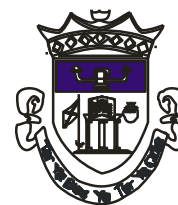

Hawick Community Council



MINUTES OF MEETING OF HAWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

held on Monday 10th October 2022 within the Lesser Town Hall, Hawick

Present	Marion Short (Chair) Jim Adams Wilson George French Wight	Cameron Knox (Vice-Chair) John Campbell Duncan Taylor John Wilkinson
Attending:	Councillor Marshall Yvonne Gilfillan, McLaughlin & Harvey	Conor Price, CPE Consultancy

There were circa 40 members of the public in attendance. Graham Ford was also in attendance on behalf of the Hawick Paper.

1. **Chair's Opening Remarks** – The Chair thanked everyone for attending in large numbers and looked forward to the slideshow presentation, which she hoped everyone would find informative and helpful. The presentation would hopefully cover timelines, any delays, hotspots etc and those attending should feel free to raise any questions they might have.

The Chair stated she was grateful to Conor Price and to Yvonne Gilfillan for their attendance (albeit Conor was running a bit late but would be in attendance later) and she looked forward to what they had to say.

There was an abbreviated Agenda that night, to allow appropriate time for the Presentation and to allow for questions and answers.

The Chair would be recording the meeting along with Graham Ford for minuting and reporting 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 Councillors Cox, McAteer, Smart and Ramage and HCC Members Braden George, Margaret Hogg, Keith Irving, Kevin Marsh, and Euan Welsh.
4. **Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of 12th September 2022** – The previously circulated Minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting – Proposed by Wilson George and Seconded by Jim Adams.
5. **Matters arising** – The Chair advised of an email update from Councillor Ramage as follows:

Gate to WLP Play Park – Regarding the issue raised of the gate not closing properly allowing a child to escape, this gate had now been inspected and the spring fitted was found not to be working effectively to close the gate automatically. SBC would look to having this repaired.

Double Yellow Lines at the entrance to WLP at the Avenue – it was noted that these would be reinstated in due course.

WLP Putting Green/Crazy Golf reinstatement – this was being looked at positively by SBC and Councillor Ramage would provide a further update on this to the November HCC Meeting.

Copper pipes around the sluice – confirmation had been received that lagging would be carried out of these pipes to prevent freezing in winter.

James Thomson Bridge – graffiti on sculpture – Councillor Ramage had reported this to SBC to have eradicated.

Lack of equipment (projector and screen) availability for HCC presentations and lack of Wi-Fi availability in Lesser Town Hall – again Councillor Ramage had reported these issues and was awaiting a reply from Live Borders.

Public Toilets at Common Haugh – the matter of these requiring a deep clean had been referred to SBC.

Motorhomes area – bins – a response had been received by the Secretary, following her contacting SBC, which stated that the existing refuse collection bin would be replaced with a larger bin and weekly collections would be made each Wednesday. The request from the Secretary had also enquired about having a dog poo bin installed in this area. The response was that the Neighbourhood Services Team had been monitoring dog poo bins but no longer provided those types of bins in favour of multi-use bins. They did not have any spare dog poo bins to allocate to this location but would investigate to see if other dog poo bins were less used elsewhere, and which could perhaps be moved to that location.

Painting of Bollards – the results of the survey had been communicated to Councillor McAteer, who would in turn be contacting Fiona Cameron, SBC, to progress painting in the preferred blue & yellow colours.

Gordon Muir, Hornshole Greenway stated he had not attended the previous HCC meeting however a survey held by Hornshole Greenway had generated greater response than that by the Community Council. He had been baffled by the report by HCC's secretary as reported in the Hawick Paper that the other surveys had reflected in favour of blue & gold, when his survey had favoured painting of the bollards in green. He considered that of all the surveys carried out, Hornshole Greenway Survey had elicited the biggest response and the results were 10/1 in favour of painting in green.

Duncan Taylor stated he had carried out a survey in Hawick Chat but would require checking on the specific results before he could comment further.

The Chair advised of an issue with these surveys, in that they did not ask specifically the same questions but nonetheless blue & gold was reported as the favoured option.

Williestruther final improvement works – French Wight reported he was hopeful that all works would be completed within the next 3 to 4 weeks, subject to weather conditions.

Hawick in Bloom – In the Secretary's absence, the following was reported - Winter plants had been delivered on 10th October and volunteers would be carrying out planting that week and the following. Six of the larger planters would be subject to a trial using perennial plants as well as pansies to add colour, and hopefully these would be left alone and not be stolen,

as had been the case in previous years. HIB had held a coffee morning on Saturday, 24th September and had raised £508 to help with future plant costs. Thanks were extended to all the Bloom Volunteers, HCC members Marion Short and Wilson George, for their help and support, and to all those who gave donations. Special mention was made to Pat Wight and Pat Yule for their fantastic support and advice on the day.

