
Hawick Community Council



MINUTES OF MEETING OF HAWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL
held on Monday 10th June 2024 within Lesser Town Hall, Hawick at 6.30pm

Present	Cameron Knox (Chair) Margaret Hogg (Secretary) John Campbell Graeme King Duncan Taylor John Wilkinson	Kevin Marsh (Vice-Chair) Stuart Beck Wilson George Michael Robertson Euan Welsh
Attending:	Councillor McAteer Councillor Smart Conor Price, CPE Consultancy	Councillor Ramage Robin Erskine, McLaughlin & Harvey

There were 11 members of the public in attendance.

- 1. Chair's Opening Remarks** – The Chair welcomed everyone to the June Meeting of the Community Council and he hoped everyone had enjoyed their Common Riding. On behalf of the members of HCC he wished to congratulate and express our thanks to our Cornet Ryan Nichol, his Lass Kirsty McAllan, Acting Father & Mother Shane and Susan Coltman, and the remainder of the Big 8 for a tremendous grand Common Riding, amongst the best of a'. The weather had not been the best nevertheless it did not detract from the support received at the Mair over the 2 days. He concluded by saying it was only 331 days to the next Pickin' Night 2025, to laughter from the floor.

He went on to congratulate and thank our new Provost, Councillor Clair Ramage for chairing an excellent, and her first, Colour Bussing and also a superb Common Riding Dinner on the Friday evening.

Finally, he stated that Julie Forrest had given an exceptional address at the Colour Bussing and should be congratulated for her dignified manner in carrying out her duties throughout the Common Riding. All-in-all he expressed well done to all involved.

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 Jim Adams, Braden George and Stuart Mactaggart and Councillors Cox, Marshall and Richards.
4. **Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of 13th May 2024** – The previously circulated Minutes of the last meeting were approved as an accurate record of the meeting - Proposed for adoption by John Wilkinson and Seconded by Wilson George .
5. **Matters arising – Grass Cutting within the Cemeteries** – The Chair confirmed an email response had been received from Stuart Young, SBC to the query raised with him from last month’s meeting about differences in path cutting at the 2 cemeteries. The response stated that was to do with graves alignment. The email response had been circulated to HCC members.
Welcome Hosts – The Chair advised that whilst HCC members were in favour of having Welcome Hosts, they did not consider that HCC could take on the role of responsibility for the Hosts due to uncertainty of financial funding. HDT were currently trialling an Ambassador role with High Street businesses, and hopefully that outcome would be favourable, however, if not, it was thought HDT should reconsider reinstatement of Welcome Hosts again.
6. **Hawick High School – Senior Pupil Update** – At present there was no Senior Pupil Team in place, and accordingly there would be no update to the meeting.
7. **Police Scotland Reports** –
 - (a) Reports – May 2024 – The Police Scotland reports for May had not as yet been received by HCC, and it was thought that was likely to be as a result of the Common Riding, when their focus would be on Policing that event. Reports once received would be circulated to Members.
 - (b) Proportionate Response to Crime Pilot – The Chair advised that Councillor Cox was unable to attend the meeting and so that matter would again be continued.
8. **Flood Protection Scheme – Update from Conor Price, CPE Consultancy** – The Chair advised that Hawick’s Flood Protection Scheme was the biggest construction project Hawick had ever seen since the railway came to the town a long time ago. There had been a huge amount of upheaval over the past few years however the town was now well protected from any major flooding. He introduced Conor Price, CPE Consultancy and Lead Project Manager of the Scheme, along with Robin Erskine from McLaughlin & Harvey, Contractors, who would provide updates and answers to any questions raised.

He requested Robin Erskine to start proceedings. Robin apologised for not being able to attend the last meeting, as notification had not been entered unfortunately to his calendar.

In terms of an update, he said that it had been nearly 4 years since they had started works on the project. He had not intended they would be on site for that length of time

however, there had been many challenges along the way, which needed collaborative working alongside Conor and the Design Team, however he considered they were nearly there. He alluded that many sites appeared unfinished around the town but works were ongoing. At Millport for instance, they had made good progress in early May but had been hampered since by high river levels. They had managed however to get the last river pour completed the Thursday prior to the Common Riding weekend. They still though had a wall pour to complete there. Further on down the Scheme, they had a large sewerage chamber to construct which was currently being worked on. There were challenges in getting that work started. They had to set up a lot of pumps to over pump the existing infrastructures to allow them access to replace existing Scottish Water pipes. They would remain there for the next couple of weeks to finish those works and some other works were also required. They had a lot of tidying up to do as well as some snagging to complete. He mentioned the topsoil for landscaping at the Common Haugh and the Wee Haugh for instance, some put down a couple of years ago, was not to standard and would need replaced. Grass had not taken and some areas would need to be stripped and new top soil inserted, which was also a challenge with that needing to be sourced from Glasgow.

