



**Preston and Abbey Community Trust  
Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting  
Held at Abbey St Bathans Village Hall  
19<sup>th</sup> February 2026 at 18:00**

Ref	Present: James Robson (Chair), Victoria Dobie (Secretary), Pip Chandler (Treasurer), James Dobie, Scott Holmes, Ian Repsch  Administrative Officer: Kat Chisholm	Action
1.	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● JR opened the meeting and noted, with sadness, the recent passing of Bill Laidlaw. Trustees reflected on his contribution to the community and the Board extended condolences to Bill's family.</li> </ul>	
2.	<p><b>Introductions and Apologies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No apologies were received; all Trustees were present.</li> </ul>	
3.	<p><b>Conflict of Interest (VD)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Paths project was noted as a potential conflict of interest, and clear boundaries would need to be maintained regarding ownership and decision-making for any agenda items related to this project.</li> <li>● SH declared two conflicts of interest: firstly, with Agenda Item 11 (Preston Village Hall); and secondly, due to his role as Treasurer of the Berwickshire Association for Voluntary Service (BAVS).</li> <li>● Trustees confirmed that any material conflicts would be managed appropriately should formal decisions be required.</li> </ul>	
4.	<p><b>Minutes from Last Meeting (paper attached P1-190226)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record.</li> </ul>	

5.	<p><b>Action Log Review (paper attached P2-190226)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The action log was reviewed. Most actions were either in progress or included within the current agenda. No additional matters were raised.</li> </ul>	
6.	<p><b>Treasurer's Report (PC) (paper attached P3-190226)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Trustees reviewed and discussed the PACT financial paper circulated in advance of the meeting.</li> <li>The PACT bank balance as of 19 February 2026 was reported as £153,309.64.</li> </ul> <p><i>Fund Investment Strategy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PC advised that Triodos Bank had confirmed that debit and credit cards are not available to charities.</li> <li>The Trustees considered practical arrangements for managing payments in the absence of card facilities. It was suggested that suppliers could be encouraged to issue pro-forma invoices in advance of payment deadlines to assist with payment planning and cashflow management.</li> <li>Trustees noted the relatively low rate of return currently achieved on funds held with Triodos. PC agreed to review available interest rates, explore short-term term deposit products (3–6 months), and confirm any restrictions arising from funder conditions before bringing options back to the Board for consideration.</li> </ul> <p><i>Financial Reporting Strategy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PC advised that a meeting with Greaves West &amp; Ayre was scheduled for 20 February 2026, to also be attended by SH and VD.</li> <li>The Trustees discussed the need for clearer differentiation between PACT's various funding streams within financial reporting. It was noted that improved clarity and transparency would be beneficial in annual accounts and in tracking expenditure against individual funds. Trustees agreed that work on this would be progressed offline with revised reporting formats or proposals to be brought back to a future Board meeting.</li> <li>VD agreed to provide a summary of the currently understood dates when each wind farm is due to stop generation and community benefit fund payments.</li> </ul>	<p>PC (PACT110)</p> <p>PC, VD, SH (PACT111)</p> <p>VD (PACT113)</p>
7.	<p><b>Community Events</b></p> <p><i>Burns Night, 24th January 2026 (IR)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The event was reported as a success, with 56 attendees, reaching maximum hall capacity.</li> <li>Thanks were formally recorded to Keith and Carol Dickson for their significant contribution to organising and supporting the event.</li> <li>A summer event is being considered for August, with further liaison planned with Keith Dickson regarding format and arrangements.</li> </ul>	

