# Hawick Community Council



# MINUTES OF MEETING OF HAWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL held on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at 6.30pm within the Committee Room, Town Hall, Hawick

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 McAteer Councillor Ramage

Councillor Richards Councillor Smart

There were 15 members of the public in attendance, as well as PC Allan Patterson, Police Scotland.

- 1. Chair's Opening Remarks The Chair welcomed everyone to the March meeting of Hawick Community Council and advised 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 went on to advise 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 Braden George and Margaret Hogg and Councillors Cox and Marshall.
- **4.** Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> February 2025 The previously circulated Minutes of the last meeting were approved as an accurate record of the meeting Proposed for adoption by Kevin Marsh and Seconded by Jim Adams.

# 5. Matters arising -

<u>Center Parcs Meeting – 11<sup>th</sup> February 2025 at Hawick RFC</u> – The Chair reported he along with the Vice-Chair had attended that 2-hour positive meeting. Their CEO had given an update on their progress with the development thus far. Paul Hogarth, their new Community Liaison Officer had been introduced, and a number of issues were discussed, e.g. possible road layout for the A7 entrance, accommodation for construction workers and staffing of the development in the future. Local producers and local contractors' days were proposed to be held later in the coming months. The next public consultation would be in Lilliesleaf (now complete), followed by meetings

in Denholm and Hawick in May. All Community Councils present were very supportive of the Development going forward and the Chair advised that a first draft block plan had also been issued a couple of weeks previously. Center Parcs would be a great asset for the Scottish Borders and he hoped everyone agreed with that statement.

Councillor McAteer advised that whilst the development still had to go through planning and the issues which may come with that, he thought Paul Hogarth would ensure all the right communications were put in place. Councillor McAteer would on Thursday following, be looking at the Longford Center Parcs site in Dublin. It was more about meeting with the Chief Executive and the Local Authority Councillors rather than the site itself, to see exactly what the impact there was. That was the newest site which had been there now for 3 years. There had been £30-40m a year injected into that community through Center Parcs being there. The visit was a first stage one, and no doubt other visits would be made. It was all about getting that intelligence on and a feel on the ground for what Center Parcs was all about. He was looking forward to learning all about that and maximising opportunities and he suspected any budding entrepreneur having any vision might be able to maximise on those opportunities. It would be good to learn what had worked or not there. Longford was a community which had made the most of things, and from which learnings could be had.

Michael Robertson advised that with regard to the recent meeting referred to at Hawick RFC, he along with Stuart Beck had spoken with the CEO following a question raised at HCC's December meeting about the capacity of our local hospital being able to cope with added use. The CEO had advised that Center Parcs had a Medical Centre on site with nurses, and accordingly that should not be an issue.

New Hawick High School- The Chair advised that HCC had sent a letter to Lesley Munro, Director of Education & Children's Services last month, and a reply remained awaited. He wondered if Councillors could suggest to her to issue a reply. Councillor Ramage advised she had also sent a communication a few weeks back and also had not received any reply. She would be happy to chase that up for those responses. Stuart Mactaggart considered that was simply not acceptable. The Chair confirmed the letter had been sent on 23 January.

<u>Calaburn BESS</u> — As requested at last month's meeting, HCC issued a request to Green Switch Energy to attend and present its proposals at a future meeting. The response thanked HCC for their invite. Currently they were in discussions with the Grid Operator and to provide HCC with the most up-to-date and accurate information, they proposed scheduling of any presentation after those discussions were concluded. That would enable any questions or concerns to be addressed effectively.

The Chair advised that contact would be maintained to get their attendance sooner rather than later. Michael Robertson wondered if they were just by-passing HCC as he had seen emails about the amount of water needed to put out any fires happening – apparently that could take weeks. The Chair confirmed the project still required to go through Planning and a Grid connection was still to be clarified. Those would need attention before they would be able to present to HCC.

John Campbell wondered why they chose to lease the land and not purchase it. The Chair advised that was a question to be raised directly with Green Switch. There was an issue around responsibilities for clean-up at the end of the lifespan, and again the Chair advised that would need to be a question to that developer when he attended. Gable Ends at Teviot Crescent — The resident of Teviot Crescent affected, and who on behalf that outstanding work was raised at the last HCC meeting, confirmed she had written to them (Flood Protection Group) and was hopeful of a response in the near future.

6. Police Scotland Reports – February 2025 – (this item was taken immediately after Item 3, to allow the Police in attendance to divert to his other commitments). The Chair advised that the February Reports had unfortunately only been received that night and Members may therefore not have had the opportunity to read.

PC Allan Patterson introduced himself as one of the Community Officers covering the Hawick area. He spoke to the individual incidents which had occurred during the month for the benefit of those attending. That included Road Traffic incidents and fines for absence of MOT and other licences, and drug offences including cultivation of plants with a value of some £300k.

Quite a few incidents of Antisocial Behaviour were still occurring within Burnfoot, along with vandalism at the school. There had also been a few supermarket thefts around the town.

Overall, mostly incidents related to Antisocial Behaviour.

Michael Robertson advised of his previous reporting on vehicles turning right off the bridge at the Leisure Centre up towards the library. Signage promised was still not in place. PC Patterson advised that there had been quite a few vehicles reported as taking that right turn, and the Police had reported incidents to Scottish Borders Council (Roads).