He went on to advise that weather conditions had not been that kind through the winter and onto Spring, however, they were on the final straight he considered, with remaining concrete works anticipated to be completed by July, and some associated finishing works behind walls etc as well.

In terms of McLaughlin & Harvey leaving the town, that was aimed for the end of July however that being said, they had a 24-month maintenance contract thereafter. There would undoubtedly be defects arising, e.g. bits of cladding may fall off walls and so on which would need to be rectified to specification. They would not walk away from any problems arising.

Conor he said would likely advise in his update that not all works outstanding were for McLaughlin & Harvey to complete, as these had been contracted to SBC Contracts to do, for instance Sandbed, the new Weensland bridge, bottom of Duke Street and so on. He concluded his update advising he was happy to answer any questions.

Michael Robertson asked if residents houses affected by works in Duke Street would have repairs completed and any compensation awarded. Robin replied that this would be the case. There had been a number of enquiries made over the last few weeks and well before that. They were working with their insurers and had now employed a Loss Adjuster to progress on these complaints. There were around 40 complaints across all work sections, some of which had been closed off. Around 90% of complaints had progressed however he conceded that there were frustrations around the length of time being taken and lack of engagement with some complainants. The Loss Adjustors had been slow to respond initially but he considered good progress was now being made.

Not everyone would get everything they wanted but any defects caused by their works would be addressed.

A member of the public queried that the children's play area at the Wee Haugh appeared to have been one of the first areas to be completed, yet Heras fencing remained to block off use of the park itself. He asked if the Heras fencing could be moved to allow use of the play area. There was also an area blocked off, which no-one appeared to know what use was to be made of that area. Robin advised it was for use of dogs doing their business.

He went on to advise that the Wee Haugh was subject to a Health & Safety inspection which had to be signed off before the area could be opened. The Health & Safety Inspectorate had stated they were not happy with the gate into the park, and that had only come to light last week. The gate closing mechanism required to be rectified and once that had been done, and the Council were happy to assume responsibility for the play park, then it would be opened. He hoped that would be in the next couple of weeks.

Councillor Smart asked about lack of work on the gap in the wall at the old Orrock Hall Church. She wondered whose responsibility that was. Robin confirmed it was McLaughlin & Harvey who had a window to install in that gap. That was the last window to be installed, and the reason why it had not been so, was a result of safety issues with the building next to it. Some stone masonry had to be inserted there for the window to be installed. They had submitted their methodology to have that window installed, which was to be from within the river. It would now require to be installed with use of a crane from the Albert Bridge from a lorry. That would be more challenging to manage. A number of meetings had taken place with SBC's Roads Department, Transport Scotland, Bear Scotland and they now had agreement albeit not a date for instalment over 3 or 4 nights. The window would also require to be tested following installation. There were also challenges around road closures with that area being a main A7 route but they had prepared a Traffic Management Plan for diversion of traffic on the nights when works were to take place. That would be via a convoy system which was likely to involve traffic going the wrong way along the High Street. That would take a lot of management due to having various side streets as well.

The Chair advised it would be interesting to see two-way traffic again on the High Street. Michael Robertson said that had to be done previously during floods within the town, using a convoy system, so he was confident that proposed system would work again.

Marjorie McCreadie asked if Bear Scotland would be involved in road closures, and Robin said they had been involved extensively in the Traffic Management Plan but would not be involved in actual works being carried out.

The Chair advised he had heard that day that Dumfries were to get a flood protection scheme for the White Sands area. It had been quoted there would be minimal disruption and it would be good to monitor that to see how it compared to disruption experienced in Hawick.

The Chair thanked Robin Erskine for his update and went on to introduce Conor Price as Lead Project Manager of Hawick's Flood Protection Scheme. Conor had attended many HCC meetings previously to provide informative updates.

Conor alluded to the question just raised as to Bear (and Transport) Scotland's involvement and confirmed that all of the roads authorities had been involved extensively in discussions on the Albert Bridge works to make sure that whatever works were to be done on the bridge would be done in the right way. Conor also advised it had not been ideal to have that challenging piece of work at the back end of jobs but it had to be recognised that there had been significant pieces of movement to take wind turbines through the town over the past year and Bear Scotland had also been recently deployed out on the main road coming into Hawick from Langholm, and all of that had to be taken into consideration so all of that work did not happen at the same time when those other convoys were in place, with a view to minimising disruption within the town. In referring to Dumfries White Sands, Conor advised he had not said there would be minimal disruption within the town, but rather that he would work to minimise the disruption within the town. Laughter ensued.

