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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> March 2024 within the Assembly Hall,**  
**Hawick High School**

Present	Cameron Knox (Chair) Jim Adams (Treasurer) Stuart Beck Braden George Stuart Mactaggart Duncan Taylor	Kevin Marsh (Vice-Chair) Margaret Hogg (Secretary) Jock Campbell Wilson George Michael Robertson Euan Welsh
Attending:	Councillor Cox Councillor Ramage	Councillor Marshall Councillor Richards

There were 5 members of the public in attendance.

- 1. Chair's Opening Remarks** – The Chair welcomed everyone to the March Meeting of HCC and advised that the support of those attending was very much appreciated.

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 HCC Members Graeme King and John Wilkinson and Councillors McAteer and Smart.
- 4. Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024** – 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 Jim Adams.

- 5. Matters arising –**

Repairs to Play Equipment at Wilton Lodge Park – Councillor Ramage advised that it had been the cantilever joint on a piece of the equipment, which she understood had been repaired and the equipment put back into place. As far as she was aware, that was now in working order.

Dovemount Traffic Lights – These lights were to be relocated as changes were not clearly visible due to the lamppost there. Councillor Ramage advised she had reported that matter however had received no response. The Vice-Chair considered that the traffic lights had

simply been hit, and had moved from their original position, and required adjusting to improve sight lines. Councillor Ramage would chase up on that matter.

Letter to SBC regarding decriminalisation of parking & warden service – The Secretary reported that it had been almost a year since HCC first wrote to SBC on these matters and given continued illegal parking on our High Street and new legislation regarding parking on pavements, she confirmed she had again written to SBC's CEO. That response was then read to the meeting. In essence, SBC were in no hurry to decriminalise parking in the Scottish Borders and for provision of any warden service, due primarily it was stated to funding pressures and cut backs in other highly valued services.

The Chair advised that parking on pavements in The Terraces area remained of particular concern, and stated there were more cars parked on the High Street than in the Common Haugh where they should be.

A member of the public advised on an issue she herself had encountered, when a delivery van parked across the middle of the crossing outside Boots on the High Street, opened both doors to the rear of his vehicle, which then obstructed her ability to pass the van and she was then stuck in the middle of the crossing. Another incident had been noted the previous Saturday when a vehicle had parked across the entrance to Walters Wynd obstructing vehicles from turning right off the High Street down that road. Cars were also found parked across the junction of High Street with Cross Wynd and the Queens Head Pub, again obstructing flow of traffic up the Wynd. Parking had also been noted in loading bays which often caused delays in traffic flow but with lack of Police resources to monitor, these problems would only continue, and HCC could only keep highlighting to elected Members to apply pressure on SBC to reintroduce a warden service.

Councillor Ramage had also witnessed a disabled person in his motorised buggy having to negotiate onto the road as a consequence of a car parked on a pavement in the Terraces area and preventing him passing that on the pavement. She confirmed parking was appalling in Hawick and needed to be addressed.

Duncan Taylor had noted from SBC's response, of evidence that warden services in decriminalised parking areas ran at a loss in rural areas, and wondered if that were due to salary costs, administration costs and insufficient monies being generated for parking spaces and/or lack of bad parking. The Chair advised that in Hawick itself, there were only 3 Pay & Display Parking areas at Cross Wynd, O'Connell Street and Walters Wynd and so funds would only be from those areas. Duncan considered that the response was almost stating that there were not sufficient people parking badly to generate sufficient income. We advise we do not want bad parking but in effect that was what generated the income to pay for wardens. You could therefore see why SBC may not want to enter into a Scheme which may ultimately end up costing them c.£200k when indeed they were cash-strapped to provide other major services. If that service were to be self-financing that would be the ideal, however if other rural areas have that in place and SBC had evidence of those areas running at a loss, it would be hard for HCC to argue otherwise for a warden service including Hawick.

The Chair considered that some people were just lazy and took their cars everywhere rather than walking along the High Street and parking appropriately in designated car parks.

It was suggested that wardens would require to be responsible for providing other services and not just employed for parking issues. Complaints were continually being received about

recurring issues with dog fouling, not only within our High Street but across the town, and accordingly wardens could also generate income to offset employment costs of wardens.

Duncan Taylor advised there were other issues with getting people to pay Penalties for such matters as dog-fouling.

