
Hawick Community Council



MINUTES OF MEETING OF HAWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

held on Monday 11th April 2022 at 6.30pm

within the Lesser Town Hall, Hawick

Present:	Cameron Knox (Chair)	Marion Short (Vice-Chair)
	Jim Adams (Treasurer)	Margaret Hogg (Secretary)
	Wilson George	Duncan Taylor
	Euan Welsh	French Wight
	John Wilkinson	
Attending:	Councillor McAteer	Councillor Ramage

There were 29 members of the public in attendance, along with Graham Ford, reporting for the Hawick Paper.

- 1. Chair's Opening Remarks** – The Chair welcomed everyone to the April Meeting of HCC. He stated Hawick would again stage the start of the second stage of the Tour of Britain on Monday, 5th September 2022. This was tremendous news for the town and a real stamp of approval from the organisers of the tour following their last visit, to the many organisations and volunteers who helped with its success. It was hoped once again that townsfolk and visitors alike would turn out in their droves to support this fantastic sporting event, spending in our shops and cafes and seeing what Hawick had to offer. This was a real feather in the cap for the town and we could look forward once again in September to seeing the bikes along our High Street.

It was noted that the Hawick Paper and the Secretary would be recording the meeting for reporting and minuting purposes.

- 2. Declarations of Interest** – The Chair advised that if any members had a conflict of interest in any agenda items, they should please make it known at the start of the discussion.
- 3. Apologies for Absence** – Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Braden George, John Campbell, and Councillors Marshall and Turnbull.
- 4. Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of 14th March 2022** – The previously circulated Minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting – Proposed by French Wight and Seconded by John Wilkinson.
- 5. Matters arising** – The Chair thanked the Reivers Festival Committee for a great Festival weekend stating that it was fantastic to see so many townsfolk and visitors supporting and in attendance in the evening for the torchlight procession. The fireworks had been spectacular. For once, the weather had been very kind. He thanked members of HCC who

volunteered with their help on the day, which was very much appreciated by the Reivers Committee.

It was noted that the Deer warning signs were now erected up the Nipknowes.

It was also confirmed that bench seating requested at the Volunteer car park side to access Wilton Lodge Park was now added to a list for completion. If there were any issues with the Flood Group attending to this work, it would go through the Small Schemes Budget. One way or the other, bench seating would be added.

French Wight re-raised the matter of the slabs at the Museum, which he considered were now quite dangerous. He had heard that similar slabs being uplifted from an area in Galashiels were allegedly being sent to Hawick to replace our broken slabs. Councillor Ramage advised she would investigate and progress this matter.

- 6. Police Scotland Report** – It was noted that as becoming the norm, there was no Police attendance at the meeting. Reports had been circulated to members.

The Chair stated that 2 addresses had been searched during the month for drugs and associated cash of £6k and £1k seized. This was again disturbing reading and the level of drugs circulating in the town remained of real concern, albeit it was good to note that the Police were having some success in catching the culprits.

It was also good to note that a No Parking Initiative in Hawick had resulted in multiple parking tickets being issued, as well as a letter-drop to local businesses on the High Street to highlight vehicles being parked for long periods and in restricted areas. This was not before time, as parking on the High Street was getting seriously out of hand.

- 7. High School Senior Team Report** – No report presented due to Easter holidays.

- 8. Guest Speaker – Fiona Drane, Project Manager – Presentation on St Leonard's Park Project**
Cameron Knox, Chair declared an interest in this agenda item, as a member of The St Leonard's Park Steering Group on behalf of Hawick Common Riding Committee. He passed the item to the Vice-Chair to chair the item.

The Vice-Chair introduced Fiona Drane as Project Manager for the St Leonard's Park Project until the end of July, overseeing the consultation process and undertaking project management tasks. This Project was spearheaded by Future Hawick, the town's regeneration group and Brian Bouglas, Chair and Colin Telfer, Vice-Chair had been involved with this Project since 2019. She was delighted they were in attendance to complement Fiona's presentation and help answer any questions which may be raised. She also welcomed the large attendance at the meeting for the presentation to hear these proposals and provide a chance to ask questions and air any concerns.