Conor said he wanted firstly to have it recorded that it had been an absolute honour to be invited to the election of the Cornet a few weeks back and to participate in the event held in the Town Hall and the Smoker afterwards. He was there to provide an update on the projects being delivered in Hawick, recognising that it was not just the Flood Protection Scheme but the Active Travel Network, Pumping Stations for SBC and also the modification of the A7 for Transport Scotland.

Robin had already provided an update on the McLaughlin & Harvey works and reiterated that in addition to McLaughlin & Harvey, works were also being carried out by SBC Contracts, all working together towards completion of all works involved.

Conor went on to confirm that the project remained on time and on budget to complete in 2024. Key targets within that were to deliver flood protection by Winter 2023 which was done and to complete Active Travel Network works by 2024. As he had advised at the last HCC update, things had not gone to plan and they had required to be flexible, working around challenges and doing works when possible.

He was of the opinion that there had been solid progress on the main works reported to HCC's update in December last year.

It had been a horribly wet past 9 months with high river levels and wet grounds, making such works as landscaping particularly difficult. Top soil turned to sludge and was messy. River works required to be completed within the window of 1st May to 30th September, and he was delighted to be able to advise that river activities did indeed start on time on 1st May. There had been a couple of weeks lost due to high river levels and equally SBC resources for works at Sandbed had served to slow activity there.

Flood Protection had been achieved by Winter 2023 as previously advised, and since then he was able to say that the Flood defences had functioned well, with two particular episodes of heavy rain in November and January, perhaps not to previous levels but nevertheless defences had functioned well.

As reported in December, not all defences had been in place and required a Plan B to erect robust temporary defences to cover gaps. Those temporary defences functioned when required, however were now replaced with permanent defences. All other temporary defences would become permanent by winter 2025.

The new and largest footbridge linking Weensland with Mansfield Road was put in place in February and at either side of the bridge there were ongoing works to connect the footbridge to the landscape there. Significant modifications were being made, and on the Hamilton Road side, those were clear to see however on the Weensland side not so much as that was a restricted section of works to the public.

Transport Scotland had now modified the A7 coming into the town from Langholm. That was a designed part of the Active Travel Network to extend the network further to get to the Langlands Bridge. Those works were mostly done and they were off the road that day, however, the toucan crossing was not yet in place, and extra works were required on signage and on the memorial there. That would be done late Summer.

The new streetscape had been opened at Laidlaw Terrace, which had been a huge pressure including for residents. He was aware that there had been conversations at a previous update meeting and he hoped that was now an enjoyable and functional space for the town moving forward. They were looking to doing something similar at the Millport area too, currently under design.

Proposed Active Travel Network improvements for North Bridge Street had been paused following a public consultation meeting where significant concerns had been raised. Much of those concerns were blended into an overarching concern regarding traffic and changes to road traffic management associated to the one-way system proposed. So, for now, design had been paused and they were running a new traffic modelling assessment firstly to determine whether changes that had been made had impacted on the location, and how those might be resolved, and with any new enhanced road traffic plan, any design that emerged would need to be run through that model. They needed to get to the bottom of whether there was any road traffic safety issue at that location. He

expected that audit to conclude sometime within the next couple of months, which would then be reported to Councillors and SBC Officers etc to determine the way ahead for that location.

Conor assumed the public would have noted the engineering works going at pace at the Hamilton Road roundabout, with the new road landscape now coming into existence. The roundabout would go, to be replaced with a T-junction, and one lane was now open with traffic lights. That new road would emerge within the next 4-6 weeks and those traffic lights would then be removed. Spaces at either side would then be finished off, without the need for those traffic lights.

Within the Sandbed area, the flood wall was now out of the ground, and within the next 6 weeks that flood wall would be completed. That had been one of the most difficult pieces of work within the project overall, and arguably one of the most complex pieces of engineering work done in Scotland. As soon as the wall was finished, the pumping station shaft would be sunk and placed behind it, and then landscaping works completed at that location - targeted for completion in October.

At Duke Street, the new street planters had been delivered. He had met with local residents and was able to reinforce that trees removed earlier were being replaced. The trees would be placed within the planters and that was expected to be within the next fortnight to stitch in with the new landscaping there.

The last gap to be completed within the flood defences would be the 3-metre gap just below the Mansfield footbridge. He intended to consult with the local community on that piece of work over the next 2 weeks, to see how they saw that being played out between now and its completion.

