
Hawick Community Council



MINUTES OF MEETING OF HAWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

held on Monday 8th November 2021 at 6.30pm at Hawick Lesser Town Hall

Present:	Cameron Knox (Chair)	Marion Short (Vice-Chair)
	Margaret Hogg (Secretary)	John Campbell
	Braden George	Wilson George
	Keith Irving	Duncan Taylor
	Euan Welsh	French Wight
	John Wilkinson	
Attending:	Councillor McAteer	Councillor Marshall
	Councillor Ramage	Councillor Richards
	Yvonne Gilfillan, McLaughlin & Harvey	Billy Fletcher, Burnfoot Community Council

There were five members of the public also in attendance, along with Graham Ford, reporting for the Hawick Paper.

- 1. Chair's Opening Remarks** – The Chair welcomed everyone to the November HCC Meeting. He stated the town had been put to the test the previous week with a deluge of rain and the prospect of flooding for some residents. There had thankfully been no serious flooding reported in domestic premises however Mansfield Park and the Royal Albert Clubrooms had not been so fortunate. The part-built flood defences had held off much of the rain, and he was sure those residents living around the banks of the Teviot looked forward to completion of the flood protection scheme, when they could sleep easier again at nights. The town's Flood Group volunteers, as well as employees of McLaughlin & Harvey were thanked for all their efforts during the crisis.

The Chair stated it was great to learn that Wilton Lodge Park had retained its Green Flag status. The town was lucky to have a park of such stature, and it was certainly a jewel in the crown to be enjoyed by townsfolk and visitors alike.

He intimated that unfortunately, the guest speaker for the evening Conor Price, CPE Consultancy, Development Lead for the Flood Protection Scheme, was unable to attend due to illness.

It was noted that the Hawick Paper and HCC would be recording the meeting for reporting and minuting purposes.

- 2. Declarations of Interest** – The Chair advised that if any members had a conflict of interest in any agenda items, they should please make it known at the start of the discussion.

3. **Apologies for Absence** – Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of HCC members Jim Adams and Alan Wear, as well as Councillors Paterson and Turnbull and the pupils from Hawick High School.
4. **Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of 11th October 2021** – The previously circulated Minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting – Proposed by Wilson George and Seconded by John Campbell.

5. **Matters arising –**

Warning signs of Deer at the Nipknowes – The Chair confirmed that SBC had been contacted and we could look forward to seeing signage at this location soon.

Former Liberal Club Building – Broken window and tree – The Chair confirmed that the tree had now been removed and the broken window had been repaired.

6. **Police Scotland Report** – It was noted that there was again no police representation at the meeting, believed to be due to Cop26 event in Glasgow. It was hoped that next month would see police attendance again.

John Campbell asked if the reduced crime detection rates had been due to Cop26. Councillor McAteer advised that Councillors had been told that the Response Team would remain during Cop26, and the CAT team would be deployed, and that no difference should be noted. He questioned that that had turned out to be the case, given these reduced detection rates.

The recording of a 109.1% detection rate was queried, and Councillor McAteer advised that this was a legacy of previous crime reported and figures rolling on but agreed it did not make much sense to report this way. He advised that it should be expected that if recorded crime numbers reduced, solvency rates should go up and so this was a concern deserving of an explanation.

Councillor McAteer took the opportunity to raise the matter of CCTV in Hawick, given its current state and the big issue particularly around fear of crime and safety of females in these dark nights. Given that SBC's position in not approving new CCTV, he wondered if the Community Council would be willing to drive such a community project. He would be willing to help with this, to look at an audit of CCTV within the town and what could be done as a community to establish our own system. He advised that Newcastleton and Selkirk were engaged in securing their own CCTV systems and we could learn from them. There were also funding opportunities available now and CCTV costs were now much lower than previously. Being the biggest town in the Borders, it was time to have a CCTV system in place. Councillor Marshall agreed and confirmed his willingness to also be involved.

Members agreed to take this project forward and to form a sub-group for this purpose.

7. **High School Senior Team Report** – No report presented.
8. **Treasurer's Report** – In the absence of the Treasurer, the Chair reported an Opening Balance of £22,275.44 with expenditure for core paths maintenance, 2 planters for Hawick in Bloom and additional compost etc for these planters. The Closing Balance was £21,668.26. Any queries on the accounts could be directed to the Treasurer.

Members approved the Treasurer's Report.

9. **Guest Speaker** – The Chairman introduced Yvonne Gilfillan, Community Liaison Officer for McLaughlin & Harvey, Flood Protection Group. He advised that while she would be unable to provide an actual Progress Report, she would be willing to address any questions.

French Wight advised he had previously spoken with Yvonne regarding dumped bags beyond the barriers at the James Thomson bridge, and which he considered caused problems down stream for fish and wildlife. He was disappointed to note that nothing appeared to have been done.

Yvonne responded stating that a lot of clearing works had been done and that some staff had been involved in the recent Big River Clean-up through the previous Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. She would take this matter up with her team to be addressed.

French also asked about other debris at the Albert Bridge and again Yvonne undertook to have this removed as well.