	<p><i>Event Planning Strategy (VD) (paper attached P4-190226)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following discussion at the PACT Board meeting 15<sup>th</sup> January 2026 Trustees confirmed that four principal events would form the core event programme for 2026. These are: Burns Supper (January, already held); Abbey Summer BBQ (August, led by IR); Children’s Christmas Party (December, led by VD); Christmas Drinks in Preston (led by PC).</li> <li>• Trustees agreed that additional events could be organised either by the events team or by resident volunteers. Examples discussed included quiz nights, pub nights, life support training, the Borders EcoFlowers spring garden tour, and a Christmas wreath workshop.</li> <li>• Trustees emphasised that residents will be encouraged to propose and lead such events, with PACT providing financial and practical support where appropriate.</li> <li>• It was agreed that clearer communication about the support PACT can provide would encourage wider participation. Promotional support, including guidance on available financial and practical assistance, will be provided via Mailchimp and other community communications. The intention is to ensure residents understand how PACT can assist while maintaining transparency and appropriate oversight.</li> <li>• It was noted that ABPCC has agreed with the planned events outlined above, and the principle of encouraging residents to stage community events.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>Community Communications (IR)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IR confirmed willingness to lead the layout of the next community newsletter but emphasised the need for written content contributions. Potential contributors include Joy Dobie, Wendy Reid, and other trustees as required.</li> <li>• A proposed publication date of May/June was discussed, to align with summer events, Local Place Plan updates, and summaries of recent grant awards.</li> <li>• Trustees agreed that this item will remain on the agenda, aiming for publication ahead of the August BBQ.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p><b>Local Place Plan (VD)</b></p> <p><i>COABP Action Plan (VD) (paper attached P5ab-190226)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VD presented a paper outlining progress on the Community Action Plan following completion of the Local Place Plan (LPP).</li> <li>• It was noted that a short summary of the Community Action Plan had been intended for circulation to all households and for use as an ongoing reference document. An initial draft had been prepared by Community Enterprise following the community meeting which prioritised projects arising from the consultation process.</li> <li>• Trustees discussed the scope of the draft. As currently written, it reflects all consultation outcomes, including matters led by the Community Council and longer-term objectives that may not be achievable within PACT’s present capacity or resources. It was</li> </ul>	<p><b>VD (PACT86)</b></p>

	<p>recognised that both PACT and the Community Council could be judged against commitments set out in the published Action Plan and that it is therefore important the document is realistic, deliverable and clearly prioritised. Progress updates could be reported annually at AGMs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VD proposed that (a)The Community Action Plan reflect PACT’s delivery plan, focusing on projects that appear achievable, subject to further scoping; (b) The plan should clearly indicate anticipated timescales (short, medium or long term); (c) The introduction should clarify that some consultation ideas are not currently included due to feasibility constraints, but that all projects identified in the LPP will remain under review and may be revisited within three to five years, or earlier if opportunities arise; (d) The plan should follow a tabular layout similar to the previous edition; e) Trustees are invited to comment on the draft table content before finalisation.</li> <li>• Trustees were broadly supportive of the approach, agreeing that the Action Plan should reflect realistic priorities and provide a clear framework for delivery and review.</li> <li>• Further detailed discussion on strategic alignment and implementation will follow at a separate strategic session after this Board meeting.</li> </ul> <p><i>Summary of Available Windfarm Funding (paper attached P6-190226)</i>  <i>Spending to date (paper attached P7ab-190226)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trustees reviewed summaries of available windfarm funding and spending to date. The papers highlighted unrestricted, restricted, and previously allocated funds to support budget planning and grant allocation decisions.</li> <li>• Discussion noted the importance of distinguishing between funds held in the bank and sustainable annual income when considering long-term commitments, including staffing or new project initiatives.</li> </ul> <p><i>Draft Budget (paper attached P8-190226)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The draft budget was discussed, noting income received to date, projected allocations, and the financial year-end of 31 March.</li> <li>• The Trustees considered anticipated income, including core funding and potential additional windfarm contributions, and reviewed projected expenditure across key areas such as village halls, administration, events, and grants.</li> <li>• It was noted that the current bank balances includes a significant portion of restricted or previously allocated funds, leaving a more limited uncommitted surplus for new initiatives.</li> <li>• Trustees agreed that continued monitoring of income and expenditure is essential to ensure that funding allocations align with community priorities and organisational sustainability.</li> </ul>	
10.	<b>Grant Applications (VD) (paper attached P9-190226)</b>	