Councillor McAteer advised that issue had been addressed with SBC. In the absence of signage however, it was possible drivers were unaware that they were not permitted to do so.

Stuart Beck enquired if there was any possibility of obtaining a Mobile Police person on the A7 at Buccleuch Road entry to the town, and PC Patterson advised that would need to be a request from the Community Council directly, and he would ascertain who the right person to contact was and advise accordingly. For Police to physically stand at a location with a speed gun, had proved ineffective use of resources, as drivers were signalling to others by flashing their lights as a warning, meaning few drivers were actually being caught. The mobile Policeman was proving more effective.

Councillor Ramage advised that mobile policemen figures had been successfully secured by Councillor Marshall for Bonchester and Denholm areas, so she would be

happy to take that forward. Councillor McAteer suggested HCC write to SBC's Road Safety Team and also Bear Scotland as that location was on a Trunk Road. He was sure Councillors would support that provision.

John Campbell enquired about any restrictions on speed of mobility scooters on pavements in the High Street, and also e-scooters. PC Patterson advised there was no legislation in place as far as he was aware regarding limits, but in relation to e-scooters these were illegal. For anyone under 16 years of age, any such use would be classed as antisocial behaviour and for over 16s, there would be a requirement for their having a driving licence and insurance.

Duncan Taylor raised concerns with regard to antisocial behaviour being reported on social media, with the same people appearing to be being targeted over and over again and having their windows smashed and so on. They were in turn having to pay for ring door bells, cameras at added expense. PC Patterson agreed that behaviour was not just what happened in earlier years, with kids playing knock-door-run and so on. It was the case that the same people appeared to be targeted which was completely unacceptable, with damage to windows, items being kicked over and damaged, and that type of behaviour was on a different level.

Stuart Beck praised Police for the issuing of a parking ticket on a car parked in Commercial Road at the garage there. A resident in Commercial Road advised that there was a man who was partially sighted and deaf, and he was frightened to pass that area due to all the cars parked and blocking pavement access there. That issue had happened from the time that garage had opened. Elderly people and a woman with a pram required to go onto the road to pass and that was not appropriate and dangerous.

PC Patterson agreed and advised he had ticketed quite a few times, cars illegally parked and along with Councillor Ramage he was attempting to get a permanent solution to that issue, as that was a Trunk Road. He had requested if the width of the pavement could be marked or hatched to make it clear to customers that they should not park there. He had thought previously about having cars uplifted but by the time that was organised, it was likely that the car would have been moved. He agreed that some sort of painted/marked area was required. Councillor Ramage advised that there had been double yellow lines inserted there, which had helped somewhat but she would raise this continuing issue again at the next A7 Action Group Meeting on 27th March with Bear Scotland's Tommy Deans.

PC Patterson agreed that someone was going to get hurt at some point. That was the main A7 Trunk Road and he confirmed the garage owners had been spoken to on a number of occasions, and a permanent solution was required to designate what was actually considered as the pavement. The garage was taking up too many limited parking spaces around that area as a whole.

A member of the public asked if cars were being ticketed at that garage, who would be responsible for payment. PC Patterson advised that would be the individual car owner or person parking that car illegally. If that was not paid, the registered keeper would be the one ultimately responsible.

Another member of the public asked why, with there being unrestricted parking opposite the garage, the road markings were in the centre of the road. Any oncoming vehicles coming from the Sainsbury's way, required to stop to allow oncoming vehicles on the garage side. The road should have been painted as a 3-lane to allow that parking area and still have a two-way road. Councillor Ramage agreed to raise that question as well at the next A7 Action Group meeting.

The Chair thanked PC Patterson for his attendance and input.

- 7. Hawick High School Senior Pupils Update No report.
- **8.** Grass Management Pilot Presentation by SBC on Pilot Outcomes (this item was taken immediately following Item 6).

The Chair welcomed Carol Cooke, Environmental Manager and Fiona Cameron, Operations Manager, SBC to the meeting to provide a summary of the Grass Management Pilot Evaluation Report which had been presented to a full Council Meeting earlier in the year.

On behalf of Hawick people, he said that they were extremely disappointed with the practical side of the Pilot. They were hopefully aware of those concerns.

Carol Cooke advised that the aim of the presentation was to provide a summary of the pilot outcomes and what was proposed going forward. The Report had been approved by Full Council on 30<sup>th</sup> January last and that had set out the next steps in regard to the Grass Management and how they would go forward. There had been some key actions regarding Hawick specifically and prior to going into detail on those key actions, she would provide a summary on the background for the whole Pilot Project.

So for Grass Management, why did they need to look at that? The frequency for general amenity grass cutting was a cycle of 20 working days – set in 2018. That cycle had caused a lot of operational problems and for communities. Cuts effectively were being carried out monthly and potentially that was considered too long a periodallowing grass to become too long and difficulties arising for some people getting out and about within our open spaces. In order to get away from that one-size fits all approach, they had tried to look at ways of reviewing their operations to see if there was a better way to deploy the same amount of resources to cutting grass. The approach developed was to increase the number of cuts from 20 working days to improve some areas and to save the length of grass growing in every playpark, cemetery, village green and so on and for an extra cut in those more important places. To allow the manpower to be made available for those areas then meant leaving grass in less important other areas. The Council was also under increasing pressure to meet Climate Emergency targets especially around biodiversity sites.