HIB had received a very generous and anonymous cheque for £2,000 via Bannerman Burke Solicitors, which would further boost the HIB fund. The next HIB meeting would be held on 25th October.

Christmas Event – The Chair advised that a further separate meeting would require to be scheduled to progress on purchase of new lights etc. The Vice-Chair reported that pat-testing of existing lights had now partly been done with works ongoing.

The Chair explained that the proposal was to erect new lights at the Tower Knowe and new harp lights, albeit expensive but with a greater lifespan, would be purchased to replace the snowmen/trees provided previously by the late Bert Wear, and which had now reached the end of their lifespan.

Replacing garages with new housing in Burnfoot – Wilson George queried Councillor Marshall on progress with this initiative. Councillor Marshall confirmed that a site visit of officers and affected garage owners had taken place. He considered HCC could invite SBHA representatives to attend a future HCC meeting on this matter, as he had little information on this, other than it had now been referred to Planning.

Wilson George referred to the ramp in Silverbuthall area which had also been taken away without any consultation, which was disappointing.

The Chair advised this requested invite would be noted. She was aware that an invite to Ross Sharp-Dent, SBC's Waste Management Section was also outstanding. Councillor Marshall agreed this was another concerning issue for the town and that invite should also be progressed. He was aware that some routes for waste uplift had been cancelled that day due to a shortage of drivers.

6. Guest Speaker – Conor Price, Project Director of CPE Consultancy – Flood Protection Update

The Chair welcomed the return of Conor Price to provide another update on flood protection works. Conor advised he would provide an update on works carried out over the summer, with a few photographs available for reference purposes. Slides would be provided for wider distribution.

He advised he was the first person on this project in 2009 and would be the last on the project in 2028, which did not mean that construction would carry on until that end date.

He stated that Flood Protection was currently in a very good place, meaning that as winter was approaching, they were on target to deliver 75% protection from flooding to the town. He had previously been clear that full protection could not be delivered until the end of the project in 2023. Between then he would be working with Emergency Planning and the Hawick Volunteer Flood Group and others to deliver maximum protection during winter as had been the case the previous winter.

He reported huge gains in river works during the summer. Deployment into the river was permitted only from the beginning of May to the end of September. The weather during this summer had been favourable, with little rain and low river levels allowing McLaughlin & Harvey to push on and they had made substantial progress in some of the most critical sections of the project. They were now 29 months into their 40-month construction programme.

From an Active Travel Network (ATN) perspective, Conor stated that most people would know of the £3.6m additional funding provided for investing in the ATN and which had been layered onto the Flood Protection Scheme. This had resulted in extra design works, and in the last few weeks a significant planning application had been submitted to Scottish Borders Council for the design proposal for a new footbridge connecting Weensland and Hamilton Road. It was hoped that the finalised design would be ready for the early part of next year.

It was important for people to know that the Scheme remained on budget and on timescale.

On the concept of completion of works, he showed two graphics with completion timelines for works during the summer, and this confirmed when individual works were completed, giving one example of the SB Pumping Station being put in place and now in operation. They had been late in opening the Victoria Footbridge and apologies had been given for that. This had however now reopened, as well as the Lawson Footbridge which had opened ahead of time.

The next two key deliverables going forward were the Mansfield Footbridge and the re-opening of Commercial Road. There was also the Common Haugh Car Park which would be targeted in two stages – the outside of the Flood Wall which had been earmarked for completion by summer 2023 but would be later due to the delay and impact in reopening the Lawson Footbridge, and the Car Park itself scheduled for completion in December.

Conor then highlighted the Programme showing its various stages from Day 1 back in December 2009 onto the start of the programme in 2012 and mapping of the project stages forward. He stated it was clear to see the main works delivered by McLaughlin & Harvey – the dotted line was representative of today and the hatched line showed estimated timelines. At line 8.3 was the redeployment of SB Contracts to work alongside McLaughlin & Harvey on some lesser complex and less critical works compared with the other extraordinary works undertaken by McLaughlin & Harvey themselves. For example, the new pathway going in and wrapping around the 2G pitch at Volunteer Park would be delivered by SB Contracts to allow timescales to be achieved.

