

BMCC Meeting – Elsrickle Village Hub 02 of June 2025.

Elected Members	Present		Ex-Official Members	Present
Alistair Muirhead/Chair	Y		Alex Allison	Y
Andreas Hudson/Sec	Y		Ian Macallen	N
Pauline Irwin/Treasurer	N		Ralf Barker	N
Anne Hutchinson	Y			
Stephen Jenkins	Y			
Eric Holford	N			

1. Attendance: Six members of the public attended.
2. As part of the welcome and apologies the audience was asked for permission to record the session. Permission was granted by all attendees.
3. Apologies and Update
 - a. Pauline Irwin and Eric Holford were unable to attend the meeting.
4. Approval of minutes of meetings and reports.
 - a. Minutes of the 12 May meeting – approved.
5. Secretary Report.
 - a. Guidelines for Micro Grants: The council has confirmed that the recently produced infographic regarding grant application process is correct and can be distributed.
 - b. Men's Shed Microgrant procedure: SLC has confirmed that the money for the previously granted micro grant regarding hall signs has to be returned to BMCC.
 - c. Social Committee – Sports Day: The recently organised Sports Day at Newbigging Sports Field was a huge success, with a great turnout from the community. Kids and parents enjoyed an evening of sporting activities and healthy competition. It was a fantastic example of a community-led event that brought together a wide range of community members.
 - d. Micro Grant application: We have received a micro grant application from the Black Mount Community Development Trust for a road safety initiative. The project responds to widespread concern about speeding, identified by 41% of respondents in the 2023–24 community survey. Building on a children-led speeding protest at the Black Mount Community Fun Day in April, the proposed activities include:
 - i. Purchasing a portable speed measuring device for community use
 - ii. Installing speed watch signage in several settlements
 - iii. Providing high-vis jackets for trained volunteer traffic monitors
 - iv. Delivering training to enable safe equipment use
 - v. Supplying varnish to weatherproof children's handmade road safety signsThe project aims to improve road safety and support ongoing community engagement. This was circulated today amongst the BMCC.
 - e. Outstanding items

- i. The road condition on Carnwarth Road in Elsrickle requires attention (reported to Road and lighting faults - South Lanarkshire Council).
- ii. The Elsrickle village sign has been damaged and reported for repair (reported to Road and lighting faults - South Lanarkshire Council).
- iii. Warning signs for the 20 mph zone at Blackmount Primary School still not working.

6. Treasurer report was presented and circulated.

a. Energy Account

A cheque payment has been issued to the Libberton Parent Council, as agreed during the last meeting. Along with the cheque, they were also provided with a copy of the grant allocation receipts form.

b. Administration Account

As previously advised via email, a cheque for £1,060.00 has been issued to support the refurbishment of our defibrillator telephone boxes. Receipts will be required in order to comply with SLC audit requirements.

c. Bugle Publication

The Edinburgh Copy Shop has been paid £200.95 for the printing of Issue 132 (April edition) of *The Bugle*. This has been funded from the £600.00 grant received, leaving a remaining balance of £399.05 to be used for future editions.

d. Online Banking – RBS

The process for setting up online banking with RBS is underway. Those authorised to approve payments have now been accepted by the bank. Once the system is running smoothly, I will propose to expand the authorisation list later in the year.

We are currently awaiting the next steps from RBS. Unfortunately, I have not yet been able to access our local branch to retrieve updated balances (including interest), but I will provide this information at the next meeting.

e. Future Funding – AOB: Proposed Zebra Crossing in Elsrickle

A funding application is being proposed to support the installation of a zebra crossing in Elsrickle. Longstanding BMCC members will recall my repeated requests to SLC for a zebra crossing outside Blackmount School, dating back to before the school's completion. These requests were regularly declined due to funding constraints.

As highlighted again in the recent BMCC-funded community survey, crossing the road to attend school remains dangerous for children—even with adult assistance—due to speeding traffic.