There were 2 aims of the Pilot and at the end of 2023, the Council gave their approval to proceed with the Pilot using the same amount of resources. That was not a cost-saving exercise – they would use the same resources in place and put extra cuts in.

They then determined 3 pilot areas – one in Eildon, one in Berwickshire and the one in Hawick which would be focused on tonight.

There were some successes in some of those other areas and there some positives from those.

In relation to Hawick, they had met with the Hawick Town Team in January last year and with other groups to see what the best trial areas would be. That consultation was to get some collaboration on sites to carry out those extra cuts and which would get less, to trial.

It had been reported in the Evaluation Report to Council, that the Hawick Pilot did not achieve its aims and objectives, and they were not shying away from that. There were a number of reasons behind that. The Depot in Hawick was broken into and a number of plant and machinery stolen - pick-ups, grass cutters, strimmers, blowers and trailers and so on. That was immensely challenging therefore for staff with no replacements. Where therefore they hoped to have extra cuts, that did not happen. Hawick got pain and no benefits

Quite a lot of changes were also happening along the Active Travel Route along the Waverley Walk and a lot of different soft landscaping also went on, along with roadworks being carried out by Transport Scotland. She was not trying to make excuses, but to paint a picture of the challenges experienced. Other sites which were under community management also experienced difficulties. So an awful lot of changes happening she said at the same time within the town.

That said, they did adjust some works, with lots of good feedback on work at Greenheads Terrace. They totally accepted that the Hawick Community had not received what the pilot set out to achieve and they would not say otherwise. The Report sets out all of those findings.

Officers were keen to take an Annual Update Report to Council to monitor performance. They were there to serve their communities and took a lot of pride in their work and wanted to do better and therefore the Pilot was a start to continue on that improvement process.

Turning now to the Hawick Pilot, and where they were now for going forward - they had met with all 6 Hawick Councillors last month and agreed an approach for this season and would take account of feedback tonight. They had listened to feedback from the Councillors and had some proposals for Hawick going forward and specifically for the sites which had caused problems over the year.

In Greenheads Terrace, there was an area at the top where the goalposts were which was being cut and the banking would be left to grow long; in Wellogate Cemetery they had a naturalised grassed area which had turned out patchy and that would be returned to the 20 working days cut but there would be some extra cuts in the main section there. In the new section at the top, they were desperate to achieve a 15 working days cycle but Wellogate with the exception of the old banking, which was dangerous, would go back to having more cuts; in Wilton Cemetery, there had been no extra cuts as proposed in the main part of that cemetery and they were proposing to get that main part cut. They would continue long grass in the old section on entry, with the pathways being cut back in those sections, as that had appeared to have worked well.

With regard to Volunteer Park, she agreed that had been a very emotive area for concerns being raised. They were working with the ATN on that and that area would be cut as they were very aware of those concerns. Where the wild flower area was, the height of the flowers appeared to be the cause of concern. They would cut that down and trim back and tidy – it had not been anticipated how high those flowers would grow. Clover would remain for the bees, with wild seed and thyme and when those were tidied, they would smell lovely and still add colour. They would go back to cutting that area and it would be tidier. The concerns were mainly regarding that area being an approach into the town but when tidied she confirmed that area would look much better. That approach had been agreed with the Councillors as well.

There had also been some feedback on the Weensland Road banking which was the responsibility of Hawick Development Trust (HDT) along with the banking at the Killinghouse Brae. Stuart Beck advised those areas were in the process of being handed back to SBC by HDT but it was noted that process had not yet been completed.

So that was their plans for the forthcoming season. They finally had new machinery coming soon. There was a need to progress on this season when they hoped to see improvements. They had experienced their worst season ever last year, with no machinery, constant complaints and the grass growing like crazy and nothing being done. The workforce were local and passionate about their town and wanted to have tidy cemeteries and no long grass — they were the ones that pointed out issues and their feedback was also listened to.

The Chair thanked Carol and Fiona for their presentation and for their admission that the Hawick Pilot had not gone well however welcomed their plans to rectify that this season.

Stuart Mactaggart advised he thought in essence the townsfolk of Hawick just wanted the town and its open spaces to look neat and tidy again. Hopefully in 2025, the town would indeed look much better. To be fair, he said the approach into Hawick from the south end now looked a whole lot better already.

Stuart Beck asked about the path at Silverbuthall leading to the A7 – that used to be a 6ft wide pathway leading to the Ambulance Station but now that pathway was well overgrown. The same was the case at Fisher Avenue leading behind the houses to the Cemetery. That path was covered by grass now too.

It was noted that the path at the Ambulance Station had been looked at, being hardcore, and it may be that would need to be scraped to clear grass overgrowth. It was suggested that Criminal Justice workforce could be deployed there.

It was agreed that the pathway referred to at Fisher Avenue would also be investigated.

With regard to road sweeping, Stuart Beck asked about the A7 from Buccleuch Road up to Parkdaill not having been swept for the last 3 months. That also applied to Weensland Road too — there had been a request to continue from the 30mph signs to Emtelle. It was noted there was a list in place of all routes covered by SBC and it was not known why those routes had not been done. There were difficulties sometimes when cars were parked. Trackers were being placed within the sweepers, which would confirm areas at any point which had been covered. That information would then tell what areas were not getting done. The big sweeper also covered Newcastleton and Denholm and the smaller sweeper which did different parts of the town. Sweepers were only as good as access allowed.