The public should be clear that the project would not finish when construction finished. As soon as the works were done, McLaughlin & Harvey had a 24-month Maintenance Programme for bedding-in, snagging and for resolving issues. There had been a 12-month Maintenance Programme for Flood Protection works in Selkirk but due to the sheer scale of works in Hawick, this timescale had been extended to 24 months. Winding down of the contract would also need another year on top of that.

Conor then showed a slide of the Pumping Station within the Scottish Borders Treatment Works which would be mostly unseen by the public due to it being located behind leylandii hedging. This was now fully operational and had been handed over to Scottish Water. He explained the Pumping Station allowed for if there was a backing up of the sewer network or the drainage systems, for the water to travel down, and be sucked out of the town and

moved on safely so that it did not cause a backup of sewage within the town itself. This Station was a critical piece of work and a component part of the project, as much as e.g., the walls, for after the Scheme completion.

Turning to Commercial Road, he showed an aerial image highlighting the scale of works in the river and the access track within the river, progressing on to the walls emerging at Laidlaw Terrace and across the river to Aldi. At the end of the summer, works planned had been finished. Whilst these were late in completing, this was due to being one of the most complex pieces of engineering undertaken in Scotland with the scale of moving utilities before McLaughlin & Harvey were even on site, followed by taking out of the road to river level and then construction of foundations in the river, before building back up to allow it to become a functional part of the trunk road once again. These works would finish before Christmas, returning this road to the road network, and they would then focus on returning the outer diversion on the High Street and Princes Street to normal. They would be taking out the traffic lights on Princes Street and all the modifications made on these routes, in advance of that diversion. They had picked up on some favourable responses to some of the assets they had put in, and accordingly it would be helpful if HCC could consider a “straw poll” to the townspeople, asking if some of the changes made to the High Street or Princes Street should be left. They were more than happy to leave these in place, should the people of Hawick wish these to be retained.

They had also picked up on a little confusion over Commercial Road which was always due to be completed in December but unfortunately the Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) submitted to Scottish Borders Council allowed for traffic regulations up to October and this had to be extended to December. They were not behind schedule on Commercial Road works and there was no concern of any impact to these works over the Christmas season.

Victoria Footbridge was now open, and he encouraged people who had not been on this bridge to do so, as he considered it gave a lovely panoramic view of the river both up and downstream and further insight into the current works being done.

He then turned to Sandbed works showing photographs of the missing parts of the former Sonia’s Bistro and the sheet-piling across for the temporary bridge, together with the wall being built from Drumlanrig Bridge. He stated that the difficulties with these works could not be underestimated because of the collapsed building which had left them with an almost impossible situation of a partially demolished building, requiring controlled demolition to take it down and the sudden realisation the foundations under that building were hollow. Works were not completed during the summer as planned. They had been so focused on getting works completed within the river, they had only now caught their breath and needed to assess what had been achieved and how they could go about completing necessary works at this location next year and within the overall project completion time. A unique meeting would be held including Sandbed residents, and within the next four weeks it should be known how to progress at this location, and a plan once prepared would be shared. Tidying inside the wall would be done as soon as possible.

Moving to the Lawson Footbridge, the new Footbridge was now open, and the old footbridge had now been taken out, as per the promise to leave the latter until the new bridge had been opened. The new bridge had also presented its challenges which had been overcome this year, learning from lessons learned the previous summer.

The next slide showed the stretch from the new Lawson Footbridge looking up towards the Cobble Cauld. This had also been a massive piece of engineering - inside there was the flood wall which protected the High School, then the space where the new ATN would sit and then another retaining wall to hold up the ATN, and in order to construct all that it was necessary to have a sheet pile wall to hold up the access path to provide the temporary platform to allow build of the middle wall. The amount of temporary works to achieve this had been enormous and they would now finish the in-filling of the wall to the edge which would have a railing on it the same as the viewing platform on the opposite side. They would then return the river to its normal condition with the gravel left unblemished.

Turning to Teviot Road, it was recognised they were not as advanced with the programme there as had been hoped for various reasons. They planned to have more work happening this winter compared to last. It was not permitted to allow platforms in or out of the river, outside the window of 1st May to 30th September, as they were unable to impact on the salmon spawning season. If any platform was in, it could be left but normally this posed risk with any storms and wrecking works in progress. For the first time, however this winter, to allow pushing on of works, they would be deploying over winter platforms. These could be seen at Teviot Road, B&M Bargains and one at Glebe Mill. Significant sheet piles had been put in, at significant cost.

Turning attention to landscaping and completing works, for which they had received many discerning comments last year, the planning application for works at the top end of the Common Haugh had been refused so works could not be submitted to McLaughlin & Harvey to proceed. A meeting would be held with planning that week.

