

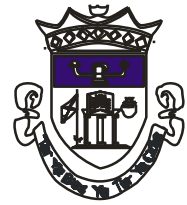
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# Hawick Community Council

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## MINUTES OF MEETING OF HAWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

held on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023 within the Lesser Town Hall, Hawick

Present	Cameron Knox (Chair) Jim Adams (Treasurer) Stuart Beck Braden George Graeme King Michael Robertson Euan Welsh	Kevin Marsh (Vice-Chair) Margaret Hogg (Treasurer) Jock Campbell Wilson George Stuart Mactaggart Duncan Taylor John Wilkinson
Attending:	Councillor McAteer Councillor Richards	Councillor Marshall Councillor Smart

There were 14 members of the public in attendance.

- 1. Chair's Opening Remarks** – The Chair welcomed everyone to the December meeting of HCC and stated the public support at the meeting was very much appreciated. He hoped everyone who attended the Christmas Market on Saturday past, agreed that had been a tremendous success. In particular, it had been great to see the kids' smiling faces on receiving selection boxes from Santa in his new Grotto.

He reminded everyone in attendance that the meeting would be recorded by HCC and on behalf of the Hawick Paper 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 and Ramage.
- 4. Adoption of Minutes of Meetings of 13<sup>th</sup> November 2023** – The previously circulated Minutes of the last meeting were approved as an accurate record of the meeting - Proposed for adoption by Duncan Taylor and Seconded by Wilson George.
- 5. Matters arising** –  
Teviot Day Centre – Councillors advised there was no update on this to report.  
Pelican Crossing at the Haugh & Resurfacing/Painterwork at Langlands Bridge – Councillor Ramage had reported prior to the meeting, she awaited updates yet on those two issues.  
Campervan refuse bins at the Haugh – Councillor Ramage had also reported that she would be meeting with SBC officials. Officials had previously intimated that HCC could assume financial responsibility for emptying of these bins, however that location belonged to Hawick Common

Good. The matter would be addressed further for discussion at the next meeting of Hawick Common Good.

Burnt out vehicle at the Common Haugh – The Chair advised that he understood that the vehicle concerned had been stolen back in July and that the Police had been in discussion with the Insurance Company on how to progress on its removal. Further information would be forthcoming in due course.

Duncan Taylor asked why it was not possible to have the vehicle removed, pending any insurance outcome. Councillor McAteer advised he would make enquiries, to determine any reason for that.

Marjorie McCreddie confirmed there were campervans booked for over the Festive Period and she would be grateful if that vehicle were able to be moved before then.

Charges to Football Clubs for use of 4G Pitch at Volunteer Park – Jock Campbell asked if there was any update on those charges. The Chair confirmed that query had been answered at the last meeting. Councillor McAteer confirmed that charges were to remain as levied by Live Borders, which were competitive with those across the sector. Whilst that was perhaps not the answer being looked for, there were funding opportunities out there, and SBC officers could help the football clubs to access appropriate funding to help cover those charges.

10% increase on Annual Support Grant – Stuart Mactaggart asked if that increase had been ratified, and Councillor McAteer confirmed that had been the case. It was noted there would be an increase of £178 to HCC.

#### **6. Hawick High School – Senior Pupil Update**

The Chair welcomed the two senior pupils (Grace Gibb and Stroma Beukes) to the meeting.

The pupils advised that their school dance would be held that week, and they had been preparing for that and were looking forward to it. After Christmas, they would develop on plans for holding a Burns Supper, Quiz Night and Race Night.

The Chair thanked the pupils for their attendance, and stated he was sure they were looking forward to their Christmas Dance but better still, the After Party up Hawick Moor.

#### **7. Police Scotland Reports** – Reports had been previously circulated to members for November. PC Ryan Stewart attending the meeting, introduced PC Ula Trochimiak, Schools Officer for Hawick High School and all the Hawick Primary Schools, and he advised of their shared responsibility for Burnfoot.

PC Trochimiak gave a resume of all the projects planned within the schools. These included a talk about Borders Women's Aid in February entitled 'Escape the Trap', Keeping Safe, an Emergency Services Day planned for Springtime, Rape Crisis Workshop and Step Up and Transition Programme. For Primary Schools, talks would centre around Parent and Children Safety, Road Safety and Parking, the latter needing especially resolved for Drumlanrig Primary. There was also ongoing work in attending the various youth clubs within the town.

There were no specific questions raised regarding the November reports. The Chair referred to the attendance of shopkeepers at HCC's previous meeting regarding theft and asked if there had been any progress on setting up a Shop Watch Scheme. He had been contacted by one of the shopkeepers in the town advising that the Police had stated they could not do this, and that such a request had to come from another body. PC Stewart advised that PC Mortimar was trying to set up a What's App Group but following visits to various shopkeepers

in the town regarding this, he had been met with negative response and no-one wanted to take ownership of such a Group. He concluded by stating that the shoplifter discussed at the last meeting had been charged and a report submitted to the Procurator Fiscal.

#### **8. Guest Speaker – Conor Price, CPE Consultancy – Flood Protection Update**

The Chair welcomed Conor Price to the meeting. He stated that Flood Protection was the greatest project for Hawick however the town was now in total construction fatigue and needed a finishing date for the project and a construction free town going forward. Hopefully Conor would be able to provide good news on that.