Councillor McAteer advised he had been told by Grant Turnbull that Buccleuch Road had been cleaned on 15<sup>th</sup> January but maybe not beyond the 30mph signs. Maybe once that schedule was finalised, it would be good to have sight of that.

Benches and Tables at Walled Gardens – Stuart Beck wondered if those could be looked at and refurbished and put back out in to the community.

John Campbell confirmed that the big sweeper had been noted on the Weensland Road, cleaning the roadway.

Michael Robertson asked what would happen if the flowers again grew to an unacceptable height at the entrance to the town from the south, mentioned earlier. Assurance was given that would not be the case again. That assurance was welcomed as it was important to create a good impression to people particularly at our town entrances.

Euan Welsh wondered from a communications point of view if SBC could provide a summary of plans proposed for this year, for sharing on social media. Some people were not interested in attending meetings but would be interested to learn of the changes proposed going forward.

A member of the public wondered if there had been insurance in place for stolen equipment, and if so why that had not been replaced until now. It was stated that insurance did not cover all equipment but only that above a certain value. She also

sought assurance that with plans to plant yellow rattle, that would not be cut before going to seed. It was stated that would only be cut once annually at the back end.

It was then asked about weeds around the town. As a member of Hawick in Bloom that issue came up regularly, and so who was responsible for those. It was stated that any such areas requiring weeding should be reported to SBC. They used to have contractors who carried out 2 sprayings across the whole of the Borders, and that was then reduced to larger town settlements and only 1 spray a year. So spraying is done at the start of each year but weeds do grow, and so anything afterwards needs to be reported.

Opposite the Ambulance Depot there was a large triangular area of grass containing a stand for hanging baskets. It was asked whether that being at the entrance to the town could be cut and tidied better. It was noted the topside immediately at the roadway was cut regularly however the remainder of the banking area was only cut annually.

At the Common Haugh, the flood protection put in raised planters and it was wondered who would be responsible for those. It was noted those had not as yet been transferred to SBC by Flood Protection Scheme. Councillor McAteer advised those raised beds were part of Common Good ground and arrangements had not been part of any conversation but would need to be so now.

9. Treasurer's Report – February 2025 – The Treasurer advised he had updated the report previously circulated to members. Completion of the Foundation Scotland Annual Report for 2024 expenditure had identified two costs which required to be transferred from the FS account into Hawick in Bloom and the Christmas Event & Lights Display Accounts.

The Opening Balance overall was £14,973.26 and the individual accounts were explained as follows:

<u>HCC 1 Account</u> – opened with a balance of £5,040.65. There was one expense of £20, resulting in a closing balance of £5,020.65. That balance included £1,566.76 Fallago Pathways Grant ringfenced for use on pathways.

<u>Christmas Lights & Event Account</u> – opened with a balance of £1,412.90. The invoice for maintenance of the Christmas Lights Display for the sum of £605.46 reported last month, should have been paid from the FS Account and had now been transferred back into the Christmas account, resulting in a closing balance of £2,018.36. The invoice for electricity for the Lights Display remained awaited.

Hawick in Bloom Account – opened with a balance of £4,397.14. An anonymous donation was received in the month for £2,000 and the sum of £2,404.89 was reimbursed to that account from the FS account in respect of Summer Plant costs paid in February from the HiB account, awaiting the FS Grant Funding which had not been received until May 2024. The closing balance of the HiB account now stood at £8,802.03. It had been noted at last month's meeting however that a project was planned to replace the wooden planters in the town, which were now past their best. That funding would be utilised to help pay for those replacements.

Community Benefit Fund Foundation Scotland – opened with a balance of £4,122.57 and following the 2 adjustments above-mentioned, the closing balance was £1,112.22. The Annual Report 2024 and Distribution Plan for 2025 had now been submitted by the Secretary to Foundation Scotland and had been approved. The FS Grant for 2025 was confirmed at 11,845.92 and was anticipated to be received the following week.

The overall closing balance for all accounts amounted to £16,953.26.

Members approved the Treasurer's Report.

Michael Robertson asked if there were any proposals to have hanging baskets in the triangular area opposite the Ambulance Station. Maureen Toogood, member of Hawick in Bloom, advised she would like to see that happening however there were issues with watering at that location and lack of volunteers. That could perhaps be revisited at some point.

#### 10. Public Forum and Town Issues

<u>Thomson Bridge</u>- Duncan Taylor raised his concerns again, which had been brought up at a previous meeting, regarding the state of the Thomson Bridge. That was a newer bridge and was used regularly by townsfolk and visitors alike. He wondered if Councillors were able to get a date when refurbishment would take place.

<u>Borders College</u> – Stuart Beck wondered if there was any update on what was happening with the Hawick Campus. Everything appeared quiet on that as to whether the Campus would stay in Hawick or go. Councillor McAteer advised of an onsite meeting held with the Principal and Chair of the Board some six months ago, when it was confirmed they had no immediate plans for change. They would keep Councillors up to date on any developments with that. Councillors shared concerns on that important facility and how that might tie in with the new High School. He had the impression that those representatives were very open and loyal towards working with the town. There had been no change on that.