Returning to the ATN, whilst it would not be appropriate to refuse money for Hawick, the works associated with the extra £3.6m funding provided, had proved challenging to process into the overall project. A new design team had been necessary, but it had been good to see the planning application submitted for the new significant bridge linking Weensland to Mansfield, and the other works all around the town to deliver 8 to 10 km of new ATN which was considered would be the best in Scotland and particularly for a rural market town. He recognised that little of the ATN could be seen in the town yet but included the footbridge and all landscaping works. Of all new work sections, many were additional works for McLaughlin & Harvey and the less complex works would be set to be delivered by SB Contracts.

Conor went on to show a new site compound which had gone in at Hamilton Road and where SBC Contracts would be based to allow their delivery of extra obligations. There was a new pathway winding right through where the compound sat and so that ground would have required to have been dug up anyway, and so it seemed sensible to have that compound built there rather than on virgin ground.

A new footpath would also be put in stretching from where the previous footpath finished at the triangular junction point by the current footbridge, taking us around the old 3G pitch to intercept with Buccleuch Road, and a new toucan crossing taking us across the road to the compound path. Works were ongoing and quickly coming together.

Conor then advised of a new river crossing, which he considered a signature piece of the project and something which had been desired by the town for what seemed like a lifetime. He was delighted to have found a pathway to take the project to this point. He did not wish to pre-empt the planning application but was hopeful of there being no planning issues at

town or Council levels and that they would be able to deliver on this as intended. In relation to that planning application, which could be found online, he showed a site plan of the area being considered. They were not just looking at a bridge in isolation between Weensland and Hamilton Road roundabout but equally at the redevelopment and what the scheme would have delivered were it not for the additional ATN monies. It meant that at that location there would be 3 main changes – firstly, the flood wall on the Weensland side would be changed to an embankment; secondly, the roundabout at Mansfield would be removed and a new T-junction placed, which the roads authorities were comfortable would not reduce traffic movement, and which would remove space from the road as the roundabout took up more space (the roundabout had been put in many years ago as it had been assumed there would be a road bridge at this location which would not now happen). So, the logic of that roundabout was no longer relevant, and would allow redesign of that space working closely with the Rugby Club and others to effectively create a new town civic space-type plaza; and thirdly the foot bridge to span one side of the river to the other. He then showed a sketch of a similar bridge of that proposed to go in and of the same family of bridges, style and form of the Victoria and Lawson bridges. There would however be no need for any construction in the water with the new bridge. An outcome from planning would hopefully be received before Christmas.

Conor advised that an awful lot of information had been provided for people to take in, however, he would be happy to answer any questions.

The following questions/queries were raised -

French Wight advised that he had raised his concern with Yvonne Gilfillan that 17” gaps in the new railings at the Cobble Cauld were too wide and posed risk to children and animals who were able to easily access the river. He referred to the Laurie Bridge and Drumlanrig Bridge at the Tower Knowe which had narrower gaps with mesh fitted and considered this should be the case at that location too.

Yvonne Gilfillan confirmed this had been referred to the design team. The Chair stated she had witnessed a dog accessing that area just the previous day.

Cameron Knox stated it was good to hear that the project would complete on time and on budget and considered this protection would be great for the town. This was a major construction, and he expressed his thanks for a job well done.

Duncan Taylor asked if the budget was inflation proof, as it was likely that construction, design, and transport costs must have increased over the last couple of years.

Conor responded stating that he could not go into confidential financial discussions held and recognised what was happening at a household level, but he stated the fact that they were on time and on budget was extraordinary with the pressures out there being enormous. Covid had hit at the start of their journey, and they had gone to the Council in February 2020 with a budget of £82m. They did not sign the contract with McLaughlin & Harvey then, due to awaiting Government Covid guidance. They had then put an extra £6m into the risk pot to cover the Covid situation, and with the extra ATN works of £3.6m from Sustrans, this took the total budget to £92m, which was the locked in figure in April. Based on that figure, the project remained on budget.

One of the biggest risks for the budget related to the price of steel and with the scale of usage of that material, and so from the early stages of procurement they had focused on steel and locked in costs back when difficulties of price increases were unforeseen and emerging today because of Ukraine and cost of living increases and so on. He was confident that they would remain on budget.

Duncan Taylor went on to advise of a kink in the stonework under the Office Bar and queried any risk to this stonework in heavy flooding.