	<p><i>Grant Applications Subcommittee Activity (VD) (paper attached P10-190226)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trustees reviewed the PACT Grants application spreadsheet and received an update from the Grants Subcommittee. The update included progress on applications, approvals, and pending reports.</li> </ul> <p><i>25-06-02-Elleford Show 2025 - Industrial Society – Final Report (paper attached P8-150126)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trustees noted the final report and raised no concerns.</li> </ul> <p><i>25-06-04-Berwickshire County Show 2025 -Final Report (paper attached P12-190226)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trustees noted the final report and raised no concerns.</li> </ul> <p><i>Community Beekeeping (£150.00 approved by email 06.02.2026) (paper attached P13-190226)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prior to this meeting, the Trustees discussed via email the application submitted for a Community Beekeeping site in Abbey St Bathans.</li> <li>The Board approved £150.00 for a beginner’s beekeeping course by email on 06.02.2026 with the funds coming from Aikengall. This meets the PACT Charitable Purpose (B) the advancement of education, with the overall aim of the application meeting the PACT Charitable Purpose (M) the advancement of environmental protection or improvement.</li> </ul> <p><i>Duns PlayFest 2026 application (papers attached P14ae-190226)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A detailed discussion took place regarding the PlayFest application. The proposal includes free tickets for residents, a contribution towards a play leader and an event in Abbey Village Hall.</li> <li>Trustees queried the level of organisational reserves and whether grant funding was necessary in this instance, noting that funding decisions must take account of financial need as well as community benefit. It was agreed that resident benefit must be clear and proportionate to the funding requested.</li> <li>It was agreed that a response from the applicant is required before final determination. VD will update Trustees once a response has been received.</li> </ul> <p><i>25-08-01-PrestonStitchersHallHire – Final Report not received</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A final report has not been received despite four previous requests. Trustees agreed that KC would provide PC with the final report form to follow up with the applicant.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>11.</b></p>	<p><b>Community Projects</b></p> <p><i>Preston Village Hall Project</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JD noted that solar panel installation had been delayed by weather but was now nearing completion.</li> </ul>	<p><b>JD (PACT78)</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Battery installation is scheduled for 2–3 March. Due to contractor availability, the Local Energy Scotland deadline has been extended to 20 March 2026 to ensure project completion and compliance.</li> </ul> <p><i>Paths Project (JD)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An update was provided on discussions with local landowners. Conversations remain ongoing regarding access routes and potential development of a wider footpath network, including connections towards Cumledge and the river.</li> <li>The possibility of land release near the cemetery for parking associated with the church was noted. Ownership and liability considerations were highlighted.</li> <li>The project remains at relationship-building and feasibility stage. An update will be provided at the next meeting.</li> </ul>	<p><b>JD (PACT70)</b></p>
<p><b>12.</b></p>	<p><b>Village Halls</b></p> <p><i>Preston Village Hall Maintenance Grant 2025-2026 Submission (paper attached P15-190226)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VD noted that all documentation has now been received and the Trustees agreed that the maintenance grant may now be released.</li> </ul> <p><i>Village Hall Maintenance Grant Conditions Updated Terms and Conditions (paper attached P16-190226)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trustees agreed to improve the wording of the Terms and Conditions and to remove Point 9 (relating to the statement that PACT grants are made to promote community development in line with its charitable status).</li> </ul> <p><i>Village Hall hire charges (VD) (paper attached P17-190226)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VD introduced a discussion paper proposing that PACT approach both Village Halls to explore whether hall hire charges could be waived for certain community uses. The proposal suggested that hall hire be free for events open to the whole community or subgroups of the community, and for ABPCC and PACT meetings. Private or profit-making events would be excluded.</li> <li>Trustees noted that hall hire costs can act as a barrier to residents organising community activities. Removing this barrier was seen as a practical way to encourage greater use of the halls and support community cohesion.</li> <li>Two administrative options were considered: a fixed annual contribution of £500 per hall or a ledger system with invoicing for eligible events.</li> <li>Trustees agreed in principle to pursue a ledger-based system, subject to discussion and agreement with both Village Hall Committees. This arrangement will apply only to qualifying community events and not to private or profit-making activities.</li> </ul>	