It was noted that piling works had been completed, and French asked if that work would now stop cellars being flooded in areas such as Buccleuch Street. Yvonne confirmed that piling would be effective for some of the cellars however the only way to stop cellars from being flooded would be to have a complete protective wall around the whole of Hawick as there would still be water coming off hills etc. Much of the flooding would be addressed when drainage and the pumping station were in force and planned walls completed. She could not confirm that even then there would not be any water into cellars.

Duncan Taylor asked about the Information Board at the Wee Haugh, and Yvonne confirmed that this was a bugbear of hers, and due to its unacceptable condition, this board needed to be replaced and information inserted as soon as. She would continue to try to progress this.

Councillor Marshall asked if there was a timescale for the opening of the Victoria Bridge and Yvonne advised this would be open before Christmas.

He then requested an update on the bridge at the High School and a timescale for when the wall, which had not yet started, would be finished in Duke Street.

Yvonne advised that the Lawson Bridge at the High School had been subject to further inspection. She confirmed the construction itself was safe and secure however the access from St George's Lane side had been subject to some erosion because of the recent flooding. Some additional works were required to allow this to be opened again safely and she awaited further information on works required from SBC. As yet, there was no timescale for these works.

In relation to Duke Street, works had also been held back due to recent flood levels, however weather permitting, the wall should be completed by March 2022.

John Campbell enquired if space had been incorporated for SBC to dump snow which used to be done at the Common Haugh but latterly into the river at Duke Street. Yvonne advised that this question had not arisen previously, and she would take this back to her company for response.

The Chair thanked Yvonne for her attendance.

10. Public Forum & Town Issues

- (a) Frederick Douglass Commemoration - update - The Chair advised that Brian Tait, President of the Hawick Archaeological Society was in attendance at the meeting and that the Society was supportive of this project.

The Chair reported that the project was moving along at pace and that he along with Mr Tait had recently given a short presentation to Primary 7 pupils from Drumlanrig School, on Frederick Douglass at the actual site of the Green Kirk at Myreslawgreen, where 175 years previously Frederick Douglass had given a 2-hour anti-slavery speech to a multitude of townsfolk.

The Chair circulated a mock-up of a proposed brass plaque featuring a wreath head of Mr Douglass, which was proposed be erected at the Myreslawgreen site and had received permission of Scottish Borders Housing Association.

It was proposed to make a second bronze casting and the finished piece would be called the Frederick Douglass Prize. On the general theme of racism, this prize would be competed for annually by Primary 7 classes in Hawick, along with Denholm and Newcastleton. It was also proposed that the winning class would win a day trip to the International Museum of Slavery in Liverpool.

Finally, it was proposed that Education Packs about Frederick Douglass would be prepared and distributed to each of the Primary Schools to take his story and message forward.

The Hawick Archaeological Society along with HCC would be preparing a joint application to Hawick Common Good Fund for financial support towards this project. Members agreed this to be a worthwhile project and supported the application to the Common Good Fund.

- (b) Laing Terrace – The Vice-Chair reported that she, along with Councillor Marshall, were to meet with SBC officials the following week on site at the former church yard at this location, due to its appalling condition. It was noted that this site had required clearing some years back, and it was hard to believe that residents in this area had not complained about the mess.

Councillor Marshall confirmed that he had asked an interested party to also attend the meeting, and who might want to take this project on themselves to their benefit.

Councillor Ramage advised that she had requested at a recent Council Meeting for a list of derelict sites across the Scottish Borders, and it would be interesting to see if this site was included.

- (c) Christmas Tree at Dovemount Roundabout – The Vice-Chair reported she had been given the go-ahead to place an order for a Christmas Tree at this location, following confirmation from Bear Scotland that they would carry out necessary electrical works. Whilst works by Bear Scotland to the roundabout itself would not be entirely completed, there would be further tidying works done. The Chair undertook to purchase new lights required for the tree.

Councillor Marshall thanked the Vice-Chair for her work on this, stating everyone would benefit and it would look great as a gateway into Hawick.

- (d) Wilton Cemetery Remembrance Garden - Billy Fletcher, Chair of Burnfoot Community Council, circulated plans for their Remembrance Garden at Wilton Cemetery. It was noted that plans had now passed planning regulations, and a quote for works sought from Clamp & Pringle, Builders. It was hoped works would commence late March/beginning of April 2022. The Chair congratulated BCC on their progress with this project.
- (e) Vandalism to Defibrillator in Commercial Road – John Campbell raised this matter and Councillor Marshall agreed this was mindless vandalism. He advised he was aware of cars being targeted in this same area with one car having their windscreen smashed. The Police were continuing with their enquiries and this, along with issues of graffiti in this area and in the lane leading to Princes Street, was another good reason for having effective CCTV in the town.
- (f) Trevelyan Terrace – Overgrown Trees – Braden George advised that SBHA nor the Council were assuming responsibility for overgrown trees in this area. Councillor McAteer advised that SBHA trees were well defined, and he was not aware of any issues within their responsibility. He was dealing with SBC on trees within their responsibility nearer the Loan end but that the Council's policy was unless trees were dangerous, hazardous or diseased, it was unlikely they would do anything.