Conor responded saying that the key thing to be recognised was that the stone that was on that wall was not the flood protection. There was a massively well-engineered and robust flood protection wall which sat inside that stone cladding. The sheet piles would go down 10-12 metres into the ground and then the concrete would rise off it. The complexity of the reinforcing in there had been very challenging to build and was very difficult to design – trying to keep the structure as slender as possible and the impact on construction at the least possible, while simultaneously ensuring it did its job under very adverse conditions for a hundred years. That wall's alignment did make it a little more exposed to impact, but he did not consider that a tree or piece of debris would hit that wall, however if anything did happen to that stone cladding over the lifetime of the scheme, it would need to be repaired. A concrete wall could have been inserted but this would not have been as aesthetically pleasing. It was designed like this, as the best way to protect the wall, ensure the movement of the water and simultaneously construct it to an historic bridge. This required a multi-agency engagement at the design stage between the bridge owners, the designers, and the construction specialists for delivery.

Councillor Marshall referred to the pockets of unfinished works and closed footpaths and generally manoeuvring around the town which impacted on townspeople. He also referred to the Princes Street layout, where he had received differing feedback whether this should remain as is presently and wondered how that consultation to measure views would be done.

Conor advised in Selkirk they had experienced similar consultation. Their priority was to have Commercial Road opened and re-signalled as the Trunk Road so that any traffic coming through Hawick would be oblivious that there had been any diversion. Until that time, they did not propose doing anything with High Street or Princess Street as the town suffered from construction fatigue and they did not need to add in an extra construction complexity to make any changes in the short term. He would take the matter to the next meeting of elected representatives, to the next traffic management working group meeting with all the statutory regulators and tease out their thinking. Ultimately Transport Scotland as asset owners of the trunk road would need to be consulted and everyone involved in a brainstorm session, in order to come up with something to present to the town later next year.

A request was made to have a white line installed at the traffic light junction exiting Princes Street, and concerns raised with the pavement at that junction being too small. These points were noted.

Ian Young from Teviot Crescent commented on many workmen appearing not to be fully engaged in work, standing around for hours on end, sometimes on their phones, sitting in vehicles etc and then it being apparent they were then working on weekends probably at double-time. It was suggested that more supervision and management of workers was needed.

Yvonne Gilfillan confirmed that she would refer this comment back.

Jim Fisher, Teviot Crescent, asked for an update on ATN from Santa Marina to the Horse and the connection through Armstrongs.

Conor advised regarding travelling through the ATN design, the very first thing done was to identify any work or change to the existing work given to McLaughlin & Harvey. Within the design they had focused first on the footprint of the original river corridor and then on to the new footbridge sections at the Hamilton Road area. At the other end of the town at Buccleuch Park, Transport Scotland had stepped in and taken away (section 51) to deliver that under their own roadworks and roadworks budget, but to the authorised and agreed design. That now meant works being driven towards the centre of the town. In effect, Conor did not know at that stage but with the team finished at the bottom of Hamilton Road, the design resources would be reorientated to the remaining passages. Any path which would run from the Victoria Footbridge to the High Street was yet to be determined, and even though that was showing through the gap site at Armstrongs, that decision had not been taken. Equally the path from the Horse to North Bridge and what would be done there had also not been decided. They had to determine what would happen at Dovemount Place, and so those corridors were where the Design Team would now be reorientated to.

Jim then went on to highlight his concerns regarding long outstanding works to the gable end of his property, which Conor advised was not part of his work remit and he could not respond to. He was responsible to take the path network from the Victoria Footbridge through to the High Street – whether that be through the gap site at Armstrongs, or by going left and around Teviot Crescent or via Baker Street. Conor undertook nevertheless to determine the present situation regarding the outstanding gable end works and revert to Mr Fisher.

Evelyn Sangster, a resident of Dovecot Mews and whose house faced the river explained she had lived in a bombsite since before the first Covid lockdown and was still living in a bombsite. She had suffered extensive drilling and noise, ongoing from 7am to 7pm, along with all the dirt and mess. She considered it had impacted on her house and that situation was still ongoing. A pumping station had been installed immediately in front of her house with two enormous holes and loads of machinery in it, and she wanted to know how noisy that station would be when activated. She also wanted to know when everything would move away from her house so she could get peace. She also stated that on 30 September on coming out of the river, she had suffered from 7am to 11:50pm from the noise of diggers. There were floodlights on which lit up her lounge and the noise had been just dreadful. She complained that she had not even had anyone come to apologise and say sorry.

Yvonne Gilfillan gave an apology on behalf of McLaughlin & Harvey but there was no other option than to come out of the river on 30 September. Given the volume of work being undertaken they were right to the wire to complete works, and whilst she had wished they could have been out of the river by 7pm that day, this had not proved feasible. Despite risk to workforce, they had to make sure of adherence to environmental consents and licensing, but nevertheless she conceded no-one should have had to put up with the level of disturbance that residents had to deal with. They were however trying to build a flood protection scheme to protect 970 residents and businesses in the town and there had been some residents affected more than others for which again she apologised. They had a duty

however to build that wall. Yvonne went on to state that if they were to have to formally apologise, this would need to be to the whole town, as everyone had been impacted in some form or another, either with being close to works, or with travel delays caused but those who had previously heavily suffered over the years from flooding would also need to be recognised.

Conor echoed Yvonne's apology and stated he would repeat to Mrs Sangster and everyone in the town, if anyone's property had suffered damage because of the works, there was a legitimate claim for compensation process or to have buildings affected repaired. Damage appeared to have affected Mrs Sangster's building but as works there had not yet been fully completed, it was not reasonable to make any full assessment of damage until all works had finished. The matter had been logged, assessment of any damage would be made on works completion and any damage would be made good.

On the Pumping Station, that was not the same as that shown earlier at the Wastewater Treatment Works. There were 8 Pumping Stations built around the town behind the Scheme and these had been set up so that the outlet from those was a pipe operating underground which fed directly into the river. Under all normal circumstances, if water, drainage, or seepage made its way into the drainage network which sat on the dry side of the defences, it moved through the pipework into those very large chambers and gravitated and flowed directly into the river, so there would be no pumping and the water would flow naturally out into the river. The pumps were there for when the river was up. Every outlet onto the river now had a non-return valve on the outside so that when the river was up, no water was able to get into the river. That water needed to go somewhere, and it would continue to make its way to the very large chambers described and be stored until it reached a certain level. The water would be then pumped back into the river. The reason the chambers were so large was to enable them to hold a large volume of water in them, to minimise the amount of time the pumps kicked in and out and therefore minimise the noise of the pumps themselves. The pumps themselves had been designed to be as silent as possible and so in answer to that question, pumps should only be operational in the middle of a storm event and so very infrequently throughout the year. When they did kick in, they would be on and off for the least amount of time, and even then, Conor believed these would not be largely heard.

Yvonne added that regarding works at that location, these would continue into early next year. They were finishing works at the back of B&Ms and at Santa Marina.

Gordon Jackson directed a request to the Community Council, to allow everyone to hear properly, that for future some form of microphone system be put in place. Some voices projected better than others. The Chair undertook to progress on this with the preference being for a roving mike, and she also advised that discussions were ongoing with Live Borders regarding other suitable equipment and WiFi being made available for use for presentation purposes.

Gordon went on to raise a concern regarding the apparent discolouration particularly at the lower part of the walls he had looked at in Commercial Road. He conceded there had been many wet days recently but asked if that discolouration was a problem with the bricks used.

Conor said he would make it his business to look at these walls and recalled at the December HCC meeting there had been similar concern raised regarding the stone cladding along Buccleuch Road. Stones started at quarry colour before settling to a base colour. Some of

the walls he stated were not yet the finished stonework and these would be picked up at quality control stage for any necessary replacement.

John Kernaghan stated that Princes Street was working well and particularly where it met the A7, with the traffic lights it was much easier to get out at that junction and safer for people crossing. He questioned if parking should however be restricted there.

Councillor Marshall stated he hoped once Commercial Road had been fully opened and everyone had familiarised themselves again, then Princes Street traffic would calm somewhat and with the new crossing in place, that area would remain much safer than previously.

John Kernaghan stated he disagreed with French Wight's request earlier re mesh fencing at the Cobble Cauld. Historically dogs had entered the Cauld at that location and even kids for paddling and he considered there should be a gap left for this to continue.

Conor stated that the matter had been logged, and a check would be made with the Design Team and whether there had been a mistake with what had been installed or otherwise. It was not possible to put up fencing to stop access to everything, but a balance of risk needed to be considered.

Councillor Marshall referred to the necessity to close off Mansfield Road again but sought assurance that the bridge there would be opened by the end of November, and everything returned to normal.

Conor advised that all resources had returned to Mansfield Road to get that bridge opened. He had also been questioned about the window openings at that location not being in place and advised these were on the verge of being so. He did not definitively know however whether the bridge would be opened on time but gave assurance that every effort would be made to achieve November. He would provide an update on this to the HCC. Yvonne Gilfillan advised that this would certainly be as early as possible but before Christmas. She also wanted to provide a heads-up that ponding work would be carried out at the Victoria Bridge.

Maureen Notman asked if there was any update on Laidlaw Terrace and was advised there was no update on this, with resources being targeted as previously highlighted in earlier conversations regarding the ATN at Teviot Road through Armstrongs.