<u>3G hire costs</u> – Euan Welsh raised again concerns from Clubs using that facility about their ability to continue to pay those high prices. It had been discussed that the prices in place compared favourably with those across Scotland and that advice had been communicated back to the Clubs. However, they were concerned that for those high hire costs, goal posts remained broken and they received little help with any set-up and changing facilities. They were not sure that the service they were receiving was value for money in terms of having full use of equipment and that set-up help. Invoices remained irregular and not being received on a monthly basis as highlighted. In the cities, there appeared to be better prospects of securing funding from monied sponsors or other grant funding opportunities, whereas that was not the case, especially in terms of the football clubs, in Hawick.

Councillor McAteer asked that a letter be prepared on that matter urgently. There were currently Consultants looking at the Borders and that type of feedback was important to be made known, from costings to support being provided. Those consultants were pretty close to completing their review, and if such a letter or report

could be done quickly, it could be forwarded to the Consultant Team and Board looking at that. Any changes to pricing just would not happen until the outcomes of the Consultants' Report.

<u>Heras Fencing at Teviot Crescent</u> – A resident at Teviot Crescent advised that the fencing between the 2 gable end houses earlier referred to, was being breached by kids as it was not properly secured. Kids were congregating there and leaving loads of rubbish which also highlighted a safety issue. She wondered who would be responsible for that. Councillor McAteer undertook to report that.

<u>Dog Fouling & Wardens</u> — Michael Robertson again raised that matter as a continuing issue. Councillor Smart advised she was preparing a Motion regarding Wardens tying that in with parking. There was a report going to Council later in the month regarding parking fees across Scottish Borders and she would be interested to see what that said. Fees were not being raised as such for parking in Hawick, as that showed a deficit of £6k in the year. That needed to be looked at not only as Councillors but along with the Common Good, to see if there was a possibility to have wardens across the piece in terms of what they do in Aberdeen shared Council, as an example, where there was a public/private partnership there with a company called National Enforcement Solutions. Aberdeenshire Council now had a squad comprising a leader and 5 officers and their remit was dog waste and fly tipping, operating 7 days a week. That type of example was something which could be looked at for Scottish Borders.

Michael Robertson stated on the point of fly-tipping, he considered that appeared to be getting worse within the town, with a particular issue with settees. Councillor Smart advised that those required to be booked in and the reason for that was the area to house those, only had limited space. Regulations required those to be separated from other general waste, due to the chemicals they contained. It was not that those items were banned, they just required to be booked in and any damage to upholstery required to be taped over.

Michael Robertson considered that information should be put in the Hawick Paper to prevent people dumping everywhere. Councillor Smart agreed and she would remind SBC's Comms Team to recirculate that advice. Also the Council would uplift items, for a small fee, for those who did not have transport available to take to the Recycling Centre. There were concerns that people were engaging "Man with a Van" without the certainty that they were necessarily then depositing those items correctly.

A member of the public thought that only 5 items could be deposited there in any month, however, that was noted to be 15 items per month.

<u>Sandbed – Albert Bridge</u> – Michael Robertson raised concerns that he had witnessed large lorries mounting the pavements on that bridge, which was a safety issue. It was considered that would be a matter for Bear Scotland, and that issue was already thought to have been raised with them via Councillor Marshall. Michael wondered if a barrier might help in that area. Two lorries could not pass at the same time, and there had been incidents of people being hit by wing mirrors. Councillor Ramage undertook to raise that issue with Tommy Deans, Bear Scotland.

<u>VE Day</u> – Stuart Beck asked if the town had any plans to celebrate that anniversary. Jim Adams advised the Ex-Service Club were holding a meeting the following week.

There had been plans for an event for the whole Scottish Borders but whether that was proceeding he did not know. Ex-Service Club would be proceeding with some kind of celebration in Hawick.

<u>Disabled Access Ramp at Wee Haugh</u> – A member of the public said it had been asked at a previous Flood Protection Update Meeting and stated that there would not be any ramp but now one had been put in place. Someone he said had been paid a lot of money to design that in retrospect and in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century that should have been a given.

Toucan Crossing at Burns Club – the same public member went on to say lights there had been working on Saturday morning but were not now and he wondered what was happening with that. Councillor Smart advised that she had emailed Bear Scotland a few times that week. Following discussion with an engineer who had been testing the lights, those needed to be signed off by Bear Scotland. That morning (Monday, 10<sup>th</sup> March) an email had been received to say those lights had now been signed off. However, on checking, they were again not working. A further email had been sent and assurance was given that an engineer would again be on site the following day. That issue was being dealt with. Councillor Ramage advised there was also an issue for disabled users in wheelchairs and mothers with prams accessing that area with limited access room.

Councillor McAteer advised there was a fundamental issue with Bear Scotland and Transport Scotland more appropriately in terms of the works going on in and around Hawick. The crossings were one example, but a prime example also related to the High School hole, which had been there for 3 weeks, and for 2 weeks there had been no works carried out there. So on top, there were issues with traffic lights for 3 weeks. That was all enabling works and there were 2 weeks of issues as well in the Howegate. The experts knew the jobs which had to be done but it was the enabling teams employed by Bear and others like Scottish Water and Scottish Gas - they get the hole dug or whatever and clear off and other works are done and it is then left to the enabling teams to return but that appears to be in their own time, causing massive disruption for everyone. There was the situation he said for 2 weeks of massive disruption in Commercial Road because some team would not return to fill a big hole - that was a disgrace. That had been shared with Bear and with Scottish Water residents he said should be visited in the Howegate to recompense for the amount of time taken to complete works there – Howegate had been closed an additional day awaiting the enabling team to return to fill a hole. That issue was a fundamental problem which needed to be sorted.

