

2025 I&E Highlights

Architects

Scottish Borders Design Awards 2025 – *Trimontium Museum* won the Placemaking Award and *Earlston Primary School* won the Large Project Award, recognising quality, character and contribution to the Borders' built environment; this recognition strengthens SBC's design reputation and showcases best-practice delivery in public architecture.

Catering

National recognition – *Anne-Marie French* achieved joint first in the street food category at the Annual Catering Conference (building on ASSIST FM School Cook of the Year 2024); this elevates SBC Catering's profile and validates service innovation while *inspiring great practice across the service*.

Service continuity at West Linton PS – *Helen, Izzy and Janette Lothian* responded to a kitchen electrical failure and still delivered full meals; pupils were well fed as planned, safeguarding health and wellbeing and avoiding disruption. *Headteacher Jenni Curson wrote that the soup provided on the day was "some of the best I've ever tasted."*

Food for Life Scotland Partnership – Soil Association commended ongoing National collaboration with *Debbie Hosie, Elspeth Lean* and the Catering team; continued compliance and quality assurance supports healthier school food standards and positive inspection outcomes.

Convenors' Christmas Lunch – Delivered a well-received corporate event under resource pressure. This annual event recognises the importance of bringing together Elected Members and key partner agencies together, to reflect upon the achievements and challenges of the year, strengthen partnership working and showcase the exemplary hospitality standards provided by the Council. These events take a significant amount of effort and thanks to all the team involved *Susan Serjent (Catering Coordinator), Nicola Lothian (Unit Manager Berwickshire High School), Alistair Fitzgerald (Catering Delivery Driver of school meals), Elspeth Lean (Catering Nutritionist), Karen Clarkson (General Assistant Cafe HQ), Moira*

Wright (General Assistant Newtown St Boswells Primary School), Janette Lothian (Catering Coordinator), and April Whittet (General Assistant Cafe HQ).

Cleaning & Janitorial

Peebles High School & Galashiels Academy opening readiness – Cleaning & Catering enabled timely opening; operational readiness of a major education asset was assured. *Cross-Council feedback highlighted the team's long hours and "behind-the-scenes" professionalism in the final weeks to opening.*

#YourPart award – *Walter Scott (Janitor at West Linton Primary)* – Recognised for support during a missing-person search; this strengthened public trust and highlighted the service's civic contribution.

HQ preparations – *Bruce Hannay (HQ Caretaker)* gave up annual leave to prepare HQ for a high profile event; ensuring safety of public and staff, and enabling democratic participation under challenging conditions.

Emergency Planning

Prevent (Contest) – The Home Office annual assurance report highlighted strong governance, oversight, multi-agency partnership, clear referral pathways and youth guidance. SBC's statutory duty performance was independently validated, reinforcing partner confidence in the approach taken and plans in place.

Engineers

Hawick Flood Protection Scheme (FPS) – The scheme collected the prestigious BCIA Environmental Award for the Hawick Flood Protection Scheme in London in October. This is now the third significant award that this project has collected alongside the Geotechnical Award that was won in the summer 2025 and the CECA Scotland – Scottish Civil Engineering Award's Project of the Year and Resilience Award at the end of August. These awards recognise the vision of Scottish Borders Council and its members over multiple Councils; the benefit of partnership working both within the Council and with our regulatory partner organisations; the support of the people of Hawick in working with us over nearly 16 years; and the hard work of the Project team.

2025 I&E Highlights

These awards recognise engineering excellence that enhances community flood resilience and long-term risk reduction.

Bridges & Culverts Inspections – Competitive procurement (14 bids) appointed AECOM on a 3-year term, led by *Stuart Moir* and *Maria Dickson*; specialist capacity is secured to manage structural risk and inform maintenance investment.

Estates Management

Asset Disposals Pipeline – We concluded several disposals including Lauder Roads Depot (0.78 ac) where an offer of £255k (with no conditions) was accepted for a landscaping business, creating three jobs immediately and scope for growth; receipt and local employment were secured through proactive marketing and member briefings. A £250k offer was accepted for Maxmill (Kelso) (no conditions). These sales will realise capital receipts to support the Council's capital investment plan.

The Estates Team also secured the sale of a site on Commercial Road in Hawick for a new McDonalds drive thru restaurant.

Fleet Management

Fleet modernisation (~£5.45m orders, 2025/26) – supporting the renewal across ~450 vehicles and ~700 plant.

Investment within the workshop in procuring Stertil-Koni wireless mobile column lifts has improved maintenance inspection turnaround, enhanced operative safety, and increased frontline fleet availability.

Apprentice Bogdan Bratila took the initiative to refurbish one of our service pits. After two days of sanding back corroded metal and another two days painting, the result is a safer, cleaner and more efficient workspace. A great example of pride in the job and learning by doing. Bogdan was supported by *Alex Fair* and the *Fabrication team*.

Tar Tanker procurement – a UK build was secured at £270k vs typical >£400k; major cost avoidance for a critical roads asset through resourceful procurement.

Fleet Factors, a managed stores solution has been implemented – Delivered collaboratively with Legal, Procurement, IT and Finance. This solution significantly improves stores parts visibility, improves supports and strengthens cost controls.

Support to Waste – New compactor and three telehandlers delivered; transfer station throughput and collection reliability improved.

Fleet Recruitment & Workforce – Through careful recruitment, helped by increased desirability, the fleet workforce capacity and resilience has increased and stabilised.

Major Projects

Borders Innovation Park 2 (Tweedbank) – £3.86m City Region Deal funding secured and construction work began on-site start in October. This economic development project will see the creation of business and employment opportunities and will help continue growing momentum of the Tweedbank development at Lowood.

Tweedbank Care Village – Sod-cutting and public open day (26 Sep) coordinated by Andrew and Lynn Medley. SB Contracts began groundworks and enabling works, a significant milestone for a challenging project and sees further development at Lowood.

Earlston Primary School – officially opened in January 2025, since then demolition and Phase 2 works have been completed.

Peebles High School & Galashiels Academy – these significant capital investment projects have been completed with Peebles High School opening in November and Galashiels Academy opening in January 2026. Phase 2 demolition and external works will progress during 2026.

Network Infrastructure & Asset Management

April – December 2025

- 480 white lining requests have been completed, 76% of all requests made. The number of white lining requests reduced by 26% on the same period in 2024.

2025 I&E Highlights

- 9,859 reactive patching repairs have been carried out on 948 roads.
- The Pothole Pro has completed 1,534 repairs on 23 roads. This has resulted in 9,583 square metres of repairs on 69.5 miles of the network.
- We have carried out 24,607 jet patch repairs across 690 roads.
- We have cleaned 7,046 road gullies.
- We have completed 88 planned capital jobs, totalling £3.914m. These include carriageway surfacing, surface dressing and patching, carriageway patching, footway works, drainage works, embankment works, street lighting and bridge works.
- We have received 832 roads reactive patching enquiries and 80 claims. In the same period in 2024, we received 1,110 enquiries and 123 claims. 2025 has seen a 25% reduction in enquiries and 35% reduction in claims.
- The sign shop has completed 264 requested, taking an average of 5.8 days to complete a job.
- We have cut 2,383km (1,464 miles) of roadside verges.
- We have filled 1,318 salt bins and completed two refills.

Roads liability repudiation rates have improved from ~68% to 73.6% in the quarter. 80% is the target. This metric reflects the growing reliability of our road network, as evidenced by a reduction in insurer refusals to settle vehicle-related claims. This improvement is driven by enhanced data collection on road conditions and our sustained commitment to timely and effective repairs across the network.

CONFIRM, an application to help manage public infrastructure assets, control budgets, and maintain predictive and preventive maintenance tasks has been rolled out within Roads, Street Lighting and Parks & Environment Teams. This application provides real-time asset management now drives prioritisation, compliance and safer environments and helps improve customer/ community experience in reporting and receiving updates on works.

The Roads, SBc Contracts and Parks & Environment teams continue to deliver a winter

service. This sees our staff turning out every day of the year including Christmas Day, working in high risk situations to ensure our network resilience in some really difficult wintry conditions.

Delivery credited to Keith Millar, Daren Silcock, Donald Scott (now retired), Alex Young, Jason Hedley and the many staff making up the Roads/ SBc Contracts squads.

Parks & Environment

Refer to Carol Cooke's update (appended).

Passenger Transport

2025 saw significant work undertaken to deliver new bus services in Peebles and Galashiels, at pace (within 8 weeks), in the face of service withdrawals and growing community need. This involved:

- Using Workforce Mobility Project insights (led by Ewan Doyle), the team mapped real travel demand to underserved areas; this anchored the redesign in lived passenger patterns.
- The team built in later evening and Sunday options (eg, Melrose Gait), added journeys (eg, West Linton) and improved connectivity between the BGH/Tweedbank/Edinburgh; creating a network that matched how people actually travel.
- Operating permits, registrations and supportive letters were secured to replace gaps left by Borders Buses; regulatory compliance and continuity were locked in under tight timelines.
- Five new vehicles procured and prepared (safety features tested; destination screens configured).
- Seven drivers were recruited from 20+ applicants and trained for customer service and route familiarity; capacity and quality aligned from day one.
- A simplified fare structure and back-office ticket machine build were delivered; SIRI real-time screens replaced static timetables so delayed services remained visible until arrival; clarity increased trust and reduced anxiety at stops.
- Members were kept briefed; vehicles and routes test-run; positive public feedback fed rapid tweaks; risk fell and buy-in grew.
- More than 1,000 passengers in week one, growing to approx. 17,000 journeys on Gala

2025 I&E Highlights

75A/75B; a comprehensive town service now covers both sides of Galashiels six days/week, 12 hours/day, at net cost just under £60k p.a. after revenue; drivers' rapport with patrons is evidenced by daily compliments (and home-baked scones!).

Two wheelchairaccessible coaches expanded trip capacity, enabling large savings (eg, Dalguise £3,600 vs £14,000; Robinwood £500 vs £1,500; Langlee–Newcastleton £272 vs £600) while prioritising accessibility.

Core Supported Network extended with Borders Buses at current price to 31 Dec 2027 (bucking national cost trends); budget stability and continuity achieved.

A new cross border proposal (with NCC) for Duns - Kelso and Wooler which will improve service cover and deliver an approximate £30k pa. net saving.

Woodland Class pilot (Old Melrose) arranged minibus between school runs (£72/ trip vs £90+ fuel); outdoor learning expanded at lower cost.

Interchange safety (Galashiels) - Joint effort with Cleaning & Janitorial, Police Scotland and Border Buses; passenger safety and asset protection improved.

Two of our Passenger Transport Drivers, *Shirley Nicol* and *Jason Roberts* volunteered an accessible minibus for a regular passenger with life-changing injuries on Christmas Day.

Drivers raised £750+ in their recent Cash for Kids campaign in December.

Delivery credited to Gordon Grant, Dan Cathcart, Carol Mablethorpe, Marcin Paszkiewicz, Chris Turner, Nicola Laing and Ellie Grieve and the whole Passenger Transport Team.

Property Management

Teviotdale Leisure Centre (Hawick) was re-opened after new heating plant installation and resolution of plant issues stemming from historic under-maintenance; led by *Lauren Green, Ray Cherry and the Property Maintenance Team*. This

work saw the resumption of public leisure services with improved reliability.

Jim Bunyan led reuse of energy efficient LEDs from Selkirk HS, Halyrude PS and Peebles HS across other properties, saving £3,750+ on equipment (paying only labour/misc.), cutting energy and maintenance costs and supporting circular economy goals. This model is also replicated across the Council estate by the Council's hard working Property Officers *Gareth Smith, Steven Drummond, Steven Forrest, Lauren Hendry and Jonathan Jones*.