The Chair firstly advised that unfortunately for the second time of receiving updates on Flood Protection at our meetings, McLaughlin Harvey would not be attending again that night. They had been invited to attend tonight's meeting on 26 September last and following a reminder for response to that invite, they then duly accepted by email on 12<sup>th</sup> October. However, a Robin Erskine then forwarded an email only on Friday past to advise no-one would now be in attendance. HCC found that extremely disappointing. Robin had however forwarded a report, as requested, which the Chair then read out.

This read - In terms of an update, McLaughlin Harvey had completed all flood wall construction across the entire project with the exception of one 20m section of wall in front of the old Glenmac building at Mill Port. That last section was hampered by high river levels in September and they were unfortunately unable to complete that in September as access was prevented for circa 3 weeks. All finishing works on the dry side of the wall at that location had been descope from McLaughlin Harvey and would be completed by others following any required redesign as the sheet piles were not driven to the designed levels. McLaughlin Harvey would return in May 2024 to complete that 20m section of wall (as it was restricted by the May to September working in water constraint).

The northern side of the river was almost complete. They had some road surfacing to complete before Christmas at Lower Mansfield Road. They would also have works to complete at the surface water pumping stations in the new year, as well as further soft landscaping and reinstatement works throughout the site.

On the southern side, they were completing works around the High School/St George's Lane which they hoped to complete in early January. Teviot Road and the Wee Haugh works were also nearing completion and would be fully completed in January (except for grass seeding). The gap at the Duke Street/Glebe Mill Street junction had been descope from McLaughlin Harvey and would be completed by others next year. Works on Glebe Mill Street were impacted by further design issues and would be completed in late January/February. The section from the end of Glebe Mill Street linking Weensland again had design issues and would be completed by others next year. The Weensland works were nearing completion, although some of those works were being completed by others due to access requirements for SBC as well as design issues. They had been impacted by the wet weather and topsoiling and seeding would be carried out in the new year.

The Chair advised it was simply not good enough for non-attendance, however if anyone had any queries on the above report, they should forward these to HCC for sending on to Mr Erskine for reply.

Conor then introduced himself and thanked HCC for their invite to the meeting to provide his update on Flood Protection works. He said he sincerely hoped that it was the last Christmas

he would require to be in Hawick to update. He had spoken previously and was acutely aware of the townfolks' construction fatigue, being now at the end of 6 years construction – 2 years of that being advanced works and now 4 years of actual works.

At the last update he provided to HCC, he said he had not advised that works would be completed by Christmas, due to the extra funding which had come from the Active Travel Network and had made known then that works would carry on into 2024. What he was able to advise on was how those works would now play out, and most importantly, provide the update on where works were in relation to Flood Protection.

Regarding the update report provided from McLaughlin Harvey, Conor expressed his disappointment and that of SBC, for the lack of their presence at tonight's meeting. Firstly, he advised McLaughlin Harvey were engaged in a contract he said which obligated them to engage with the people of Hawick including the Community Council, and he did not consider that it was in any shape or form acceptable for them not to attend. Yvonne Gilfillan had attended many meetings on their behalf previously. Secondly, he wished to advise that any communication including that from Robert Erskine to HCC tonight, should not have been issued without firstly going through himself or a member of his team, and that had not happened. He required to make that point, as he needed to have on record that SBC fundamentally disputed two assertions made within Robert Erskine's report. Firstly, that the works in certain locations were being done by others. He realised that was contractual semantics but that work was not being undertaken by others but by the Council itself. SBC had been obligated to step in to cover works which were not being undertaken. Secondly, he disputed that there were design issues in all of the locations Robert had cited in his report. That was not fact but potentially a statement of understanding or desire by McLaughlin Harvey but not fact and he did not consider the report presented to HCC to be reasonable and acceptable of the state of play at that time.

Moving on, in relation to the Flood Protection Scheme, Conor advised he would begin with some updates on piling, talk through some slides and would be happy to then take any questions. He would not go into finite detail on how certain locations would be finished at Mansfield Road or Sandbed and Millport but would be happy to take questions on those particular areas.

Firstly, he wanted to reinforce the overall Scheme remained on programme and on budget and he was proud of that given the environment being worked under, and the runaway inflation, Covid and the other challenges endured. They had been working around the clock to deliver two major objectives for the town – to deliver Flood Protection. Notices at the entrances to town indicated that would be by the end of 2023, and he wished to report on where works were now at.

In total, they had 5760 metres of defences to be provided around the town, broadly speaking on the north and south banks of the river. Last December he had reported 2,295 metres remaining to be constructed, not enough to protect the town which meant the town remained exposed to flooding. He reported that, as of tonight, there were in the order of 90m which were not 100% completed. In relation to that 90m they were broken down into some very difficult and challenging sections, with their first priority being to provide flood protection. They had been working on a Plan B since the Autumn in the event of being unable to provide 100% permanent defences. For instance, the gap at Mill Port, where works could not be completed until May 2024 due to instream working, had temporary defences put in place to link in with the flood wall, and they continued to work on other gaps e.g. in Mansfield Road

and Lower Mansfield Road at the roundabout (to be completed the following week) to provide 100% protection.