Resurfacing of the Common Haugh — it was confirmed that was to be resurfaced and it was asked that the circus should not then be allowed use of that location. Councillor Ramage advised it would not all be resurfaced, although it all needed to be.

Live Borders - Marjorie McCreadie advised that she had attended the cinema (Beanscene) and paid £8.50 entry fee, which was acceptable. She went on to refer to prices for attending Andre Rieu Musicals at £17 concession and £19 no concession (which had led to reduced numbers attending she considered). On other programmes available, costs were higher than on the national adverts where stated prices were £10 for concession and £15 for others. She asked that to be taken forward and queried.

Holiday Coaches to Hawick – Marjorie went on to say she had been approached by a holiday bus company who wanted to bring buses into Hawick. She had worked previously with that company, through the Welcome Hosts Initiative. She, in turn, had passed that enquiry on to Hawick Development Trust who it appeared had failed to respond to that Company in both January and February. The Company had then got back in touch with her – part of why they chose Hawick was for the welcome previously experienced when the Hosts were in place, and answering of questions about Hawick and what it offered. Before the demise of the Hosts it had been talked about that company bringing the buses to Hawick for 5-day periods, but without the Hosts, those buses were not going to come in, and the shops would lose out in income. Marjorie had advised the Company all she could do was raise the matter at the HCC meeting.

The Chair advised that there were HDT representatives in attendance tonight and he asked them what their knowledge was about that matter. No-one had any knowledge.

Michael Robertson considered that if the Welcome Hosts initiative with shopkeepers was not working, his preference would be to see the Welcome Hosts back on the High Street. Stuart Beck advised there was no budget availability to pay for Hosts. Marjorie advised that the trial of shopkeepers taking on responsibility was stated as being for a one-year period only but she had been advised by the Chair of HDT that there would never be another Welcome Host on Hawick High Street. She considered that between HCC, Burnfoot CC, HDT and the TT (Town Team) surely altogether something could be done. The Welcome Hosts in her opinion were absolutely needed to be on Hawick High Street.

Stuart Beck suggested that Marjorie may wish to organise such a meeting between those parties, however, it was agreed that HDT should lead on that.

Marjorie also stated there was to be a hut in the Common Haugh for the Welcome Hosts, and it broke her heart to see previous great work on the Initiative being wasted. HDT seemed to be able to find monies for the likes of the Liberal Club. The Hosts were so successful and it was a shame they were not in place now. As a member of the public she was not in a position to do anything other than continue her pleas to have them reinstated.

Stuart Beck as a Trustee of HDT stated he would take that back for consideration. The Chair advised that should be done as soon as possible and contact made with HCC and BCC and the TT for further discussion.

A HDT Trustee advised, in defence of HDT, that it had no money and that these types of initiatives were reliant on grants and without grants, there were no monies. That needed to be borne in mind.

Euan Welsh said the tourist season would shortly be upon us and Hawick had been in the news quite a bit recently. If there were a chance for people to come to Hawick, with the current interest through national press, now was the time for them to visit. Some sort of Hosts or whatever would be good to have in place.

He then referred to previous discussion on having some sort of Interactive Board and that would also be a good thing to have, to allow people to find out what to do in the town themselves. He considered that the shopkeepers acting as information providers had not worked and it was vital that something was put in place to provide suitable information. He appreciated that in terms of Welcome Hosts, those needed to be the right people in place to provide good information. An Interactive Board with tourist information, might help in some way with the present gap. He had been in discussions with people who had experience with those boards. Something should be put in place, so that the goodwill of the Hosts was not lost entirely. With Center Parcs on the horizon, it was important to have something in place to keep up momentum and interest in our town.

Gordon Muir referred to a list of items intimated at the last update to HCC from Conor Price, Flood Protection, to be attended to. One of those items listed was signage on the ATN, and it was his understanding that funding for signage would come from the £12m added to the overall budget by Sustrans. When he had asked Conor Price if that signage included the town-wide signing system on the ATN, he confirmed it did. When he, along with another representative of Hornshole Greenway met with Conor Price recently however, they had been advised there was no longer any monies. That issue had been swept under the carpet for far too long, and answers were needed on why there was no longer money from that extra £12m for town-wide signage. That was a scandal.

Councillor McAteer suggested that Hornshole Greenway make a formal complaint to John Curry, SBC to progress on that. As far as he was concerned, 3 years ago signage for the town had been agreed and was part of the project. If that was no longer the case, then that should be addressed formally with SBC to get a proper answer.

The ATN signage had been received favourably within the Investment Plan and with one aspect falling out, rendered that redundant. The signage Euan Welsh had referred to would have fitted in perfectly with that and with Center Parcs around the corner, and a deluge of visitors expected, there was no town signage system in place. The Edinburgh to London Cycle Run – The Chair advised this would happen in August this year with over 2000 cyclists coming through Hawick.