Braden to liaise with Councillor McAteer to clarify exact location of offending trees and complainant, to allow progress.

11. Reports from sub-committees

- (a) A7 Action Group – It was understood a meeting would be held on 22nd November 2021, however this was yet to be confirmed.
- (b) Christmas Market - The Vice-Chair reported the following:
 - Emails and invoices had been issued to all stallholders
 - Three stallholders from the Reserve List had now been included following cancellations
 - Baptist Church had agreed for use of their premises for entertainers
 - Morrisons had kindly approved use of some shopping trolleys to aid transporting of wares to stalls, given road restrictions
 - Skip at Deans & Simpsons - following contact, promise had been made that this would be removed
 - Collection of selection boxes for distribution by Santa to children – these collections were going well at the two designated locations – Wetherspoons and Johnstons of Elgin
 - A plea was made to Yvonne Gilfillan, McLaughlin & Harvey, for any staff provision to assist with erection of gazebos at 6.30am on the day (4th December).

All in all, it was noted that matters were progressing well.

On the matter of entertainment, the Chair reported agreement had been received for 9 acts to participate and that SBC had been notified regarding the switching on of the tree lights. He also thanked the Community Councillors who had helped with erecting lights at Trinity Gardens the previous day. The remainder of lights would be erected on Sunday, 21st November starting at 9am, when hopefully other volunteers would be in attendance. He also advised that the snowmen and Christmas trees had been partially repaired and repainted and another morning or afternoon's work would see these completed.

The Vice-Chair wished to have minuted her grateful thanks to Catford Investment for agreeing to provide electricity to the stage for entertainment purposes.

- (c) Hawick Common Good – Nothing further to report.
- (d) Hawick in Bloom – The Secretary reported that winter planting had been completed to all planters and at the War Memorial in time for Remembrance Day. Two new planters were now in place at Ladbrokes and the Evergreen Hall.

Allars Crescent had had a make-over with some perennial planting carried out, albeit more planting would be carried out at this location. A blue and yellow theme of plants had been adopted which was considered appropriate given that location was used on Common Riding Friday each year. It was reported that an Acer Tree planted the previous year had been stolen and it had been a recurring theme that odd plants from planters were being stolen which was annoying for volunteers and costly.

The next meeting of the Bloom Group was scheduled for February 2022.

- (e) Wind Farms – Philip Kerr reported that the Developer was looking for re-engagement with T&L Partners on the terms of community benefits from Pines Burns project. There had been an extension from 25 years to a 30-year project and with rocketing electricity charges and risks associated with construction prices, a rethink was necessary on levels of community benefits.

Regarding Teviot Wind Farm, Philip reported on a constructive meeting with the CEO of Muirhall Energy. It was noted that Shared Ownership would be kept open for two years after construction, which meant 2031. The issue raised previously regarding broadband would be resolved by then and it would not be until 2029 before any real community benefits would start to materialise from this project.

12. Updates from Community Partners

- (a) Foundation Scotland - Nothing further to report currently.
- (b) Future Hawick – In the absence of Brian Bouglas, Future Hawick, the Chair advised that members had received an email with the Future Hawick newsletter update. There were no questions raised on this update.
- (c) T&L Partnership – The Chair confirmed that applications for funding commenced on 1st October and would close the following Friday (12th November). Applications would be cascaded out to Pot A Assessment Panel, who had one week to adjudicate. A special meeting would be held on 6th December for Pot B submissions.

The next meeting of T&L Partnership would be held on 16th November 2021 at 6pm via Teams.

13. Planning Issues – There were no planning issues for consideration.

14. Correspondence –

- (a) Campaign for Scottish Borders National Park – HCC support – It was noted that Hawick would be on the outside edge of the earmarked area for a Scottish Borders National Park, but nevertheless this could attract further tourism and benefits to Hawick. Members agreed to support this initiative and to respond accordingly.
- (b) SoSE – Engagement Tour – The Chair referred to email information circulated to members regarding this tour. The tour would be in Hawick on 15th November 6.45pm to 8pm for those interested in attending. Registration would be necessary.

15. A.O.C.B –

- (a) Wilson George advised that he had been made aware through Scottish Borders Community Councils Network of plans by SBC to hold a Place Planning-related training programme for Community Councils. Councillor McAteer commented this would be beneficial to members in the short-term.
- (b) Councillor McAteer congratulated HCC's Vice-Chair Marion Short on achieving the role of Chair of the Campaign for Borders Rail. This was a great personal achievement and endorsement for the Community Council itself.
- (c) Scottish Water Top-up Taps – Councillor McAteer asked if HCC would consider approaching Scottish Water for one of their Top-up taps. There were already such taps in Galashiels and Peebles, and he considered Hawick would benefit from one preferably located in the Civic Space or Common Haugh. To date, there had been over a million water bottles saved across Scotland due to these top-up taps.

The Vice-Chair undertook to make enquiries and to progress this matter.

16. Date of Next Meeting – It was agreed that the next meeting of HCC would be held on Monday, 13th December 2021 at 6.30pm within the Lesser Town Hall.