



SKIRLING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRUST

ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS (October 2024-March 2026)

ANNUAL REPORT 2024 - 2026

Introduction to SCDT October 2024 – March 2025

A Community Trust for Skirling was first suggested by David Galbraith of Skirling and agreed as part of the community engagement process which led to the creation of the Skirling Community Action Plan 2024-2029. There was a need for a legal entity to take some of the proposed projects across the five themes in the Action Plan forward, and to own any land or other assets on behalf of the community which were to be gifted or required to achieve the ambitions for Skirling set out in the Community Action Plan.

A small group of Skirling residents came together over the summer of 2024 to create a Constitution for the Trust and set up a Trust bank account, and to apply through OSCR for charitable status. Helpful advice and support was provided from Border Community Action through each stage of the process and in the first instance using the SCVO Constitution and Trust templates provided. The community was kept up to date with progress through the Skirling Community website and social media, and other media distributed around the village.

Skirling Community Development Trust (SCDT) was established successfully as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation on 1 October 2024 – SC053682.

Its charitable purpose is:

“To promote the advancement of citizenship and community development, and the prevention or relief of poverty, for the benefits of the inhabitants of Skirling and its environs in the Scottish Borders, as defined by the Skirling Community Council area, without distinction of political, religious or other opinions, and with the object of improving the conditions of life of the said inhabitants”.

The Trust is effectively owned by the community, with all residents within the Skirling Community Council area over the age of 16 able to become full voting members. There is also an Associate member category for anyone who has an interest in Skirling or previously lived in Skirling to retain links with the village through the Trust.

Each year the Trust elects a Board of up to 8 Trustees to operate the Trust on behalf of the community – the majority of the Trustees are elected by the members at the AGM, and the Community Council and Village Hall also nominate a representative of each organisation to become a Trustee – to help ensure that all the groups and organisations within the village are linking up and working together for the benefit of the community.

Once SCDT became a registered charity on 1 October 2024, there was a limited amount that was able to be achieved before the Christmas 2024 period, but links were established with the different support bodies and local wind farms who may be able to support the Trust activities and membership forms were created and distributed and promoted around the village. A first open meeting for SCDT was advertised and arranged for Tuesday 28 January 2025 to explain more about SCDT and what it was intended to do and how it would help deliver the Skirling Community Plan; to understand how members would like to be kept informed and any questions they had, and to encourage members to stand for the initial Board of Trustees of SCDT.

Nominations from the membership for trustees were requested by 2 February, and it was agreed that if nominations exceeded 8 Trustees, the Board would be selected by member vote. However, if member nominations were 8 or below, these members would become Trustees and form the initial Board of SCDT for 2025/2026 to commence the work of the Trust.

The first meeting of the Board of Trustees for SCDT took place on 4 March 2025, with the following Trustees confirmed for 2025/2026, and the elected positions as follows:

- Dorota Donigiewicz-O'Sullivan, Chair
- Andrew Fraser, Vice Chair
- Mike Thompson, Treasurer
- David Gass, Secretary
- Mark Bambridge
- Isobel Hunter (Community Council representative)
- Derek Jardine (Village Hall representative).

The early actions for the SCDT were to seek funding to be able to appoint a part-time Coordinator post to take forward the day to day work of the Trust; to agree what areas of the Community Plan the Trust should take a lead on to create a SCDT workplan, and to confirm the establishment of a small Community Fund under the Trust which would take on the ring-fenced funds and operation of the Pauline Fund going forwards. The Board also worked to keep the membership and wider community of Skirling engaged and informed of the work of the Trust, as it moved into operation over 2025/2026.

SCDT Progress April 2025 – March 2026

Over the last year, the Trustees have met every 6 weeks to guide and take forward the work of the Trust, with individual Trustees taking on lead responsibility for specific Trust projects, and the Trust has continued to build its membership across the community of Skirling, closing the year at 58 full voting members (around 30% of the Community Council area population), and 5 Associate Members.

Central to the progress made over the year was the appointment of Paul Barlow as the part-time SCDT Coordinator, and his post has been generously supported in full by the SSE Clyde Wind Farm Community Fund. Paul works on average 2 days/week for the Trust, covering across:

- Supporting member recruitment, engagement and communication, and engaging across the wider community of Skirling and with other neighbouring areas.
- Working with the Project leads and different voluntary groups across Skirling to deliver the Community Action Plan and Trust projects.
- Seeking funding opportunities to take forward and develop new project ideas and proposals which benefit Skirling.

- Providing the necessary administration support for the Board of SCDT, including compliance with GDPR requirements, setting up a central filing system for the Trust, and supporting the Trust meetings and actions.

Paul was recruited into post on 1 September 2025 and his main focus since then has been on the Trust priority projects to be taken forward over 2025/2026, working with the Board champion for each project area who took forward the early stages of each project as time allowed and in a voluntary capacity.

The Skirling Land Project

This has been the principal early project for the Trust and will be an enabler for many of the future Trust projects. Arising initially from the offer of the Wheeler-Carmichael family to donate pockets of orphaned land the family still held back to the community of Skirling, there were subsequently further parcels of land within the Skirling Community Council area boundary offered up to be considered for acquisition by the Trust on behalf of the community.

Whilst all these pockets of land would enable some developments and Community Plan projects to be taken forward, the Trust also required that a full consideration of any risks, liabilities or costs which came with these acquisitions be considered, as well as timescales, so as not to become a burden on the community. An Initial mapping of the proposed land was prepared, and funding successfully obtained from the SSC Clyde Wind Farm Community Fund to fund an Independent consultant with the necessary expertise and knowledge to conduct a full study of the Skirling Land Project. A full report and presentation on the project will be made to the AGM on 25th April, and a full consultation will be conducted with the community to establish how they would like the Trust to proceed with the Skirling Land Project.

The Skirling Playpark Project (Community Action Plan Theme 3 – Skirling Community Life)

One of the projects within the Community Action Plan that has been under consideration for many years is the establishment of a Playpark within Skirling, with funding raised by the community over the years for this project continuing to be held as a ringfenced fund by the Village Hall until there is a clear way forward and project plan. This is one of the projects that could potentially be enabled by the Skirling Land Project, so the Trust have been working with SBC to seek planning advice and determine suitable sites around the village, submit a pre-planning application for a potential site, and ensure neighbouring householders to the preferred site have been written to and consulted for their views. Further discussion and agreement on the Playpark project will be considered as part of the wider Skirling Land Project consultation - essentially how do the community of Skirling want these pockets of land to be put to use for the benefit of the community.

The Skirling Pathways Project (Community Action Plan Theme 2 – Well Connected Skirling, and Theme 4 – Environment and Heritage)

The focus here has been on the Skirling to Broughton Drove Road Path and what is required to improve the pathway and its use for families and the communities of Skirling and Broughton. Consultation has taken place with the Council, our neighbouring community in Broughton and the different landowners involved with improvements including improved signage, clearance of the pathway at points from basic maintenance to tree clearing all discussed, and a final plan is now close to being agreed. The majority of the heavy tree clearing work, with the landowner's permission, is scheduled to take place in September 2026 so as not to disturb the main nesting season from March to September, but it is

hoped there will be opportunities for community volunteers to get engaged in some of the lighter clearing and tidying up of the pathway in the coming months.

The Skirling 750 Project (Community Plan Theme 4 – Environment and Heritage)

SCDT led a successful funding application for this project which came forward from Bob Hunter to set up a small exhibition to celebrate the first mention of Skirling in historical records 750 years ago. A small exhibition was put together showing the history and different elements of Skirling village life through the years – with many of the Skirling community past and present contributing and lending items, photographs and stories to the exhibition, as well as old documents and photographs sourced from the National Monuments record and the Borders Archive.

Funding was secured from SSE Clyde Wind Farm Community Fund, and the SCDT Coordinator and other volunteers from the village worked with Bob and Isobel Hunter to put on a fantastic exhibition in the Village Hall on Saturday 25 October, followed by an evening reception with refreshments and stories from past and present residents of Skirling. Both the exhibition and evening reception were well attended and received great positive feedback, and a BCA volunteer kindly provided a photographic record of the day. The exhibition itself then went on to be displayed at Biggar Museum through November and December. Early discussions are also underway to look at using much of the material created as part of the Tweed Eco-Museum project.

The Pauline (Cancer Therapy) Fund

This Fund now sits under SCDT, with the previous funds ring-fenced for the use of the Fund to help prevent and relieve any aspects of poverty coming to the Trust's attention, and the Trust Fund continues to be advertised on the Skirling website with applications to the SCDT Coordinator encouraged. Over 2025/2026 one note of interest in the Fund was received which is being progressed.

In Summary

The first 18 months of SCDT has been a learning curve for all involved, with the need to put in processes and systems to manage the different projects and funds transparently and well; ensure SCDT continues to engage with the community and other community bodies; and source funding to be able to operate the Trust and take forward the different project ideas. Much progress has been made, with special thanks to the SSE Clyde Wind Farm Community Fund for its core and project funding support through the last year, and our members who have continued to engage and support the work of the Trust. We look forward to an exciting 2026/2027, and the projects coming forward and being delivered to improve the community life and environment of Skirling and its surrounding area.

David Gass

SCDT Secretary

FINANCIAL REPORT 2024-2026

A Bank of Scotland account for the Trust was previously opened by the initial Trustees, as per OSCR requirements, prior to the inaugural SCDT meeting in January 2025. Following election of the current Trustees, and to comply with the conditions of Wind Farm funding, the bank mandate was altered to require 2 of 3 signatories i.e., a combination of the current Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. A receipts and payments (cash accounting) basis has been adopted.

The first accounts cover the period 01/10/2024 - 31/03/2026. During the period, total income was £33,583.41. Of this £510 was received as donations mainly from the Skirling Lunch Club and is treated as unrestricted funds.

£2,230.91 was received as a transfer from the Pauline Fund and three Windfarm grants were received totalling £30,842.50. These cover 3 projects (the Skirling 750 Project, the SCDT Coordinator costs and the Skirling Land Project). All are treated as restricted funds.

During the period, total expenditure was £18,073.33. Of this £304 was general administrative expenditure on hall hire, and the balance of £17,769.33 on project costs.

The closing balance for SCDT for the period is £15,510.08 CR.

The full financial details and transactions are shown in the attached spreadsheets to this report, as an appendix.

Mike Thompson

SCDT Treasurer