Burnett Smith asked when double piling was withdrawn, how much dredging would be done to return the river levels to normal and the same at the Office Bar area where it was particularly deep.

Conor advised there was an obligation to return the river to its pre-existing condition. That operation would be managed by SEPA next summer. With the withdrawal from the river now complete for this summer, lessons would be learned to enable plans to be put in place for next summer. One of the things to be looked at would be the riverbed restoration to normal, so he did not have a definitive answer on that yet, but a topographic report on the riverbed as it was, and what it was now, was in place. Yvonne added that time and resources would be saved in leaving the piling in situ at the Sandbed.

French Wight enquired about the glass panels being installed – who would be responsible for cleaning these and how would they be cleaned.

Conor advised he did not know the answer to that, but they would be turning their attention to the final layers of logic requirements of the Scheme. He would be having a tour of the scheme with senior management and directors of Scottish Borders Council at the end of the month or into November, and maybe that would be when they would commence these types of conversation. Not only would this include the cleaning of the glass panel but also grit bins, ATN, dog bins, maintenance of all the landscaping and so on. Given the scale of work to get to where they now were, not all of that had yet been looked at. He would not like to see these assets put in and for there not to be proper maintenance plans in place which would see these fall into dereliction. Conor would revert to HCC once he knew the answer to that question himself.

John Kernaghan asked Councillor Marshall about the footpath at the Upper Haugh where there had been new litter bins installed and he enquired if these were now on SBC's schedule for emptying. He said that on passing these bins last week, one had been full.

Councillor Marshall undertook to refer this matter to SBC's Waste Management Services and provide an update later.

Gillian Neish, Teviot Crescent advised she was interested to hear that any damages to buildings would be made good. She stated that they were in quite a precarious situation in Teviot Crescent because nobody knew how things were going to join up (with the ATN) and the weight of the machinery going along that road was she considered putting houses there at risk.

Conor confirmed that if someone incurred damage which was a direct result of the scheme and associated works then they would be compensated. Anyone was entitled to drive what vehicles they wanted to on that road, if legal. If the damage derived from the road network, there could be proof difficulties. Conor would speak to Gillian out with the meeting to discuss that matter further.

Michael Jeffrey raised concerns about published scheduling in the Hawick Paper giving an example of a pumping station which started a whole year earlier and yet did not complete last October and was still ongoing. He stated that it was well known when work was permitted in the river, and he considered it was essential for proper scheduling of works to ensure river works were completed on time and not everything left to the last minute causing unnecessary disruption and noise for people. In addition, should works overrun it would be courteous to communicate with those people directly affected, which had not been done. On the last pages of published leaflets, contact details had been incorporated but not in the last two leaflets. The shop at the Horse was also no longer open.

He went on to revert to the kink in the cladding at the Sandbed and asked if there was no major flooding until after the scheme was completed, who would then be responsible for any reparation.

Regarding the Thomson Bridge being closed, he had noted there was no signage from the Teviot Road side to indicate that closure. A workman he had spoken to had stated he would see to this.

The Scheme was costing £88m and he considered works should be being done right first time, and not require for having to return for repairs. It seemed to him that organisation and workmen standing about, was all wasted money.

None of these issues affected him personally, but he had spoken with various people around the town who had expressed difficulty with signs on paths, and for those with mobility issues the lack of communication when these paths would be closed. He considered that communication was sadly lacking.

Conor stated he had no idea firstly why contact details had gone from the last two leaflets, so this would be investigated. In relation to the programme publicised in the Hawick Paper on the first summer and that this had not been adhered to, this had been addressed at the last HCC meeting in December and the December before. The plan had changed as they learned lessons after that first summer. At that point, they had made a judgement call to travel away from that original plan, to maximise the delivery of flood protection across the town. For the first two years, as had been reported in December last year, every effort would be made to get as much of the flood protection defences in place to minimise the risk of flooding to the people of Hawick. By December of last year, it had been stated that 50% of the flood defences had been complete and the town protected for last winter. The scale of achievement of holding the flood waters out last October was as a direct result of taking that decision to concentrate on flood defences and he apologised that the transition to move away from that original plan had not got through to Mr Jeffrey. Mr Jeffrey considered that the opportunity could have been taken to have almost weekly updates in the Hawick Paper, especially when centre pages of leaflets were so specific regarding timelines.

Finally, Conor advised that the shop was not opened due to Covid and then a judgement call had been taken that this was no longer required. They had similarly not opened the Contact Centre at the site compound as again this was subsequently determined as unnecessary. If the town however considered that the shop should re-open then this could be reconsidered.

Marion Short thanked Mr Jeffrey for his input but due to time, requested that others be given the opportunity of further questioning and time preserved for other matters yet to be discussed on the agenda.

Councillor Marshall stated it was great to have a good turnout at the meeting and so many constructive questions and he thanked everyone for their attendance and input. He had considered from day one of the Scheme that Conor and his team along with McLaughlin & Harvey had taken the community with them on the journey. They had carried out many public consultations and personal visits, and whilst there had been pain along the way, they had not shied away from this. He urged everyone to stick with this project, as the end result would be hugely beneficial to the town.

Mrs Sangster confirmed that when the river did rise back in October, McLaughlin & Harvey had worked very hard well into the night to help with extra sand bags, so they had to be praised for those efforts.

The Chair advised she had noted the change to an embankment from a wall at the new Weensland Footbridge. In terms of the Weensland Function Suite, that had been flooded on a number of occasions and was a probable reason why in the past it had been difficult to sell. She wondered if changing the wall to an embankment might continue to dissuade buyers.

Conor advised there would be no less protection from the embankment than there would be with a wall and having an embankment would make matters much easier in terms of the ATN proposals.

As a separate matter, Conor understood that there were planning proposals already submitted to SBC for future use of the Weensland Function Suite.

The Chair then thanked everyone for attending and gave special thanks to Conor Price and Yvonne Gilfillan for coming along and providing the update. It would be good to have them back again in due course for a future update.

She hoped everyone would take something positive away with them and were happy with responses to questions raised. Flood Protection had a website for everyone to view, and they issued regular newsletters to the public. Overall, whilst the scheme still had a way to go, it would make a huge improvement to the living conditions of residents particularly those previously affected by flooding in the town. A round of applause then ensued.

7. AOCB –

- (a) The Chair advised that there was a Great Borders River Clean scheduled for Friday, 28th October to Sunday, 30th October. Volunteers were being sought. Details of this could be found on HCC's Facebook page.
- (b) HCC had received an email regarding the closure of the Waverley Walk either fully or in phases. It was proposed to close the walkway from 24th October through to 27th January 2023 to facilitate the construction of the Sustrans ATN path from Wilton Hill/Princes Street to Hamilton Road.

The current Method Statement from the Contractor was to construct a temporary path alongside the current path and that method could still be an option, however there would be benefits in terms of time and cost and also reductions in consumable material if the path was closed over that full period. Any monies saved in the construction works would then be able to be reinvested on further ATN extension works within the town.

SBC were therefore looking for comments to determine whether the path should be closed for 3 months or piecemeal to construct this temporary path. Whilst (for full closure) this may come as an inconvenience to some users of the path, SBC hoped that the timing of these works was conducive to a full closure during the winter months.

Councillor Marshall stated that the path needed to be constructed, with as minimal disruption as possible to users and it was essential that closure was communicated effectively. His understanding was that the walkway would be closed in sections and there would be some sort of access available. This work was essential to fit in with the other ATN works throughout the town.

The Chair expressed concern that the email had only been received from SBC on 5th October with responses requested by 12th October, and that short timescale was not satisfactory, with more notice required.

A member of Burnfoot CC advised that the walkway was very well used, particularly for schoolchildren from Burnfoot attending Trinity School.

The Chair also expressed concern regarding any impact to the proposed Borders Railway extension along that same route.

Ivor Pearce, a resident of Hamilton Road advised he was unaware of this proposed closure, and the Chair undertook to forward information via email to him.

- (c) The Chair advised that as a Community Council, information had been received from the Scottish Borders National Park Group who were campaigning to create a new Scottish Borders National Park. The Group were asking that people support their initiative. Leaflets were available for viewing. Previously it had been thought that Hawick would not be part of any SB National Park, however it now seemed from the plan to be the case that Hawick would be so. Only one National Park was able to be created by the Scottish Government over so many years.

Councillor Marshall advised that Councillors were awaiting a report on this for their consideration. Wilson George advised of information out that day from the Scottish Government relating to this initiative.

The Chair advised there were pros and cons to this - there could be planning restrictions imposed but on the other hand the park could bring in more tourism and economic benefits for the town.

Councillor Marshall advised that as and when this went through the planning process there would be much more publicity and information made available. At that time, it might be helpful for an invite to be extended to a HCC meeting.

A member of the public advised that while National Parks came with a number of restrictions, they also came with much needed funding to communities.

John Campbell enquired of a rumour of a Steinway grand piano coming to Hawick, but nobody attending knew anything about this.

- 8. Date of Next Meeting** – The next HCC meeting would be held on Monday, 14th November 2022 at 6.30pm within the Lesser Town Hall.