A member of the public asked about liaising with the Police. He was aware of new legislation on pavement parking and that had been introduced as a result of a loophole in the existing legislation he thought. In order to commit a criminal offence, the Police had to catch someone driving on the pavement and they could not do anything about parking on pavements otherwise – that had been the reason he understood for that new legislation being introduced. It remained an offence for someone to park on double yellow lines, to park on the pavement and to obstruct people. He wondered why all these laws were then in place if they were not being enforced by the Police.

The Chair advised that Police were often in attendance at HCC meetings and were well aware of the ongoing issues regarding parking in the town. HCC were continually advised that enforcement on illegal parking was not high on their agenda, due to their limited resources.

The member of the public asked if there was any evidence of Police issuing any tickets, and the Chair advised that monthly reports were received from the Police, and that in February, 131 parking tickets across the Scottish Borders had been issued. It was not known how many related to the Hawick area itself.

Councillor Cox advised Councillors would be meeting with the Community Action Team (CAT) the following day, and she would be happy to raise HCC's concerns at that meeting on parking.

Duncan Taylor stated he had noted that one of the CAT's were to be disbanded, and the Chair confirmed that 6 officers would be lost and 1 Sergeant into general policing. 1 CAT covering from Newcastleton to Eyemouth would be too stretched. Councillor Cox was hopeful that officer numbers would be extended to 9.

The Treasurer thought that the public were supposed to advise Police of issues with such matters as illegal parking and dog fouling, and he considered that if more and more people reported those issues, that may reinforce the message that more required to be done.

Another member of the public wondered if it would be worthwhile to carry out some further research with the rural areas mentioned, on reasons behind their running their warden services at a loss. Without that further background information, those types of statements were without much substance.

The Vice-Chair stated that SBC had wardens in place to monitor Pay & Display Car Parks and questioned that they could not possibly be employed full time, however, it was understood that there were only 2 FTE posts which covered the whole of the Borders.

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

The Chair welcomed the two senior pupils to the meeting – Rhianna Smillie and Stroma Beukes.

Pupils reported that Mr McMaster had been made permanent as Deputy Head Teacher following a thorough interview process.

They had many plans proposed for throughout the year - Celebrating Achievements of pupils out with the school itself. They had a Quiz Night proposed, with a view to making monies for their Summer Prom Event and Graduation Night for S6 pupils.

Some High School pupils had taken part in a Place Planning Session where they were able to discuss what they liked about Hawick and what they would like to see put in place in Hawick in the future.

They had held various workshops, such as Rape Crisis to help understanding about that, and would be holding more in the future, such as one planned for supporting and encouraging girls to play rugby and Lana Skeldon would be carrying out a taster session soon.

Following prelims in early February, pupils were now working towards exams, with Easter Study Sessions in place to help with those.

There were now two new maths teachers selected following interviews, with interviews being held for a third position.

There was now a section in the Hawick Paper called 'What's going on at Hawick High School'.

The Chair thanked the pupils for providing their update and wished them well with their forthcoming exams. He hoped taster sessions for girls rugby being held with Lana Skeldon would result in possibly a Hawick Girls Team playing in future at Mansfield, as opposed to having to travel to Corstorphine in Edinburgh where he was aware Stroma herself had now joined.

Duncan Taylor asked if either of the pupils had any plans for when they left the High School and Rhianna advised she hoped to study medicine at University and had two offers for places. Stroma would be attending Borders College and hopefully University thereafter working towards becoming a PE Teacher.

- 7. Police Scotland Reports** – Reports had been previously circulated to members for February. Police Scotland had intimated they were hopeful of attending however that was subject to any urgent matters requiring priority.

It was noted that a number of incidents (9) reported during the month in Morrisons with youths causing disturbance, however by the time Police were able to attend, the youths had dispersed. Some incidents were being followed up.

Regarding parking tickets, the Chair confirmed 131 tickets were issued. Complaints had also been received about people parking in the ambulance bays at the two GP surgeries in Hawick. Police had spoken to staff and nearby businesses to remind them of parking restrictions in place.

Councillor Marshall confirmed that Councillor McAteer had been heavily involved in relation to car parking at Teviot Health Centre and would perhaps have further updates on that for the next meeting.

The Chair had noted information from an article on Facebook and on BBC Scotland that Police Scotland would no longer investigate every crime, where there were no witnesses or CCTV evidence in place. That was after a Pilot Scheme carried out in A Division (Aberdeen & Moray). Very minor offences would not be investigated, and he wondered what the local Police here were making of that, particularly given a spate of thefts reported at HCC meetings previously on our High Street. What might be a minor incident in Police terms may well be major to the person affected. Councillor Marshall agreed and raised his concerns at the signal that then put out to local criminals. That initiative he considered to be as a consequence of an under-funded Police service.

