

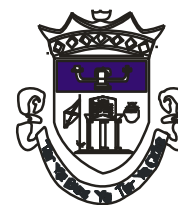
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# Hawick Community Council

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## MINUTES OF MEETING OF HAWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

held via Zoom on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021 at 6.30pm

Present: Cameron Knox (Chairperson) Marion Short (Vice-Chairperson)  
Jim Adams (Treasurer) Margaret Hogg (Secretary)  
Brian Bouglas John Campbell  
Braden George Wilson George  
Keith Irving Duncan Taylor  
Alan Wear Euan Welsh  
French Wight John Wilkinson

Attending: Councillor McAteer Councillor Paterson  
Councillor Turnbull Helen Clyne, School Captain, HHS  
Harry Scott, School Captain, HHS Colin Telfer, FH

There were 14 members of the public also in attendance, including Jason Marshall and Graham Ford on behalf of the Hawick Paper, Kirsty Smyth, Southern Reporter, and David Henderson, Station Manager, TD9 Radio. Also attending were Jamie Leslie of Muirhall Energy as guest speaker (Item 7), accompanied by colleagues Mhari Frain, Director of Business Operations and Graeme Kerr, Head of Planning.

- 1. Chairman's Opening Remarks** – The Chair welcomed everyone to the monthly April meeting of HCC and thanked everyone for their attendance via Zoom. He went on to express deep shock and sadness at the passing of the Duke of Edinburgh on Friday past and extended condolences to HRH The Queen, the Royal Family, and their extended families and to everyone who had lost members of their family during the pandemic. A minute's silence was held as a mark of respect. In concluding, he advised that the meeting would be being recorded by HCC and the media present for reporting purposes. If anyone wished to raise a question, they should raise their hands.
- 2. Declarations of Interest** – The Chair advised that if any members had a conflict of interest in any matters being raised, they should make it known at the start of the discussion.
- 3. Apologies for Absence** – An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Councillor Ramage.
- 4. Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021** – The Minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting – Proposed by Duncan Taylor and Seconded by Wilson George.
- 5. Matters arising** – The Chair reported on the following matters arising:  
Unpaid Work Team – this matter was ongoing however one person had been seen to be carrying out litter-picking who was not considered to be an SBC employee.

Borders Railway Extension – Film Project – it was noted that funding had been granted at the last T & L Partnership meeting. The Project had now started, with the Alchemy Film Group now looking at archived material and for people to speak on behalf of the Communities to be included in the film. Further information on this would follow.

Rotary Club £250 – it was noted that cheques for £62.50 each had now been delivered by the Chair to the four households at Crowbyres. Monies had been well received by the residents who stated they were glad they had not been forgotten about by the Rotary Club and HCC.

Electronic Speed Indicators Signage – poles were now in respective locations, but the installation of the speed units was still awaited. Advice received was that these would be installed within the next 2 weeks.

HCC Litter-picking scheduled for 28<sup>th</sup> March – it was noted that the Great Borders River Clean-Up was scheduled for weekend 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> May, and possibly HCC could re-schedule their litter-picking on one of these dates. Members would be informed nearer the time if this date allows HCC litter-pick to go ahead.

- 6. High School Pupil Update** – Harry Scott reported on pupils being back to school part time for 3 weeks now. Half of the school had been in for 2 days and the other for a different 2 days, alternating weeks to allow room for social distancing in classes and to follow the full timetable and allow pupils to see their teachers.

Masks and social distancing in classrooms were in place to stop the spread, and to protect teachers. All pupils had provision for 2 lateral-flow tests per week to ensure no Covid. Pupils were still required to sit outside for breaks and lunches as before, for safety purposes.

Harry advised he was really pleased to be back into school to see people and to get a bit chat and return to what he termed as “proper” teaching, and to see senior teachers, learn and bounce off each other’s ideas and generally get back to proper schooling.

Senior School pupils were to have assessments when returning after Easter holidays. The school was providing revision assessments which he considered were extremely helpful on exam techniques and much better on a 1:1 basis. He had particularly enjoyed Mr Taylor’s class and learning about politics and the history of Scotland and those affected by the Great War.

Helen Clyne advised of having assessments after Easter Holidays as part of Block 3, running for 2 weeks and split up by subjects. Assessments were to gauge where pupils were and what they needed to work on. There would then follow assessments for 3 weeks in May and it was those results which would determine grades. These assessments would be in socially distanced conditions, in silence, and generally conducted as if these were real exams.

Pupils were also putting together a Year Book for S6, which was something to look forward to, with hopefully some funding coming from the school to help towards high costs. Leavers’ Hoodies were also being arranged, possibly sourced from local businesses in Hawick to support them. And finally, due to restrictions, pupils were unfortunately still unable to hold a Prom or Graduation, however, were looking to an alternative, such as the Annual S6 Boys v Girls Hockey Match as something nice to end off the year.

The Chair asked Harry and Helen about their preferences on Assessments or Exams. Helen was in favour of exams which she would have had the whole year to prepare for, whereas considered the Assessments had somewhat been sprung on them. Harry's preference was for neither but if he had to choose, his preference was also for exams.

Duncan Taylor stated he was proud of Helen, Harry, and Abigail and indeed all students over the whole year making clear that they had done the school proud. Those who had not been in school could not imagine what that might be like.

The Chair thanked Harry and Helen for their attendance.

- 7. Guest Speaker – Jamie Leslie, Muirhall Energy** – The Chair welcomed Jamie Leslie, Project Manager, Muirhall Energy, responsible for the proposed Teviot Wind Farm, to the meeting. He outlined that Muirhall Energy wished to establish a 75-turbine wind farm on land bordering the A7 east of Teviothead and stretching from Penchrise to the Skelfhill area. The height of the proposed turbines were 220 metres tall.