Commercial Road — A member of the public referred to a meeting in the Lesser Town Hall when Conor Price said to residents that they would be pleased to hear that Commercial Road was now open. He had lost count at the number of times Commercial Road had been closed since. One good thing was that the Road had been retarred, however 2 days later, they dug that up. He (Conor) could not be believed.

Michael Robertson referred to Euan Welsh and his wish raised earlier to have a Tourist Interactive Board, and asked if there was support for that. He thought that was a great idea and wondered whether the Scottish Tourist Board could assist in any way. Euan advised he had been in touch with the right people who had experience with

those boards, and it was all about getting funding. He was holding off further, awaiting to hear on HDT's progress on some sort of Tourism Group for the town — he would not want to go away and work on that Board in isolation. Everyone should be working together. More discussion was needed on a whole Tourism Strategy when everything could be brought together.

Councillor McAteer said he understood that. He had led on the original signage at the Haugh when under SBC's remit and considered even at this early stage SSDA or SoSE may be good to contact in terms of the Digital Strategy they were working on. It may be worthwhile just flagging with them that Interactive Board as something being looked at – especially with SSDA and he suggested Euan touch base with them.

#### 11. Reports from Sub-Groups

- (a) <u>Christmas Event</u> The Chair advised he would be taking part in a Zoom Meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> March with other local CCs and organisations who organised Lights Switch-Ons and Lights Displays throughout the Borders. The purpose was for those participating to exchange ideas and experiences and interaction with SBC. Costs were now being placed by SBC on those organisers e.g. Pat testing of lights now required to be done online instead of hand written format. That could mean a possible cost to HCC of some £7-800. That would be the case for other organisers within the Scottish Borders as well. There was only one company in the Borders who could provide that service. There was another company he knew of in Edinburgh but their costs would be well over £1k. The CCs were pulling together with a view to voicing their collective concerns that volunteers were doing their best to have Christmas Lights Displays and being hit by such costs.
- (b) <u>Hawick in Bloom</u> The Chair, in the absence of the Secretary, read out her report. Costs for Summer and Winter plants had now been received and agreed for £2,500. HiB were extremely grateful for the donation from an anonymous donor of £2k. Funds were being built nicely towards replacing existing wooden planters using a more sustainable type material. Discussions were being held with a local contractor, who had read about HiB's plans to replace planters within the local Paper. They would present to the next meeting of HiB in April. It would be a phased replacement starting hopefully this winter and onwards to replace c.48 planters. A Plant Sale fundraiser would also be held on Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> May in the Old Parish Church to bolster funds further and any donations of cake and candy would be much appreciated, along with support on the day.
- (c) <u>CCTV</u> The Vice-Chair advised an email had been received from SBC's Alex Young to advise that the planned completion date of SBC's CCTV had been extended. Councillor Ramage confirmed she had requested a map of where cameras would be placed but had not heard further on that.
- (d) Resilience Nothing to report.
- (e) Fundraising Nothing to report.
- (f) <u>Planning</u> The Chair advised there had been no major planning issues in the month
- (g) Bandstand Events Duncan Taylor advised that a few Acts had been booked and progress was being made. Hopefully good weather would prevail.

#### 12. Reports from Community Partners & Representative Groups

(a) <u>Hawick Development Trust (HDT)</u> – The Chair asked when a decision on the new Chair of HDT would be made. It was noted their next meeting would be 31<sup>st</sup> March when a decision on that would be made.

Euan Welsh wondered where he could find details of Trustees and Members of HDT. From a young person's viewpoint, he said it would be good to know what was going on with them. He had been approached by his peers and could not provide information on contacts and there appeared to be no website, and their Facebook page did not have much added regularly either.

It was noted that marketing of the Trust was being looked at and signage for the website etc. A HDT member offered Euan to speak with him following the meeting to discuss further.

(b) <u>Foundation Scotland</u> - The Chair in the absence of the Secretary provided her update on FS. It was advised that a survey had been issued via HCC website, Facebook Page and the Hawick Paper. Whilst survey response numbers (67) had been low, nevertheless 89.1% of those responding were in favour of the 3 projects proposed continuing – Hawick in Bloom planting; Summer Bandstand Events and the extension of Christmas Lights Display.

A member of the public had noted the Hawick Paper survey had not included a return address for completed surveys. The Chair advised that information had not been included unfortunately for whatever reason, but there had been returns nevertheless to the Hawick Paper.

On the back of the survey results, the Annual Report for 2024 expenditure of grant funding had been submitted to FS along with the Distribution Plan for 2025. The reports had now been approved, and funding for 2025 would be released that coming Wednesday. The grant would be £11,845 which was up slightly on £11,450 the previous year.

Duncan Taylor highlighted one particular feedback comment which suggested that the grant was a huge amount to be spent on only 3 projects. That was not the case he considered for those particular projects.

(c) Teviot & Liddesdale Area Partnership — Councillor Ramage advised that the next meeting would be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> May. The Chair advised funding for Pot A and Pot B was no longer available this financial year, and it was thought those Pots for next year may be reduced, in favour of bringing in match-funding from other sources to support local priorities. SBC would be cutting back on expenditure for communities.

There had also been discussion about the disbandment of Area Partnerships and the Chair asked Councillor Ramage of her knowledge on that. She said she had heard rumours. The Vice-Chair advised that was not rumours and that had been subject of an email to Panel Members the previous Thursday advising that a Paper

would be forwarded to Council for sign off on disbandment of Area Partnerships. That would be to the next Full Meeting of the Council.