He raised he had three fundamental problems – one at the Sandbed, one at Millport and the other at Duke Street. However, all of those locations had robust temporary protection in place for the current winter. Temporary defences were not ideal, were costing additional monies but would provide any major event of flooding. Once works on the gap at Hamilton Road were concluded there would be 100% protection of the north side of the river.

The second major deliverable was the Active Travel Network and the last major deliverable on that was the footbridge at Weensland. Conor confirmed that, as projected in the last update, that bridge would travel to Hawick in late January, with police escort and a massive crane organised to lift that bridge into place. The bridge was in two sections and both would be lifted into place from the rugby club side of the river. One risk identified was any wind as the crane would not be able to operate in any strong winds. Thereafter, works to each side of the bridge would need to be completed to link in with walls for the flood defences. 50% of the Active Travel works were open to date, and that would become 100% as each of the connecting works came together, estimated around July/August next year. The major part of works would be completed in the first quarter of the year, with any landscaping works not commencing until at least April/May onwards.

Conor hoped that people would have noted the significant amount of work completed on Mart Street, which opened a couple of weeks ahead of programme and he considered SBC contracts to have done a fantastic job there. There had been real concern that works there would not be started on time, due to disturbances with the Pines Burns blade movements however an agreement had been brokered and both sides worked together to good effect and the road had now been reconfigured and re-opened. A toucan crossing and traffic lights still required to be put in place, however that work would not require any further road closure.

Regarding communications, it was noted Conor's team were trying as best possible to communicate with townfolk. They would continue to report through newsletters on how works would play out from January 2024. They also continued to make use of social media channels and website and it was noted there had been a huge amount of communication regarding traffic management at Mansfield Road for resurfacing work there, as well as at Mart Street. Conor would also continue to update on works at future HCC meetings throughout 2024, as well as continue regular meetings with local elected representatives. He had also delivered presentations to High School pupils and it was intended to continue that into the primary schools. Much of that would be focused to create excitement about the Active Travel Network and in the hope that people would start to use those improvements to their benefit. He referred to leaflets which had been prepared for the town's children, which could be provided to HCC for further distribution. They had also tried in their latest newsletter communication to summarise on progress with the pumping stations and to remind people of the journey which had been gone through to get to the present stage. Major flooding of the town had been consigned to the past but it was important to reflect on how far matters had come.

Conor then showed the audience some photographs, one taken the previous week showing the river flowing down Commercial Road and entirely contained by the new flood defences, and the various flat and non-return valves and pumping stations working alongside the flood defence walls. Staining and discolouring of parts of the walls previously reported should now be noted as all becoming weathered and merging with the other architecture across the town.

On the matter of resurfacing works on Mansfield Road, Conor advised it was his understanding that would be substantially completed before Christmas, with the final layer of surfacing being in January, which would at last see withdrawal from that location and the impact on travel and businesses there. New parking bays, back-to-back with the Rugby Club, would also open and take away parking pressures for that part of the town.

On the Sandbed, Conor stated that area had long been the greatest heartache to the overall project, as previously reported. Looking from Drumlanrig Bridge down, the first half of works had been completed successfully and flood waters were capable of safely travelling through. He was aware of concerns raised in not getting to finishing works in locations around the town, however he hoped the finishing works completed from Drumlanrig Bridge down would start to show people the level of detail which could be expected at those other locations. SBC Contracts would be carrying out those finishing works.

The gap at the Sandbed of some 40m, remained a massive challenge and they were continuing to work to try to resolve. There were in the order of some 73 piles required to be placed at that location before construction on the wall itself could be started. Ground conditions had meant progress with those works being much slower than anticipated however he understood that they were now nearing 50% of the way through that work with 31 piles now in place. Remaining pile work would recommence in January before moving onto the next phase. There was a degree of finishing then to be done from Albert Bridge back to the piles and then it would be all about the final 40m gap works required. Conor had a meeting with the Tweed Commissioner the following Monday to discuss finishing of the wall and river management. Following that meeting it was his intention to call a meeting with Sandbed residents in January to update them on what would then happen.

Conor then showed various slides on gaps within the town in December 2022 and up to the present time with works carried out to bring the north side of the town almost 100% complete with the exception of the gap for the footbridge at lower Mansfield. The south side with issues at the Sandbed highlighted, was a different matter he said, albeit temporary defences were in place until works required there were resolved and completed.

On the Active Travel Network, Conor then reported 55% of works carried out were now open and he hoped some of those attending had experienced some of those locations. The key matter now was to get final locations completed. He showed some slides of the Common Haugh with a new toddler's playpark and multifunctional space to accommodate the market and other different events. There were large green areas, with many trees sown last year which were already rooting and growing.

Councillor McAteer enquired of Conor regarding the Sonny Murray Monument referred to earlier in the meeting, which he suspected was on the Active Travel Network, and he wondered if that could be checked, which Conor agreed he would do.

Conor went on to refer to challenges regarding Laidlaw Terrace, which he said he could not go into detail on as that was a contractual dispute between the Contractor and SBC but in order to have works completed at that location, SBC Contracts had taken control of finishing works on the pipework underneath the ground and final paving at that location. He undertook to continue with clear communication with the residents there so that they were aware of what was going on. Regarding the footpath between the kerb and buildings, in order to take pressures off, they would reinstate the road with a rock surface before returning to

recommence works on the final paving and roadway to completion in the early months of 2024.