All across the town, continuing works would be seen over the Summer. It was their intention to work hard and fast, especially when weather conditions were hopefully good. All of that said and done, when reflecting on all the works which had been done, he said that the works planned this year were significantly smaller than in previous years. They remained on project programme to complete all works in 2024. The Project Team and both contractors - McLaughlin & Harvey and SBC Contracts - would not be going away, as had been clearly stated, having obligations for 24 months after project completion and any final obligations regarding works defects, which at this stage were not known. Defects always happened in major projects such as this. Any finishing works would also be made good. Some landowners who had given their land to the project – their landscape, their industrial units etc – all had to be returned to a condition like for like in which they were when taken over by the project. Discussions would take place with those people, and whilst works would be reinstated they would not be enhanced to the detriment of the public purse.

Conor then showed some slides of work areas to the meeting of areas such as Sandbed engineering works, Laidlaw Terrace where it was considered the street was now settling into its new structure with less complaints regarding parking. All streetscapes would be allowed to settle before being handed over to the relative authorities to take responsibility. He also showed slides of the Hamilton Road roundabout and new road layout and one lane open and use of traffic lights. Over the next few weeks, change would be noticeable with the new road layout and resultant changes to the wall height there with heightening of the road. The new road layout would provide further space at the roundabout to be used for public space.

The A7 new road layouts and all the toucan crossings which were Bear and Transport Scotland's responsibilities were also shown, and he hoped those crossings would be completed as soon as possible.

He then showed a penultimate slide of a view at Weensland looking towards the new footbridge. Street light columns were now inserted and the heads would be added in the next week, when that path would be, broadly speaking, ready to open. A judgement would need to be made during the summer as to whether the path should be opened on Weensland Road down to the bridge and over to the Rugby Club as soon as possible, because the connection to the Bridge from Duke Street would be later on in the summer. Or should the whole area remain closed until the whole network was connected. Either way, he showed that the allotments were coming back into existence, with fences to be erected to secure that location and then allowing that land to be handed back to the owner and to those allotment users. All of that should be within the next couple of weeks.

Finally, he showed a slide from Weensland back to Glebe Mill to show the scale of works being done there, which no-one would have yet seen as that area was currently closed off. That area of work was one of the hot spots and biggest lot of works to be done this Summer. That work was isolated from the town and that was one of the reasons for leaving that work to the back end of the project. What was being shown was the end of the footpath coming from the new footbridge. Currently there were sewerage issues as highlighted earlier by Robin, and works were continuing to get those issues resolved. He advised that works should be completed within the next 4-5 weeks, which would then allow resources to be focused on opening of the footpaths to allow connection from Duke Street to Weensland and the entrance to Oliver Park, onwards to the new footbridge at Weensland Road and then onto the new footbridge over to Mansfield Road. He requested feedback as to whether he should open the footbridge from Weensland to the rugby club as soon as possible, rather than await for connectivity to the pathways later.

Before finishing, he had a couple of points to mention. The first had already been covered by Robin in respect of individual claims from residents for damages to properties. Those claims were a matter for McLaughlin & Harvey but he advised he was

happy that those were progressing well and as those were legal matters, he could not comment further. The process was working however and moving forward.

Secondly, he wanted to highlight that as works progressed over the summer, there would be a rolling programme of road reinstatement works taking place across the town. They were aware that there were roads which had deteriorated significantly across the town and mostly in close proximity to where their works had been carried out. His team were currently working with Council Officers to assess the roads from when they started and to make a judgement call on what their state was now and what they would be fixing and to what level. There was a substantial amount of monies available for those works. That work would then be co-ordinated with Bear and Transport Scotland and with McLaughlin & Harvey, and everyone would be made aware subsequently on what works would be being done.

The Chair thanked Conor for his very informative update and asked for questions.

Stuart Beck asked whether the large area past the sewage works would be grassed and, if so, whether that area could be used as a caravan park. Conor advised that area belonged to Scottish Borders Council and whilst that was a nice idea it was not one he had heard before. The project currently occupied that land and that would be the case at least until the end of 2026 to run operations from. Other facilities would systematically be closed down throughout the town and everything concentrated to that particular area. After that there could be conversations as to its use, and he would log that idea.

A member of the public advised it was his consideration that area of land would be provided to the rugby club for parking, however Conor advised there had been many conversations with the rugby club but he was not at liberty to provide any details of those at a public meeting. They were working to provide a new public space along with Sustrans however the design of that was not as yet complete, and that land would remain within the ownership of SBC and continue meantime to be used for the project.

Another member of the public agreed that parking was an issue in that area when various rugby games were being played, and those residents in Mansfield Road were accordingly impacted on match days. The area behind the Rugby Club had been landscaped for use as a picnic area and accordingly parking lost there.

