

Dunbar Community Council Election

Candidates' Personal Statements

ACTON, Catherine

I believe in the community of Dunbar. In the years since Dunbar Community Council was formed the town has experienced many changes. These have brought challenges and opportunities. The town has adapted, and that says a lot for the local communities within.

There are more changes ahead, as is the nature of life, new challenges and new opportunities.

The role of the Community Council is to gather the views of local people and make sure these views are heard in the right places at the right time. These include the local authority, health services and other statutory groups and organisations that influence life in Dunbar. That does not guarantee that they will be acted on, but I believe people have the right to a voice.

There are many groups and organisations in the town, with willing and skilled people carrying out various roles to enhance life and build community. Amongst these are Dunbar Christmas Lights Team and Dunbar Civic Week. The ongoing effort put in by the members of these, and many other teams, to provide the results they achieve is immeasurable.

Dunbar Community Council has a role in encouraging and enabling these efforts, as well as maintaining close links with local groups and projects that improve well-being, help grow the economy, and offer training and development opportunities.

Your views are important, you deserve to be heard.

If I am elected, I will try my best to work within the community council to enable this.

ANDERSON, Beverly

I have been a business owner for 6 Years, running Wishing Tree by the Sea in Lauderdale Park. The vision for the business was to run a vibrant café with community focussed events and activities programme in the heart of Dunbar. We have grown from a team of 4 to 19 staff creating employment and training opportunities for the local community.

I sit on the Dunbar Traders Committee.

We introduced a successful Food and Craft Market to Dunbar, showcasing 80+ small craft and food producers, with live music and an audience of 600 - 800 monthly visitors.

We collaborate with the Dunbar Music festival and The Ridge Recovery festival. I have been a member of the Dunbar Civic Week committee for 4 years running successful weeklong community events.

We need to promote Dunbar as a key tourist destination. We have a great range of independent shops, wonderful accommodation, an abundance of outdoor activities and a creative events programme and we must shout about it to a wider audience. I was an Active Schools Co-ordinator for 12 years before moving to East Lothian. My skills lie in bringing people together to make things happen, building positive partnerships with schools and local agencies, providing work placements, volunteering opportunities and engaging the community to help our town grow. I would be focussed on representing your views on key issues facing Dunbar, such as parking charges and working together listening to your ideas on how to improve our town to the Dunbar Community Council.

BELL, Gayle

I have been involved with the Dunbar Civic Week committee for the last four years and have been asked to lead on this as of September 2025. This will see me bring in new team members and build Civic Week to an event that the whole community can enjoy, that is inclusive and accessible for all.

I have a vast array of experience:

- Led third sector organisations for over two decades working in community settings, including East Lothian.
- Professional experience of engaging with Area Partnerships and contributing to ELC action planning.
- Good awareness and understanding of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) and Dunbar and East Linton Plan (DELAP).
- Co-chair of the Quality of Life Group, that feeds into the Poverty Working Group.
- Delivery and management of community projects based in Dunbar – Youth CAB, Dunbar Community Shed, and employability projects.
- Involved with Dunbar Grammar School Fundraising Committee for over one year (Treasurer) and assisting with fundraising events.
- Resided in Dunbar for over 28 years and been involved in many community activities within that time. Currently a Coastguard Rescue Officer.
- Responsibility for the Music Festival part of Dunbar Civic Week, as well as the branding and social media over the last four years.

BELL, Jacqueline

I have lived in Belhaven since 1989. I am a retired hospital social worker. I have been a member of Dunbar Community Council (DCC) since 2000 aside from 2007-12 when I was an East Lothian Councillor for Dunbar & East Linton Ward. I am a member of a number of other community groups including Belhaven & Spott Church, Sustaining Dunbar, Friends of Winterfield, Dunbar and District Amateur Dramatic Group, Dunbar Community Woodland Group, Dunbar Community Bakery, RAGES,

East Lothian Community Rail Partnership. I chair Dunbar & East Linton Health and Wellbeing Group.

I have particular interests in Health and Social Care, environment, heritage, transport and planning.

I am keen to ensure that DCC keeps residents informed, listens to the views of local people and represents them to ELC, Health, Scottish Government and others.

BELL, Simon

I have lived in Dunbar since 1989 and have been active in community life over the years, including being a member of the Dunbar Lyric Group and also a founder member and sometime convenor of Dunbar Community Woodland Group (DCWG). I also represented DCWG on the board of what was then Dunbar Community Development Company (DCDC). I bring to DCC a lot of relevant experience and knowledge through my professional career as a qualified forester and landscape architect as well as a university professor with a personal chair in 'Landscape and Wellbeing'. I have a lot to offer regarding the ways we can improve the built and natural environment of Dunbar, especially the woods and the coastline. I would like to see the rate of development in the town paused to allow for infrastructure to catch up and to ensure that ELC upholds its obligations to the environment and to strengthening the opportunities for cultural activities in the town, to balance the priority given to sport in recent years.

CAMERON, Stuart

I have been an active member of Dunbar Community Council for just over 2 years and have enjoyed being involved within the community in which I was born 'n' bred. My part within the council is working with associated parties to try and resolve anti-social behaviour and to try and connect with the young residents in the town.

I'm currently in the process of trying to make contact with the local Grammar School, in which I'm hoping to create a link between the CC and the school by listening to the needs of the kids and create an easy access route for them to have their views heard, something I'm hoping to progress on in the near future.

I also work alongside the Community Police Officers and attend the CAPP meetings quarterly to relay any residents' concerns within the town, from road safety to anti-social behaviour.

However, my main hope is to serve my town again, with dignity and decorum and be able to put fellow residents at the heart of what I do, and where possible support in times of need and confusion.

Going forward I would like to be part of a newly elected group who are interested in creating great links with the community and look to be listening to the community concerns.

COULL, Alexander

I retired in December 2022 after having served with East Lothian Council for 47+ years. I was a member of the Drawing Office team in the Planning Department. Various job titles and departments saw me getting involved in architectural and civil engineering projects. My last years at the Council were spent working alongside SEPA working on Flood Risk Management Plans for the Forth Estuary plan area. At the Council I was involved in survey and other preparatory work on both the Musselburgh and Haddington Flood Protection Schemes. Local projects that I have worked on include, West Barns New Bowling Green, Dunbar Swimming Pool, Replacement Bridge at Dunbar Harbour and the Groynes and Breakwaters at the East Beach. I was also the flooding consultee for ELC in major housing developments etc.

Currently I serve as a Director of Winterfield Golf Club Ltd and Dunbar Community Development & Heritage Trust (Hallhill).

I am also the Club Secretary of Dunbar Rugby Football Club.

HARPER, Kirsten

I have lived in Dunbar since 2013 with my two children, Ollie and Caoimhe, who go to the local Grammar and Primary. I am a self-employed bookkeeper and work for a number of businesses throughout East Lothian. I am currently the Treasurer for Dunbar Primary Parent Council and Bleachingfield Centre.

I am passionate about strengthening community connections and ensuring that everyone's voice is heard. I believe a thriving community is built on collaboration, inclusivity and shared responsibility, and I want to contribute actively toward continuing to shape a place where people feel proud to live.

Dunbar, our town, is a place where I wish to continue to engage positively with the community. This includes with ELC over the parking charges and whatever outcome that may hold. With the police and the schools to create more opportunities for engagement across all age groups. To advocate for positive impacts on renewable contracts and to support the continued work on the heritage and appearance of the High Street.

I am a good listener and communicator and can bring these skills to mediate differing perspectives and find common ground.

RENTON, Hannah

I would like to become a member of the community council because I am passionate about contributing to the area where I live and work, and I believe my experience and skills would be of benefit to the community. As the owner of a local hotel for a number of years, I have gained a strong understanding of the needs of residents, visitors, and local businesses. Running a business has taught me the importance of

communication, collaboration, and practical problem-solving – qualities that I would bring to the council.

Through my work, I have built positive relationships with traders on the high street and understand the challenges and opportunities they face. I believe the council has an important role in supporting local enterprise, strengthening the town centre, and ensuring that businesses and residents feel connected. I would like to contribute ideas around local events, marketing initiatives, and projects that could encourage more footfall and pride in the high street.

I have also been involved in community projects through my daughter's school, which has given me insight into the importance of creating opportunities for families and young people. I would like to see more intergenerational activities, school-led initiatives, and community events that bring people together.

Overall, I am enthusiastic about the chance to represent local voices, support positive change, and work with others to make our community a vibrant, welcoming, and sustainable place to live and work.

ROBERTSON, John

I have lived in Dunbar for 16 years with my wife Lorraine and our Border Collies. I previously was Chair and Vice Chair of the Medical Centre Patients Group for 4 years. I work as a Leadership Development Consultant where my clients have included, British Aerospace, BP, Shell, Lothian Buses and Heineken Global.

I greatly admire the work carried out by the Community Council, which in present times is very important to ensure the quality of lives of all people is maintained at a high level.

There are so many important issues to be dealt with that I believe Community Councils should be given more say in challenging and supporting our Council.

I would be interested in becoming a Committee Member.

I enjoy travel and visiting other countries where you can learn a lot from different cultures. I have trekked many times in Nepal and generally enjoy meeting people.

ROLPH, Ree

I am a resident of Dunbar High Street and chair the Dunbar Town Centre Residents Association. I sat on the Community Council from February 2025, liaising with the town centre action group, and arranging repairs to the Corn Exchange. I'm actively involved in development projects to bring local buildings into community management and use. I've helped to organise and run community consultations into the future of the High Street and opposition to parking proposals, as well as several events about the history and heritage of the town. If elected, I would seek to continue developing community assets and capacity around the town centre and help to ensure that our community can steer its own path into the future.

SMITH, Laura

I would like to join the community council because I care deeply about Dunbar and want to contribute to its continued growth and wellbeing. Having lived here all my life, I have a strong sense of belonging and a real understanding of the town's history, values, and needs of its people.

I am closely involved in local life, personally and professionally. My son attends Dunbar Grammar School, I work at the primary school, which gives me daily insight into the experiences of young people and families in the area. I believe this perspective is valuable in ensuring the voices of children, parents, and educators are represented in community discussions.

I am currently chair of Bleachingfield Centre, where I have gained experience in leadership, decision-making, and supporting projects that benefit residents. In addition, I have long been active in youth organisations. I have worked with Cubs and Scouts, last year I was proud to open the first Squirrel group in the area, providing younger children with opportunities to learn, grow, and feel part of the community from an early age.

I would bring enthusiasm, commitment, and a collaborative approach to the council. I believe strongly in the importance of creating opportunities for all generations, supporting local groups, and strengthening the sense of community that makes Dunbar such a special place to live.

Joining the community council would allow me to continue giving back to a town that has given me so much.

I am also secretary and treasurer for Countess playgroup for the past 4 years.

TAYLOR, Bea

I am fully invested in the Dunbar Area, having lived here for over 8 years, and brought up my family here. I also run a shop on Dunbar High Street so have daily contact with many locals.

I have recently sponsored the local girls hockey team, make many donations to local events and am an active member of the DTA committee.

I am particularly interested in sustainability, sports and the threatened parking charges.

URQUHART, Jean

Now retired, I worked in the NHS for 32 years, then did voluntary work in education and ecology.