A reduction in the CAT team was also of concern, and the Chair asked if that matter could also be raised with the Police at their meeting with elected Members. Councillor Ramage also said that those issues would also be raised with Sergeant Granger.

A member of the public commented on the enormous Police building on the edge of town but he wondered how many people actually worked there and what they were doing. What he was hearing was that nobody was happy and now that the Police were not going to investigate some crimes, he felt at a loss. The Chair agreed and advised that when that Station was built in the 70s, it was one of the busiest and had once been the Police Headquarters for the Borders. The only reason that Hawick Station remained, was that it had holding cells, and those cells were the only ones in the Borders. It was not known how many people actually worked there nowadays. From examples of incidents requiring police attendance, it was clear that the Station was not manned at all times, with police coming from other stations to cover Hawick incidents.

Regarding problems at Morrisons, incident response times were not recorded, and accordingly it was not then surprising that culprits were no longer there when Police did eventually arrive. Incidents happening in even more rural areas such as Newcastleton could wait up to 2 hours before any Police attendance.

Another member of the public asked if there may be any appetite in Hawick, along the lines of the 'Guardian Angels' who could be around the town at different times, and that level of self-help may be something to consider. In Hawick, the Chair considered that there may be challenges around personal protection insurances and that type of volunteering, especially when there was a paid Police force in place, and he thought that would not be a step the public would want to take on. Special Constables were still in place, albeit those appeared short in number. It was noted from the Chair however that Cumbria area had a big intake of Specials and an ongoing recruitment drive for the Penrith area, despite a BBC report that recruitment to Police Scotland had all been stopped.

- 8. Treasurer's Report** – The Treasurer advised the Opening Balance was £10,203.49 and the Closing Balance £7,109.00.

HCC 1 started with a balance of £3,868.60 with expenses of £20 for our Small Lotteries Licence and First Aid Training of £669.60, leaving a balance of £3,179.00. Ring-fenced money within that balance were £1,566.67 from Fallago for improvements to pathways, and accordingly there was an operative balance of £1,612.33. Grant funding of £419.60 was awaited from the Neighbourhood Support Fund. All costs for the First Aid Training had been covered.

Christmas Lights/Event Account started and closed with a balance of £957.55. The electric bill for Christmas Lights Display 2023 was still awaited.

Hawick in Bloom Account started with a balance of £5,228.63 and had expenses for summer plants of £2,404.89, resulting in a closing balance of £2,823.74.

Finally, it was noted that the Community Benefit Fund Foundation Scotland had an opening and closing balance of £148.71.

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

## **9. HCC Town Clean-up**

(a) Request from Hornshole Greenway – The Chair advised that a request had been received from Hornshole Greenway, who were holding their clean up on Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> April, the same weekend as the Big River Clean-up, asking whether HCC would be happy to do our clean-up on the same day.

The Treasurer advised that there was rubbish all around the town, and whilst he considered it would be good to have everyone out and visible on that one day, he thought another clean-up would be necessary soon thereafter. Bird droppings along the High Street were a real challenge at the present time.

It was not known if Burnfoot CC were considering any clean-up.

Euan Welsh wondered if doing something altogether and on a much bigger scale and getting people even cleaning outside their houses or shops in the town, might be worthy of consideration. Other town groups could also be brought in.

The Chair advised that he had been involved in HCC's clean-up for as long as 12 years, and the most volunteers attending, despite contacting a number of groups in the town, was 14. So that idea, whilst he considered would be great, getting people to commit would most definitely be a big challenge.

Stuart Mactaggart asked if HCC members, akin to erecting the Christmas Lights Display each year, could earmark 3 or 4 dates and spend 2 hours on those Sundays chosen, to litter-pick. Members were concerned that as soon as any area was completed, it returned to as bad as ever within days. It would be good if some preventative measures were available.

It may be that the Hawick Paper could highlight litter around the town as a major concern for HCC, to see if that could raise further volunteers to help.

Gordon Muir, Hornshole Greenway advised that their clean-up would essentially follow the river from Mansfield to Hornshole and he had noted two of the biggest sources of debris were items belonging to the Hawick Flood Protection Scheme and Marlin Industries but also empty bottles of wine - he had collected 99 Pinot Grizio bottles on verges around Hornshole which appeared to have been thrown out passing car windows. Hornshole Greenway would be engaging with those named companies for help from their workers at their clean-up.

Braden George wondered if litter-picking could be done by the Unpaid Work Team and the Chair advised that their labour was free and they only charged for any materials.

