roundabout is now open without traffic lights. Road widths will be reviewed, and further resurfacing is planned.
- There has been a noticeable increase in transport-related teething problems.

Action to be taken:

- Cllr Drummond to monitor the Section 42 planning application for sand and gravel transport, progress on Birkenside Pavilion grant, and transport issues including the Melville roundabout and road resurfacing, and to report any significant developments to GDCC.

COUNCILLOR'S REPORTS (continued)

Cllr Scott:

- Report circulated to Community Council members.
- Ongoing issues remain at River Gore/Newbyres. Cllr Scott met the manager with Ian Hewitson, and the Manager confirmed new staff are in place and work will not begin before 8:00am.
- After a meeting with King's Meadow residents who had raised complaints about the quality of the Play Park this and other issues were taken up with Persimmons. As the site has not yet been signed off to the Factors by the Planning Department, residents had received invoices from the Factors which were not due. This is being investigated
- As Whitehouse residents are not happy with the quality of the ground maintenance by the factors, after a meeting at the site with a resident, he will investigate the possibility of setting up a Residents' Association.
- Gladhouse, residents are frustrated by visitors blocking the Clearway to emergency and farm vehicles. The number of visitors is very high and damage is being caused by cutting branches and trees for fires. Campers are lighting fires which with the dry summer is a hazard for the area and constituents' homes. A meeting was held with the residents, Officers and Scottish Water to discuss solutions to this problem, one being a car park for visitors.

Actions to be Taken:

- Cllr Scott to monitor Persimmon/Newbyres construction, children's play park changes, Whitehouse factors issues, and Gladhouse access and safety concerns, providing updates to GDCC as developments occur.

Cllr Bowen

- Full report circulated to GDCC members.
- Attended Licensing Board, Planning Committee, and Council meetings.
- Local Development Plan discussions continue, with concern over housing numbers and lack of infrastructure.
- Assessed grant applications for Tyne & Esk Valley Local Action Group.
- Supported the visit of Huenshoven Jugendchor from Germany.
- Ongoing issues include: Lingerwood and Scout Hut planning applications, Gladhouse anti-social behaviour, Kings Meadow Estate, Newbyres Park fence, and several community projects in Borthwick and Newtongrange.
- Will undergo knee replacement surgery and attend meetings virtually during recovery.

Actions to be Taken:

- Cllr Bowen to continue monitoring local development, planning applications, community projects, and ongoing issues in Gladhouse, Kings Meadow Estate, Newbyres Park, Borthwick, and Newtongrange, providing updates to GDCC while attending meetings virtually during recovery.

ROAD CALMING & MAIN STREET ISSUES:

- Speeding: Vogrie Road/Lady Brae, Powdermill Brae and other hot spots continue to have drivers who are going too fast. Cllr Scott met with Officers on site to discuss these issues to try to find a solution.
- The rollout of the new 20 mph speed limit was discussed at length; while generally seen as a positive initiative, it was agreed that the implementation could have been managed more effectively.

Action to be Taken:

- Cllr Scott to share speed monitoring data with the Community Council.
- Secretary to request clarification from Midlothian Council on the timeline for implementing the 20mph speed limits and address concerns about obscured signage.
- Police to be contacted to discuss further enforcement and educational measures regarding speeding in the area.

POLICE REPORT / SURGERY

PC A Livingstone and PC F Porteous attended the meeting on behalf of PC J McFarlane and read out his police reports for June and July. The full police reports for June and July were circulated to GDCC members and will be attached to the minutes.

Police Report Summary – Gorebridge June 2025

- **165 calls received.**
- **Key issues included:**
 - Thefts & vandalism: vehicle fire, shoplifting, van & house break-ins, licence plates stolen, and youths stealing alcohol.
 - Assaults & disorder: neighbour disputes, youths blocking a bus, and a male with a head injury (circumstances unclear).
 - Serious incidents: robbery at knifepoint (The Crescent) and a male stabbing himself (non-criminal).
 - Traffic offences: uninsured and unlicensed drivers stopped.
 - Other: SSPCA seized 11 puppies under warrant.

July 2025

- **235 calls received (notable rise from June).**
- **Key issues included:**
 - Violence/weapons: youth with hammer (charged), female arrested for assault, fight in street, assault over parking dispute.
 - Thefts & break-ins: theft of TV/console, jewellery, fishing & computer equipment from van.
 - Vandalism/ASB: window smashed, youths damaging equipment at The Beacon, dirt bikes in fields.
 - Traffic offences: uninsured driver, driver using mobile phone.
 - Other: police search warrant executed at David Herkes Way items recovered).

POLICE REPORT / SURGERY

Trends:

- Significant rise in calls from June to July.
- Ongoing issues with thefts, antisocial behaviour, and uninsured drivers.
- Youth-related incidents remain a recurring concern.

Action to be Taken:

- Alice Drever will continue to liaise with PC Jason McFarlane to schedule future Police Surgeries including an evening surgery.

CORRESPONDENCE

- **Barratt Redrow** – An email was received from Barratt requesting a meeting to discuss the Lingerwood Development and safety concerns on Crawlees Road. GR and RH met with Barratt representatives on Monday, 17th August, where they outlined the GDCC's concerns regarding road safety along Crawlees Road.

Action to be taken:

- GR and RH to continue discussions with Barratt Redrow regarding Lingerwood Development and Crawlees Road safety concerns, and provide updates to GDCC.
- **Taylor Wimpey** – RH noted receipt of correspondence from Taylor Wimpey regarding their proposal for residential development at Stobs Farm, Gorebridge, as part of the Midlothian Local Development Plan 2. GDCC expressed concerns about the site's suitability, citing poor access to amenities and public transport, insufficient school capacity, unsuitable road infrastructure, and pressure on local health services. These concerns are consistent with those already raised in relation to other proposed sites. The Committee agreed that GDCC does not support the proposal.

Action to be taken:

- GDCC to monitor the Stobs Farm proposal from Taylor Wimpey and any related developments, should Midlothian Council consider approving it, noting potential impacts on access, infrastructure, school capacity, and local services.
- **MP's constituency office** – RH reported that GDCC had contacted the constituency office to highlight ongoing road safety concerns at Crawlees Road and to arrange a meeting to brief them on the issues.

Action to be taken:

- GDCC to meet with the constituency office to brief them on ongoing road safety concerns at Crawlees Road.

CORRESPONDENCE (continued)

- **Scottish Information Commissioner** – RH reported on the appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner regarding the release of school roll projections from Midlothian Council. He was pleased to confirm that the appeal was successful, and the SIC has instructed the Council to release the data.

Action to be taken:

- GDCC to obtain the school roll projection data from Midlothian Council following the Scottish Information Commissioner's decision.
- **Midlothian Council Planning Meeting Request & Extension Planning Application 25/00384/MSC** – The Community Council requested an extension to the response deadline, which was granted by Midlothian Council. Following discussion at the meeting, GDCC submitted a response via the Planning Portal confirming support for the development, with the caveat that concerns regarding road safety on Crawlees Road and its junctions must be addressed.

Action to be taken:

- GDCC to monitor the progress of planning application 25/00384/MSC and ensure that road safety concerns on Crawlees Road and its junctions are addressed.

TREASURER'S REPORT

- There was no report submitted

Actions to be Taken:

- Treasure to email and submit an updated report on there return.

MIDLOTHIAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL FEDERATION

- Next meeting: 17 September 2025.

Actions to be Taken:

- Secretary to email the GDCC members the minutes of the meeting once they are received.

PERSIMMONS/NEWBYRES UPDATE

- Ellen's report mentioned that we met with the site manager and had a positive conversation when he told us he would not allow any early starts and would ensure all rules are followed.
- There is now a banksman on site working at ARFC between 7 – 8 am to stop heavy vehicles from entering the estate before 8am. He then moves to the site entrance to manage traffic and "advise" drivers about speed, load covering and care etc. It has had a positive effect. Still the odd idiot driver of course but mostly ok.
- I have heard of no complaints re early starts. It certainly seems quieter as the Site Manager promised it would be.
- Several houses are nearing completion and at least some will be show houses. Until they are ready, sales are open from Persimmon site at Prestonpans I believe.
- Road sweeping has been more thorough and includes the new roads in the development which has helped reduce the amount of mud spread by waggons leaving the site.

Action to be Taken:

- For IH to keep the GDCC informed of any issues regarding Persimmons.

COMMUNICATION

- **Meet & Share meeting** – Will be held on 23rd August 2025 in the Beacon at 09:30.

Action to be taken:

For GDCC members to attend the meeting.

- **Leaflets** – Leaflet distribution is progressing well, and we have already received positive feedback on their content. The response so far has been very encouraging, showing that the leaflet is not only reaching people but also making a real impact. This effectiveness highlights the value of the material and gives confidence that the leaflet is achieving its intended purpose

Actions to be Taken:

- GDCC members to update on the progress of the leaflet distribution at the next GDCC meeting in September>

AOCB

- **Tree Felling** – A question was raised about whether residents require permission to fell trees within their own gardens. A residents living on Private Road have yet to receive a response from Midlothian Council. It was also noted that some of the trees may be listed.

Action to be taken:

- Councillor Scott will follow and feedback at the next GDCC meeting in September.
- **Running a Business from a Council Property** – A query was raised about whether council tenants require permission to operate a business from their home. Concerns were expressed as one individual is occupying multiple parking spaces, adding to existing parking pressures. It was noted that if residents experience parking issues, they should contact the Police.

Action to be taken:

- Councillor Scott will investigate further.
- **Harvieston Cemetery** – An issue was raised regarding the poor condition of Harvieston Cemetery, with concerns about overgrown grass and general upkeep.

Action to be taken:

- Councillor Drummond will raise the issue with Midlothian Council and inform the GDCC at the next GDCC meeting in September.
- **GDCC Meetings** – M Davidson confirmed that the pavilion has been secured for GDCC meetings up until May 2026, ensuring continuity for the Council's business.

Actions to be Taken:

- None

DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday 16th September 2025, 7pm, Birkenhead Pavilion.