<p><b>13.</b></p>	<p><b>Windfarm Communications</b></p> <p><i>Aikengall Ila Community Benefit (JR)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● JR reported that he followed up with Rob Fryer on 19 February 2026, as no response had yet been received.</li> <li>● Trustees discussed the metric used for calculating payments and information published online regarding funding levels. It was agreed that further clarification is required before concluding negotiations.</li> <li>● The Board agreed to continue discussions to seek clarification and, if possible, negotiate an improved rate, while also considering the implications of accepting the current offer.</li> </ul> <p><i>Annual Report Penmanshiel Community Benefit Fund 4.2025to12.2025 (papers attached P18ab-190226) (information only)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Trustees noted the report. VD agreed to assume responsibility for annual submission each March.</li> </ul> <p><i>Crystal Rig 1 Repower Wind Farm – funding timetable (paper attached P19-190226) (information only)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Funding timetable noted for information.</li> </ul>	<p><b>VD (PACT102)</b></p>
<p><b>14.</b></p>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No additional items were raised.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>15.</b></p>	<p><b>Future Meeting Dates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• April 16th – Preston Village Hall</li> <li>• June 18th – Abbey Village Hall</li> <li>• August 20th – Preston Village Hall</li> <li>• October 15th – AGM at Abbey Village Hall</li> </ul>	

## **Strategy Discussion – Not Part of the Formal Minutes (Trustee Working Notes)**

The Board held an extended strategic discussion on long-term sustainability, wind farm income, reserves, staffing and medium-term community priorities.

### **1. Financial Position and Sustainability**

Trustees reviewed current financial projections in the context of long-term planning.

Based on current estimates:

- Approximate annual core income: £55,000, excluding potential additional income such as Aikengall IIa.
- Estimated annual commitments (village halls, administration, events and grants): circa £47,000.
- This leaves a relatively limited uncommitted annual surplus under present arrangements.

It was noted that approximately £150,000 is currently held in bank accounts; however, this includes restricted funds and previously allocated sums. Trustees emphasised the importance of distinguishing between cash currently held; and sustainable recurring annual income when considering longer-term commitments such as employment or major projects.

It was acknowledged that headline bank balances can create a perception of financial flexibility which is not reflected in annual income projections. The Board agreed that future decision-making must be grounded primarily in sustainable income rather than total cash held.

Trustees also reflected that income assumptions should remain cautious, particularly where future wind farm arrangements or repowering decisions remain uncertain.

### **2. Reserve Policy and Grant Allocation**

The Board agreed that a formal reserve approach is required.

It was agreed in principle that:

- Approximately £50,000 should be maintained as a contingency reserve, representing around six months' operating costs and provision for unforeseen expenditure.
- Of this, approximately £25,000 reflects annual running costs, providing operational security.
- Funds above this level may be considered for project delivery, subject to commitments and funding restrictions.

Trustees discussed the importance of avoiding structural reliance on reserves to fund recurring expenditure. Reserves should provide resilience and risk management rather than substitute for sustainable income.

Trustees further agreed in principle that:

- External grant awards (to organisations outwith the immediate Community Council area) should be capped at approximately £15,000 per annum, as a guideline rather than a rigid ceiling.
- This cap is intended to prevent over-commitment and ensure sustainability.
- Flexibility may be exercised in exceptional circumstances, subject to annual review.

It was noted that clear communication of this principle will be important to manage expectations among repeat applicants.

In relation to investment, Trustees agreed that it would be prudent to explore short-term interest-bearing accounts for reserve funds, provided liquidity is maintained and funder conditions permit this.