Mr Leslie began by introducing two colleagues accompanying him. They were Mhari Frain, Director of Business Operations and Graeme Kerr, Head of Planning at Muirhall Energy. Between the three of them, they would be happy to answer questions following his presentation, which would be shared with HCC members thereafter.

It was noted that Muirhall was a Scottish-based developer, based in South Lanarkshire near Carnwath, and had been developing renewable energy projects since 2003. In 2011 they had developed their own Muirhall wind farm next to their offices and had almost finished on construction of their Crossdykes project near Langholm. They had been in the south of Scotland area for some time now, however this area was new to them.

Muirhall took plans all the way from the start, through early feasibility stages, planning, right through to construction and then overall project operations. Muirhall would be able to be contacted at any time during the project. They had a vision to do things differently to other developers, stating they were not listed on the stock exchange and not chasing arbitrary profit margins. They wanted to make a real impact on climate change and to reduce dependency on fossil fuels and to see that the communities' benefited from their wind farm project. To date they had generated £2m in community investment. This project had great potential for businesses in this area, e.g. construction, hotels, fencers, ecologists and he wanted to hear from everyone how they might want to work with Muirhall.

They provided guarantees, as could be seen from their leaflet recently distributed within the town. They had an industry-leading £7000 per megawatt of installed capacity for their Community Investment Fund, meaning £3.6m available for community funding, with largely unrestricted criteria, making this easier to obtain. Examples of use of funding were for Superfast broadband for better connectivity, new sports facilities etc however communities themselves knew best how they might benefit from these monies. They were therefore happy to provide their support to any community projects.

They offered shared ownership on all their projects and this arrangement was currently being heavily promoted by the Scottish Government. The local communities involved in the Crossdykes project were almost there in buying a 10% stake in that wind farm and would receive further monies on top of their share of Community Investment Funding. This was an excellent opportunity which would be offered for the Teviot Wind Farm, and financial advice

and support from Local Energy Scotland and other independent financial advisers could be provided.

They also had an Initial Investment Fund which covered the gap between the start of construction to when the Community Investment Fund kicked in. This was used in the Crossdykes project, where 50 groups and projects shared more than £100k. These monies were well received within the communities. For the Teviot Wind Farm project, £500k would be provided at the start of construction until the Community Investment Fund was up and running.

Muirhall had also purchased the Old Post Office in Hawick which was currently being refurbished and brought back into the community. The building would be used as a Hub for the development of the Teviot project where people could access with any questions on the development, see plans etc.

Whilst a significant number of jobs would be created with this project, they did not know exactly how many but advised they had commissioned a leading economics consultancy to provide a report to identify details on job numbers for during construction and operational phases. They had partnered with Borders College Hawick Hub to start the process of creating opportunities for further education in e.g., engineering etc and for this training to be held within the Scottish Borders.

Finally, it was noted that Muirhall were keen to explore the delivery of reduced energy prices for people close to this development. Mhari Frain advised that this had been a constant source of frustration to them, that energy generated locally did not provide the benefit of discounted prices locally. She advised they had been working over the last 9 to 12 months with suppliers, such as Octopus Energy, on the potential for working in partnership to offer reduced energy costs for those people close to their wind farms. This had proved too much of a challenge and had been abandoned. They had now contacted Offgem directly to start the process of becoming an Energy Supplier themselves. This process would take a minimum of 12 months, but she hoped that if Teviot Wind Farm passed Planning, they would be able to buy their own electricity and provide this at discounted prices to those living around the wind farm. They had engaged with Bristol City Council and were using their model to deliver low-cost electricity generated locally to those closest. Finally, when this process was completed, Muirhall would require developing a team to deliver this, and that team would be based in Hawick.

Mr Leslie then advised that, as a company, they were interested in the environment, not only through climate change, but how they could bring further benefits to the local environment. They had committed to significant environmental enhancements such as native broadleaf planting, they had isolated populations of red squirrels in some of the conifer woodlands and were creating corridors to connect these populations up. They were also involved in the restoration of some peatland areas which were degrading and were trying to increase numbers of black grouse in areas where these had been diminished. They were also keen to do a significant amount of riparian woodland planting all along the burns, to create food for vertebras, create shade for fish and most significantly to assist with flood defences.

In concluding, he advised that this was an all-encompassing project and he had given an outline of their plans. Over the next few months, they would begin a proper consultation process and looked for feedback on their initial plans. A scoping request had been

submitted to the Scottish Government and the next stage would be for public exhibitions hopefully in person, subject to Covid restrictions. More consultation would then follow with a final application submitted later in the year. He encouraged feedback to ensure this was a project which benefitted everyone.

The Chair then asked for questions.

Marion Short, Vice-Chair referred to the stated 75 x 220m tall turbines and asked why this was such a large wind farm project and raised concern at the height of turbines.

Mr Leslie agreed that this was a large site being 37 square kilometres from Teviothead and east from there. The site had great potential for windfarm development. The layout for the scoping exercise was an indicative layout and a conversation starter. They were at the start of the process and keen to hear this type of feedback. Initial analysis work had been done to look at the height of the turbines, the majority of which were 220m to tip, and from knowledge of the area, the key views of these turbines would be from the A7 and Hermitage Castle. The tip heights would be reduced in these areas to 180m to reduce their visibility in these areas.

French Wight considered that the bulk of the presentation focused on monies available to local communities however even if most people were against the wind farm being built, it was likely to still proceed. He questioned how that could be considered as working with the local community. Also, 660 feet of turbines would have a major impact on the local communities.