To move forward with a formal proposal to SLC, it's likely we will need to contribute most, if not all, of the required funding. I have therefore requested a guideline quotation via a third party from an approved SLC contractor. I would also welcome Councillor Allison's support in obtaining an official costing directly from the council, along with any initial feedback on the project.

Once we have the relevant information, we can begin approaching potential funding providers to support this initiative on behalf of the community.

7. Planning

- a. There are no planning applications affecting the Blackmount Community.

8. Blackmount Social Group.

- a. The Blackmount Social Group hosted a successful Sports Day at Newbigging Sports Fields, which saw strong attendance and community engagement. The event offered various sporting activities for children and families, creating a lively and inclusive atmosphere. £40 was raised through a “duck shop” stall.
- b. Looking ahead, the next planned event is a sponsored walk, scheduled for the second Saturday in September. This will follow Scotland’s participation in a World Cup match the weekend prior, and the group hopes to build on the momentum of recent events. Planning is underway, and further details will be shared closer to the time.

9. Cllr. Alex Anderson

- a. Ongoing Infrastructure Issues:
 - i. Warning sign near Black Mount Primary School remains non-functional.
 - ii. Overgrown branches in local roadsides have been referred for trimming.
- b. Clarification on Micro-Grant Funding:
 - i. Councillor Allison emphasised that BMCC’s annual micro-grant budget is **not** population-based.
 - ii. All Community Councils in South Lanarkshire receive a base £5,000 per annum from the Renewable Energy Fund (REF) administered by SLC.
 - iii. Six Community Councils, located within 15 km of a Clyde wind farm, receive additional funding through the SSE Clyde Wind Farm Fund, resulting in a total of £10,000 per year.
 - iv. The original policy intentionally allocates based on proximity to wind farms, not community population, to support those directly impacted.
- c. Discussion on Allocation Inequity:
 - i. Councillor Allison acknowledged concerns raised by some areas about imbalance—specifically, wards without wind farms receiving only £5,000 while others receive £10,000.
 - ii. He clarified the historical rationale: wind farm proximity was the driver, ensuring those communities bear the largest impacts benefited most.
 - iii. While not proposing immediate changes, Councillor Allison indicated it is an important issue for future policy review—potential adjustments could consider population or the number of community-led facilities now operating (e.g. halls formerly run by leisure trusts).

10. Current Business

- a. Scottish Water and Scottish Power Concerns.
 - i. BMCC members raised longstanding issues with water pressure and electricity infrastructure, specifically highlighting the lack of response from both Scottish Water and Scottish Power regarding community concerns.
 1. Residents reported ongoing low water pressure during peak usage times, particularly during dry weather and when households are gardening.
 2. Concerns were expressed about inadequate fire hydrant pressure, which poses a potential risk for emergency services.

3. The issue seems to stem from reactive pump systems that are not functioning optimally or scaling output appropriately based on demand.
 4. Despite the installation of a new water main in recent years, water pressure continues to drop without warning.
 - ii. Scottish Power – Lack of Infrastructure Investment:
 1. Scottish Power had previously announced significant funding (£12.5 million) for infrastructure improvements in rural Scotland.
 2. BMCC noted that none of this investment appears to have reached the Blackmount area, despite repeated issues with power reliability and aging equipment.
 3. There was frustration about the lack of communication and transparency from Scottish Power following previous correspondence.
 - iii. The chair will Reopen dialogue on infrastructure improvements and share community concerns and pressure data, if available.
- b. Conflict of Interest – Policy Clarification and Discussion.
- i. A detailed discussion took place concerning the handling of conflicts of interest, prompted by concerns raised by a member of the public regarding the council’s previous treatment of a micro grant application submitted by an individual applicant.
 - ii. Background:
 1. The member of the public expressed concern that the previous application had been subjected to significantly more scrutiny than others, including repeated questioning over whether the applicant was affiliated with a local organisation.
 2. They suggested that council members who were themselves affiliated with other applying groups had participated in related discussions and votes, which was viewed as inconsistent and unfair.
 3. The situation highlighted the need for greater clarity, consistency, and transparency in how potential conflicts of interest are managed within the council.
 - iii. South Lanarkshire Council Guidance (as Reiterated):
 1. Each Community Councillor has a duty to assess whether they have a conflict of interest relating to any item under discussion.
 - a. Where a conflict exists, the individual must:
 - i. Declare the interest at the appropriate point in the meeting.
 - ii. Should withdraw from the discussion of that item.
 - iii. Abstain from voting on the matter.
 - iv. This includes financial interests, formal roles (e.g. membership of a group applying for funding), or informal affiliations that could reasonably be perceived as biasing judgement.
 - v. The responsibility to declare a conflict rests with the individual councillor.
 - iv. The council confirmed that councillors cannot choose to stay silent about a relevant conflict of interest.
 - v. Agreed Actions and Policy for Future Meetings:

1. The council unanimously agreed the following procedure:
 - a. Any councillor with a direct or perceived interest in an agenda item must declare it.
 - b. Once declared, the councillor **must not** participate in the discussion or vote on the agenda item.
 - c. All declarations will be **formally recorded in the minutes** to ensure transparency and accountability.
 - d. These rules will apply to all matters, including grant applications, planning items, and community events.
- vi. Commitment to Improvement:
 1. It was recognised that in a small community, individuals often serve multiple roles. This makes the need for transparency even more critical.
 2. The council committed to upholding clear, fair procedures to ensure that all applications and matters are assessed impartially.
 3. The infographic on micro grant criteria and process, now validated by South Lanarkshire Council, will be circulated and used as a standard reference for future grant assessments.
- c. Corrections to the Minutes of the Meeting Held on 24 March 2025.
 - i. A member of the public raised a concern regarding the accuracy of the minutes from 24 March 2025, specifically related to an implied commitment of £500 from the emergency (savings) fund to support the Dolphinton Hall. The concern was that a statement made at that time had not been recorded in the minutes, and a later reversal or clarification created confusion. The Council acknowledged the issue and agreed to record the concern formally in these minutes. No formal amendment to the March minutes was made, but the discussion is noted here for the public record.
- d. Minutes Publication Process – Review and New Procedure.
 - i. A discussion was held to review the current process for recording and publishing minutes and to address concerns about delays, transparency, and public access.
 1. A member of the public raised a concern about how the Council corrects or amends inaccuracies in previously approved minutes.
 2. The secretary, who is responsible for drafting the minutes, acknowledged the difficulty of transcribing accurately from complex recordings—particularly when multiple people speak at once or when audio is unclear.
 3. He confirmed that every effort is made to produce a thorough and accurate record, and welcomed input from other Council members to improve clarity and completeness.
 4. The Council agreed that while full accuracy is the goal, a more transparent and structured process was needed to support both internal review and public engagement.
- e. Man Shed Grant (Historical)
 - i. Background: £500 grant issued 2 years ago for noticeboards not spent due to COVID-19 closures.

- ii. The Council acknowledged that all previous minutes clearly recorded the hall closures as the reason for the delay and affirmed that no fault lies with the Men's Shed.
- iii. It was clarified that, under South Lanarkshire Council grant conditions, any funds not spent within 12 months must be returned, regardless of reason.
- iv. This requirement is non-negotiable and linked to how BMCC's overall allocation is calculated year to year.

f. Dolphinton Hall update.

- i. An update was provided by a community member involved in reopening and refurbishing Dolphinton Hall, which had been previously closed.
- ii. The hall is in the process of being brought back into community use, with the goal of hosting events such as the upcoming Flower Show.
- iii. Final compliance steps are underway, including obtaining an electrical safety certificate.
- iv. The community group (charity) pursuing use and possible acquisition of the hall described challenges related to lack of secure tenure, which limits access to long-term grant funding.
- v. There was acknowledgement that the situation has created a chicken-and-egg scenario: funding requires control of the asset, but asset purchase requires up-front funding.

11. The next BMCC meeting held on the 7th of July 2025 at the Elsrickle Hub (formerly Elsrickle Village Hall).