
Hawick Community Council



MINUTES OF MEETING OF HAWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

held on Monday 13th December 2021 at 6.30pm at Hawick Lesser Town Hall

Present:	Cameron Knox (Chair) Jim Adams (Treasurer) John Campbell Wilson George John Wilkinson	Marion Short (Vice-Chair) Margaret Hogg (Secretary) Braden George Duncan Taylor
Attending:	Councillor McAteer Councillor Ramage Conor Price (CPE Consultancy) Jake Szoneberg (HHS) John Hogg (Hornshole Greenway)	Councillor Marshall Councillor Turnbull Yvonne Gilfillan, McLaughlin & Harvey Gordon Muir (Hornshole Greenway)

There were seven 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 December HCC Meeting. He stated once again the town had been put to the test by Mother Nature. Storm Arwen had hit Hawick when roofs were blown off buildings, power lines knocked down and many trees uprooted at Wilton Lodge Park and other areas of the town.

The community spirit of townsfolk rose to the task, with neighbours helping each other as well as strangers in their hour of need and showed Hawick at its resilient best.

In relation to the recent fire at the old Glenmac offices in Cross Wynd, he agreed with Elected Members that something needed to be done in relation to derelict buildings within the town and to stop people, especially children, from entering these premises for their own safety. Hopefully there would be no further such incidents which could result in more dire consequences.

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 Alan Wear, Euan Welsh and French Wight.

4. **Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of 8th November 2021** – The previously circulated Minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting – Proposed by Wilson George and Seconded by Braden George.
5. **Matters arising - Frederick Douglass Commemoration** – The Chair reported that a joint funding application would be forwarded to the Common Good Fund for their next meeting, and this would hopefully receive their approval. Funding would then allow the project to get up and running for specific dates planned for in 2022.
6. **Police Scotland Report** – It was noted that there was again no police representation at the meeting. Members expressed disappointment that the percentages of resolved cases continued to drop and no real answers appeared to be forthcoming on why this was the case.

Councillor McAteer advised that Sergeant Paul Begley's 2-year post as Hawick's Community Police Officer was now at an end and notification of his replacement was awaited. It was agreed that Sergeant Begley had served the town well in his term of office.

7. **High School Senior Team Report** – Jake Szoneberg reported that the pupils had run a few charity events including a bake sale, raffle, and a virtual coffee morning, raising funds for Avril's Trust. To raise Christmas spirits within the school, they had also decorated doors and held a Christmas Jumper Day. House Captains had also organised tournaments, such as dominoes and a snowman drive.

There had been an Inspection week, and many Senior Pupils had represented the school well. Assessments had also been held in case February exams were cancelled.

The Head Team were grateful to be asked to lay wreaths on Remembrance Sunday, and he stated that pupils would not forget that experience.

He congratulated the Community Council on the success of their recent Christmas Market and was glad that some pupils were able to help with set up.

Jake advised that dances had been put back to nearer the summer albeit pupils were still doing dance as part of their academic time. Pupil Council Members from across all years had been elected, to ensure a wide range of different opinions. Finally, Prefect rotas had also been set up, giving more senior pupils the chance to volunteer within the school.

The Chair thanked Jake for his report.

8. **Treasurer's Report** – the Treasurer reported an opening balance of £22,275.45.

Expenditure within the HCC1 account was in respect of a wreath for Armistice Day, leaving a balance of £5,209.79. It was noted however that £3,000 of that balance was already ring-fenced for events.

Most of the expenditure in the month was within the Christmas Lights/Events Account with total expenditure of £524.34. With income of £520 from 26 of the 37 stallholder fees, the closing balance in that account was £2,098.89. Other stallholder fees would be in next month's accounts.

Hawick in Bloom account appeared healthy at £5,329.16 however funding from the Common Good for the War Memorial finished after the Summer and would need re-applying for. With additional planters, planting costs were ever-increasing.

Foundation Scotland Fund stood at £8,631.07 but again this money was largely ring-fenced for Williestruther and Wilton Lodge Park Band Stand projects.

The Treasurer advised that street collections at the Xmas Market were also well down on previously, and whilst on the face of it, the Closing Balance of £21,630.92 appeared healthy enough, there was no leeway, and he had concerns that the need to repair and/or purchase additional Christmas Lights in the High Street damaged in recent storms together with planned events and projects, meant that caution had to be exercised. He considered additional funding resources would need to be explored. Finally, he expressed dismay at comments on social media regarding some lights being out along the High Street. Everything possible had been done to sort what was possible but money would be required to upgrade lighting for next year.