Conor was aware, however said that the level of parking in the area had not been reduced and because he was not commenting further on that did not mean there were no plans being worked on in the background but he could not prejudice those with further conversation at the meeting tonight. He understood frustration with more parking being required.

Stuart Beck gave his view that in relation to opening of the new bridge linking Weensland to the Rugby Club, he would be in favour of that opening as soon as, rather than await completion of works affecting opening of the connecting footpath network later on. All agreed with that sentiment. That being the case, that footbridge would be targeted for opening within the next 6-8 weeks. Michael Robertson thought that would prove beneficial for the start of the new rugby season.

A member of the public had 2 points to raise. Firstly he had noted on one of the slides shown a horrendous number of dumped bags in the river at the back of the Angling Club. Between Hawick and Denholm he considered the number of dumped bags was pure environmental vandalism, along with the number of bits of trees and other debris. He said that it had been promised the area would be cleared last year but that appeared to be a continuing problem. If there was a flash flood, as could happen, he said those bags would be shredded which he considered was a disgrace. The solution to that was quite simply not to allow dumped bags on the wet side of the walls, preventing them getting into the river itself when water levels were raised.

His second point was that glass panels had been inserted into the walls at great expense, however, planters for the trees were directly in front of those panels.

Conor advised in relation to the bags, he was aware of what was there at the present time and preparations were in course for the river to be cleaned. In certain circumstances where bags were caught up, removal would be done almost instantaneously. His team had been down at Denholm to clear up debris which had been flushed down there over the last few weeks of high river levels. The priority would be however to finish off river works within the time afforded and works would then be co-ordinated with the River Tweed Commissioners for a major clean at the back end of the summer. All debris and litter was not however as a result of the Flood Protection Scheme works, as previously evidenced, and the river had never over the last 15 years been spotlessly clean. They were aware of the issue and they would resource that clean-up towards the end of the Summer in terms of their obligation to SEPA. It was necessary to have a number of bags in the river in order to deliver their pollution prevention measures. Right now you would see lots of materials for instance down at the new footbridge. They could not always be withdrawn when river levels rose as that could be instantly and as a result materials would be washed into the river. They would however commit to that clean-up and would assess conditions of the river at the end of the summer.

Regarding the second point raised regarding trees and the windows, there was winter and there was summer. During winter there was little to no vegetation in the river corridor and windows would be able to be seen through then. During Summer there was always vegetation in the river but you could not have it both ways. You could not have a river which was natural and had trees and a healthy biodiversity and good vegetation cover for fish, and absence of trees for functionality and the purposes of a window. The

walls and windows would be in place over hundreds of years and realistically trees would come and go over that time. It was a judgement call for those managing the flood protection scheme in the future whether they wished to take away those trees strategically placed at windows. The windows were not just put in to facilitate sight from one side of the river to another, they were put in as a textural effect to break up the walls and visionary experience, and to allow light travel. As you moved down in a linear fashion it broke up the sight of walls. It was all of those things together which brought about that design. If that was a fundamental problem for the town, then it should be raised with Scottish Borders Council for any tree removal.

John Campbell asked if and when the programme was signed off, would SEPA be involved to allow residents located in former flood areas, to obtain reduced house insurance costs. Conor agreed that was an important question and the moment they were able to declare full flood protection, as per the Scheme, the Council would be capable of putting out a template letter for residents to verify that their properties sitting behind the flood defences were now protected to the right levels. That would then allow for insurance premiums to reduce in those properties. That had been done previously in Selkirk where they had placed the template letter on their website, identified that through local communication channels and through their Community Council and other organisations to have that information available and for residents to take up their rights regarding reduced insurance costs. The Insurance Companies resisted that to begin with but as soon as one allowed, that cascaded to other companies and insurances reduced from c.£500 to in the order of £250 for a normal standard property. That was around 8 years ago. That was the sort of scale of change which could be available.

A template letter was now available however verification from the Contractors that the product was now complete was required before that template letter would be released and communicated. The Community Council and elected Councillors would be the first to know when that letter was to be released, as a good news story. The north side of the town however was now near full protection but the south side was not, due to the remaining gaps at Sandbed and Millport. So Conor had the dilemma as to whether to release to the north side residents first or await until all works were completed and communicate to all residents at the same time. There would only be a matter of months between the two situations, and so the latter may be more sensible.

A member of the public said he may have been somewhat critical of the Scheme in the past, however, wanted to record that the Active Travel Network was a real boon to the town. He had really enjoyed making use of the pathways opened so far and Laidlaw Terrace was a delight. He said cycling around the town with no fear of cars was great, and he considered works done to be a real asset to the town. From what he had heard tonight, works were on the finishing straight and he personally thanked everyone involved for all the work carried out and the benefits that would bring to the town. A round of applause in agreement was then given.