Returning to Mart Street, he had spoken about that and the fact that the roadway had now reopened with two-way traffic on both sides of the roadway. He thanked everyone who had contributed to allowing them to reconfigure and tailor the traffic management plan for that location, which had not turned out to be as bad as had been anticipated (with Pines Burns blades movements).

From the footbridge perspective, he showed further slides of the piers – one showing the excavator on the Hamilton Road side, the mid-pier which was on dry land at Weensland side and finally the pier which would sit inside the embankment. Everything would come together when the footbridge was in place at the end of January. New entrance headwalls had gone in at the top end of the path on Weensland Road side and whilst finishing works for new top soil and landscaping had not yet been completed, there was no issue with that at the present time, as the path could not be opened until after the footbridge was in place.

Turning to Burnfoot, development proposals for that area were continuing to be worked on. It was proposed to trial a one-way system in front of the School and they would see how that developed and progress on that afterwards. There was also a design for a new toucan crossing at Kenilworth Avenue.

Finally, Conor wanted to mention process for any claims for damages. It was entirely right that there was a Claims process in place, most of which to date received were in respect of works carried out by McLaughlin Harvey. Conor advised he had been reviewing the process, which had been stated as being very slow, and whether that could be accelerated. He considered however that claims were being processed at the correct pace however should he determine at any time that not to be the case, he would then step in. A Third-Party Loss Adjuster had been appointed by McLaughlin Harvey to make judgement on whether any claims made were legitimate or spurious for damage to properties. He gave assurances that claims were not being ignored and asked for patience. If after a period of two months claims had not been seen to be progressed, he would then intervene.

Before questions, the Chair and Vice-Chair declared interests as an Employee and Director Of Marsh & Riddell who were involved in pre- and post-work surveys.

Duncan Taylor asked about the post construction works and snagging works over the next couple of years. He wondered what the definition of snagging was and as an example remarked on the bridge from the High School across to the Common Haugh and the ramp to the car park. People he said tended to not follow the path round in preference to taking the short-cut onto the grassed area. He wondered if there might be a way of fitting steps to prevent that and asked whether that would come under snagging or would it be a whole redesign matter.

Conor advised within works scoped, a contractor was then appointed to take that forward. If a contractor failed to carry out that scoped work, that would then be considered snagging. Once works were completed, they were inspected in detail to identify any works incomplete, which then formed a 'snagging' list. If, however, the contractor had done something wrong or works were not to standard, then those works were considered as a 'defect'. Sometimes defects may not be identified within 12 months, and in those cases, works would then be identified as a 'late defect' – in effect, works had been signed off, there had been no snagging

nor defect but later those works came to light. Conor then gave an example where they had signed off on some Active Travel Network works in the summer, and the rains then came some 3 months later, resulting in ponding and a 'late defect' being recorded. For Hawick, there was a 24-month period where late defects could be identified, unlike in Selkirk Flood Protection where that defect period was much less at 12 months. The Hawick project was aimed at standing for 100 years, with no substantial maintenance works for at least 25 years.

In the case identified, that would be additional design and therefore to retrofit any steps would require that to go through a design process, which would mean additional cost. Conor confirmed he was aware of and had evidenced the tracks made by people taking that shortcut. That issue was on a list of 'nice-to-do' but it would not be known until towards the end of the project, whether monies would be available to allow for those steps to be put in place. If that were not possible, an 'aspirational' list would be made available to SBC who could then consider to take on those retrofits. It was not possible to design for every scenario and to forecast human behaviour.

Braden George referred to the 24-month defect period but asked what happened if a defect then arose after that period. Conor advised that for instance with any roadwork defects, it would be difficult to identify responsibility, with that roadway having already been in use and whether that was then attributable to heavier usage for transporting of wind turbines and machinery. For roadworks, the industry standard defect period was 12 months and to go beyond that required additional cost, and that cost had been paid for within the contract. With the complexity of certain parts of the project, they had known that the town would require to go through a very difficult time of build, and they considered it appropriate to extend to a 24-month defect period, which in the industry was almost unprecedented.

Michael Robertson enquired on safety measures being put in place along the river's edge, i.e. life belts etc and Conor advised that the new walls had, in every instance, been designed so as to try to ensure no-one fell into the river. Where walls were adjacent to the Active Travel Network for cyclists, those walls were to the prerequisite height of 1.4m. The area most affected would be Commercial Road. The Scheme was subject to full risk assessment, and access points had been designed in, to ensure access was available for any such incidents. There were no additional safety measures proposed. At the top of Duke Street, which area was not yet entirely finished, Conor stated that on the wet side where the flood wall met the path, it would be graded on the outside to allow walking seamlessly from the inside to the outside at that location and with an access point there. Separately, he stated that the access points would not be fully appreciated until all works had been completed. He referred also to areas at Weensland and at Hawick Rugby Club where there were embankments and access points available to allow for machinery for maintenance of landscaping etc.

Michael continued that he would still have liked to see lifebelts or some other additional safety equipment put in place, and Conor undertook to record that as a concern raised at the meeting, for discussion at the next Emergency Planning meeting.