Councillor Marshall advised he could speak with relevant officers at SBC to see if that could be made possible, in liaison with HCC. It was noted that some individuals within the town also took it upon themselves to pick up litter around their areas, which was great. It was perhaps worthy of contacting those companies who had been highlighted as causing debris, and any other guilty of doing the same, to get them to clean up their litter. SBC's Environmental Health should perhaps be notified, as they have within their remit to deal with commercial companies causing such mess.

HCC agreed to hold their town clean-up on Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> April, starting at 9am from the Common Haugh and to request an article in the Hawick Paper, jointly with Hornshole Greenway to publicise that initiative and seek further volunteers to help. It was noted that the Guides had volunteered to attend on the day.

- (b) Areas to be covered by HCC – it was agreed to litter pick around the town centre areas, Howegate, Tannage Close, along the High Street, B&Ms. It was noted that there was a lot of debris below the Cauld on the river banks, however, HCC did not encourage working on the wet side of the walls.

It was noted that the date chosen was in the midst of the school holidays.

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

- (a) Railings outside Heart of Hawick – Duncan Taylor appreciated that these railings had now been sorted. They still required to be painted. It had taken some 4 months due to insurance purposes, but it was encouraging these had now been done. The Chair also reported that the wall at Backdamgate had also been repaired.
- (b) Cobble-slabbed area outside Lowries Properties – Braden George advised that area had been power-washed around 2 weeks ago, and he wondered who had been responsible for that works, as all the debris had then been deposited onto the pavement itself. Councillors would make enquiries into who had been responsible.
- (c) Textile Towerhouse – Michael Robertson advised he had heard from some townspeople that building would be closing down due to problems with the roof which were purported would cost c.£300k to repair, and he asked Councillors to clarify. None of the Councillors attending had heard anything but Councillor Ramage undertook to make enquiries. Duncan Taylor advised nothing had been said about that at the recent Archaeological Society AGM.
- (d) Request for additional lighting at the Mote – Michael Robertson asked if any progress had been made with this, and suggested an email be sent to Street Lighting to enquire, copied into Councillor McAteer, who had already made enquiries on behalf of HCC.
- (e) Refusal of Planning Permission for former Deans Bar – Jock Campbell raised his concerns with that refusal based on Flood Protection levels for a house rather than a bar, especially at the significant cost of flood prevention measures put in place. It was thought that refusal may have been as a result of the whole Flood Protection works requiring to be signed off but that would only happen once all works were completed. There remained a 1 in 50-year risk of flood, and for a dwellinghouse that required to be 1 in 200 years. It was noted that the Mansfield Bar had been approved to be turned into a house, however that had been following appeal. It was known that the applicants of Deans Bar had also appealed their refusal and it could only be hoped that common sense would prevail and that application also allowed following appeal.

Councillor Ramage advised that she and Councillor Smart had met with Conor Price, Flood Protection Scheme, and Councillor Smart had brought up that refusal with him and he said he would look into the matter further. It would be unfortunate should that building just then fall into disrepair if approval continued to be denied by Planning.

The Treasurer raised that rather than the application being new build, it was for a change of use (bar to house), and in addition what would happen regarding planning permissions which would be required regarding the collapsed building at the former Bridge/Sonia's Bistro. Councillor Cox advised that building would be discussed at SBC's Review Body soon.

Finally, it was noted that there appeared to be inconsistencies with planning, in that in another case, Planners had overruled a decision by SEPA on a building deemed to be on a flood plain and had granted planning permission.

## **11. Reports from Sub-Committees**

- (a) Christmas Event – Nothing to report until nearer the end of the year.
- (b) Hawick in Bloom – The Secretary confirmed summer plants were due for delivery in May. Hawick in Bloom would be holding a Coffee Morning in Trinity Church Hall on Saturday, 30<sup>th</sup> March 10-12noon. Any donations for stalls - cake & candy, bottle stall, raffle prizes would be welcomed.

Marjorie McCreddie advised she had witnessed a couple of days previously, that following recent planting at Teviot Crescent, a number of spare plants had been left by the roadside at the foot of Baker Street, if these were of any good to Hawick in Bloom.

- (c) CCTV – The Vice-Chair reported it had been worked out why the advice provided to SBC differed from advice provided to HCC in terms of rules on facial recognition. It was simply that SBC would be responsible for installing their system which would then be operated and managed by the Police, which then changed the rules. Whereas if HCC were to install the CCTV system, HCC would be responsible for monitoring and the Police would only be accessing as and when required. That difference should have been fairly obvious.

The Secretary asked what the next stage towards securing a CCTV system was, and it was advised that was currently with SBC Officers to progress on. If SBC were to bring CCTV inhouse, the Police could take away the segment of evidence they required, and so it would not be the Police Data Protection Policies which would need enforced. However, if the Police were to take responsibility for monitoring solely, that limited quite significantly what the system could or could not be used for, which appeared a backwards step.

- (d) Resilience Group – As had been alluded to in the Treasurer's Report, the Vice-Chair confirmed that a First-Aid course had been held for HCC resilience members on 25<sup>th</sup> February, which those attending had all passed. That then gave additional back up to him as a First Responder at Community Council future events. A successful bid for funding from Pot A Neighbourhood Support Fund had been granted, and so all costs for that training had been covered.
- (e) Fundraising – Nothing further to report. Still looking to progress on a Farmer's Market on Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> May.
- (f) Planning – There had been no major planning applications in the month.
- (g) Bandstand Events – Nothing further to report, pending the outcome of Foundation Scotland's confirmation of funding grant for 2024/25.



## **12. Updates from Community Partners**

- (a) Hawick Development Trust – A report had been received from Colin Hope, Hawick Development Trust and in his absence, the Chair read out his report, which was as follows:

### **“HAWICK DEVELOPMENT TRUST REPORT TO HAWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

Apologies for my absence.

The final part of the process of the change to the Trust model concluded on Jan 24th with the charity regulator amending its records to confirm the change.

#### **PROJECT UPDATE**

High Street Cleaning:

The ongoing discussion with SBC about improving the standard of cleaning of the High Street continues. The latest step was a trial of pavement cleaning equipment to remove grime chewing gum etc. This proved very successful although some concern was expressed by council officers about the amount of dirt and debris flushed out between slabs. The results of the trial can be seen on the pavement adjacent to the toilet block on the Howgate. Subsequent discussion with the relevant officers including a request for SBC to carry out a deep clean met with a negative response. This because of lack of funding and because the deep clean being sought by the Trust was above the statutory requirement placed on the council.

However, the Trust is hoping to proceed with the cleaning of the High Street. Prices are being sought from contractors to carry out a clean using local labour and similar equipment to that used on the demonstration. The Council have agreed to have the gutters and gullies cleaned immediately after the pavement deep clean to remove the debris. Council officers stated that some further new equipment had been obtained that would free up some staff time to allow for more frequent sweeping on the High Street. Once prices are obtained grant funding will be sought to have the deep clean carried out and the Trust hopes that the Community Council will support such an approach and possibly help to coordinate a wider litter pick tidy up exercise later in the spring.

#### **CARS**

A meeting with the CARS representative took place last week and it was agreed that the Trust would take the initiative of working with CARS, SBC and SoSE in an effort to have Historic Environment Scotland extend the deadline for grant drawdown by a year so the funds aren't lost to the town.

#### **BRIDGE GUEST HOUSE**

The Trust has started discussions with the flood prevention team about the future of the former Bridge Guest House and Sonja's Bistrot, currently under the flood defence teams control. Connor Price has offered to facilitate a meeting between the Trust and the relevant Council Officers to start discussions about the possible transfer of ownership to the Trust. The Trust using its new powers to hopefully access the Scottish Land Fund in an effort to secure the future of the building to provide further accommodation for visitors to the area.

#### **WILTON LODGE PARK PITCH AREA PARKING**

One of the board of trustees has identified an issue with the lack of suitable parking around the Volunteer area of the park with an increased risk of injury to children at peak times a suitable piece of ground has been identified and the Trust has agreed to work the relevant agencies to see if the existing car park can be modified and extended. A request

for some clarification of what is required in terms of process has been sent to the Chair of the Common Good Fund who has in turn sought advice from officials.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICER ROLE

Community Councillors will recall that the Trust has been seeking the appointment of an economic development officer for some time. A meeting with the relevant decision-making partners has now been scheduled for w/c 18 March and the Trust hopes that the Community Council will express its support for this appointment which will accelerate the much-needed economic development of the town.” That concluded the report from HDT.

The Chair had a couple of queries, and in the absence of Colin Hope, he hoped that other Trustees of HDT could help respond or revert to Colin for his responses.

In relation to the CARS Scheme, the Chair wondered when information noted in that report would be shared with members of the CARS Steering Group. As Chair of that latter Group he had received no such information of HDT’s request to extend the Scheme deadline, which he considered would be unfair to those towns which had gone before and would come after Hawick. Jedburgh for instance had an allocated length of time to complete all works, and unspent monies by that deadline had been retrieved by CARS. It would not seem right that Hawick would be permitted accordingly to extend their deadline.

Regarding the Bridge Guest House, the Chair recalled Conor Price comments that the Bridge Guest House would be gifted back to the community for their use, and not just one organisation. He was sure ex-Councillor George Turnbull had been involved in that discussion and he had stated it could possibly be turned into a small museum on the ground floor and used for community meetings on the upper floor. That should be borne in mind by HDT.

The ground for additional car parking at the Volunteer, the Chair assumed that proposed ground to be between the rugby pitches and the A7. That ground he considered, along with the Cricket Pitch had been gifted to the townfolk of Hawick by The Duke of Buccleuch under the condition that it would be used for sporting practices only. He did not consider therefore that additional car parking would meet that condition. That may be an issue for Hawick Common Good, Land Registry and perhaps even the Courts.

Duncan Taylor commented that the area proposed for car parking was an area which was not currently used for sporting purposes. If the car park were to be extended for the use of parents whose children were attending sporting activities, that may be a way around that condition. It would make that area more accessible, as it was too busy and of a danger at present particularly at weekends. He considered that land was not being used for sporting activities just now and would create better accessibility for those making use of sporting facilities.

The Chair argued nevertheless that the land as such would not be used for sporting activities, however, Duncan considered it was originally part of the cricket pitch land, not now used for sport. He thought there was good cause for the community to make

representations for additional car parking space based on the emphasis of health and wellbeing and sporting excellence nowadays.

Councillor Ramage as Chair of Hawick Common Good, stated there was confusion surrounding that whole area. The Duke of Buccleuch had gifted some parts, SBC was responsible for the car park and so on. Councillor Ramage had requested clarification from SBC Officials but confirmed SBC did not have funding to extend that car parking, and what had been proposed was that it may be possible to bring that into the new High School rebuild. That would therefore not happen overnight and would be in the longer term. The sooner option may be to make use of parking at the Common Haugh and walk along the path next to the High School to the Volunteer.

Euan Welsh advised he had experienced the chaotic car parking at the Volunteer and suggested something had to happen before any drastic accident and especially any children being harmed.

Euan went on to agree that making use of the Bridge Guest House for the community for all the clubs and organisations in Hawick for meeting space was an excellent idea and much needed. The existing HDT office was not suitable and having a new comfortable space would lend to sustainability for clubs and organisations to meet in the town. Car parking at the Common Haugh and accessibility would lend that building as ideal.

Duncan then went onto the CARS Scheme, and he considered that Hawick did not make best use of that Scheme as that was not well publicised and was announced during the Pandemic. He considered that would be a morale case to request extension for another year to use up the funding. Other towns did not have the Pandemic, with funding applied for prior to that. The monies had been allocated to Hawick, and we should at least push for that extension.

The Chair enquired if the Welcome Hosts Initiative would be continuing. Feedback he had received was that Welcome Hosts provided the personal touch. He had heard it was the case that shopkeepers would be expected to provide tourists with information and feedback from one butcher business had said that shopkeepers were busy enough and would be unable to provide anything like the information given by the Hosts.

Duncan Taylor advised that a review of the Welcome Hosts Programme had been carried out at the end of 2023, and due to funding and staffing issues, they were currently surveying shopkeepers and businesses to gauge their interest in their staff being trained up in excellent customer service for free. The idea was that Welcome Hosts would be there in the summer but not all tourists came to Hawick over the summer with a number of visitors all year round, campervanners making use of the Common Haugh and so on. HDT could not fund staff on a permanent, all year-round basis, and so the idea was to skill up staff within the shops and businesses as much as possible. He thought it surprising that the butcher mentioned was too busy to provide information, when his personal experience was that shopkeepers were very helpful in explaining what was available within the town and gave directions to places and recommended other businesses.

Marjorie McCreadie advised on the reaction she had received from townsfolk regarding the Hosts. For some 27 years, herself and others had been the face of the Hawick Welcome Hosts. She had been tasked to prepare the Welcome Hosts Brochure and as far as she were aware, she would then be surplus to requirements. No-one from HDT had however approached her on that matter. As far as she had heard, there would be no Welcome Hosts on the street this year (2024) due to lack of funding. A letter in the Hawick Paper had also raised the issue. When she had been preparing the brochure (as an employee of HDT), she had been in and out of businesses and shops, and advised feedback from them was that they were not happy that the Hosts would not be in place. There was apparently to be a letter go out to the shopkeepers the last week in January, and that had not yet been issued to businesses. In her experience, feedback was indeed stating that they did not wish to attend any training. They did not take well to being advised that they were not already providing good customer service. Euan Welsh wondered if there could be a mixture of both – some Welcome Hosts and some shops providing tourist type information. Duncan Taylor reiterated that the Review carried out, which the Welcome Hosts recruiters were part of, had shown they were unhappy with the Welcome Hosts recruited recently. It was therefore not all about the money but the ability to recruit the right people. He hoped that would not come out negatively to the detriment of those Welcome Hosts. His understanding was that as a Consultant for HDT, Marjorie McCreadie and Derick Tait had been tasked to liaise with the businesses to encourage the proposal of their being involved. Marjorie confirmed that was the case however the letter to businesses had not as yet been issued, as above mentioned. Both herself and Derick were waiting on that letter being approved and issued. The trouble with recruiting as Hosts was that it was not a permanent all year-round position.

Euan Welsh queried what was happening with the Information Board within the Common Haugh. Some 2 years or so back, he had raised concerns that Board needed upgrading – the Board itself as well as its contents.

Gordon Muir, Hornshole Greenway advised that a single signage system had been proposed and agreed as the way forward for Hawick, incorporating the Active Travel Network and included the Notice Board referred to. Conor Price, Flood Protection Group would determine how much money would be provided to kickstart that process. That had been some 18 months since, and a decision was still awaited. Another meeting was proposed for two weeks' time to again push for a decision.

- (b) Foundation Scotland – There was nothing further to report. Awaiting approval of Distribution Plan for funding for 2024/25 and notification of the level of that funding.
- (c-i) Updates from Representative Groups – There were no updates from any of these Groups.

**13. Correspondence** – There was no further correspondence to report on which had not already been circulated to Members.

**14. AOCB –**

- (a) The Chair referred to the Town Team who had on display their Consultation Boards at the meeting. He said the information related to the Hawick Draft Place Plan and it was important that everyone had their say regarding proposals. There would be a

Public Consultation Day held on Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2024 within the Evergreen Hall 11am to 4pm. Members of the public were encouraged to attend, have their say on proposals and Consultants and Town Team Members would also be in attendance to speak with if so wished.

Stuart Mactaggart asked if someone could explain the difference between Hawick Development Trust and the Town Team. The Chair advised both were volunteer groups whereas HCC was an elected group. Both of those groups were trying to help Hawick in any way possible, but he could see where confusion arose, because they could possibly be just one.

Duncan Taylor agreed it was complicated but advised that HDT was a registered charity with a Board of Trustees and accounts and so on. The Hawick Town Team was a group of volunteers who had come together under the auspices of SBC and a Place-Planning process, and SBC/SoSE monies had been used to hire in Consultants to create a Place Plan for Hawick, which was being consulted on. SBC's Place Planning Committee would sign off that Plan, and that would hopefully unlock a vast amount of money from Borderlands to fund the proposed projects.

HDT also had its own plans, as outlined in Colin Hope's report earlier in the meeting. The Town Team does not have a bank account or Trustees or accounts and therefore could not draw down any funds, however, what it was doing was to support other groups who would be able to draw down those funds. It was a supportive group.

Keith Johnson, Chair of the Town Team advised that the main focus of the Team was to gather information required from the community and to consult on that. It had no powers itself to draw down any monies. It was not set up to do that but to provide a facility to bring forward the information to form a Place Plan and to allow consultation on that – a Plan devised by the Community, for the Community.

Gordon Muir added that unlike other ongoing projects, the involvement of 8 professionals who had a number of years' experience across the number-crunching and the landscape architecture and planning processes, was what set the Town Team aside, as these were professionals doing the job on behalf of Hawick, with Hawick people steering them towards the issues they wanted highlighted. Councillor McAteer he stated had long been an advocate for a Master Plan for Hawick throughout most of his tenure, which the Hawick Town Team were involved with. Not everyone would agree with every element included but it was the weaving together of all aspects of Hawick – the economy, the culture, the arts, architecture and community, and see how that could work more effectively together. As townsfolk we may be too close to see what was required and what would make Hawick tick in a way that it was not doing at the moment. The involvement of the Consultants was critical and was what set the project aside from other ongoing projects within the town.

Michael Robertson asked what the position was in relation to St Leonards Park. The Chair advised that a group had been set up and was now named Friends of Hawick Mair on which the Chair and Duncan Taylor declared an interest as members of that Group. The Chair reported there was a rough drawn idea to take forward but that was very much still at discussion stage. Common Good Councillors would be involved as well as the farmer. It was moving forward.

Duncan Taylor advised that the Town Team also had Hawick Mair listed as one of their projects, which already had some support of townsfolk.

Stuart Mactaggart expressed further confusion that there was another group Friends of Hawick Mair. Keith Johnson confirmed it was confusing for townsfolk, who had never previously been asked or consulted with, rather SBC came up with ideas and proceeded to action without including the public. Hawick was rather leading the way with a Place Plan. Euan Welsh stated that it was important to keep matters simple.

Duncan Taylor advised that 4 towns in the Borders were going through the Place Planning process at the time, with a view to securing Borderlands funding available. He would like to see more groups or individuals coming forward to provide their views, and Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> March would provide a good opportunity to do that. There was also a survey online and consultants had met with pupils from Hawick High, Burnfoot and Drumlanrig Schools, and they were trying to reach out to as many people within the community as possible. Paul Hogarth Associates was one of the Consultants, and Paul was a local man with knowledge of the town, but also having other professionals who had worked with other towns also gave a more neutral viewpoint which was very useful and would make our place plan more credible and represent the views of more people in the town.

A member of the public queried how schools to consult with were actually chosen and Duncan Taylor advised that an administrator from Hawick High had been requested by him to contact all primary schools and he could only surmise that those schools visited, were the ones who had responded.

Another member of the public said he was hearing about organisations which sounded almost identical and he understood that the Town Team would hopefully be tapping into millions of pounds of Borderlands funding, yet he had not seen anything in the local paper or other literature to signify that this was much bigger than anything else talked about at the meeting and was a really big matter for Hawick. Why, he asked, were people not highlighting that more. Keith Johnson advised that there would be mention in that Friday's Hawick Paper. Duncan Taylor advised that he had written a Press Release the previous year for the Hawick Paper which had mentioned the £7m available then. The Hawick Paper was very supportive of the Town Team and their social media presence had also been extended as a means of getting the message out there. There would always be some people declaring they knew nothing, and that would unfortunately always be the case.

The member of the public advised he had read articles and the website but had not seen anything about the level of funding available. Duncan Taylor advised that before any funding would become available, there was a need for a Place Plan to be approved, and that needed to represent what the community wanted, and the project needed to make financial sense. The money was not inevitable but potential, and he suggested that they did not want necessarily to promote the funding available and then be unable to deliver an approved Plan. He took on board nevertheless comments made by the public member attending. Borderlands website was a useful resource to learn about the planning process itself and requirements for funding.

The Vice-Chair queried if the £7m funding was for the Borders area, however Keith Johnson confirmed that funding was for Hawick.

- (b) Michael Robertson enquired as to which group was responsible for Hornshole as he knew that Paul Hogarth had been involved previously. He considered that area to be a disgrace at the present time. There was no colour about it at all.

Gordon Muir advised that daffodils had been planted by John Hogg, and there had been a review on the planting for going forward. It was his understanding that it was the Common Riding Committee who had responsibility and were essentially handling that area.

- (c) Marjorie McCreadie advised that she had been in touch with HCC's Chair regarding the possibility of having the locations of the town's defibrillators listed in the Welcome Hosts Brochure but she said having given that further thought, she had decided that would not be appropriate. As had been stated by the Chair in their discussions, a number of the defibrillators were installed inside premises and would not always be available, and to insert that type of information into the Brochure would leave HDT wide-open to criticism should someone check the advert and then not be able to source the defibrillator.
- (d) Michael Robertson asked about plans for St Leonard's Hut for centenary celebrations. The Chair explained that the Hut belonged to Hawick Common Good and not the Common Riding Committee. Braden George confirmed there had been no further discussions on that at the Common Riding Committee meetings.
- (e) Michael Robertson enquired of Councillor Ramage who had reported at an earlier meeting that the Common Good Councillors would have a walk about the Hut area. Councillor Ramage confirmed that there had been no walkabout as yet with challenges of getting a date to suit everyone however, disabled access to the Hut had been attended to by Steven Drummond, SBC's Estates Officer.
- (f) Jock Campbell enquired when damage to the fingers of the James Wilson statue would be sorted. Councillors to make enquiries but it was unknown as to who would be responsible for those repair works.

**15. Date of next meeting** – The next monthly meeting of HCC would be held on Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024 within the Lesser Town Hall starting at 6.30pm.