Councillor Ramage enquired whether a cohesive signage system was still on track for the town, rather than all the different signage throughout the town, and whether there remained funding in place to complete and align signage. Conor advised that it had been more than talked about regarding the Signage Strategy for the town. He confirmed it was still their intention to deliver any signage they could as per that Strategy approach, and some signage had in fact started to emerge across the town. He had always said that signage would come in at the back end of works. He aimed to get an update himself on signage but he knew that there was a Signage Strategy Group who he considered now needed to bring all the parties involved back together to achieve best outcomes. Not all of the signage would be delivered by the Scheme but they would deliver their signage in line with the styles within that Strategy. Right now he apologised he could not provide a full update on signage but would undertake to further report on that at the next update late Summer.

The Chair enquired as to the toucan crossing at Bath Street and whether that was intended to still proceed. Conor advised that he had referred earlier to that as Victoria Footbridge and confirmed that crossing was the responsibility of Transport Scotland. Those crossings had been designed as part of their network, however Transport Scotland had taken on responsibility for delivery. Conor advised if the enquiry was that the crossing would happen now, he confirmed that would not be the case. It was noted there had been some issues with that, and he expected to hear later in the Summer from Transport Scotland following discussions with key stakeholders. That outcome would also be reported back to HCC as soon as. An extra-ordinary amount of work had been done in briefing the community on what he (and McLaughlin & Harvey) had been told would be happening with that crossing, and there were frustrations that only now they were discovering that the crossing was not to happen as per what had originally been planned, and which they did not fully understand.

Grame King raised regarding signage, that HGV vehicles were still using the High Street coming from the A698 to access the A7. According to SBC, it was the responsibility of the Flood Protection Scheme to reinstate the signage. There was no signage coming from the A698 to redirect large vehicles. It was advised that signage was in place and basically covers just needed to be removed and would be so shortly.

Conor advised in relation to the High Street, some 4 years ago the town's Traffic Management was changed in preparation for the closure of Commercial Road. Commercial Road works had not formally been handed back as completed yet to Transport Scotland, so he was now in the process of concluding on that. The responsibility of Princess Street would revert back to SBC, Commercial Road to Transport Scotland and the High Street would return to what it was before the Scheme. There was a translation of change happening towards that all being achieved.

The Chair thanked Conor for his positive update. We were on the home straight he said to conclude on remaining works but there was comfort that the town was now defended

from flooding and hopefully for many years to come. He also thanked Robin Erskine, McLaughlin & Harvey for his attendance and update.

9. Treasurer's Report – May 2024 – The Secretary, in absence of the Treasurer reported an opening balance of £8,950.04 and closing balance of £20,308.51.

HCC 1 account started at £3,633.14 with expenses of £100 for gifts to the Cornet and his Lass; Christmas Lights/Events account started and closed with a balance of £957.55; Hawick in Bloom account opened with a balance of £4,210.64, with income from hanging baskets of £280 and expenses of £271.78, resulting in a closing balance of £4,218.96. Finally, the Community Fund Foundation Scotland opened with a balance of £148.71 with income from the Annual Grant for 2024 of £11,450.15, resulting in a closing balance of £11,598.86. That fund would be used for Hawick in Bloom plants, Bandstand Events, additional Christmas lighting and our annual Christmas Market Event.

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

10. Public Forum & Town Issues –

Grass cutting at Wilton Lodge Park from Playpark to Bandstand - Stuart Beck considered that the grass was being rolled more often than being properly cut. He considered that to be inappropriate. It had been cut 2 weeks ago but more often it was being rolled. Councillor Ramage advised that was as a result of the weather and inability to cut when damp, however, Stuart questioned that it had been cut that day in poor weather. Councillor Ramage undertook to investigate further.

Grass-cutting within Cemeteries – Michael Robertson commented on grass cutting at the cemeteries. They had cut the pathway two sections back but there were clumps of grass around the gravestones which had been left on the cut paths, which he considered looked terrible. He asked if those could be seen to. Councillors took on to query responsible staff.

Traffic Cones – Given that all turbine blades had now been transported to Pines Burns, a member of the public asked as to the possibility of all the traffic cones remaining being removed. There were a number of cones he said around the town but he was particularly requiring the cones at the roundabouts at TLC and Morrisons be removed. That would prevent one cone in particular being constantly put on top of and then removed and put on again at the stone in the middle of the TLC roundabout. Removal of cones would take away that temptation and he was concerned cones would also end up in the river. Councillor Ramage undertook to progress on that matter.