Jock Campbell enquired about ponding on Commercial Road. Conor confirmed that there should not be any ponding on that road and he considered that to be a defect requiring listed for remedial action.

Conor advised that there were a number of significant openings along the walls which had flat valves on them, which may not logically make sense to people. One of those was on Commercial Road and were there for use in absolute emergency situations. The flood



protection scheme was in place to deliver flood protection but not every flood event, as there were always bigger rivers or flooding which could come along. It was impossible to take away every risk when the town was situated on a flood plain, so where water did come over the walls, to prevent ponding or water remaining days after, those valves were in place as an emergency release valve before the pumping stations kicked in and all valves worked together to accelerate the release of water. The current flood protection would have dealt effectively with flooding experienced to date, however, there would always be a residual risk in extreme flood events.

The Vice-Chair enquired if the pumping stations were now operational. Conor advised there were 9 pumping stations – 1 Scottish Water and 8 relative to the Scheme. Scottish Water pumping station was the largest and had been fully functional for the last 2 years. Of the remaining 8, the one at the Sandbed was not operational, as the wall there required completion before it could operate, 2 were now fully operational, 3 would be fully operational by the end of the year, leaving another 2 not yet fully operational which included the one at Walters Wynd with pipework challenges.

Those pumping stations operated in a number of different ways – firstly by a gravity system connected into the entire drainage network, so in effect all the drains connected allowed water to flow into the chambers and the chambers then released the water back into the river. That part of the system was 100% operational.

The pumping stations themselves were designed to hold extra water until it were safe to release back into the river but would not operate unless an extraordinary flood event happened. SBC had a massive pump held at HQ and which they used previously at Selkirk, and which pump had been deployed to Hawick to cover pumping stations not yet operational.

John Wilkinson said he appreciated issues with the pumping station at the foot of Walters Wynd but enquired as to the reopening of Walters Wynd road itself as there appeared to be nothing else preventing this. Conor advised that works to reconfigure pipe works there had now been agreed and were about to happen. He confirmed that the focus of McLaughlin Harvey's attention was on that pumping station to have works completed.

The Chair enquired as to when the James Thomson Bridge would be reopened. Conor advised he would make enquiries and report back.

Councillor Marshall stated he had some of his constituents enquiring about what would be happening with regards to the one-way system in Princes Street, advising some residents were for the road layout to remain whilst others were not. He wanted reassurance that changes made would be fully consulted on to determine what should remain or in effect be changed back. He wondered what the consultation might look like. He also stated that as well as ponding on Commercial Road, that was also happening on Mansfield Road and should be monitored.

He went on to mention regarding the Active Travel Network that signage appeared small and therefore not a deterrent to vehicles making use of paths and referred specifically to vehicles using the Hamilton Road path. He advised that whilst the Active Travel Network was great for the town, it was not designed to take vehicles.

A member of the public enquired as to any further progress with Active Travel Network works on North Bridge Street. He considered that starting from Stampers appeared to him to be in

the middle of nowhere. Conor recalled concerns raised by residents at the previous HCC update meeting and confirmed that redesign was ongoing to take account of those concerns. He had enquired of the Design Team how that redesign would be communicated back to the residents but to date he had not heard back and nothing therefore was as yet confirmed. The design he had witnessed looked to capture all concerns raised, and enhanced connectivity along North Bridge Street but most importantly there would be no loss of parking and he understood that there could in fact be a parking gain. All in all, he considered that the Design Team had done a really good job in stepping back from the areas of concern.

Another member of the public asked about the process for claims. He was a resident living in Duke Street and had been flooded in October 2022, with ceilings etc coming down, resulting in a bill of £980 which he had required to pay himself. He considered that damage had resulted from vibration from works being carried out outside his home. In September 2023, more tarmac was being dug up and he considered that work to have resulted in water penetrating dormer windows and through flat roofs again. A Liaison Officer had visited and advised a surveyor would attend, which he duly did but to date he had not heard anything further. Every time if now rained, he said that the rainwater came down through ceilings, internal walls and stairwells and he wanted to hear how he could achieve some real progress. He wanted others to be aware of what residents affected were going through and did not consider it acceptable to have to live with those conditions.

Conor gave his apology but he was unable to accelerate that process. He represented SBC and they were not responsible for works in that area. It was the responsibility of the Contractor. Conor undertook to speak with that resident for more detail at the close of the meeting, and he would speak with the Contractor.

Councillor Smart thanked Conor for his informative presentation. She asked about the Wee Haugh and the raised area at the corner where the two walls met in front of Santa Marina, and why that did not have wheelchair access. Conor advised he was unable to respond but would make enquiries.

Another member of the public advised he was unhappy that Conor was unable to answer when the Thomson Bridge would be reopened. He asked if it were logical to assume because works were incomplete on the Teviot Road side that the Bridge would remain closed until after May, when works were scheduled to recommence. Conor advised that may be the logic, however he did not consider he would allow his team to have the Bridge closed for that duration. He would make enquiries the following day to progress on that.

A member of the public, resident in Laidlaw Terrace expressed her concerns regarding the road layout to Mart Street and the long route she now required to take to access her property. She asked if the 'No Right Turn' from Union Street to North Bridge Street would be permanent. Conor advised that would be a permanent change, which had been agreed some time ago at design stage. Duke Street would not also go back to two-way traffic.