Members approved the Treasurer's Report and agreed with comments made.

- 9. Guest Speaker – Conor Price, CPE Consultancy** – The Chair welcomed Conor Price and Yvonne Gilfillan, McLaughlin & Harvey to the meeting and requested Conor to provide an update on the Hawick Flood Protection Scheme.

Conor advised that works were now 19 months into a 40-month construction programme. Whilst there was a degree of weariness within the team as well as within the town, the Christmas break from works would allow everyone to recharge batteries and focus on their return to the next 21 months ahead.

He advised that the process remained on schedule as well as on budget and an end date for completion of September 2023 was still anticipated.

Regarding defences, they had targeted to construct 6.2km of new flood protection – flood walls and banking throughout the town - and 19 months in, being nearly half the timescale, they were almost halfway to achieving that construction target. Duke Street area was ongoing and once complete would bring that figure nearer to the 3km mark.

The fundamental task in hand was to remove the flood risk to the town, and whilst not yet fully protected, they were substantially on that journey. Back in October, Conor stated there had been a massive scare where areas of the town were requested to be evacuated. He commended the work of McLaughlin & Harvey and Scottish Borders Council for their efforts along with the Hawick Flood Group. Due to their efforts, flooding was kept to a minimum. New defences in place along with the demountable defences had greatly helped. The more defences completed the better, and he referred to the new defences emerging in Mansfield Road and Duke Street since October, adding to that protection.

In relation to completion of defences, Conor advised that it had been agreed due to several unfinished works at various locations, since the Autumn they would not open up any new areas of work, in preference to completion of works. Completion was essential, to enable testing of finished sections to guarantee protection. Whilst he was unable to state exact dates when sections would be completed, their focus firmly remained on completing sections of work, which he would report on in his next update.

In relation to traffic management, which was another major pressure within the town, particularly on Fridays, it was recognised the flood scheme had a role to play in this, and they were trying to minimise their impact and reduce the pressure wherever they could. Commercial Road had re-opened, albeit this would require to be closed again in 2022 to allow further completion of works.

Conor's team, along with McLaughlin & Harvey would shortly be carrying out a "lessons learned" exercise from the past 19 months to determine the best way of constructing the next stages of the project. This exercise would take account of the October flood scare and their report on plans for 2022 would then be shared publicly.

Councillor Marshall on behalf of the Hawick Flood Group and townsfolk of Hawick congratulated Conor and his team and all others involved, in their achievements to date, particularly when the weather had been very challenging. Their responses to flood warnings had been fantastic, and he thanked them for a job very well done. The audience clapped in agreement.

The Chair agreed, stating the general comments within the town were very positive with special mention to the aesthetics of the walls. Many people had considered these might replicate the Berlin Wall, but this had not turned out to be the case and they were very pleased with how the walls looked.

Marjorie McCreadie advised that many visitors to the town had also made favourable comments about the quality of the walls. She then asked what was happening with the Common Haugh Car Park. Conor advised the project team were organising the next series of engagements on the Active Travel Network and a meeting would be held in January. There would be a display of what had been achieved with the Active Travel Network and its links to the flood protection scheme. Options and proposals for the additional £3.7m money granted would also be discussed, for example the proposed new footbridge linking Weensland and Hamilton Road, albeit this project had yet to be publicly consulted on. There would also be an update then on the Common Haugh.

The route of the Active Travel Network to the rear of Oliver Park was also raised and the dangerous trees on the banking there. Conor advised that this route had been confirmed back in 2020 and he understood the challenge of that banking. There would be a major retaining wall built to ensure no danger to properties there. Plans had all been through planning. A new concept to widen an area at Oliver Park would be consulted on in January and if accepted, would be added to plans already in place for this area.

The Treasurer enquired about the car parking at Teviot Crescent where part of the wall having been erected had resulted, he considered, in the road being tight. Conor advised that plans being presented would overcome that problem. He encouraged the checking of these plans when presented.

Conor then moved onto the Hawick Hornshole Greenway (HHG). This was a newly formed charity organisation in the town which had emerged from the previous organisation Return to Hornshole. That group were involved in enhancements to Hornshole and to now developing a Greenway from Wilton Lodge Park to Hornshole.