Councillor McAteer said that the important point was that it was a Consultation Paper to consider whether there was agreement on disbandment and to focus attention and finance towards Community Councils. It was not a one-sided issue and there were options to consider within that Paper.

- (d) <u>A7 Action Group</u> Councillor Ramage advised the Group had met on 27<sup>th</sup> March and she had taken forward all of the actions previously raised by HCC to be addressed.
- (e) <u>Hawick Common Good</u> Councillor Ramage advised the next meeting would be held on Wednesday, 2nd April at 10am online.
- (f) <u>Renewable Developments</u> The Chair advised SBC Planning had objected to the Teviot Wind Farm Development and that would now move to Public Enquiry. SBC Planning had a number of Wind Farm Projects which now totalled 221 turbines. By Ward, Hawick & Denholm 51 turbines, Hawick & Hermitage 177 turbines.

Regarding Stirches Solar Farm, meetings had been attended with some of the affected families to discuss their concerns on how they saw matters going forward. Office-bearers from HCC had also attended a Teams Meeting regarding forming a Steering Committee for any possible Community Benefits should that project be agreed. That meeting had only lasted 10 minutes and it was considered they were not forthcoming with much in terms of information asked for. Another meeting had been requested.

On Pines Burns, that Community Benefit Agreement had been signed, albeit no funding scale had as yet been set. That Fund would be overseen by Foundation Scotland going forward.

The Chair had suggested to all CCs within the T&L area affected by Renewable Developments to have a joint meeting. A date would shortly be agreed for that to take place.

A member of the public asked if that would mean more blades for those wind farms coming through Hawick. The Chair advised that no Transport routes had yet been established but hopefully not all of those, if approved, would mean transport through Hawick.

Maureen Toogood wondered if there had been any progress on speaking with Duns who had managed to prevent a BESS in their area proceeding. The Chair advised that we would await any progress with planning on Stirches and Calaburn and then take that action forward. All of Renewable Developments ongoing would be considered at the joint meeting referred to earlier.

Michael Robertson asked if all the energy being generated would be sent to England. The Chair thought there would be no benefits to Hawick. He had heard it would benefit middle-England/Manchester area and the National Grid.

- Michael Robertson sought confirmation that HCC would oppose all of those projects. The Chair advised that was entirely up to HCC members to propose or object in due course.
- (g) <u>Hawick Common Riding Committee</u> Michael Robertson said he believed HCRC were spending £30k on upgrades to the Mair when £70k had already been spent. The Chair said that £30k was not the case. Michael then asked if there was any other information with regard to upgrades to the Mair. The Chair declared an interest as he was employed by the Company contracted by Friends of Hawick Mair and HCRC and a report would be issued to them as well as to all stakeholders in due course.
  - Michael then asked if the Provost would be presenting the Cornet with his badge on Election Night. The Provost said she would not be in attendance at the Smoker and her Senior Baillie would do so on her behalf. That was her personal prerogative not to attend.
- (h) <u>Hawick Reivers</u> The Chair on behalf of the Secretary advised that the Committee were progressing nicely with tasks for the Festival which was over the weekend 28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> March. There was a reminder for volunteers to help with tasks and stewarding set-up at Auld Baths on Thursday evening at 7.30pm; pick-up of gazebos etc on the Friday (time tbc); clear up of Auld Baths after Friday evening concert approx. 11pm; Saturday, set up and take down of gazebos 6.30am and 3.30pm; Saturday Opening Procession 10am till 11am approx.; Saturday Torchlight Procession 6pm to 8pm approx.; and final clear up of Auld Baths on Sunday time tbc. Anyone willing to help should get in touch with the Reivers Committee.

## **13. Correspondence** – None

#### 14. A.O.C.B. -

<u>Outstanding Actions</u> - Stuart Beck asked that any matters raised for action should be listed under Matters on following meetings until complete, as he considered matters were 'sliding' and being missed. The Chair advised that could be addressed with the Secretary.

<u>Disabled Parking at the Heart of Hawick</u> – A member of the public raised that sometimes there were hardly any people in Heart of Hawick but as a wheelchair user and Blue Badge Holder he could hardly ever find a parking space. Who would he make a complaint to as he had witnessed hardly any cars carrying a Blue Badge.

Councillor McAteer confirmed that it was a car park for Live Borders buildings but also SBC were responsible for ticketing of offenders. So there was a twin-route for making complaints he thought. That area was one of the more targeted parking areas checked for ticketing. It was not right that disabled people struggled for parking spaces there.

## HCC Re-elections 2025

Euan Welsh asked whether it would be possible to encourage more young people onto HCC with elections being in 2025. Could youngsters be encouraged on especially

with the likes of Center Parcs coming to Hawick. Being a Council Member was good for youngsters to have on their CV. All members attending tonight were white and male for instance but that was not reflective of diversity within Hawick. It would be good to do a presentation to High School pupils. The Chair asked if Duncan Taylor could ask if that were possible. It was stated that SBC did have a Diversity person and perhaps she should be invited to speak to HCC members on how best to achieve diversification of membership going forward.

**15.** Date of Next Meeting – It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2025 at 6.30pm within the Lesser Town Hall, Hawick.