£3m levelling-up Fund from UK Government – The Chair commented on that funding and he wondered if that would still be paid with any forthcoming change in Government. That money would make a huge difference to the town.

Councillor McAteer said Councillors had been advised there was a Plan for Hawick, however, given Purdah was now in place due to elections, he could not obtain any further details on that. He had however been pushing and would continue to push on that matter with a view to obtaining more information. Councillor Ramage said she had similarly been queried by residents following release of that funding news, but again on making enquiries at SBC was unable to learn more on any Plan due to Purdah.

Hustings Event – Duncan Taylor asked if HCC had any plans to host a Hustings Event in relation to 4th July Elections, along the lines of that held for the previous local elections in 2021. The Chair advised that could be possible and would try to progress.

Councillor Smart advised that Kelso had organised a Hustings Event for 25th June.

11. Reports from Sub-Groups

- (a) Christmas Event – nothing to report at this time.
- (b) Hawick in Bloom – nothing further to report, as all Summer planting had now been completed. Councillor McAteer advised there had been a service held the previous Thursday at the War Memorial to commemorate D-Day and he wanted to congratulate Hawick in Bloom on improvements made at that site. The new planters and chipped stones had really made a significant difference to what was a problem part of that garden area.

The Secretary pointed out Maureen Toogood, a member of the public attending, who along with another 3 Hawick in Bloom members had been responsible for those improvement works.

Maureen advised that many people thought she and her team worked for the Council, despite having Hawick in Bloom vests on. The Chair said that the Cornet and especially the Lasses had also commented on how lovely that area looked for the Wreath-laying ceremony on Common Riding Saturday.

Councillor Ramage gave praise also on the colourful display from planting at Allars Crescent where the Song-singing took place on Common Riding Friday. The Secretary again highlighted that was also the good work of Maureen Toogood.

- (c) CCTV – nothing to report at this time.
- (d) Resilience – The Vice-Chair reported he had now received from Emergency Planning the Resilience Plan for HCC. There were some names and contact details to be completed however the Resilience Plan for Hawick was now in place.
- (e) Fundraising – nothing to report at this time.
- (f) Planning – There were no major planning applications to report.
- (g) Bandstand Events – Duncan Taylor advised there was nothing major to report on, other than focus was currently on promotional material to promote the Events.

12. Reports from Community Partners

- (a) Hawick Development Trust – The Chair gave Colin Hope's apology for the meeting, and then read out the following report from HDT.

FORMER LIBERAL CLUB (80 High Street) - The 2022 option appraisal has now been released to the Trust for use. Two of the potential end users named in the report have been contacted and are still showing an interest in becoming managing tenants of a refurbished building. A meeting has been called for the end of the month with all identified funding partners to gauge their willingness to play a part in the restoration of 80 High Street. Around the same time CARS is seeking to clarify how much funding Historic Environment Scotland will allocate to the building. The project is expected to be

featured in the Place Plan which should make fund raising for the project more straightforward in future. So from two years of limited activity a good deal of progress is now being made.

BRIDGE GUEST HOUSE - The proposed transfer of this building from SBC to the Trust is still being explored. However the design work carried out to date by SBC and the flood protection consultants does not allow for the development of enough new visitor accommodation for the town. We are waiting to hear if SBC is in a position to amend the plans to remedy this situation and this is being pursued by our SBC community engagement officer. This project is featured in the first draft of the Place Plan.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT-DEVELOPMENT OFFICER - I'm sorry to report that we have not received confirmation of any forthcoming appointment. However after informal discussions I am now more confident that this resource will be made available as the aforementioned two projects are taken forward.

HIGH STREET CLEAN UP - A major feature in the early Have Your Say Day information gathering exercise was the need for improvements to the look of the High Street. The Trust has been seeking agreement with SBC to carry out a deep clean of the pavements and this has not been forthcoming to date. We are continuing to pursue this.

A second approach to this project has been identified and that is a general tidy up of loose cabling, gutter cleaning (which was still in the remit the Chair said of HCC) and the restoration of some architectural features in buildings on the High Street. Our CARS contact has issued tender documentation for a conservation architectural survey of the area to identify the works required. The hope is to be able to carry out the works to a high standard with inconvenience to owners.

AMBASSADOR PROGRAMME - I note the decision taken by the Community Council on Welcome Hosts. The Trust would welcome the opportunity to share its experience of the Hosts initiative and the Trusts wider tourism project with the Council.

(b) Foundation Scotland – The Secretary advised that the Grant, as reported earlier in the Treasurer’s report had now been received.