Following a meeting he had held in 2016 at which the audience were anxious to understand if a Berlin Wall was coming to Hawick, it was decided to try to reimagine how his

organisation should go about things. A new design statement was derived which committed the final parts of the Flood Protection Scheme to work in partnership with the town to deliver projects which the townsfolk would see as unique, and which would encourage tourism. Hornshole Greenway sat on the footprint of the Flood Protection Scheme. It should be recognised that the Greenway was likely to take c.15 years to deliver, and this designed infrastructure once delivered would belong to Hawick, long after the Scheme itself was completed.

HHG had 4 things they wished to deliver - the greenway itself; an enhanced signage strategy bringing many organisations together to create standardised signage throughout the town which his team endorsed; an environmental education package for delivery within schools – this was already ongoing with favourable comments forthcoming; and finally, the Border Queen, a signature piece of art. His team would do all they could to support this project during their time in the town, but it was for townsfolk themselves to take forward.

Gordon Muir, HHG added the intention was to install 30 interpretation boards telling the story of Hawick along the greenway. These boards would be linked to the HHG website to allow locals and visitors alike to expand on that story of Hawick. The greenway would also be a place for the eco-education of every primary-aged child in Hawick, and HHG had already piloted this with outdoor learning sessions which were not achievable in the classroom. Education modules had been developed working along with Scottish Wildlife Trust to learn children about the ecology of the area as well as on diversity and their role to help save the planet. The aim was to have children educated to become the messengers to in turn educate their wider families.

New standardised signage throughout the town was proposed to direct people to what's on in the town, car parking, with other maps and signs suggesting where to go from there, e.g., Wilton Lodge Park and along the greenway itself following the many interpretation boards.

These initiatives alone would unlikely maximise visitor potential, and the purpose of the Border Queen was to bring impulse visitors who currently viewed the Kelpies in Falkirk or the Angel of the North in Gateshead to view Hawick's example of public art.

Various public consultations on HHG's proposals were underway and everyone's feedback was encouraged.

10. Public Forum & Town Issues

- (a) Queen's Platinum Jubilee – the Chair advised that there would be an extended bank holiday from 2nd to 5th June 2022 for the Queen being the first British Monarch to celebrate 70 years of service to the country, having acceded to the throne in 1952. It was being suggested that communities hold some form of celebrations that weekend to mark the occasion. The Chair advised this could replicate the Jubilee Beacon event at the Millers Knowes with a party along the same lines as that proposed, and which had had to be cancelled, in respect of the VE Day celebrations to be held at Wilton Lodge Park. The Chair was open to ideas from members. There was funding being made available through Scottish Borders Council, details of which would follow.
- (b) Wilson George raised the matter of poverty within the Burnfoot area, discussed at the last HCC meeting, and in particular highlighted an article in the Hawick Paper the previous Friday about a Burnfoot Community Councillor's struggle living in poverty.

Councillor Ramage reported that at a recent Anti-Poverty Strategy Group meeting she and Councillor Marshall had attended, it had been discussed how elected members could help people suffering from fuel and other poverty within their communities.

This matter then raised itself at a Burnfoot Community Council meeting where Councillor Ramage stated the lady had explained her personal struggle. This had inspired BCC members into considering how people suffering poverty could firstly be identified and then supported. There were already Food Share projects in Burnfoot, and the Salvation Army also offered their support, but it was about having everyone working together and not in silos. Whilst it was early days, Councillors and BCC members were now working together with some progress being made towards addressing this issue within the Burnfoot community.

11. Reports from sub-committees

- (a) A7 Action Group – Wilson George advised that a meeting had been held on 22nd November. It was noted that resurfacing works would be carried out in February from the High School to the Sandbed roundabout and that the Dovemount roundabout would be resurfaced later in the year.

Marjorie McCreadie advised that both the Chairs of this Group had now resigned. This had come about following a letter she had been tasked as Secretary of the Group to write back in July to both Chairs, due to lack of any communication from them. The letter included a proposal to reconstitute the Group to allow selection of a Chair or Chairs from within the Group. A zoom meeting had followed in August, with no minute of that meeting being forthcoming from Oliver Mundell as promised.