She then went on to advise, like the previous Duke Street resident, she also now had cracks appeared in her flat and had various people attend, and expressed concerns at how long she would also require to wait to see real progress. Conor advised that as works at that area were now being done by SBC Contracts, he would arrange for someone to attend her property however if damage was caused during McLaughlin Harvey works, they and not SBC would be responsible. He would speak with her at the end of the meeting for more detail.

Jock Campbell raised concerns at the level of vermin around the town as a result of works. Conor advised that they had been running an enhanced Rat Management Programme over the last 3-4 years, so that if anyone had an issue with rodents, they were able to contact SBC who had been dealing with concerns timeously, and far more comprehensively as it was most likely associated with works being carried out. He requested people continued to report any issues with vermin to SBC as would normally be the case and immediate action would be taken.

Councillor Marshall referred back to his earlier remarks, and stated he wished to determine how exactly community engagement would take place especially in regard to the Princes Street junction. Conor advised it was not just about Princes Street but about any of the temporary arrangements which had been put in place to allow Flood Protection Works. He appreciated that Princes Street was probably a significant area, but equally the High Street had been reconfigured with parking bays and bus drop offs and modification of the junction at the bottom end of that location. Judgement calls had to be made on what was to be done at those locations. The question was whether the town was better off with the new junctions in place or not. The Traffic Management Team had been looking at changed areas – how they were and how they were now following changes, and it had been their view that the town's traffic management was better following changes made. That was theoretical. Both theoretical and current management in place were distorted by ongoing works and traffic management to accommodate. He therefore suggested it would be prudent to hold off on any consultation until next Summer, to allow works to be completed and traffic to flow as it should before any judgements were made. Councillor Marshall advised he was comfortable with that timescale but confirmed consultation would be required and Conor agreed that it was essential that residents using those roads needed to have their say.

A member of the public raised her concerns that log lorries came thundering down Wilton Hill and were unsighted when navigating the corner at the foot of Wilton Hill. She considered that was an accident waiting to happen as they screeched to try to stop at the traffic lights. Conor noted that position.

There being no further questions, the Chair thanked Conor for his attending, unlike McLaughlin Harvey. Conor confirmed he would attend again to provide further updates.

- 9. Treasurer's Report** – The Treasurer advised the Opening Balance at the start of November was £15,547.11 and the Closing Balance £12,903.96.

HCC 1 Account started with a balance of £6,251.20, with expenses of £759.27 for part-funding of a new Santa Grotto; £904.98 for new icicle lights for Trinity Gardens; £47.98 for stationery; and £35 for Armistice Day Wreath, leaving a Closing Balance of £4,503.97. From that closing balance there were ring-fenced monies amounting to £2,456.19, leaving an operative balance of £2,047.78. Some of that would be used for ongoing costs, with the 2024/25 Annual Support Grant not being received until June time.

Christmas Lights Event Account – that started with a balance of £2,419.86. Added to that was a £500 donation towards the cost of the new Santa Grotto; and remaining stallholder fees received of £205. There had been only one expense for a music licence for the Christmas Event at a cost of £102.21. All of that had left a closing balance of £3,022.65, which he considered would be sufficient to cover all Christmas Event 2023 expenditure, however further funding would require to be raised for going forward. Stallholders' fees did not cover all expenses for that Event.

Hawick in Bloom Account – that account balance opened and closed at £5,228.63 but he reminded that would account for only one year’s planting and if it were proposed to expand on the hanging baskets displayed during the summer, again further funding opportunities would need to be explored.

Community Benefit Fund Foundation Scotland – The Opening Balance on that account was £1,647.42 with expenses for projects of £823.00 for an audio system and part-funding of the new Santa Grotto of £675.71, leaving a closing balance of £148.71. That balance would be used towards Christmas Event expenses.

The next Foundation Grant would be applied for early in the New Year, and it was proposed that be used for our own projects again, e.g. Bandstand Events, Hawick in Bloom and Christmas Event. These projects had all been well received. Any public donations would be welcomed too.

There were no questions raised and Members approved the Treasurer’s Report.

#### **10. Public Forum & Town Issues:**

- (a) Sonny Murray Statue on Buccleuch Road – Stuart Beck stated he believed that would be taken away in relation to the new Active Travel Network Path and would be placed in storage at the Town Yard. He requested that the statue be placed at its new location straight away, rather than be placed in storage. Councillor McAteer undertook to investigate that matter.
- (b) Puddle at Wrights Hardware – Stuart Beck advised that had been an ongoing matter for some time back (raised formerly as Puddle at M&Co) and with heavy rain recently and wares from that shop being placed outside, that had resulted in pedestrians having to walk right through the puddle. Councillor McAteer undertook again to have that matter investigated.

Wilson George advised there was a burn underneath O’Connell Street where a pipe had been fitted many years back following flooding of nearby shops. It may be that there was a blockage of that pipe causing the puddle.

- (c) Wilton Lodge Play Park – Stuart Beck queried when the piece of equipment taken away by SBC some nine months ago had not to date been repaired/replaced. Councillor Marshall undertook to investigate that and report back. He had received a complaint back in the summer about that same equipment and had been advised by SBC officers that it had been removed for safety reasons. It should have been repaired and replaced by now he considered.
- (d) Mote Park – Michael Robertson requested additional street lighting at the lower part of that Park. He had been advised that women walking dogs were scared to use the lower part at night due to lack of lighting. Councillor McAteer advised he would raise that however there would undoubtedly be costs associated in any further provision which may be prohibitive.
- (e) Parking on Pavements – Jim Adams raised that new legislation regarding that had come into effect that day, and he wondered how far on SBC were on managing that.

Councillor McAteer again confirmed that de-regulating of parking regulations was necessary and he and his colleagues were fighting for that de-regulation which had not happened as yet in the Scottish Borders. Until such happened, there were no powers available to SBC to enforce that new regulation on parking on pavements.

- (f) Street Lighting Issues - Jock Campbell enquired how to report issues with street lighting. Councillor Marshall advised he would forward information to HCC on that, and advised

that when reporting any issues, it would be helpful to have the lamp-post number identified at the same time.

## 11. Reports from Sub-Committees

- (a) Christmas Event - The Chair reported on a very successful Event the previous Saturday. It had been a tremendous day, except for the poor weather. The positive comments received by the Community Council were very encouraging indeed and made all the hard work worthwhile. The new Santa's Grotto had gone down well with parents, who were able to take photographs of their children chatting with Santa and each received a selection box. Grateful thanks were expressed to all those helping, and to the Entertainers and the MC Provost McAteer, various Stallholders, Hawick Youth Rugby for erecting and dismantling the gazebos.

The Chair then announced the winners of the Best Dressed Window Competition and apologised for his missing announcing those at the end of the Christmas Event. The overall winner was Adam's Kitchen, with Dorwards and the Howegate Opticians taking 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> places respectively. Judging was carried out by Wilton Dean WI. The Chair and Vice-Chair would be presenting the Silver Salver to Adam's Kitchen and Certificates in due course.

Wilson George confirmed that the Santa Grotto had been a real success and the faces of the children attending just 'said it all'.

Michael Robertson commented that the High Street with its new lights and harps looked really good this year. The Chair agreed and advised that it was HCC who supplied these, as well as paying for the electricity, and not, as many thought, Scottish Borders Council. Last year's costs of electricity were c.£500 and new lights c.£5,000.

- (b) Hawick in Bloom – Nothing new to report.
- (c) CCTV – The Vice-Chair reported he had met with Jason Marshall (Hawick Paper) and they were progressing on a report to update the public, in light of a report which had been presented to last month's SBC's full Council meeting. A further report would be forthcoming probably in January.
- (d) Resilience Group – The Vice-Chair advised he had leaflets available for anyone interested in finding out more about Resilience. There had been an article recently in the Hawick Paper to attract volunteers, and he had been interviewed by TD9 Radio the previous week. Volunteers should Email: [hawickcc@gmail.com](mailto:hawickcc@gmail.com) to express interest, and a form seeking information on areas where they could help would be issued.
- (e) Fundraising – No progress with that at the present time.
- (f) Planning – There had been one major planning application in the month – the new extension at Johnstons of Elgin. HCC would support that extension.
- (g) Bandstand Events – Nothing new to report.

## 12. Updates from Community Partners

- (a) Future Hawick/Hawick Development Trust – Colin Hope, Chair, reported that as from 2<sup>nd</sup> December, the name of Future Hawick had been changed to Hawick Development Trust. Grumpy Old Man had reported previously in the Hawick Paper, the worth of having the name change and Colin advised that changing the name also required a change in their Constitution, allowing them more powers and to become a membership organisation, and much more scope to do more than they could do, with better access to funding streams and money to buy

buildings etc. They had plans to move along on that basis, which would make them more accountable to the townsfolk.

Looking at activities, they had decided some time ago to look at the High Street, which had come out of the Town Team's 'Have your Say' Day Planning Sessions. One of the main complaints from those discussions was the conditions and state of the High Street. Early exchanges with SBC local officers had been quite fruitful, albeit there had been a delay in any action being taken. At the end of November, however, and at fairly short notice, they had received indication from SBC that the street gutters and the gulleys would be cleaned and a road sweeper engaged. Due to the short notice, they had not been able to publicise that work. Nevertheless, the street had been cleared of parked cars following Notices erected by the Council and works carried out had been completed to good effect. Typically though, with current weather conditions, gutters etc had filled up again with leaves. He reported there was more work on that front to be done, and HDT would be meeting with Council Officers again in January with a view to engaging different machinery for necessary works. They had Contractors from Kelso who would be providing a demonstration, as a trial to clean out debris for instance in between the small cobbles, take away chewing gum and clean the pavements of other debris to a much higher standard. The idea would then be that, going forward, the Council would maintain the High Street cleanliness to that higher standard. If that standard was not maintained, due to the Council's cash or resource constraints, then the Trust considered that there should be an arms-length body set up to carry out that work, on behalf of the town. How that might be funded was another thing but hopefully the Council would agree to maintain that higher standard once cleansing had been done to that higher level.

The Trust were also working on developing tourism, again as a result of outcomes from the Have Your Say Day. Heritage Tourism had major potential as a money spinner for the town however right now, Hawick did not have a tourist body or tourist information office. There was much more work needing done on that front, and early in the New Year, HDT planned to try to set up such a Tourism body, including representation from Publicans and the hospitality trade and various visitor attractions to set up a type of 'Visit Hawick' body to develop on the Town's offerings in terms of accommodation and attractions within the town. They had been fortunate to engage with various professionals, who previously had lived in the town, to develop on a Strategy for that idea.

Colin went on to advise on the Welcome Hosts Initiative. Their initial proposal would be to extend that to a full year's service delivery and expand on that service provision. Further discussions would be held on that initiative in the New Year. Their thinking was to have Hawick recognised as the Most Welcoming Town in Scotland.

He concluded by saying that all that work would take time, particularly for a voluntary body of representatives to give of their time to develop on those ideas. There were more projects coming out of the Town Team's Place Planning process, that may involve the Trust or may not. He considered that there were insufficient resources being applied to develop on projects, and HDT considered there was a need for a Town Project Development Manager.

With all the projects they had under consideration and the projects coming out of the Town Team, there was a need for someone specifically employed to develop on those. Paperwork associated even with Grant Funding had to be prepared and that in itself was time-consuming, and that could be covered by such a Development Manager.

Jock Campbell asked if the Welcome Hosts were in effect now redundant, and Colin confirmed that the Initiative had concluded for 2023 and Hosts were appointed only on a casual basis over the summer period, and so there were no Welcome Hosts employed now. The Trust were however hoping to develop those posts as previously mentioned.

Jim Adams advised that a Development Manager had previously been employed and had gone by the wayside. Councillor Marshall confirmed that had been the case many years ago however he agreed that there was a need now for such a post. Councillor McAteer also agreed saying there had never been a more important time for such a resource. He understood that the Council required cut backs on a number of things, which were then being pushed out to volunteers, however they (the Council) nevertheless had an obligation to provide support to volunteer groups on their work, and a Development Manager was a means to provide that support. The key would be funding, and the Regional Economic Strategy was designed for that purpose. There were many sources of funding out there, and a Development Manager could then explore those specifically and determine what was available for the town.

The Chair thanked Colin Hope for his update report.

- (b) Foundation Scotland – The Secretary reported she was in course of preparing the Annual Report for 2023 for submission to Foundation Scotland. Members had agreed they wished to utilise the 2024 funding for our own projects. If we wished to continue with Bandstand Events and our Christmas Event as well as continuing improvements on our Christmas Lights Display, that would not be affordable without the Foundation Scotland funding. If anyone else however had any ideas for use of this community funding, they could email [Hawickcc@gmail.com](mailto:Hawickcc@gmail.com) with those ideas. The Distribution Plan for 2024 would also require shortly to be submitted once activities had been confirmed.

#### **Updates from Representative Groups**

- (c) Teviot & Liddesdale Area Partnership - No meeting held, so nothing new to report.
- (d) A7 Action Group – Stuart Beck reported that the group were struggling for funding for stationery and general operating costs. Marjorie McCreadie advised of a critical meeting regarding funds being held a week come Thursday night.
- (e) Hawick Common Good – Graeme King advised the main matter to report was that a Company named Strawberry Lemonade Events were currently putting together a Business Plan for reinstatement of the Market at the Common Haugh. An update on that was hoped for at the next meeting.
- (f) Wind farms – The Chair advised of slow movement of blades for Pines Burns but more importantly a meeting had now been set up with Energiekontour for early January organised by Rachel Hamilton. Representatives from Hawick, Hobkirk, Southdean, and Newcastleton would be in attendance. The main agenda item would be Community Benefits which to date were not confirmed.
- (g) Hawick Common Riding Committee – Nothing further to report.
- (h) Hawick Reivers – Nothing further to report as Secretary unable to attend last meeting.
- (i) SBCCN – Nothing further to report.

**13. Correspondence** – No new correspondence to report.

**14. Meeting Dates** – These had been circulated to HCC members and following discussion, it was agreed not to hold a January 2024 meeting. Otherwise, the meeting dates were approved for 2024. In the absence of a January meeting, members agreed to meet for a debrief of the Christmas Market Event.

**15. AOCB –**

Colin Hope advised that development of the Place Plan for Hawick was moving on rapidly, with Consultants being appointed as early as the following week for starting early in the New Year. He suggested HCC may wish to add them to their list of contributors to their monthly meetings.

The Chair asked for Councillors' views on a National Park for the Scottish Borders. Councillor Marshall confirmed of much paperwork he had for reading prior to the Council's meeting on that. Councillor McAteer suggested it was more the views of HCC and the public that were needed to be presented to the Council. He had received views from Newcastleton, Hermitage and Upper Teviotdale & Borthwick Water along with previous views from HCC. He was happy to represent any other views forthcoming.

Councillor McAteer congratulated Euan Welsh and Braden George, Recognition Hawick on the recent Awards Event held, which had been a great success. They had identified a gap in recognising the work down by many volunteers within the town, and he was sure that event would be built upon and go from strength to strength.

There being no further business, the Chair wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

**16. Date of next meeting –** The next monthly meeting of HCC would be held on Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024 within the Assembly Hall, Hawick High School starting at 6.30pm.