Jenny Fausset has undertaken a programme to improve water demand management, working with Business Stream to review and cleanse data, expand automated meter readings and reduce costs (standing charges) and use our systems to identify issues. Successes already identified at West Linton Primary School and St Ronan's Care Home.

Significant contributions from *Avril Marriott, Ray Cherry and Lauren Green* to progress actions to support the Live Borders Review while maintaining property support and strengthening Property Maintenance capacity; providing organisational focus and momentum maintained under complex constraints.

SBc Contracts

105 jobs won from 214 tenders, totalling £7.6m in value, including 8 main contracts (£5.8m), realising a net profit of £661k.

They have completed civil engineering works at 113 sites, works on 47 bridges and multiple surfacing, patching, surface dressing programmes.

They have secured a framework agreement with Midlothian Council to strengthen external income opportunities and Border-wide delivery capacity.

They have delivered a range of works to support community outcomes improving road quality, street condition improved and community satisfaction.

2025 I&E Highlights

They have been recognised by APSE UK Performance Networks as finalists for Best Performer and Most Improved for Roads.

Delivery credited to Mark, Ian Dickson, Peter McNulty (now retired), Kenny Fotheringham and the team of staff within the team at SBc Contracts.

Waste Management

After our residual waste supplier went into administration, the Waste Treatment team have undertaken re-procurement and obtained SEPA approvals to commence a contract with a new supplier, ensuring statutory service continuity and reducing operational risks. *Led by Ross Sharp-Dent, Maggie Cripps, Kirsty Torrie, Scott Roberts and Collections/Treatment teams; with support from Elected Members (“good management leading to good results”).*

A new Transfer Station compactor has been procured and is in operation which will help maintain a good productive management of waste and strengthen working relationships with our Waste Treatment suppliers and hauliers.

In-cab auditing devices fitted to collection vehicles (with staff & TU support). In-cab devices will help deliver an efficient and effective waste collection service, by offering:

- Real-time information on route progress;
- The locations of all bins on each route, and guidance on how to get to them;
- Identification of special requirements for bin collections;
- Hazards/risks for specific bin collections or areas on routes eg. schools;
- The ability to record issues arising when collecting waste eg. road access issues, bin not presented etc; and
- Ability to report on all data collected.

There was a successful multi-agency response to an RCV fire during Storm Floris. With Waste Collection staff and Scottish Fire & Rescue Services working together, they ensure that staff safety was protected and service continuity was maintained.

WUDS contingency arrangements we put in place to safeguard local business continuity and reduce disruption, through successful negotiation by *Kirsty Torrie*.

Lauder and Melrose residents praised Waste Collection crews for reliability and friendliness; service reputation and satisfaction increased.

Events & Recognition

Scottish Borders Council was recognised at the Scottish Thistle National Awards for Outstanding Sporting Event for the Tour of Britain Men’s Race on 3 September 2024. The Scottish Borders played host to the Grand Depart of the Lloyds Bank Tour of Britain Men Race, with a 180km route starting and ending in Kelso. The total economic impact in the Scottish Borders for the 2024 Tour of Britain was £1,801,021 plus an additional £685,408 in media value (advertising rate relating to television shots that promoted the Scottish Borders), resulting in a £17:1 return on investment. The event received very positive spectator feedback and significantly elevated the Scottish Borders profile locally, regionally and nationally. This national win reflected the significant cross-Council effort and showcased the Scottish Borders. Specific recognition goes to *Jane Warcup, Denise Brydon, Cameron Balfour, Gillian Douglas, Neil Inglis, Brian MacFarlane, Andy McLean, Stephen Mitchell, Adam Drummond, Philippa Gilhooly, Simon Hislop, Gary McGuire, John McBay, Chris Bryant, Sam Smith, EventScotland and SOSE*. Borders’ tourism profile elevated and event management capability showcased.

John Curry | Director Infrastructure + Environment