Updates from Representative Groups

(c) Teviot & Liddesdale Area Partnership – Councillor Ramage confirmed the next meeting would be held on 18th June 2024 online to discuss Neighbourhood Support Grant applications. It would not be a full meeting.

The Chair advised that the T&L Neighbourhood Support Grant panel had met to consider one application to Pot A, and the outcome of that would be discussed further at that meeting on 18th June.

(d) A7 Action Group – Stuart Beck advised that the next meeting would be held in the Eskdale Hotel, Langholm on 28th June at 7pm.

(e) Hawick Common Good – From the meeting held on 22nd May last, Graeme King reported that one of the main items discussed was an application from Escape Youth in Hawick. There had been discussion on whether funding requested should come from the Scottish Government, however it was agreed to provide funding of £9,000 to maintain that service in recognition of the great work being done.

- (f) Wind Farms – The Chair reported on an email received from Muirhall Energy advising they had made significant changes to the proposed layout of the Teviot Wind Farm, dropping the overall number of turbines from 62 to 53, and reducing some tip heights. They had also decided not to progress the solar array on Binks Hill so that element had been removed completely.

Resident stakeholders interested in seeing the new plans were invited to an informal information event at their North Bridge Street offices on Wednesday, 26th June. There would be 3 sessions – 10am to 12 noon, 2pm-4pm and 6pm-8pm. The Teviot Project Management Team would be available to answer any questions.

They had now submitted their revised layout to the Energy Consents Unit, and all documentation could be found on their website from 18th June. Comments on the revised submission should be submitted before 21st July. He encouraged people to pop along to view the revised drawings.

Carol Douglas, Muirhall Energy, advised that the whole team would be on hand at the sessions to answer any questions raised. Information would still be available after the 26th June, however, the whole team would not be available unfortunately after that date to answer any questions.

- (g) Hawick Common Riding Committee – Nothing to report at this time.
(h) Hawick Reivers – Nothing to report at this time.
(i) SBCCN – Nothing to report at this time.

- 13. Correspondence** – The Secretary reported on an email received requesting HCC's support to improve the safety of lithium batteries used in e-bikes and e-scooters and their disposal. The email went on to introduce the writer, Ron Bailey who was a researcher for Lord Foster who was campaigning on that issue in the House of Lords, and he (Ron Bailey) was also the Parliamentary Advisor to Electrical Safety First, a UK Charity who were dedicated to reducing the deaths and injuries caused by electricity.

The email stated that lithium batteries fires were on the increase with over 1000 in the past few years, with around 200 injuries and a dozen fatalities. Homes had been destroyed and the cost to the UK was stated to run into billions of pounds. He said that doubtless we would know of examples in our area. A spreadsheet had been attached to the email showing areas where there had been such fires.

In essence, the email sought support from HCC for the campaign to have lithium batteries made safer.

Relative to this matter, the Secretary had been made aware of a proposed lithium battery storage facility to be built on the outskirts of Hawick near Calaburn and Whitehaugh. She wondered if Councillors had heard of any such proposal and Councillor Smart advised that as far as she was aware any such storage would require to be out with certain required distances from any residential properties because of any risk of fire. It was noted that the proposal was at pre-planning stage with SBC. It would be an industrial type facility along the line of containers.

A member of the public considered that matter was worthy of more discussion by HCC, because if there were 35 tanker sized batteries at that location and there was a fire, emissions from that fire would impact heavily on the town itself. He believed that it was not possible to put out any such type fire and burning could continue for long periods.

It was noted that consultation would in due course be necessary however the member of the public considered that Environmental Impact Assessments were perhaps not thorough enough, in favour of any application going straight through to Planning. These types of applications appear to be being given an easy route to approval, without proper consultation with parties affected.

Michael Robertson said he did not consider that the road network in that area would be capable of handling large lorries. It was said that Transport Scotland had apparently been spoken to and had advised it was not their problem, as any damage to roads would then be the responsibility of the owner of the building to reinstate. It was agreed however that 30+ artic lorries transporting to that area would most definitely impact and cause damage to the roads there.

It was agreed that the matter was worthy of further consideration, and it would therefore be placed on the next HCC Meeting Agenda for July. Councillors should try to find out further information for that meeting.

14. **AOCB** – Councillor McAteer stated he was sure HCC would wish to give recognition to the passing of Madge Elliot given her huge contribution over many years to the town, in particular in relation to the railway and tennis as well as other community work. HCC Members agreed with those sentiments and the Chair requested that to be so recorded.
15. **Date of next meeting** – It was agreed that the next meeting of HCC would be held on Monday, 8th July 2024 at 6.30pm within the Lesser Town Hall, Hawick. The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance.