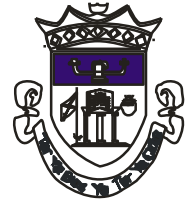

Hawick Community Council



MINUTES OF MEETING OF HAWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL
held on Monday 9th September 2024 within Lesser Town Hall, Hawick at 6.30pm

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

There were 12 members of the public in attendance as well as Graham Ford from the Hawick Paper.

- 1. Chair's Opening Remarks** – The Chair welcomed everyone to the September meeting of Hawick Community Council and said he hoped everyone had enjoyed their summer break, albeit the weather had not been the best for much sun and heat.

Whilst the Community Council had a break (with no August meeting), its members nevertheless had been working away erecting and dismantling gazebos etc at the very successful Music in the Park Sundays (Bandstand Events), which had proved very popular with the townsfolk and visitors alike. Duncan Taylor had produced a Live Music Hawick Festival which had been well supported with acts from near and far. Continuing on the music front, he congratulated John Darling for his 'Tunes by the Teviot' event held in the Wee Haugh, which had also been very well supported by our townsfolk.

The Chair and the Vice-Chair had attended the opening of the new Playpark at Sleepy Valley in Burnfoot, and he considered that to be a great asset for the youngsters of that area.

The Weensland Bridge would also be a great addition to Hawick's bridges and was the final piece of the Sustrans route around the town. He hoped it would encourage Weensland folk to walk, cycle or wheel across to Burnfoot and Mansfield, and vice-versa.

HCC's condolences were expressed to the parents, Irene and Robbie Rodgeron, on the sudden loss of their son Craig (Dodger) the previous week at aged only 47 years. Dodger was known to a number of HCC members and would be a great loss to many.

The Chair advised of a change to the Agenda at that night's meeting, to allow a presentation of the proposed IbVogt solar development, Stirches Renewable Energy Park.

The Chair advised there was an open mic and any members or members of the public wishing to speak at the meeting, should make use of the mic.

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 Braden George and Margaret Hogg.
4. **Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of 8th July 2024** – The previously circulated Minutes of the last meeting were approved as an accurate record of the meeting - Proposed for adoption by Jim Adams and Seconded by Stuart Mactaggart.
5. **Matters arising** –
 - Lithium Battery Storage Facility at Calaburn - the Chair asked Councillors attending if there was any furtherance within Planning on that matter. The Councillors considered it remained within the pre-planning stage, as they had not heard further.
 - Grass Cutting Pilot Scheme – The Chair asked when the outcomes of that pilot would be made known. Councillor Ramage advised that October was the deadline for responses, so it would follow on from there but hopefully before the end of the year.
 - Fountain within Wilton Lodge Park – Councillor Ramage confirmed that had now been fixed.
 - Renaming of the Path at Balcary to Madge's Path – Councillor McAteer confirmed that was now complete and the official opening of the path would be on 25th September at 11am, to which all were invited.
 - Teviot Day Care Centre – Councillor Ramage advised that she had received mixed reports on how that was operating. Stuart Beck advised that a representative would be attending a future HCC meeting to advise on that service. It was his belief that the costs being charged were over £10 per hour, which he considered may be prohibitive. The Chair confirmed that a presentation would be made at the next HCC meeting in October by Brian Fowler, Manager, Teviot Day Care Service.

Councillor Cox advised she regularly visited the Centre and considered there were more and more people in attendance at each visit. She was not however aware of the costs.

Proposed Outdoor Gym between Laidlaw Terrace and the Wee Haugh - Councillor McAteer advised that there had been nothing confirmed officially, only from the party making complaint. He would enquire further to determine what was happening or otherwise.

Railings at Morrisons Roundabout - Stuart Mactaggart advised he was pleased to see that the railings at that location had now been fixed.

- 6. Hawick High School – Senior Pupils Update** – The Chair welcomed Rory Adams, Senior Pupil – Rory introduced himself as a member of that year’s Head Team, with the other members of the team being Chloe Patterson, Isla Gibson and Joel McGregor who sent their apologies for being unable to attend. The Team he said were settling into their roles well and they looked forward to providing updates to HCC at future meetings on what was happening within the School.

For their first event as a Head Team they were involved in the consultation exercise on proposals for their new High School, and the previous week had also been involved in the School’s Annual Prizegiving to recognise pupils’ achievements and all their hard work. They were delighted to have the opportunity to speak at that Awards Ceremony and to lead on that evening’s events.

Rory went on to advise there were many plans for the Head Team in the upcoming weeks and months. On Tuesday, they would be attending the Rotary Club to provide them with information on the Head Team’s future plans and how they were getting on. They had also received an invite from the Archaeological Society to attend the Memorial at Stobs Camp on Remembrance Day to pay their respects to those who had lost their lives in the War. They were awaiting confirmation to attend a meeting within the Inspire Building in Tweedbank of all the various Head Teams from all the Border schools to discuss their ideas and gather the opinions of others, to ensure their decisions were as good as they could possibly be, and to represent both the school and the town to as high a standard as had been set by previous Head Teams.

Rory stated if there were any events going on in the town which people would wish the Head Team to be part of, they could get in touch with him or any other Head Team member or the school directly, and they would be more than happy to discuss how they could be involved.

He then opened up for questions. Anything he was unable to answer, he undertook to get back on.

The Chair thanked Rory for his update. Stuart Mactaggart enquired on any anticipated dates for completion of the new High School, and Rory advised that plans were for opening in August 2027, with demolition starting next year in August time.

The Chair advised that he had attended the first consultation within the High School and he wondered what the feedback from those attending had been. Rory considered that the consultation had been good, however there was another session planned to show internals, rather than just the information and images of what the

externals were. It was noted that second consultation would take place during October.

Duncan Taylor advised of his disappointment at the lack of numbers attending the consultation. It was likely that people would only pay attention once the buildings started to be demolished and the new school being built. The message needed to get out there that the opportunity for consulting was really important and he encouraged people to take that opportunity to have their say.

The Chair advised that he was disappointed with plans that demolition would include all of the older historical parts of the school building, which he appreciated were not listed and therefore could be demolished, but he had hoped that somehow parts of the old building (Bell Tower etc) could in some way be incorporated somewhere. It was he considered a great waste of a building, which they could repurpose with the existing façade and build new to the rear. Architects obviously had different ideas.

A member of the public asked if it would be required to close the School during renovations. Rory advised that would not be the case. There was sufficient space at the part of the school not being demolished for everybody to fit in. It was then asked if ongoing building works would disrupt the pupils' work? Rory said that was indeed a concern for both teachers and pupils, as there would be disruption and possible stress caused.

Duncan Taylor advised there had been an enormous building scheme next to the High School over the last 3 or 4 years with a lot of construction, staff car parking right down the side of the extension building and technical department. They had survived that however Rory was right he said, there would indeed be disruption and there would require to be very careful health and safety measures put in place, with construction equipment on site and buildings being demolished. The canteen building would be demolished and there would be decanting of the rest of the school, which would need to be done in an incredibly safe manner and secondly, when in the new building in 2027, there would be further demolition with the same principles to apply. The whole process would require to be done with an immense deal of care to the youngsters and staff and to passersby using that part of the town. It was going to be a building site for potentially 3 years.

Councillor McAteer advised that similar onsite works were ongoing both within Galashiels and Peebles Schools and effectively having our new school built on the same site would inevitably cause disruption. There had been much consultation on where the new school should be built, and the preferred decision had been made to retain the new school on the same site given its central location. There was a cost to bear for that in terms of that inevitable disruption and material impact.

A member of the public enquired of any penalty for the school not being completed on time, and Councillor McAteer advised that the normal contractual obligations in terms of timescales would prevail. The detail of that would be made known when the Contract was prepared.

Duncan Taylor advised it was his understanding that the demolition would commence at the start of next year's summer holidays, and much of that work should be completed whilst the school was closed then. Best use of that 6-week closure period had to be made.

Additional Agenda Item – Presentation - IbVogt, Stirches Renewable Energy Park

The Chair then advised on a change to the Agenda to allow a presentation on Stirches Renewable Energy Park. He introduced Melissa Albarran and Kateryna Martovytska from IbVogt.

Kateryna thanked HCC for allowing her to present to them. She was a Senior Project Developer with the company and Melissa was responsible for Communications. She went on to explain that the Stirches Energy Park project was about solar energy and battery storage and was owned and developed by IbVogt UK who headquartered in London. They had a team of experienced engineers, project developers, planners, and land and grid managers. They were currently operating 486.8mWp of Photovoltaic (PV) Plants; 177.9MWp of PV plants under construction; 667MWp of PV plants commercialised before construction and 150MW of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) in construction.

At the end of 2017, she advised that funding for solar farms was restricted and not as much funding was then available from that point onwards.

So why Solar? It was stated Solar Energy supported the Scottish Government's commitment to achieving Net Zero by 2045. Solar was a reliable and efficient method of producing energy and supported energy security from it being generated locally. There was no additional cost to the public purse as it was a subsidy free project and had minimum impact on the environment and the potential to improve local biodiversity and health of the soil. It was a fully reversible project and decommissioning after 40 years would see the land returned to its natural state.

Why that location? The presentation that night was their first public introduction to the Scheme and it had not been put into the public domain as of yet. The design had not been set in stone and was in its first stages of development. It was noted there was a viable grid connection which was next to Stirches Farm. The location was less than 2km from the grid through Hawick sub-station which was a good situation to ensure the efficient integration of generated power into the national grid, and there were no obvious environmental constraints on that site.

Kateryna went on to explain some further project information including technical studies to ensure the best siting of panes and BESS development within the site. Those in turn would be shared, along with proposals for landscaping and biodiversity enhancements. They were at the feasibility stage conducting landscape assessments, assessing archaeological and environmental impacts, and that would filter down into final design. That would then be forwarded to the Energy Consents Unit of the Scottish Government for approval. All the information and consents were on a provisional timeline. They anticipated submitting a screening application very soon.

Once the screening application had been submitted, they would then arrange for community consultations to disclose the full scheme. After the first consultation, they would take on board any comments, adjust the design and follow on with a second public consultation where community benefits would be discussed. They would submit the full planning application in the first half of 2025.

They would be setting up a website for the community to look at and email and attending the HCC meeting was their first step in introducing themselves and the project. They did not want to submit the project to full planning without first having that community engagement. She would arrange to share her presentation slides.

The Chair advised that presentation was the first HCC had heard of the proposed Development and opened the floor to questions.

Stuart Mactaggart referred to one of the slides relating to solar panels and a BESS and advised that there was already a proposal for another BESS on the other side of the hill to the Stirches proposed site, and he considered Hawick was fast becoming an area for these units. He asked how big the battery storage unit would be and Kateryna responded by asking how big the other BESS was. It was noted from a member of the public that the Calaburn BESS was 60kw and Kateryna considered that the Stirches one would be half that size and therefore medium.

Stuart Beck queried the physical size of the storage containers, however that was answered by Kateryna providing information on storage capacity for water for fires. Stuart Beck considered that the water availability at that site would not be sufficient for requirements to extinguish any fire. It was noted they proposed to install an underground water attenuation tank. That had not yet been adopted as a standard but they intended to include that within their design.

Councillor Cox enquired whether the proposed plans for a Stirches Care Village had been taken into account. Kateryna stated she was not aware of that development and Councillor Cox advised that Village had been in planning for some time.

Councillor Marshall enquired whether Scottish Borders Council would have any real say in the proposal, and whether that would be up to the Scottish Government. It was confirmed SBC would be made fully aware as one of the key stakeholders. Councillor Marshall continued that there were already concerns which had been raised by nearby residents in relation to the battery storage facility proposed at Calaburn, and he saw that further proposal was only going to add to those concerns. He looked forward to seeing more details, and in particular the impact on the local infrastructure – for instance, impact on the road network and its ability to support that and proposals to mitigate the impact. He advised that there was already a functioning Care Home at St Andrews, and already a busy transport route to cater for that Home as well as the local Stirches School. He appreciated the time taken to present to the meeting but wanted greater detail. He wondered what timescales were being envisaged from start to finish. Would it be a 3 or 5-year project?

Kateryna advised that she could not provide an accurate timescale because of the backlog within the local authority Planning and within the Energy Consents Unit for obtaining permissions but they had a planned connection date of 2028. The construction of a project of that size would take approximately 9 months, with an intense two-month period when the solar panels were delivered and installed. For that intense period when the solar panels were delivered, there would be a detailed Traffic Management Plan put in place.

Councillor Marshall encouraged the company to give careful consideration to the residents in the Stirches area to ensure close engagement took place with those residents.

Councillor Ramage advised that she had already spoken with some Stirches residents and some were in attendance from Stirches at the meeting, however it did concern her about the lithium battery storage, especially with another one proposed at Calaburn. That was for c.90 Storage units at that storage facility, and she wondered as to the number of units proposed for the Stirches development. Kateryna advised she was currently working on a development with 16 containers but those numbers changed for each different development. Battery sizes were also changing constantly, and that would also impact on the number of containers required.

Councillor Ramage continued stating that another concern raised regarding the Calaburn proposal, was that the local Fire Service were currently under review, and there were real concerns from residents regarding the safety aspect of these containers in terms of fire, run off from chemicals involved and so on. She was hugely concerned regarding the proximity of these two proposed storage facilities within a very picturesque area of our town. Finally, she asked who owned the land – was it a farmer and would they be renting that land. Kateryna confirmed they would rent the land through a lease agreement.

A resident in the vicinity of the Calaburn proposal reiterated that their specific concerns were around the safety of the battery storage units and the number of fires which had taken place around the world due to these, as well as run-off from contaminated land and the impact on the local environment. Also the infrastructure mentioned earlier to the local roads network, and more importantly, concerns what would happen after the batteries had come to their end of life, and impact on any contaminated land once the lease had run out. What she could not understand was that it was much cheaper to buy the land required, yet again in this proposal as with Calaburn, it was stated the land would be leased. It was suspected the contaminated land would then not be any companies responsibility and passed back to the landowner to deal with. She was nevertheless happy that IbVogt representatives had attended the meeting and given a commitment to proper consultation with the local community. The sooner that happened, and the more open they were regarding that, the better.

Kateryna advised that the private land ownership agreements were something beyond her capability to answer questions on.

Councillor McAteer advised that whilst he was happy that representatives had come along to the meeting, he considered the approach taken was quite unusual in that it was described as consultation. There was however no real detail on that and what was missing was the detail on what the plans were, the impacts, how it was going to be managed, transport and so on. What was being presented appeared to be ahead of all that and, in a nice sense, was a very sales pitch type of presentation, whereas people want to see what's actually going to happen, the process and so on. He asked when that level of detail would happen. It was noted that would come from a Scoping Report (which appeared not to have been undertaken thus far). Kateryna advised that the Scoping Report would provide the detail, as well as environmental impacts and so on. They had come that night to introduce themselves, so that the public would be aware of the body making the application when it came to that stage.

Councillor Marshall also wanted to see in detail a Decommissioning Report of any development, as had been alluded to earlier by the resident near Calaburn. It was vital to know what happened, once the project ended.

Kateryna advised there was no policy specified across the country of what they needed to do, and so they had adopted at the planning stage what mitigation they would use for decommissioning and returning the site to its original state.

The Vice-Chair reiterated the discussion previously held on the Calaburn proposal and the statement by a Chief Fire Officer that it would take 1900 litres of water per minute taking 2 to 3 hours for any fire to be brought under control. In the Stirches proposal, that would be 25m litres of water or the equivalent to 92 leisure centre sized swimming pools. Underground storage was mentioned and it did not therefore seem possible for that amount of water to be stored underground. That did not sound practical.

Kateryna advised the plan was to insert a tank 4 metres underground but that would be subject to final design and risk mitigation and with evolving technology in firefighting, that would also need to be taken into account. The Vice-Chair advised that a tank of that volume would cover in the region of 4 square kilometres (bigger than the site itself).

The Chair thanked Kateryna and Melissa for their attendance, and said the matter would require to be closely followed to see how that developed. There would require to be further consultation in due course.

- 7. Police Scotland Reports – August 2024** – The reports had not been received from the Police until late that afternoon and the Chair advised that members may not have had the opportunity therefore to read in detail. He had noted the high number of times that Police had been called out to Morrisons for youths running through the store and around outside too. He hoped that practice would not continue.

Councillor Marshall advised that matter had been raised at the CAT meeting earlier that afternoon and the issue remained on their tasking list. Councillor Ramage

advised that there had been a meeting held on 26th August on antisocial behaviour with 25 people in attendance, and 6 police and various services, who had been trying really hard to resolve the issue of such behaviour. There would be a further meeting to try to bring all the various services together to attempt to resolve.

Marjorie McCreadie expressed her disappointment at there being no police in attendance at the meeting. She advised of an incident at 10am the previous Monday morning when she had required to make a 999-emergency call. She wanted to ask when she could expect a response to that call, as there had been none at all. HCC were requested to take that forward with the Community Sergeant Alison Granger.

The Chair advised it was good to learn the police had engaged with primary school pupils. He had witnessed himself, at Trinity Primary School, the parking issues there, which he described as 'a total accident waiting to happen'. Parents had no consideration of children's safety and road markings. Better instruction had to be given.

8. **Treasurer's Report** – From an opening balance of £22,476.64, the Treasurer reported income of £47.94 in bank interest. Expenses totalled £71.82 for Hawick in Bloom and £5,000 for the Bandstand Entertainment. As a result, the Closing Balance at the end of August was £17,452.76. That closing balance figure included £1,566.76 ring-fenced money for grant funding from Fallago for use on pathways maintenance. A suitable path, such as Williestruther, had yet to be decided for use of that remaining grant funding.

Members approved the Treasurer's Report.

9. **Public Forum & Town Issues** –

Wilton Lodge Park – Football pitches – Stuart Beck had been advised that conditions of the football pitches were considered to be unsafe. There were issues of some deep holes and accidents were inevitable – sprained ankles or worse – and the pitches needed filled in and levelling. Councillors were requested to progress on that matter.

Borders College Hawick Campus – Stuart Beck asked if there were any truth in rumours that the College would be pulling out of Hawick in 18 months' time. The Galashiels Campus had apparently been earmarked a couple of months back, and he wondered whether there was any feedback on Hawick. Councillor McAteer advised there had been no formal feedback on any decisions made.

Lights at Mote Park – Michael Robertson asked if there had been anything further on getting new lights at the bottom end of the Mote Park, which had been requested back in February. Councillor McAteer advised there had been no further feedback on those and given current budget issues at SBC, he was not optimistic of that happening any time soon. Michael Robertson then asked as to the possibility of HCC making application to the Small Schemes Budget to have at least a couple of lights installed at that location. It was noted that Budget would be open again for applications from April 2025.

Commercial Road Garage – Stuart Beck raised concerns regarding the pavement being used for parking of vehicles at the garage in that location, causing obstruction. That happened frequently. Michael Robertson also considered that there were a couple of vehicles parked in the Common Haugh which could also belong to that garage. Councillor McAteer advised that should be reported to SBC and it was noted there was an online form available to complete to report dumped vehicles. Michael undertook to report to SBC.

Councillor McAteer also advised that Bear Scotland be contacted, as they were responsible for that road, and should be able to exercise their authority to ensure pavement access was not being hampered by any vehicles at that location. Stuart Beck would bring the matter to attention also at the next A7 Action Group Meeting to be held on 20th September when Bear Scotland representatives would be in attendance.

Defibrillator at Town Hall – The Chair advised that defibrillator had been used in an incident the previous week however the Police had expressed concern that it could not be located easily, as it had been hidden behind some wheelie bins there. The Chair was not sure whether those bins belonged to the Town Hall or the Queens Head Pub opposite. Councillors were requested to determine who were responsible for those bins. If those did not belong to the Council, he would be happy to then communicate with the Queens Head Pub staff. John Wilkinson considered those bins belonged to the Queens Head and the resident at No.6 Cross Wynd.

Graeme King reported that new adult pads would be required for the defibrillator and unfortunately the battery was not rechargeable and also required to be replaced. The defibrillator with only adult pads could not be used on children aged 1-8 years as it would be considered too powerful, however pads for children were expensive. The cheapest cost to obtain new adult and child pads and a new battery would be £490. Members agreed, whilst paediatric pads were not essential, new pads for both adults and children and a new battery should be purchased.

Michael Robertson asked about progress with identifying the location of the town's defibrillators and a proposed map. Graeme King advised that defibrillators were identified on all relevant Apps and HCC's defibrillator at the Town Hall was registered and after any incident they would be checked and would also be serviced every month. There was no notification to HCC through our Gmail account and it was queried whether that registration should be to an individual or otherwise. Graeme King advised he was registered as the contact person for HCC and would disseminate that information.

John Wilkinson queried why the defibrillator at the Town Hall was used in the incident mentioned, when there was one in Lochpark Industrial Estate, which was much nearer. He wondered who decided on that defibrillator. Graeme King advised that the Police and Ambulance Service would have known and so it was not known why that one had been used at the Town Hall.

Michael Robertson wondered if the defibrillator at the Town Hall could be relocated to the front of the Town Hall building, but that question had already been asked and was not possible due to electrical requirements.

St Leonards Park – Michael Robertson asked if there was any furtherance with suggested improvements to that area. The Chair advised there was a meeting on that scheduled for the following Thursday night, and feedback would be provided at the next HCC meeting.

New footbridge at Mansfield – Michael Robertson enquired if the bridge would be named and wondered if that might be by way of a petition. Councillor Ramage suggested it may be an idea to involve the schools to get an unbiased name, as people on the Weensland side may want it to be known as the Weensland Bridge whereas people on the opposite side could want Lower Mansfield and so on. Councillor Marshall considered there should be a competition to name the bridge and his two suggestions would be The Greens Bridge or named after the guy who started the whole idea of having a bridge there – the Late Councillor Bill Douglas. Councillor Ramage undertook to progress.

10. Reports from Sub-Groups

(a) Christmas Event – The Chair advised that the Christmas Event would be held on Saturday, 30th November at the Horse/Oliver Place/Oliver Crescent. A number of tasks were currently underway – new Christmas Lights had been ordered, an electrician contracted for pat testing and maintenance. Stallholders had also been contacted and it was envisaged to have 30 stalls, with local entertainment again in the afternoon. The next Events Meeting would be held on Wednesday, 2nd October at 6.30pm.

Councillor McAteer advised that the Town Hall now had a coloured Floodlight which could be used to publicise good causes, commemorative and traditional events. It had been trialled and had kept the High Street residents awake with its light. There would be many events coming up, and he suggested HCC should ask for their Christmas Event to be publicised.

- (b) Hawick in Bloom – In the absence of Margaret Hogg, Maureen Toogood who was a Hawick in Bloom volunteer, advised that the winter planting would take place on 11th October. Some planters had been tidied ready and the remaining would be tidied soon. The beds at the War Memorial had also been tidied. There would be another meeting of Hawick in Bloom members held at the end of October.
- (c) CCTV – The Vice-Chair advised that a meeting between HCC sub-group members and SBC officials was still trying to be arranged.
- (d) Resilience – The Vice-Chair advised of an email received from Emergency Planning regarding their annual training session for Resilience Group members. He would circulate that email to HCC members to determine those wishing to participate.
- (e) Fundraising – The Vice-Chair advised that sub-group had a meeting two weeks previously but unfortunately the day they had proposed for a Hawick Farmer's Market turned out to clash with another Farmer's Market and they were then out of Saturdays available within the Summer months. It was proposed to determine 3 dates for 2025, and have these dates arranged with stallholders now and booked in, starting Easter time.

- (f) Planning – there were no major planning applications in the month.
- (g) Bandstand Events – Duncan Taylor advised that the weather had not been so kind however 5 out of the 6 events went ahead despite conditions. The sixth event was rained off – the Scout Pipe Band and the Drumlanrig Dance Group.

On behalf of HCC and Live Music Hawick, Duncan thanked all the volunteers and in particular Keith Johnson. The budget of £5,000 was underspent he said by £230. £2,020 of expenditure he was pleased to report went to local Hawick companies for sound systems, marketing, adverts, and so on. Of the artists themselves, only one had no connection with the Borders, and so a further £2,250 went to local artists, which meant the money going back into our local Borders economy.

In terms of grant funding, he suggested that HCC should again recommend similar expenditure from Foundation Scotland Community Benefits Fund for next year's events. He was of a mind to reduce events back to 4 Sundays during the summer rather than 6, as that was perhaps too onerous for volunteers.

Councillor Marshall through the Chair gave thanks to Duncan Taylor for all his efforts and that of the volunteers for putting on these well supported events for the town. A great job had been done by all he said.

11. Report from Community Partners & Representative Groups

- (a) Hawick Development Trust – No report. The Chair asked Stuart Beck when the Trust's AGM would be held, and it was advised that would be very soon.
- (b) Foundation Scotland – No report. Expenditure was ongoing, as per Distribution Plan submitted.

Updates from Representative Groups

- (c) Teviot & Liddesdale Area Partnership – Councillor Ramage advised that the following night there was a meeting to be held in the new Business Centre at 6.30pm. That meeting would not be a blended meeting as she had hoped for, but in person only. The meeting was likely to last half an hour with Neighbourhood Funds only to be agreed on.

A Community Conversations meeting would follow on from that T&L Partnership Meeting, with SBC's CEO in attendance there. That could provide HCC an opportunity to discuss organisation of a CCTV meeting. Euan Jardine would also be in attendance. The more people who could attend to provide their views for priorities for Hawick, the better.

- (d) A7 Action Group – Stuart Beck reported that the next meeting of the Group would be held in the Burgh Chambers at 7pm on Friday, 20th September. Marjorie McCreadie advised there had been no input from HCC on the new A7 Action Plan. Inputs were to be forwarded to her by 6th September and a reminder had been sent out but still no input. The Chair requested any members having such input should contact Marjorie as soon as possible. Duncan Taylor advised he had saw a Facebook post and wondered if there was still a proposed Selkirk By-pass route on the agenda. Marjorie explained there was a route but that had not progressed

any further. There was also a route for Langholm. Those were in the 'pot' with all other proposals. Selkirk CC had also not responded with any comments.

Councillor Marshall enquired how much feedback had actually been made to Marjorie, and she advised she had heard from Burnfoot, Langholm and Heriot. He considered that feedback should be made.

Marjorie considered that representatives on the Group should be bringing forward important matters to be addressed, and whilst she had requested feedback from a number of Community Councils and other Groups, the responses were not forthcoming. It was a golden opportunity for Hawick to put forward their ideas.

Jim Adams expressed his concern at the area at the Dunk, and risks to pedestrians when two large vehicles crossed each other, especially at the bridge there. It was noted that the water issue from the banking had now been resolved, albeit rainwater still appeared to accumulate there from run-off.

- (e) Hawick Common Good – Councillor Ramage reported that a meeting had been held on 21st August when funding for the Escape Youth Café had been agreed. Michael Robertson referred to the wheelchair access for the Hut and advised that there were no wheelchair access or disabled rails etc in place there as yet. Councillor Ramage had thought those to have been completed but would chase up as new flooring had been installed and a cement ramp. Michael confirmed those works had been completed but nothing else. He wondered what the costs had been for those works however Councillor Ramage did not have that information to hand.
- (f) Wind Farms – In relation to the Teviot Wind Farm, the Chair advised of a meeting arranged for 23rd October for all affected Community Councils at Muirhall Offices. That was to finalise arrangements for the Community Investment Funding should the development be approved. There would be 10 Community Councils invited, not only from the Borders but also from Dumfries & Galloway.

Also on the Teviot Wind Farm, the Chair advised that Walter Douglas, Chair of Upper Teviotdale & Borthwick Water Community Council, had sent a letter to David Robertson, SBC on behalf of the Community Councils in our area enquiring as to the planned transport route to be used, should that Wind Farm be approved. There were two routes proposed – coming through the A7 straight through the centre of Hawick and onwards, with the second route being through Craik Forest and through forestry commission roads. There was no confirmation of what route would be used, at the present time. Transport was not part of any planning application and the transport route would be decided upon by SBC, the Developer and Transport Scotland. Community Councils unfortunately would not get a say, which was disturbing, on what route would be chosen.

The Chair went on to advise of another Wind Farm within scoping – Mid Hill Wind Farm up the Borthwick Water. HCC was not a statutory consultee for that wind farm, albeit the northernmost wind turbine would be only 4.5 kilometres from

Hawick. That development would consist of 42 x c.200-metre-high turbines. HCC would nevertheless keep an eye out on progress with that Wind Farm.

Stuart Mactaggart voiced his concerns that Hawick appeared to be coming a centre of renewable energy all of a sudden, with wind farms, solar panels, battery storage units. At the end of the day, the townsfolk would not benefit from cheaper electricity.

(g) Hawick Common Riding Committee – No update report.

(h) Hawick Reivers – Margaret Hogg represented on behalf of HCC and a report would follow at the next meeting.

12. Correspondence

(a) Resignation of HCC member Wilson George - The Chair expressed his regret on hearing of the resignation of Wilson George due to his ill health. Wilson, he said, was one of the longest serving Community Council Members with a wealth of experience and knowledge of its running and of the area of Hawick. He was also a past Chair of Scottish Borders Community Council Network. On behalf of the HCC members, the Chair wished him well and stated he would be hard to replace.

(b) Street Naming – An email had been received from Alison Wallace, SBC regarding the naming of 6 houses to be erected in place of the former garages in Ramsay Road. Due to the numbering sequence of Ramsay Road, continuing on existing numbers would not be possible, and their proposal would be to name a new street.

Suggestions were requested from HCC members and the public. The Chair suggested Ramsay Lane, Ramsay Terrace, Ramsay Braes, Ramsay Street (laughter). The Chair advised that SBC had stipulated if the suggestion was to name the street after any person, that person should be deceased. Anyone wishing to provide ideas should contact HCC.

13. AOCB –

Trinity Steps - John Campbell raised his concerns regarding the condition of Trinity Steps. There were loads of vegetation and weeds and rats had been seen there. As a result, that vegetation would likely carry infection (Weil's Disease). The steps were a disgrace and needed tidying.

Councillor Marshall was sure that Councillor McAteer had been in touch with the Neighbourhood Services Department on that matter and suggested that he be contacted for an update. It was noted that the steps were close to a Primary School. Councillor Smart sought clarification on where the offending vegetation was, as she believed that part of that area she had arranged to be strimmed during the summer months but conceded that may require done again. It was advised the vegetation was on the steps themselves, up the side walls of the steps and at the bottom area of the steps around the garages. There were also some loose steps as well, and those should be given attention too. Councillor Smart undertook to follow up on those issues.

Buckets at Bruce Court – A member of the public referred to her filling 5-gallon buckets with weeds in the area around the garages backing onto Bruce Court which

area used to be regularly cleaned. She had taken to tidying that area but expressed her disappointment that many areas throughout Hawick looked terrible. She urged that in her area of Mayfield the Council forget about sending one man to spray and weed kill the pavement edges to keep those tidy. Due to all the recent rainfall that had no effect and especially being on a hill, silt accumulated at the bottom of the hill from the weeds. She considered time would be better spent actually edging the grass areas themselves and keeping those tidy with no spillage then over into the pavement gutters resulting in weeds. She hated to think with germinating of seeds, what the weeds would be like next year not only in her area but across the town.

Grass Maintenance Pilot, Hawick - Michael Robertson expressed his ongoing concerns with the Grass cutting pilot in Hawick and advised that the grassed banking area in Langlands Road was full of ragwort. He said that other Border towns did not appear to have those same issues as Hawick. He asked when the pilot outcomes were due, and that was reiterated to be by the end of the year as discussed earlier in the meeting.

Councillor Marshall said he was equally saddened at the state of some of the areas within Hawick. He had opposed and been very critical to SBC about the impact of the grass cutting pilot, including the state of Hawick's cemeteries, and he hoped that there would be many complaints made regarding the Pilot Scheme. He urged people to register their concerns and to highlight the impacts of the Pilot across the town. We needed to get Hawick back to being beautiful again, especially as many volunteers like Hawick in Bloom were trying their best to make the area look good and were stepping up. The Chair advised when going around the other Border towns, there were none in the state of Hawick. It was noted that some had wild flowers but these were confined in containers and were very attractive, as opposed to being spread across large areas and left to their own devices.

Bikes at entrances to Hawick - Another member of the public commented on the bikes at the 3 entrances to the town which had been put there for a cycling event years ago. It was not Hawick in Bloom's responsibility to fill the boxes on those bikes which were now an eyesore and should be taken away. They did not give a good first impression coming into the town. There was a hanging basket tree coming into Wilton Hill end, and if that were filled, that would give a good impact. She had also thought to approach Lockies/Harbro regarding having a planter between their premises and near the crossing to give impact too. Finally, she suggested if there could be one full-time person employed by the Council continually tidying that would do so much to ensure the town was kept tidier. She considered employing contractors was not always cost-effective.

Michael Robertson asked what HCC intentions were in coming up with a plan rather than just continually speaking about it. We should not be accepting lack of grass cutting and the untidiness of the wild flower areas around the town. The Chair advised that any Action Plan would need to come from SBC following the Pilot. Councillor Marshall agreed and emphasised again the need for people to make complaints online in response to the Pilot. The Chair's personal view was that the Pilot had been a complete disaster and should not be continued.

Councillor Ramage considered that when Jenny Rudkin presented the Pilot to HCC, the impact that it would have was never really envisaged and it was emphasised by her (Jenny Rudkin) that it was not a cost-cutting exercise. Councillor Ramage herself did not envisage such an impact and there were so many complaints made to Councillors. Councillor Marshall advised that blame should not be apportioned to the staff but considered as Councillors they needed to stand up and ensure that the town was brought up to a good standard again going forward. Cemeteries were an absolute disgrace and the suggestion that paths should be cut as far back as possible especially at the entrances had not even been taken into account.

A member of the public agreed regarding the poor state of the cemeteries and raised her concerns that instead of trimming around headstones, weed killer had also been used there and as a result the grass had been killed off. Many headstone plinths had been affected by the use of weedkiller and as a result many headstones now lay flattened. Councillor Marshall confirmed that issue had been highlighted, and he hoped Hawick would be in a much better place come next year.

A member of the public considered that the impasse with SBC needed to be broken to allow much more work to be carried out by volunteers in Hawick. SBC had in effect dressed up what was indeed a cost-cutting exercise. Insurance for volunteers needed to be addressed to see what they could do. He did not like to see Hawick being talked down.

Councillor Smart agreed with Councillor Ramage in that when the Pilot was presented to Councillors by SBC Officers, they did not ever think of the impact it now has had. It was however a Pilot Scheme and she also hoped people would record their concerns. One of the things she wanted to know was if SBC's intentions were to encourage more biodiversity, why on earth were they then using more weed killer. That was a completely hypocritical stance. It had been a terrible year for insects and anything to help encourage biodiversity would be good, but not the use of weed killer.

The Chair hoped that Councillors were now fully aware of HCC's views and hopefully the Hawick Paper would also take those views on board.

- 14. Date of Next Meeting** – The next meeting would be held on Monday, 14th October 2024 at 6.30pm within the Lesser Town Hall.