Mr Leslie responded saying that visually they were designing the project to minimise the impact and having consultation with the communities would allow any constructive comments or any viewpoint important to the local area to be taken on board and worked around. They were committed to the project and wanted this to genuinely benefit the people locally and at the same time to produce a lot of energy to assist them achieve delivery on their climate change targets. These were legally binding in Scots Law.

French Wight then raised his concerns that the amount of electricity being produced by wind turbines across the Borders far exceeded its requirements and suggested that this power was predominantly for the benefit of the central belt. He questioned then why the project was not being built in the central belt. In addition, this project would meet with wind farms at Windy Edge and Fa'side, with a tremendous impact on the local communities.

Mr Kerr stated that to contextualise why they were looking at this site, apart from this being a very windy site, they had looked at central and local government planning documents and policies. SBC had stated this site might potentially be suitable for wind farm development. They did not touch national parks which were not considered by Government as suitable for development. There were then Group 2 areas which may have potential for development but with significant constraints. This site was in the lesser constraints Group 3, which still required due planning processes and environmental assessment processes to be gone through, but the reason why they were looking at this site, with good wind speeds, as were other wind farm developers.

In terms of electricity, Scotland supplied 97% of its own electricity demand from renewables however supply predictions were increasing. In terms of energy use, as motor cars for example were moving towards more renewable forms, from petrol and diesel to electric,

additional demands on electricity use required supplies to be obtained from somewhere. He stated it may be that there were going to be more wind farms locally than Hawick itself needed however the location had been identified as potentially suitable for wind farm development to meet the ever-increasing demands for electricity over the coming years. In concluding, he stated that Fa'side had not to date been approved and there were reasons why one wind farm application would pass through planning and another would fail however that would not detract from them making an application. The cumulative assessments process would take account of the consolidation of wind farms in the area and make an assessment on which, if any, were appropriate.

Marion Short advised that there were plans afoot to set up a Borders National Park and questioned whether Muirhall had done any research on this and whether there was any crossover in the land for their proposed site and the land identified for the Borders National Park.

Mr Kerr confirmed that they had worked on the current situation but as had been pointed out by Mr Leslie earlier they were in the early stages, and in terms of the scoping response this was the perfect time to raise those points through the planning process. It was difficult to predict what might happen, there may be a Borders National Park or a Dumfries & Galloway National Park or another significant project altogether, so as part of the scoping submission, these types of issues should be submitted to be taken account of.

Councillor McAteer thanked Muirhall for their presentation and went on to express his concerns. He was surprised at the scale of this project given Muirhall's track record of being generally a 9-10 turbine Company and their going to this industrial standard, right at the entry edge and into the heartland of the Scottish Borders, with a huge impact. He queried how they were going to achieve this and why they were stepping up to that scale, asking if it was purely about profit.

He advised there was huge cynicism locally and whilst the Local Development Plan for Hawick & Hermitage area did designate development, which as a local Councillor caused him concern, he stated there was more wind at the top of the Eildon Hills, but there would be no chance of any wind turbine development there.

Given that cynicism, and the fact that this level of plan was Government granted, he asked how would Muirhall listen and respond to the local community. He had received countless complaints already and queried how the community would be listened to, and how would they convince people that they would listen and address their concerns and not let the matter go to the Scottish Government in the hope that they would just agree to it first.

Mr Kerr responded advising that the Planning System encouraged a diverse range of opinions which the Council and the Scottish Government had to take account of. There were a range of views - some people felt strongly and did not want wind farms and to see more turbines whilst others did. There was a misnomer about success rates of applications to the Scottish Government, but recent statistical evidence showed that there was no more likelihood of a successful consent, than e.g., all the local authorities combined. The Scottish Government was not necessarily a soft touch so to speak. Due to its scale, this application would be determined not under the Planning Act but under the Electricity Act, as a matter of law rather than their preference or choice.

Muirhall had looked at the planning system and had been attracted to the site due to existing Local Plan policies. Over 2 years, they had done the survey work, they had carried out several bird surveys, a lot of landscaping works and had tried to understand what any constraints might be. Had any significant constraints been identified, then the project would have been stopped, as many projects did not get to this stage across the industry.

Listening to the consultation - They considered this was a good site for a wind farm and would take all views into account and reflect these in their final design for submission. These views would be considered by the decision-makers, but they were hopeful of reaching a balanced opinion, and one which would then allow consent for them. The worst thing would be if people did not want to engage or speak with them, then that would not help their understanding of concerns. There may be a turbine located near a bench, or listed monuments etc, that they did not know about, so it was understanding locally, sensitive issues so that they could take these into account. He concluded it had been worthwhile to have taken the time to explain why they were looking at the area, what the system was and how the system would deal with differences of opinion.

Philip Kerr requested an update on the Eskdalemuir situation. He had been advised that a large section would be written on this within the application itself, and there were budget implications, but he wanted to understand why they considered they might be able to proceed with this scale of development, when the current rules stated that they should not be able to.

Mr Kerr advised that Eskdalemuir was effectively a nuclear listening station to find out if the Russians or North Koreans were testing nuclear bombs. There were two arrays of listening devices pointed generally in an eastern direction to pick up on any vibrations in the ground. Some years ago, it had been established that vibrations coming from some wind turbines initially built were potentially having an impact on the arrays and ability of the listening stations being effectively able to pick up on these vibrations.

There had been different iterations of the budget set 10-15 years ago however following works between the Ministry of Defence (MOD), private contractors, and wind farm bodies, regarding the vibration issue and mitigation of it, budgets were amended and increased for wind farms applying for planning consent within 15km of these Eskdalemuir arrays. Budgets were now calculated on what was termed in the industry as a "Frankenstein" turbine, the worst aspects of three wind farm turbines, and considered a conservative and worst-case scenario.

The Fa'side scheme was inside 15km of Eskdalemuir and would require doubling or more of overall budget. The Fa'side application had been submitted and the MOD operated a queuing system. As projects went through the planning system, and were refused, they effectively lost their budget which was then allocated to the next project. If Fa'side disappeared, that would release a significant amount of budget. That project was progressing towards a Public Enquiry probably later in the year. If Fa'side were removed that would not solve the entire issue for Teviot but it would make a difference. Small differences in distances from the Eskdalemuir arrays could have a significant difference on impact on budget. A turbine within 10km could blow a budget but one within 50km the impact would be minimal and there was a sliding scale in between. It was conceivable that Teviot would not have as significant an effect as Fa'side but would have some effect and this would be flagged as part of the scoping exercise and dealt with in the environmental impact assessment. There may be a recalculation of the budget again which did not for instance

take account of background noise or there may be a change to how budgets were allocated to turbines- this was a Frankenstein turbine - and there was a suspicion that turbines used now were much quieter than even 5 years ago. Technology had advanced significantly. The increase in height was another change. If the budget increased or the budget allocation changed and there was still an issue, what could then be done. Muirhall had appointed a private consultant to monitor work being done at their Crossdykes wind farms to identify the base line scenarios as the problem was that the MOD did not have any pre-wind turbine data from existing wind farms within the consultation zones. They were making assertions at the impact of the wind turbines, but they did not actually know what the impact of the turbines were. Muirhall were also working with some turbine manufacturers to look at impacts of the turbines – were they quieter, and what could be done in terms of foundation design.

There would be a range of solutions, taking some time to sort out over the course of the assessment of the project but they were confident that through budget re-allocation or re-adjustments or through engineering and scientific assessment and analysis, a solution would be found to allow Teviot to move through. Philip thanked Mr Kerr for his good summary of the Eskdalemuir issue.

Returning to Teviot Wind Farm, Philip Kerr then asked about the ZTV range. He had assumed this would be 50 or 60km due to the size of the turbines and asked when the visual imagery would be available. People would be interested in the key views. He had visited Penchrise Pen and had considered there would be issues with stacking and was keen to see the imagery.

Mr Leslie confirmed that the scoping request had identified 45km and would also produce a 10km in the scoping as well. In terms of visualisations, they were looking to get comments from layouts first, and then produce visualisations. Consultation events would be held later in summer, hopefully in person but at least blended online and in person. There would be plenty of opportunity to look at the visualisations and provide comments.

Philip Kerr then asked Mhari Frain about Bristol Energy which had been taken over due to £50m losses. He had been involved working with the banks and EnergieKontor to design a local electricity discount scheme and he asked what the problems were for Muirhall in giving within 10km a set amount for people to receive, asking what the issues were with regulators and the likes to do this.

Mhari Frain advised that Muirhall had looked at several options and other peoples' experiences. They considered it should have been relatively straightforward to work with a recognised provider to deliver this, but this proved not to be the case. Bristol had redeveloped their whole approach and had been upfront about this, and it was hoped to learn from their mistakes. She considered Muirhall might make mistakes, but they would try to be as transparent as possible and were determined to make this happen. The Scottish Government were also aware they were keen to do so and had offered them their support in developing the scheme. It was too early to say how they were going to do it, but they were determined it would be done.

Mr Leslie requested if Philip Kerr had any lessons from his work on developing such a Scheme, he would be happy if these could be shared.



Marion Short stated that Hawick was blessed with much history, heritage and traditions and there were many organisations in the town who would have an interest in this proposal. She sought assurance, despite planned public exhibitions and consultations, that these organisations would be in line to be briefed and consulted with too.

Mr Leslie confirmed this would be the case and asked to be made aware of any individuals who she considered should be contacted. He advised that another reason for choosing this site was that over the 37sq km space, there were only 3 scheduled monuments, which was low density for such a large area. They could have extended this project further but chose not to, due to the history of the area. They had covered the environmental enhancements from an ecological perspective, but they were also looking at the site from an archaeological perspective – could they create walkways across the site to enhance its history. They were keen to involve people who knew the area well and had ideas, to see if the wind farm could facilitate those ideas. This early consultation process allowed for ideas to be included and a project designed for everyone.

Charlotte Ecombe asked how the wind farm fitted in with proposals for the Borders Railway.

Mr Leslie confirmed this would not be impacted at all and they wanted to work with the Railway. He queried why the railway could not be electrified and stated Teviot Wind Farm could go a long way to help facilitate that. They considered the railway had done amazing things for towns further up in the Borders and they would be keen to determine if there was anything they could do to add support in bringing the railway to Hawick and further south.

Ms Ecombe considered they would be supporting the railway with electricity, but she did not think tourists would be keen on having yet more turbines.

Mr Leslie responded to advise that the nearest part of the route would be in forestry and there would be a large section of tunnel at Whitrope to be navigated for going south. The route very much followed the valley a lot. As the railway project advanced, they could carry out visual assessments from the railway but with large tunnel and woodland areas, he considered, albeit could not say for certain, there would be minimal visual impact.

The Chair thanked Jamie Leslie and his colleagues for an informative presentation, stating he would like to welcome them back for further updates. Mr Leslie stated he would be happy to return to further meetings.

8. **Police Scotland Report** – The Chair considered the report showed improvement in reading from the previous month, albeit there remained several assaults, anti-social behaviour, and vandalism incidents.

The Vice-Chair agreed that there had been slightly better detection rates this month but raised concerns at the high increase in the numbers of anti-social behaviour cases, including nuisance calls relative to COVID. The N Peal building had also been subjected to vandalism and anti-social behaviour and remarked this had to be quite unnerving to residents in the area. She asked if there was any progress in relation to what was happening with the N Peal building.

Councillor McAteer advised that Councillor Marshall had been highly active in working with the Fire Service regarding incidents at this building and was known to have had a recent

meeting with the new Fire Chief and Scottish Borders Council. Unfortunately, in Councillor Marshall's absence, he could not report further on this.

Duncan Taylor expressed frustration at not having the Police in attendance for immediate response on their Report. There had been two separate Covid breaches where one case resulted in a fine and the other a warning. He was interested to learn why different treatment had been applied in the two cases as this was not reported on.

Councillor Turnbull advised he would query this with the CAT and Sergeant Paul Begley and report back to HCC. He reiterated that anyone could contact their local Ward Members with issues as they had direct contact with the relevant Officers.

Councillor Paterson advised that if any members became aware of any people in houses where they should not be (in terms of Covid restrictions), then they should report this to the Police.

- 9. Treasurer's Report** – The Treasurer reported a closing balance of £27,253.67 stating this appeared high and drew attention to his Balance Sheet. He explained £600 of the HCC 1 fund of £1,873.69 was ringfenced from historical events at Wilton Lodge Park. Hawick in Bloom Fund was currently doing well, however costs of plants would reduce this substantially going forward. In relation to Foundation Scotland balance of £16,542.19, nearly £9,000 was received as this year's Grant which was currently being allocated. There were monies ringfenced for the Bandstand Events and Williestruther, the latter having been allocated an additional amount to cover the increase following an updated estimate. There was also a small amount outstanding to be paid by Scottish Borders Council. In all, once all monies had been paid, Foundation Scotland account would have around £900 remaining.

Councillor Turnbull asked whether the extra costs for Williestruther could come from the windfarm money. The Vice-Chair advised that the initial quote was supplied in 2019. The Contractor had again been contacted due to the delay in starting works and gave a revised quote, stating the increase in costs was due to a 25% rise in wood prices. The original cost of £3,400 was then enhanced to just over £4,000. Taking account of ringfenced costs for the bandstand events and the grants to be paid out shortly, this would leave a small balance and it was proposed this be retained to cover any further enhancements.

Councillor Turnbull queried because of the 25% increase in costs, whether these works should have been re-tendered for by those who tendered initially. The Vice-Chair responded to advise that previous contractors could not match the costs from Criminal Justice.

French Wight advised that because of the delay from 2019 when works were to be carried out, more deterioration had occurred, and this contributed to the increase in costs. He agreed that Criminal Justice could not be matched in terms of costs and that they were considered best value for money.

## **10. Meeting of HCC re the creation of sub-groups –**

- (a) Hawick Sporting Greats Board: The Chair advised of a recent Zoom meeting of HCC members where ideas were discussed at length regarding a Hawick Sporting Greats or Characters or Personalities Board and qualifying criteria.

It was agreed, after much discussion, that a Board could be erected based on the recipient(s) of the Honorary Provost's Achievement Award. This decision would need to be ratified at the next monthly HCC meeting and permission sought from the Provost's Council would also be required.

Financial-wise, costs are estimated at circa. £3,500 and costs could be funded from Foundation Scotland Grant for 2022, with the project completed next year.

Jock Campbell considered the Board should be erected before this tourist season. He suggested a Booklet be prepared and made available in the Hub to allow the public to view the history on recipients. The Chair advised however that time and financial constraints would not allow for the project to proceed this year and this would hopefully proceed in 2022.

Councillor McAteer stated he was sure that the Provost's Council would be happy to discuss this at their next meeting.

- (b) Feasibility of an Asset Transfer Proposal for Hawick (based on JLG Proposal): It was agreed that this be a 'watch and brief' regarding developments with the JLG Proposal for Jedburgh. It was noted that at present JLG were in discussion with Scottish Borders Council regarding clarification of financial funding before they progress further.

The Chair advised that any further information received from JLG would be circulated to HCC Members as and when received.

## **11. Public Forum & Town Issues**

- (a) Racist Graffiti – responsibilities for removal – Duncan Taylor advised of concerns raised with him by a member of the public on Facebook regarding racist graffiti. He was also aware of Councillor McAteer's dealing with this issue in the Hawick Paper. There was a KKK and a Nazi Swastika flag on the side of a shop in Hawick and this had been there for a while. He enquired as to who was responsible to paint over it - was it the shop owner or was it the responsibility of the Council or could a member of the public take matters into their own hands to remove offensive material? If so, would they get into trouble if they painted over it when it was someone else's property, even if it were for the right reasons? It had not been the first graffiti to happen in Hawick and would not be the last, and he sought clarification on the procedure for any next time - who to phone, and what to do in the case of no response.

Councillor McAteer advised that the Council's initial position was that rubbish and graffiti was the responsibility of the shop owner. He stated that might be the case except when criminal behaviour occurs, he considered the Council had a responsibility in taking mitigating action as a caring authority. He advised that he appeared now to be getting a more positive response from the Council but would like to get to a more formal position to address questions raised on whose responsibility is it. He stated this issue was all our responsibility but that the public should not proceed to paint over someone else's property. It is hoped to get to the position where the Council do help in dealing with criminal offending action to get to a better position on responding in the future.

Councillor Turnbull advised he had been in email contact with Councillor John Greenwell and Iain Davidson, SBC's Employee Relations Manager, on this matter. He proceeded to

read an extract from SBC's Equality, Diversity & Human Rights Policy and agreed to circulate a copy of the email content for distribution to HCC members.

Councillor Paterson concurred that this graffiti had been in situ for a long time and had been brought to the attention of the Police. This could not be condoned, and it was not acceptable in the town.

Duncan Taylor raised concern at the time taken for removal, and that it had taken a member of the public on Facebook to create a bit of a stir, and he felt that as a Community, this should have been taken care of a lot earlier. He hoped that a better response was indeed reached for going forward with these types of behaviour.

Sanne Gault (member of the public attending) stated that more information on the legality of someone painting over offensive graffiti would be welcomed, however, the Chair reaffirmed that the advice from Councillors was that members of the public should not take such matters into their own hands. He agreed that a quicker resolution though was required.

Wilson George asked if Criminal Justice could be engaged if works were required in a hurry. Councillor Turnbull advised that sometimes Criminal Justice did not have capacity for immediate response as workloads were scheduled in advance. Perhaps this could be achieved through the Network Manager System.

- (b) Groups within Hawick – Communications – Brian Bouglas sought better communication between groups working within the town e.g. HCC and the Volunteers Group and others who were all doing good work. He considered that Burnfoot was however often excluded, and this needed to be addressed as Burnfoot was part of Hawick, and perhaps improved communication between the various groups, and including Burnfoot, would bring more benefit to the town.

The Chair asked if it were considered certain groups meet up during the year and Brian suggested some sort of Central Hub of Information would be good, as many people in the town were not aware of what the various groups were doing.

The Vice-Chair advised that normally a representative from Burnfoot CC attended our meetings. Both she and the Chair were in regular contact with Billy Fletcher (Burnfoot Community Council) and had appraised him recently regarding the proposed Summer Market. It was agreed there was some communication however this may not be sufficient.

Philip Kerr, T&L Partnership advised that new funding arrangements would necessitate Hawick and Burnfoot CCs coming together to work on their joint funding share. This would address Brian's concerns regarding Burnfoot and encourage greater participation when working together on joint projects.

Councillor McAteer agreed that the T&L Area Partnership showed real potential for the future and way forward. SoSE had taken over the economic development roll from SBC and at a strategic level this was working ok. At a tactical and operational level this was also working ok. To address Brian's point, however, the co-ordination function in the middle was not working. There was a gap around responsibilities to join up on who was doing what and to ensure projects were interlinked to enable benefits to be delivered.

There were lots of great efforts by the various groups doing fantastic work in the town but on occasion groups did fall over each other through lack of communication when one group was unaware of what the other was doing. The need for Burnfoot and Hawick CCs to work together in terms of T&L Partnership funding was a good way forward.

- (c) Wilton Lodge Park (i) Tree-felling – Keith Irving considered more consultation was necessary regarding some of the trees being cut down in the Park. He raised concern at the number of trees taken down (around 20) in the last 5 years in comparison to the number planted (around 5). He expressed his concern that the mess from one tree at the top of the park could have been avoided by having a road closure in place to ease removal and asked Councillors comments on this.

Councillor Paterson stated when the view to the Museum was opened up, it was made clear to Councillors on the number of trees which would be removed, and assurance given that there would be a greater number planted. He undertook to investigate this further and report back to a future meeting.

It was noted from Councillor McAteer that SBC had a 5-year Strategy for trees, over which Councillors had no influence. He raised his concerns on the overall way in which trees were being managed, maintained, and protected. Complaints from the public regarding trees were an ongoing issue for Councillors, and there was a general lack of knowledge and awareness on actions taken by SBC regarding trees. He was pleased Councillor Paterson had agreed to investigate the matter further regarding trees within Wilton Lodge Park.

Councillor Turnbull advised that Jason Hedley was the responsible officer on trees and considered pressure should be placed on him to provide improved information.

Keith Irving agreed that much more was required in terms of maintenance of trees rather than felling them. He also questioned what happened with the timber from felled trees, stating this should be retained and used within the town and asked if this could be investigated. He then referred to trees falling at the Dunk corner. Flooding had caused 3 trees to fall already, and he considered that maintenance was essential to the island there to avoid further loss of other trees at this location.

French Wight advised that he had taken this matter up previously with Councillor Ramage and Councillor McAteer advised he had also been dealing with Duncan Morrison, SBC, on this matter as had other Councillors.

Councillor McAteer recommended that HCC write to Netta Meadows, CEO of SBC seeking an explanation concerning trees, including the point raised by Keith Irving re timber, and SBC's plans overall regarding trees in the town. Councillors would appreciate that support.

Wilton Lodge Park (ii) Control of Dogs – The Treasurer expressed concern at the control of dogs within the Park, citing two incidents where he had been nearly knocked over by uncontrolled dogs. There also remained the big issue of dogs fouling within the Park and owners failing to clean up after. He was concerned that uncontrolled dogs could have a more serious effect if children were knocked over, and that young mothers were having to manoeuvre their prams around the large amounts of dog foul. The Park was being

spoilt by uncontrolled dogs and he asked Councillors what could be done to rectify this issue.

Councillor McAteer advised of a recent meeting held with the Chief Legal Officer and Parks Officers to address these same types of complaints and in particular dogs approaching children. The question being raised was, could the Park have Byelaws, and the answer given was no. There were now no local Byelaws in place. He advised that SBC had employed a Dogs Officer under The Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010 who was responsible for complaints about dogs causing concern or alarm. The complaint process was not dynamic in that it required the person involved to report this and to provide a witness statement, as this was a criminal matter and the only route to deal with this threat. He understood this was a concern for people. He undertook to share information he had with HCC including contact details for the Dog Officer.

Councillor Turnbull agreed that this was a problem, with sports playing areas also at times being unable to be used due to dog mess on the pitches. Games had been cancelled for health issues and this was appalling. Owners were the issue and required taking more responsibility. There was an issue however in getting people to come forward and report incidents.

Colin Telfer (as Co-ordinator of Hawick Community Rugby) concurred that it had become normal practice for coaches to be supplied with poo bags and to sweep pitches for dog poo before children were permitted to use.

- (d) Graham Ford (as a member of the public) advised he had been in contact with Councillor McAteer and Sergeant Begley regarding the possibility of setting up an Online 'Hawick Watch' based on the previous Neighbourhood Watch Scheme but online. There were many petty crimes occurring in the town and being reported on Facebook to alert others, e.g., house doors being tried, and items being stolen from gardens etc. Many people were frustrated at the number of incidents happening but that nothing seemed to be being done.

The idea, which he was happy to take the lead on, would be to have Co-ordinators in various areas around the town to whom people subjected to these types of incidents could report and an alert could be issued to surrounding residents.

A CCTV database would be drawn up and where an incident occurred, like recent car windows being smashed etc, available CCTV could be checked, and Police alerted. Members of the public could again be the eyes and ears to assist the Police, whose resources were limited to any behaviour of this type.

Graham advised he would like to take this idea forward in conjunction with the Police and HCC in some capacity.

Councillor Turnbull considered this was fantastic news and referred to Future Hawick's "No Cold-Calling" initiative in different areas of the town however considered that getting volunteers may be a problem. He thought that the Police would provide their advice and support and wished Graham, and everyone involved in the project, every success in progressing.

Duncan Taylor advised that he had noted many incident reports on Facebook however expressed concern that these were not all being reported to the Police. There were 3 incidents only included in the monthly Police Scotland report to HCC to evidence this. The Police were therefore not being given any chance to investigate these other incidents. If all incidents appeared in our Police Report that would perhaps also help to increase their resources in Hawick. It should be promoted on Facebook to report all incidents to the Police in the first instance.

The Chair confirmed that this project would have the full support of HCC members and looked forward to further progress reports from Graham Ford.

## 12. Reports from sub-committees

- a) A7 Action Group – There was nothing to report on this Group.
- b) Christmas Event – It was noted from the Chair that the Christmas Lights were still up but that he hoped this would not be for much longer, once SBC's approval was received. Work would be required on Bert's Snowmen etc due to the weather battering of these.

The Vice-Chair advised that she had received excellent response from stallholders regarding the Summer Market and was in touch with the Reivers Festival Group for a loan of some of their gazebos.

- c) Hawick Common Good – Jock Campbell reported the sluice proposed at the Common Haugh had received the go ahead with costs still being investigated. There would be no charge for campervans using the Haugh. The Saturday Market at the Common Haugh required somebody to take charge of it. He had advised the Common Good Members of HCC holding a Summer Market and there was some discussion on either getting one person/organisation to take charge of the Saturday Market or form a Committee or members from HCC. Finally, the matter of the Earl of Minto Portrait was still ongoing.
- d) Hawick in Bloom – Margaret Hogg reported that following 60+ letters being issued in the previous month, to date the sum of £2,800 had been raised in sponsorship to help towards planting costs. It was agreed that this had been a great response from local businesses.

Brian Bouglas asked whether any further consideration had been given to Hawick in Bloom having a bowser. As hanging baskets would again not be being planted this year, it was explained that this matter had not been progressed. There were no plans also to have hanging baskets on the High Street as this was previously the responsibility of Scottish Borders Council. The Vice-Chair confirmed that SBC were responsible for hanging baskets previously on the High Street, but lack of funding had led to these being withdrawn. If Hawick in Bloom wanted to reintroduce hanging baskets on the High Street, then stress testing would require to be carried out.

- e) Wind Farms – Nothing further to report.

## 13. Updates from Community Partners

- (a) Foundation Scotland - The Vice-Chair reported that 18 applications for grant funding had been received which meant the available funding was oversubscribed. Applications

had been worked through and it was hoped these would be concluded shortly and to issue letters. She would provide the Hawick Paper outlining the successful recipients, award amounts and for what purpose.

- (b) Future Hawick – Colin Telfer, Acting Chair of FH, advised of 9 items to report.
- (1) CARS – it was noted that Brian Bouglas would be Future Hawick's representative on this Steering Group.
  - (2) Community Enterprise Manager – it had been confirmed that SoSE would be taking this forward in this financial year and a meeting had been set up for the end of the month to progress this.
  - (3) Teviot Wind Farm – A meeting had been held with Jamie Leslie and collectively Future Hawick Members had given their support to this project and would be monitoring developments closely.
  - (4) Wild seeding – an approach had been made to SBC to wild seed the Killinghouse Brae Banking and they were awaiting initial written confirmation from SBC to start works. They had raised £700 out of their own funds and were awaiting to hear the outcome of another funding application. There would be an annual upkeep of around £400 and they were seeking other funding avenues to secure this.
  - (5) Post-Covid Festival – they were looking at the possibility of holding a Post-Covid Festival on Hawick Moor. Preliminary talks had been held with various organisations and bands, but foundations were being put in place.
  - (6) Hawick Welcome – Hosts were being readied for the start of the season and delight was expressed at works starting on the sluice (waste disposal). A Campervan Rally planned for MossPaul Rideout had required to be cancelled. Plans for the New Year had also required to be cancelled. Campervans would however be returning at the end of June.
  - (7) St Leonard's Park Project – Information was still being documented for their next Steering Group Meeting to be held after the Easter break. Initial discussions would be on a phased approach, services, renewable energy, and options to be put to the public for consultation to be held later in the year.
  - (8) Covid Recovery – it was noted a second Shop Local Campaign was now in place and would be marketed on local media to help local businesses. The photography competition was ongoing and families, adults, etc were encouraged to enter. Cash Vouchers for prize-winners could be used in any businesses within the Shop Local Campaign.
  - (9) Cold Calling – signage for Wellington Court was now up, with a Lead Resident in place there. Fisher Avenue was still being surveyed however a Lead Resident was also in place there, and a potential third area highlighted as Buccleuch Road.

The Chair thanked Colin Telfer for his report.

- (c) T & L Area Partnership and T&L Community Fund 2021/22 Framework – The Chair reported that the Community Fund had now been paused until the Working Group had considered the model for funding to be implemented. The proposal was to have two funds – A and B, split 50/50 for the £42,000 budget, and split £21,000 to each Fund. For Fund A, Hawick CC and Burnfoot CC would have 2 shares and the rest of the CCs would have one share each. Fund B would see each of the Area Partners Place Plans reviewed by administration and assessed against a scored matrix system. A Meeting would be held week beginning 19 April to discuss proposals going forward with Scottish Borders Council Officers.



Philip Kerr confirmed that the changes were largely to achieve greater involvement in the Area Partnership itself, with each partner including the smaller communities getting access to their share of money and responsibility. Hawick and Burnfoot would get 2 shares each, meaning 4 out of the 10 shares of £2,100 per share for Fund A. Fund B was akin to the Community Fund as it stood now, except that a Panel would be made up from a combination of people from Hawick, Burnfoot and the rural Community Councils, to carry out assessments, rather than having Council Officers doing these in what he considered was in less than a transparent way. It was an opportunity to bring in younger people to CCs.

In addition to Place Plans, he would like more individual issues within the communities to be able to be discussed and to date there had been no real opportunity to do this. The revision of the Area Partnership would help that process.

There was a meeting with Council Officers on the Area Partnership scheduled later that week followed by the meeting on the Community Fund the following week and there were some matters where the Council's help would be required. The whole concept of the Area Partnership managing things themselves and the ability of perhaps involving younger people and being able to allocate monies the way the Partners wanted to, would be of great benefit. He thanked the Chair and members of Hawick Community Council as well as the rural communities for their support in this initiative.

Barbara Elborn advised that Type A fund was designed to be judged and assessed in each of the Communities. She considered Hawick was very much established and perhaps Denholm to a degree however the rest of the communities had been unable to enjoy the proceeds of wind farm monies. Budgets available to those communities were low due to Covid and other challenges. This Proposal would allow the wider communities to have their own pots allowing for more community engagement.

Transparency was another important factor. Previously the Partnership was not provided with all information on applications, only what SBC considered should be made known, so any wider picture was not known.

This Proposal also gave the opportunity for Partners to work in collaboration as was the case on the Railway Film Project, which was signed off. This was to the benefit of the wider T&L catchment area. Other issues with flooding, forestry and, as discussed earlier, trees at Wilton Lodge Park, as well as other urban and rural issues which needed special efforts and could not be done in silos, could be addressed. Having the funding and pulling together could really help.

On the matter of Community Engagement raised by Brian Bouglas earlier, and changing the way we work, the Council could be asked to invest in providing increased capacity to support the Community groups as they were being asked to do so much. Community Councils were just the frontline however there were hundreds of community groups doing lots of things as a volunteer network and getting more and more to do. This could not carry on without further support. Fundamental to this change, a Website/Hub was required where information could be shared, e.g. Development Plans to share what each other was doing and to allow more joined-up working together. It was all about joined up working going forward.

The Chair thanked Philip and Barbara for their input.

- (d) Scottish Borders Council's Review Working Group – The Chair reported this Review was ongoing and at the last meeting items worked on were the Code of Conduct, online banking, complaints procedure, and Wards for the Community Council elections. The next meeting would be held on Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 6pm. He would continue to report back to HCC members following meetings.
- (e) CARS Steering Group – The Chair reported that invitations had been sent out by Future Hawick to various community groups for representatives to ensure this was set up with a balanced community representation. A meeting would be held the following Thursday afternoon. Information from that meeting would be reported back to HCC at their next meeting.
- (f) Resilience Group – The Vice-Chair was pleased to report that requirements for Resilience Group assistance appeared to be coming to an end now that things were opening again. Only one or two more vulnerable cases remained.

**14. Planning Issues** – None.

**15. Correspondence** – None.

- 16. A.O.C.B** – (i) Wilson George raised the matter of poor conditions of High Street buildings citing a recent incident of roof debris hitting a car. He considered this required to be addressed as a matter of urgency. The Chair confirmed that SBC engineers had viewed the area, and safety zoning at ground level was in place around that area. It would be a matter for the building owners to address.

Councillor McAteer reported that Councillors had been on a call with Officers at SBC and had received assurance that they would be contacting owners to make them aware of their responsibilities. Officers were aware of the issues SBC required to address as their responsibility, however Councillors were assured that inspections were underway, and this situation would be addressed by SBC with the property owners.

Wilson George queried whether CARS funding of £15k could be used towards assisting owners. Councillor McAteer advised that whilst specific properties had already been identified for this funding, part of the funding could be applied for. The Council was encouraging anyone with funding issues to apply to this Fund.

- (ii) Referring to earlier discussions regarding Shop Local Campaign, Jock Campbell raised the matter of 4 or 5 large removal vans engaged for clearance at the Town Hall, and queried why local removal firms were not used, which he considered would have been much cheaper.

Councillor McAteer recommended that this matter also be raised with SBC's CEO when writing to her regarding trees, seeking explanation. It was agreed that there were plenty removal firms within the town who could have been used.

- (iii) Councillor McAteer considered along with him, that HCC might wish to comment on the huge success of the Reivers Festival. This had been reached worldwide in Outer Mongolia, China and so on, with over 75,000 views over the 3-day event, and internationally had put Hawick on the map. From a community viewpoint he was sure HCC would want to join him

in congratulating them on their fantastic efforts in keeping this history alive and digitally relaying this out to the world.

The Chair stated he hoped that next year when the Festival returned to the High Street that some of the online events would continue, agreeing that this had been a great success.

**17. Date of Next Meeting** – It was agreed that the next meeting would be the AGM to be held via Zoom on Monday, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 6.00pm, followed by the Monthly May Meeting.