### **3. Wind Farm Funding – Lifespan, Conditions and Endowment Options**

The Board discussed the longer-term context of wind farm funding.

It was noted that:

- Most wind farm agreements are based on an anticipated operational lifespan of approximately 25–30 years.
- Funding duration may change if sites are repowered or recommissioned.
- Clarification of the assured funding period for each wind farm would be helpful for long-term planning.

Trustees acknowledged that repowering may extend funding in some cases but cannot be assumed, and that long-term planning should avoid reliance on optimistic projections.

Trustees also noted:

- Certain funds are treated as unrestricted within the terms of their agreements, subject to overarching fund conditions.
- Penmanshiel funding may allow up to 10% for administration, though this should be confirmed against the agreement.
- During earlier negotiations, an externally managed endowment fund had been proposed by a funder, but with associated commission costs.

The principle of establishing a legacy or endowment fund was discussed at length.

Trustees acknowledged:

- Uncertainty as to whether funders would permit funds to be retained and invested rather than spent annually.
- That governance and cost implications would need careful consideration.
- That any endowment model must not undermine the delivery of current community priorities.
- That a phased approach could be considered in future, allocating small proportions of new or exceptional funding streams rather than diverting core annual income.

Members considered the balance between:

- Setting aside funds to build long-term resilience; and
- Using current income to deliver immediate community benefit and potential staffing support.

It was agreed that:

- An endowment fund should remain a long-term aspiration, not an immediate commitment.
- Clarification should be sought from funders regarding permitted retention and investment of funds.
- If additional funding (e.g. Aikengall Ila lump sum payments) is secured, allocation of a proportion toward a legacy fund could be explored at that stage.

#### **4. Staffing and Delivery Capacity**

The Board revisited the question of employment support.

Based on current projections and limited annual surplus, Trustees agreed that:

- No employment commitments should be entered into until additional funding is secured.
- Long-term salaried roles would require reliable recurring income, not reliance on reserves.

Alternative models were discussed, including:

- Part-time employment;
- Project-based appointments;
- Self-employed consultancy support for defined pieces of work;
- Phased project delivery aligned with confirmed income.

Trustees noted that even part-time employment could represent a significant proportion of annual surplus and therefore materially alter financial risk exposure.

It was recognised that while staffing support could increase delivery capacity, it would represent a significant proportion of annual income under current funding levels.

Trustees agreed to continue operating within existing voluntary capacity while maintaining flexibility should additional funding be confirmed in future years.

#### **5. Community Priorities and Water Supply**

The Board discussed medium-term priorities arising from the Community Action Plan, including private water supply issues.

It was recognised that:

- Private water supply concerns affect a significant number of residents.

- Any financial intervention would require clear, transparent and equitable policy principles.
- There is potential for community division if support mechanisms are not clearly defined.

Trustees agreed that:

- A formal policy framework would be required before considering financial support.
- Any approach must be consistent and fair to both private and public supply households.
- The issue should be treated as a medium-term strategic matter rather than an immediate financial commitment.

Trustees agreed that intervention in private infrastructure raises complex questions of precedent, eligibility, and proportionality of support.

It was also noted that a previously funded borehole at the Village Hall remains incomplete and may require further investment (pump, storage and filtration) to make it operational as part of resilience planning.

## **6. Agreed Strategic Position (Summary)**

Trustees agreed the following working principles:

- Maintain a contingency reserve of approximately £50,000.
- Cap external grants at approximately £15,000 per annum (guideline level).
- Avoid staffing commitments until sustainable additional funding is secured.
- Treat the establishment of an endowment fund as a long-term aspiration.
- Seek clarification from wind farm funders regarding funding lifespan and permitted fund use.
- Explore short-term interest options for reserve funds where appropriate.
- Base future strategic decisions primarily on sustainable income projections rather than total funds held.

It was agreed that further strategic discussion would continue informally over an informal dinner in March. A Doodle poll will be circulated by VD.