Fiona thanked HCC for their invite and advised that at this stage this was indeed a Proposal for St Leonard's Park prepared by Future Hawick, and it was important to recognise it as that. There was now a Steering Group made up of various members of organisations within Hawick, following on from a completed Feasibility Study in 2019. The Steering Group also included pupils from Hawick High School, as one of the proposal objectives considered it important to involve younger people.

South of Scotland Enterprise (SoSE) provided funding to Future Hawick and among other things this was to cover having someone project-managing the consultation process to July, which was the most important part of the project to consult and secure feedback from those within the town.

What was being proposed was that St Leonard's Park would be an asset which would be owned and managed by the Community for their own benefit, with any profits being put back into the community.

Having had an in-depth look at costs, and albeit not set in stone, costs were c.£ 9.5m plus VAT. This would be to provide the following facilities:

- A new multi-event arena with viewing areas, cooking and café facilities – 1st stage
- A new all-weather horse training area and track
- Veterinary Stables
- New parking areas
- Seasonal campsite including glamping pods.

The reason why Future Hawick wanted this project was most importantly to benefit the community and its young people. There would be a multi-use venue to be used by the community, supporting equine events, dog agility, as well as providing an indoor facility for use by other wider local groups.

As part of the Feasibility Study, a Focus Group was held at the High School, where it was noted that young people considered the town lacked facilities for leisure and for work placements and careers. This project would enhance Hawick as a destination and she considered there were many other initiatives happening within the town making it an exciting place to be, and in addition the project would provide facilities for both local and major national events, equine, dog agility events as well as major events such as 2-day music festivals and such like.

The benefits were, there was currently no dedicated event centre within the town or wet-weather facilities, and any profits coming from their use would go back into the community for the community. For the young people, it would be pride in Hawick with this community asset, but it would also allow young people to have work placements for example in event management, marketing, photography, jockeying etc. Research was done for the Feasibility Study into other rural areas where they had held major events such as music festivals and in Moffat and Stornaway, it was found that young people had increased pride in where they lived, and because of working at the festivals, they had gone on to careers which they may otherwise not have, had these events not been held.

Events being held, such as a Stage of the Tour of Britain held last year in Hawick, put a town on the map and even if people did not attend, they still heard about the event and Hawick. The Borders Book Festival in Melrose was stated to have generated £2.5m income into their local economy, with the Moffat Music Festival estimating £3m into theirs. Income to local economies from big events could generate anything from £2m-£9m. Equally, events encouraged investors, for example if anyone was interested in building a hotel in Hawick, research had also shown holding multiple events generated greater interest from investors.

Aitken & Turnbull, Architects had prepared pictures of what the project could look like, and Fiona shared these briefly with the audience, including what a music festival might look like

and to show the capacity for holding such an event as well as the temporary nature of some resources eg tents, which could easily be removed afterwards.

There were 4 phases proposed for the project, which would work on a traffic-light system. If any phase went to red within the project, it would stop. If the phase was amber, it would pause for further consultation before progressing, and if the phase was green, it would proceed to the next stage.

At the present time, the project was at the consultation stage, including permissions for use of the land from Scottish Borders Council. This was a key stage, which was why they were speaking to all the Community Councils within the TD9 area, and other key groups and stakeholders. Reactions from residents would also be sought, probably by carrying out surveys, following best community engagement standards.

A draft Business Plan was in place and community consultation was the first stage to that Business Plan, and the outcomes would be documented and made available to the public. If consultation was favourable the project would move onto the next phase. If, however, the community felt that plans were not right at that time, then these would need changed and go back for further consultation and if they were not accepted, the project would stop until agreement could be reached.

Funding was the second stage following consultation, but it would be necessary to prove the backing of the community before any funders would provide this. Once the consultation had been concluded, they had already had positive meetings with SBC and SoSE as well as Councillors and MPs and would start to look at funding for the first stage of the project. This phase would again progress on the traffic light system – if successful in securing funding, then this phase would be green and progress to the next stage, if full funding was not secured, it would be amber which would require review and further consultation; and no funding would mean the project stopped.

The next stages would be the building of the main event building, and finally operational events being held and generating income back into the local community. These stages may change, subject to the progress with consultation and funding stages.

In conclusion, this was very much a Proposal and feedback from the community was required. The project proposal would give Hawick an events centre, putting profits back into the community. It would create more reasons for people to visit Hawick as a destination, along with initiatives e.g., Town of 1000 trails, Hornshole Greenway, development of Wilton Lodge Park and various other initiatives, with these organisations all working together to make Hawick a great destination.

In relation to Tourism, this had changed due to Covid, with people now looking for unique and genuine experiences. They no longer wanted to go up North or visit the Royal Mile in Edinburgh for tartan hats but to have a different experience, e.g. to learn how Scottish products were made and to meet genuine people, which Hawick was able to offer. As the largest town in the Scottish Borders, Hawick was able to hold national events and generate economic impact for the town, and this would attract inward investment.

Fiona thanked HCC once again for allowing her to present the Project's proposal and opened the floor for questions.

The following questions were raised:

Gordon Muir thanked Fiona for her succinct presentation and went on to say that without fear of contradiction from anyone present, he considered it safe to say that Hawick Moor was already an important natural asset for the town, used by many locals daily for all sorts of activities. It was also a potential attraction for new visitors to the town particularly ecotourists who visited and were involved in the type of project he was involved with (namely Hornshole Greenway). With its rugged and wind-swept character and stunning views, he said it was right up there with Wilton Lodge Park and the Riverside Walk to Hornshole, so why on earth would anyone want to erect an aircraft hangar-sized building, an artificial racetrack, and an unspecified number of glamping pods on it to completely destroy all of that. He asked if any other locations had been explored, of which there seemed to be quite a few, all of them much more suitable. If not, he went on to ask if it was intended to conduct a town-wide referendum to determine whether or not the people of Hawick were prepared to give up part of their common for this project. A town-wide referendum he considered was the only legitimate way to determine whether the people of Hawick wanted this project to go ahead.

Fiona advised in relation to conducting a town-referendum that this was indeed under their consideration.

Brian Bouglas stated that Hawick Moor was a beautiful place which he considered should be opened to the wider Hawick Community. As far as other locations were concerned, he stated that this area was begging to be utilised and that was why they went down that track. Gordon asked if the decision was based on it being free ground albeit an important part of the Hawick Common, to which Brian responded saying that it would remain so, and the project would be to the benefit of the community of Hawick. Gordon advised that the images showed the important character of Hawick Moor would be altered by imposing those buildings on it, creating an artificial racetrack and glamping pods, and it would no longer be the place it currently was. He considered it was far more important for it to be kept as a natural asset rather than turning it into an Ingliston-type showground. Colin Telfer stated that these concerns were encouraged as part of the consultation process, and they would take on board his comments. It had been stated that this was a Proposal and as previously advised a traffic-light system would be in place, including for consultation. They were proposing something to benefit the town.

Brian Bouglas then asked how many times in the year Hawick Moor was used, to which Gordon answered stating, 365 by townspeople. Brian then stated the number to be 11 in relation to events held at this location during a year. Frank Scott stated that a farmer used the ground under lease arrangement all year round.

Colin then went on to state that first and foremost they had spoken with the Common Good, with SBC and had had meetings with SBC's legal team to see if the project could proceed and had documented everything stage by stage to enable them to reach the stage of public consultation, which was what was being done now. Any comments were valid and would be taken into account.

John Hogg asked if they had considered infrastructure and how lorries, horse boxes etc would get to the Moor, passing Drumlanrig School, Rosebank Road, as he considered the roads in any direction were unsuitable but especially with additional traffic passing these areas would cause further danger. He considered the residents of these areas should have

been consulted with before speaking with the Common Good or anyone at SBC. Colin responded saying they had acted on the advice of SBC and the Common Good from day one. Part of the pre-application submitted by Aitken & Turnbull to SBC related to infrastructure, which was being looked at presently, and that could be met with a red flag, but they had attempted to do things right by the advice provided. SBC estates would also carry out the necessary consultation with residents (as part of the planning process).

Fiona added that public transport would be being encouraged.

French Wight stated that there was a lack of accommodation within Hawick and wondered how this project might impact on this further. Brian Bouglas stated that glamping pods proposed would help with accommodation issues, and Colin added that Hawick would not at the present time attract any new Hotel but with the potential of proceeding with the project and having big events, could attract inward investment for such. French asked about Springwood Park in Kelso and Colin advised that they had been in discussions with Springwood who had agreed that their project would complement what they had to offer.

Lesley Fraser asked if there was an aerial plan to scale available of the buildings and other things proposed, which would benefit people to see. This would identify space taken up for each of the proposals e.g., the campsite, the toilet blocks and so on. There is concern that the green of Hawick Moor will become industrialised looking. Colin stated that Aitken & Turnbull were working on such a plan to scale at the present time. There were slides here and as the public consultation progresses then this scaled plan would become available.

Ian Nichol said this was a huge investment, upwards of £12m and asked if they had looked at avenues for funding. Fiona responded stating that they had a list of potential funding options but confirmed there were no commitments as these options updated all the time. What was available today may not be later. She agreed this was a lot of money and referred to Leven, Fife example who were involved with a community park, café etc and that this level of money can be done. Ian then asked that if the project did proceed, what were the proposals for continued upkeep of it. Fiona advised that this would be incorporated into the Business Plan and again, in considering the Profit & Loss, this may go into red again. There were a lot of hoops to go through before then. Ian then stated that the all-weather racetrack would need daily work, which would be a huge expense and he was concerned that there was going to be the income to make this sustainable. Fiona agreed that if costs were not sustainable, again this would not get the go-ahead. Ian then advised that there were many race-trainers in the area, but they all had their own all-weather gallops, and he assumed the project would require those trainers to use the proposed track but he doubted whether local trainers would do so, and pay for this, when they had their own all-weather facilities. Colin responded stating that Euan Whillans was on their Steering Group, and he had discussed this with other local trainers, who often required to go elsewhere, e.g., Newcastle to use facilities there and it was considered they would make use of the new proposed track. Again, this would need to be confirmed when looking at Profit & Loss.

Yvonne Gilfillan said she was not from Hawick and thought it was great that the presenters of this project were looking at proposals to increase the socioeconomics for the town. She did not have the passions others had for the Common Riding. Her concerns having worked for Visit Scotland, were around having national events which she considered were few and far between. Hawick was already on the map e.g., for the Tour of Britain who were returning, which would bring investment but would not require investment of over £10m. She could see that having glamping pods would help with shortages in accommodation and

in particular accessible accommodation but as someone who was not invested, she would have loved to have seen the Proposal come together with Future Hawick ideas on socioeconomics and the Hornshole Greenway because looking at an environmentally sustainable future, to put an industrial-type event building on top of an area of natural significance and beauty would not necessarily fit in the minds of a lot of local people, as mentioned the Common Riding people, and she wondered if there was a way that the money being looked at for the project might be used to better effect. If the project was looking for national events, such as a music festival once a year, what about all the other halls and buildings throughout the town that were not being fully utilised for various events and would the money for the project take away money from them. Fiona responded stating that in relation to holding a music festival or looking at other locations, that could be done now without investment but as a consultant, all she was stating was that there were other small rural areas who had held music festivals and that had brought significant economic impact to the towns. She stated that if Hawick wanted to hold a music festival it could look at other locations. Hawick had shown with the Reivers Festival and the many volunteers around to help, it had the capacity for bigger events to be held. Small towns like Moffat and Stornaway had shown that there were significant benefits to be gained from holding such music events.

Iain Huggan stated his concerns were regarding the all-weather track and after each flapping meeting this would need to be raked and he asked who would be responsible for that and would it have to be paid for, as flapping was struggling financially at the present time. Colin stated this would be status quo as this would be part of whoever was employed and there would be a facility provided to maintain the track. But again, they would speak with the flapping people to iron out any issues and get their opinions, and it would be subject again to the traffic light system before progressing. Iain then asked who decided on the rent and Colin advised that this was not a profit-making proposal for him, nor Brian to make money and he considered monies would continue to be paid to SBC. It was a community proposal, to be run by the community for the community.

Cath Elliot-Walker asked how it was envisaged the project would be set up – would it be a Community Trust for Future Hawick, or once delivered, would it be handed back to the Common Good to run. Like all projects if the money for delivery was received, what would be the long-term plans for the sustainability and up-keep of it going forward and who would have responsibility. Fiona responded stating potentially it would be a Community Trust. In terms of the Feasibility Study, they had looked at other rural case studies where profits made were put back into communities' events but once the green light was given for the go-ahead, like getting funding, conversations would have to be held at that point to determine the best method to progress. Cath expressed concerns around affordability - there was no point in having a project such as this, to end up with something that those within the community could then not afford to hire. It would need to be economically viable. Fiona agreed if the community could not afford to use it, then there would be no point in having it.

Councillor McAteer stated that Hawick Common Good supported projects within Hawick ad-infinitum and would continue to do so. He had a couple of issues to raise. Firstly, he advised that he had asked the Chief Legal Officer at SBC on more than one occasion to clarify issues on ownership, liability, who would run it, who would be accountable – would it be the Common Good, would it be SBC, and to date all those questions remained unanswered. Answers might be forthcoming once the Project's Business case was available. It was very important to have these issues answered.

Secondly, the Community Empowerment Act changed the way the Common Good were viewed legally, and he was clear that it would be the six Common Good Trustees for Hawick after 5th May elections who would make the decision on whether the project proceeded, not SoSE or SBC. That view would only be made after full consultation with everybody in Hawick, armed with the answers to everyone's questions, and it would be their voice who would decide.

Marinos Calothis referred to Fiona talking in glowing terms about the monetary benefits of holding music festivals, such as T-in-the-Park, but what was not being disclosed was the associated vandalism, violence, drunkenness, assaults, and thousands of people rocking up then dumping everything they didn't want after the event and leaving for home. He conceded that people do profit from music events but questioned whether those benefits were worthwhile against the aggro and these other negatives. Fiona considered this did not happen at all events. They were not talking about events to the extent of T-in-the-Park but smaller events like those held in Moffat and Stornaway which had been held with positive outcomes.

Euan Welsh stated that there may be positives to having a music festival in a tent in a spare field or whatever but queried having a construction for this in place all year round. He queried if this was the case in Moffat and Stornaway and Fiona replied that it was not.

French Wight asked what size of crowds were anticipated, and Fiona responded stating that it would be up for decision, and crowd size could be limited and perhaps grow as the community became comfortable. She said we would not want to make the mistake of going large initially.

Iain Huggan asked about the equestrian centre and what would happen in there – would there be instructors, show jumping competitions, or would it be a free-for-all - how would it work. Brian stated the idea was to have many different events not just equestrian. It would be an equestrian sized arena, which could be used for show jumping, dressage, jockey training, the list was endless. It could also be used for other indoor events, such as at the Common Riding or for conferences, meetings, receptions, big dinners, concerts all year round. Iain Huggan suggested this facility was already available 5 miles away run by an Olympic Gold medalist, so where was the need for this facility and he queried whether people would have the need therefore to come to Hawick for this. Brian Bouglas argued that they would come to Hawick and if their facility was right - they were also proposing stable blocks to be included – they could have training weekends, and for flapping meetings, their horses could also be catered for in stables rather than left in their boxes.

Jed Huggan asked if there had been any contact with trainers in Hawick. He stated also that Ian Stark (Olympian mentioned above) ran instruction courses every week, and so what made Brian think he or other trainers currently using his facilities would come to Hawick. Brian stated that their project was proposing a multi-purpose building to be used for many different activities, for the community and to bring visitors to the town, and not just solely for equestrian purposes. Jed stated that there would not in his opinion be sufficient remaining ground needed at the Common Riding.

Lesley Fraser asked how big the multi-purpose building would be if it was to be equestrian-sized. Brian said, off the top of his head, this would be 60 metres by 20 metres. Lesley stated this was much smaller than previous measurements given of 80 x 100 metres and could not then be equestrian-sized. Brian reiterated this was a proposal, with nothing set in

stone and dimensions had changed and may need to adapt following consultation with the public. Lesley expressed frustration that nothing seemed to have progressed in the last 4 years, and every time any meeting was held on the project, sizes seemed to change. This was why it was important, to obtain proper views, to have a visual/plan with clear scaled dimensions. Colin said this had been taken on board and he undertook to have this progressed and made available.

Cath Elliot-Walker advised that in going to public consultation, definitive plans would be required along with the stages/phases of the project. She acknowledged that things would change with public opinion on the proposal but there had to be a point reached to allow presentation for full consultation purposes. She asked how the consultation would be carried out and if there was a timeframe for this. Fiona acknowledged and agreed that there would have to be a point reached where people knew exactly what they were voting for, but this would require to be after the discussions on the proposal first over the next couple of months to have everyone's opinions, have these taken into account, and to determine whether it would go to a vote but agreed this would need to be on a finalised project. Cath Elliot-Walker said she assumed there would be surveying of the land at the Moor around its structure, layout etc to confirm suitability and this would be at an early stage. Fiona confirmed this would be the case.

John Hogg advised that Hawick held an event each year which was very important to the people of Hawick, and he wanted to know what ground would be left for Common Riding use if the project went ahead. There were hundreds of cars which needed to be accommodated, as well as many other things, and this information was required before any stage of voting. Anybody having attended the Common Riding would have seen the required usage of the Moor for this event. Fiona stated this was why it was important to have the proposal discussions and agreed this detail would need to be forthcoming for the finalised project to be voted on.

Ian Landles advised on the perilous journey he would require taking on his way home to the West End after the meeting. He pictured loads of additional people coming in (if the project proceeded) and coming from Commercial Road if it ever fully opened. Travelling up the Howegate, the awkward junction at Kirk Wynd, the seriously awkward junction at Beaconsfield, then Drumlanrig School which was a tragedy waiting to happen, the Auld Man's Seat junction which again was awkward and then trying to negotiate Rosebank Road and Burnflat Brae. He risked his life every day at the roundabout at the bottom of Burnflat Brae, as some folk did not even know that the roundabout was there and shot across. Then there were the golf cars reversing onto the road to be negotiated, a dip just beyond the second tee, a very awkward kink before the crossroads, the crossroads itself, the bad bend at the top Moor gate. His view was that the road infrastructure would not cope with what was being suggested.

The Vice-Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and Fiona for her presentation and Brian and Colin for their contribution. It was an emotive subject which had generated much discussion. She asked Fiona what other discussions would be taking place and if there was a timescale. Fiona stated that they had contacted all the other TD9 area Community Councils to share their proposal, and she would also like to go back to the High School. It was important also to carry out Resident surveys before pulling all the opinions together. Then she suggested coming back to the Community Council. The Vice-Chair asked if there was a timeline and Fiona advised initial discussions would be until the end of July and at that point,

they would decide on whether to proceed to full consultation and voting. If the community did not support the project, then it would be a white elephant and would not go ahead.

- 9. Treasurer's Report** – The Treasurer reported an opening balance of £22,650.66. The following expenditure had been incurred:
- HCC1 account – new defibrillator pads, Platinum Jubilee items and SBC insurance costs amounted to £1,310.18, resulting in a closing balance of £5,571.83 for that account. It should be noted that c.£3,300 of that figure was ring-fenced for Williestruther and Bandstand events scheduled in August.
- HCC2 account was now exhausted, with the sum of £167.63 being awarded in sponsorship; Christmas Lights/Events Account - SBC insurance costs of £495.32 had been paid, ending in a closing balance of £1,051.09 for that account.
- Hawick in Bloom account - £2,537.42 was paid for summer plants and a further £92.92 for a memorial tree and commemorative plaque planted at Henderson Gardens, to mark the Queens Platinum Jubilee. The closing balance was £4,486.54 for that account.
- The total closing balance for all accounts was now £19,934.91.

It was noted that the Chair had received an exorbitant bill for £1,661.70 for electricity costs for the town's Christmas lights, which had required to be queried. This had fortunately resulted in a much-reduced bill for £192.05 much to his relief. This would appear in next month's accounts.

Members approved the Treasurer's Report.

10. Public Forum & Town Issues

- (a) Hustings Event – the Vice-Chair promoted a Hustings Event to be held by HCC the following evening, which would allow the public to ask questions of any of the prospective Candidates standing for the local elections on 5th May. Postal votes required to be in by 16th April. She encouraged people to come along from 6pm for a 6.30pm start.
- (b) New Greenhouse for Walled Gardens – the Chair advised that the new greenhouse had now been delivered and asked of Councillors when this was scheduled to be erected. Councillors advised that delivery had been earlier than expected and they would enquire as to an installation date and report back.
- (c) Removal of tree debris at top end of Wilton Lodge Park – A member of the public enquired if clearance works would be carried out for Easter. Councillors advised, as had been reported at previous meetings, that these works were on a list of similar works covering many other areas and which were scheduled to be carried out on a priority basis.
- (d) Footpath/Pavement opposite Crowbyres into town – A member of the public reported debris of branches etc littering this path making it impassable, and Councillor McAteer undertook to progress this matter.

11. Reports from sub-committees

- (a) A7 Action Group – French Wight advised that the meeting had been postponed to 8th May, after the local elections.
- (b) Queen's Platinum Jubilee Event – the Vice-Chair advised that everything was in hand. SBC had been helpful in organising no parking signage and hopefully the weather would be kind.
- (c) Hawick Common Good – no report in the absence of John Campbell.

- (d) Hawick in Bloom – Nothing further to report from previous month. Summer plants would be delivered on 13th June and volunteers were on hand to plant that week.
- (e) Wind Farms – French Wight advised that there was a lot of activity around wind farms at the present time. Pines Burns had again changed ownership and that Community Benefits were now much lower than that originally agreed. He said it was interesting to note that the Government had stated, in relation to the expansion of Wind Farms, if communities did not want them then they would not proceed. French hoped that that message would filter north, as he considered that the Borders was being saturated currently.
- (f) Bandstand Events – Duncan Taylor reported he had passed on that HCC was keen for these events to proceed, and contact was being made now with potential entertainers. Duncan would keep HCC up to date as matters developed.

12. Updates from Community Partners

- (a) Foundation Scotland – The Vice-Chair reported in terms of the 2022 Distribution Plan, 4 new gazebos had been ordered, and she had taken delivery today of 8 new tables, which would benefit HCC and other community groups. Estimates for replacement Christmas trees and snowmen had been sought but were still awaited from Colin Wilson, as well as Christmas lights estimates being sought by the Chair. The Foundation Scotland allocation for 2022 would be used solely for HCC's own projects.
- (b) Teviot & Liddesdale Area Partnership – The Chair reported that a new Neighbourhood Support Fund (formerly known as the Community Fund) was now open for 2022/23. The Pot A fund for Hawick amounted to £11,513.35. Applications were now open for constituted and un-constituted groups and available on SBC's website. Everyone was encouraged to apply.

The Vice-Chair stated she was pleased that SBC had taken on comments and had reintroduced micro-grants up to the value of £500 for smaller projects and un-constituted groups, as well as fast-track applications.

The Vice-Chair went on to raise a point of concern that the Area Partnership process was so structured, yet HCC received such short notice from SBC for example to hold Panel meetings, sometimes only a week. It was also unfair that SBC be allowed to take such long periods, sometimes months, to carry out their parts of the process, and by the time applicants were eventually notified of any successful application, costs for purchases for which funding was being applied for had then escalated, resulting in gaps in funding having to be sourced elsewhere. These concerns had been reported to SBC.

Councillor McAteer advised that contact should be made with Jenni Craig as it was not acceptable that Community Councils or other groups applying should be left with funding increased costs themselves due to processing delays.

- (g) Williestruther – French Wight stated that the idea of laying gravel down had been very successful, and that the whole area was looking really good. He was keen to do a further final stage which would require 20-25 tonnes of gravel and had requested Criminal Justice to provide an estimate for carrying out these works. The Vice-Chair agreed that there had been good feedback on the improvements carried out to date, and that she would be submitting a further application to T&L Area Partnership Fund for these additional works to fully complete on improving Williestruther, once estimates for gravel/labour had been received.

- (h) Scottish Borders Community Council Network (SBCCN) – The Chair reminded members that the SBCCN AGM would be held the following Thursday in the Victoria Hall, Selkirk starting at 7pm. This was a hybrid meeting meaning attendance could be in person or via zoom.

13. Planning Issues – There were no major planning issues for consideration.

14. Correspondence – There was no correspondence for consideration.

15. A.O.C.B –

- (a) The Great Borders River Clean – The Chair advised this would take place over the weekend Friday, 27th to Sunday, 29th May 2022. To encourage the involvement of school groups, a small prize of £500 would be awarded to schools directly involved in the River Clean, and who then took steps within their own communities to either highlight the problem of littering and pollution, or actively worked to tackle those issues directly over an extended period of time.

A member of the public advised of an organisation named Gala Waterway Group which was a group of volunteers who met every month, to target and clean parts of their waterways needing attention. She considered that it would be good if Hawick had such type of group going forward to deal with cleaning debris around their river areas on a regular basis and wondered who might take that on board to organise. This would prevent debris getting so bad and to the poor state it currently was in.

French Wight commented that due to the flood defence walls, it was almost going to be impossible to access the riverbanks. Behind Lovat Mills, there was so much debris that he considered this would continue to be used as a dumping area and become a real eyesore.

- (b) Duncan Taylor raised the matter that at the last update from the Flood Protection Group, it had been pledged instead of starting new projects, schedules would be changed, and emphasis would be placed on completion of works already started. There had been comment made on HCC's Facebook page following a Road Closure Notice being shared. There appeared a perception in the town that works remained incomplete, such as the Haugh. So that members of the public could be advised, he asked if there was any update on when areas of works would be finished.

Yvonne Gilfillan, Flood Protection Group, advised of further resources being put in place the previous Monday, and the challenges faced in securing contractors, as well as delays because of design issues, rigid quality controls in place and with fabrication. Banned use of red diesel had also caused problems. There were genuine and valid reasons for works being unable to be completed. The only way to hold onto resources, meant works had had to proceed bearing this in mind. If contractors were lost, then it was unlikely they would be secured later.

The fitting of the glass panels at the Haugh were still outstanding and it was noted that these would not be able to be fitted until each section of wall requiring a glass panel had passed quality controls.

Councillor McAteer advised that at a recent update meeting with McLaughlin & Harvey, it had been recognised by Conor Price, Project Lead that gaps in works such as the glass panels did not look good.

French Wight queried when the bridge at the Wee Haugh would be completed and Yvonne Gilfillan advised this was likely to be around Summertime, again due to challenges with Contractors.

- (c) Councillor McAteer advised of a 30% reduction in waste collection statistics. This was of real concern going forward should this percentage prevail.

In certain areas of the town, it was noted also that waste was being determined by SBC binmen as being 'contaminated' and as a result bins were being left unemptied. This then led to bins being left possibly for a further two weeks or more without residents being informed.

French Wight provided an example of what happened in other areas where stickers were placed on bins to identify contaminated waste. He considered, and Councillor McAteer agreed, that such type of sticker would be well used in Hawick to inform residents on reasons why their bin waste had not been uplifted and this could then improve on waste uplift percentages.

- (d) With the pending local elections, the Chair expressed grateful thanks on behalf of HCC to all Hawick Councillors for their great help and support over the past term. Two existing Councillors would not be standing for re-election, namely Councillors Paterson and Turnbull and he wished them both well in their retirement. He also wished the best of luck to all Councillors standing for re-election.

16. Date of Next Meeting – It was agreed that the Annual General Meeting of HCC would be held on Monday, 9th May 2022 at 6.00pm followed immediately by the May Monthly Meeting, within the Lesser Town Hall.