The day following the HCC's October meeting, two representatives from HCC and herself had met with one of the Chairs, Rachel Hamilton who had contacted the other Chair, Oliver Mundell to organise a meeting. This was the meeting held on 22nd November and which meeting had been called as an AGM. Marjorie reported that the whole meeting had been a fiasco, Oliver Mundell had been an hour late, no Agenda had been issued so no one knew what was to be discussed and no office-bearers were appointed which was standard practice at an AGM. Some communities nor SBC had been invited to attend and so were unaware of events. Oliver Mundell was again to issue Minutes, but nothing had been received. The matter to be decided was whether it was considered the A7 Action Group was needed now after 31 years. It was left that this be discussed at individual Community Councils with all responses to be collated by Marjorie and reported back to the Chairs by 20 February 2022.

The Chair of HCC confirmed that HCC would report to Marjorie by the deadline date.

- (b) Christmas Market - The Chair reported that this had been a huge success, despite poor weather conditions. There had been a great team effort from HCC members and volunteers alike.

The Vice-Chair agreed that whilst it had been a long 12-hour day she had been greatly encouraged by the support from the community attending. She thanked the Hawick Paper for their article and photographic coverage, and particular thanks went to Hawick Youth Rugby along with employees of McLaughlin & Harvey and pupils from Hawick High School for their sterling help in erecting and dismantling of gazebos. Thanks also went to Colin Wilson, Keith Johnson, Steven Wight, Eddie Brogan, John Hogg, Gordon Short for their efforts, Scott Mitchell for the stage sounding, the Salvation Army for use of

their hall, Morrisons for a loan of trolleys, Baptist Church for use of their hall for the entertainers and Catfords Investments for use of their electricity for the stage.

Santa again had been the main man for kids, of whom there were many despite the inclement weather, queuing for a selection box from Santa. It had been a joy to see their faces. Surplus selection boxes had been distributed amongst care homes, the community hospital, and Burnfoot Community Council.

Regarding the erection of the Christmas lights along the High Street, she also expressed thanks to volunteers Lindsay Nichol, Ian Nichol, Greg McLeod, Richard Walker, John Hogg and Judith Murray without whom there would be no lights display. She agreed with comments made by the Treasurer earlier regarding 'keyboard warriors' on social media complaining about some of the lights display affected by storm damage. They did not appear to appreciate the work undertaken by HCC members and the many volunteers in ensuring the lights display.

The Chair agreed stating that many townspeople still thought this work was carried out by Scottish Borders Council. Comments made were grossly unfair. An assessment of lights would be required when these were taken down to determine future requirements.

- (c) Hawick Common Good – John Campbell reported that the sluice and the campervan parking would now be located at the top end of the Common Haugh. The Flood Group were looking to store their barriers around the Haugh, for ease of use in the event of any future flooding.

It was noted that the next meeting of Hawick Common Good would be held virtually the Wednesday following.

- (d) Hawick in Bloom – nothing further to report at present. The next meeting of the group would be held in February 2022.
- (e) Wind Farms – nil report.

12. Updates from Community Partners

- (a) Foundation Scotland - Nothing further to report currently.
- (b) Future Hawick – No report. Brian Bouglas, Chair, Future Hawick, to issue updates to future HCC monthly meetings.
- (c) Williestruther - the Vice-Chair reported she had received communication regarding Fallago funding, seeking a final report with photographs of works completed at Williestruther, which she would provide. A considerable amount of new boardwalk had been able to be erected with this funding. She thanked McLaughlin & Harvey who had kindly donated 20 tons of gravel, making some of the remaining muddy areas safer for walking.
- (d) T&L Partnership – The Chair advised that Pot A fund amounting to £7,169 was assessed by a panel comprising 2 local public members along with himself and the Vice-Chair. Two applications had been received and assessed. One application was from the Saxhorn Band for practice instruments and the other from Hawick Youth Rugby for a stretcher for use at the Volunteer Park. This stretcher would be available for use by other organisations too. Both these applications were recommended for approval.

A surplus of funds remained for Pot A applications and organisations were encouraged to apply.

The Vice-Chair reported on the 5 applications received for Pot B funding amounting to c.£27,000. Applications were received from Survivors Unite (£5,000) for supporting adults subject to childhood sexual abuse, Wilton Lodge Tennis Club (£4,000) for summer tennis and taster sessions, Escape Youth Services (£4,090) for upgrade to games hall, Reivers (£5,000) for assistance with 2022 Festival and Hawick RFC (£4,200) for tots 2–4-year-olds rugby, coaching equipment, kit and assistance with provision of a mascot.

Some conditions were applied to provision of funding. These conditions were for SBC to be requested to reconsider festival grant application to them for the Reivers Festival, which Councillor McAteer undertook to again request, albeit he did not hold out much hope. The other was for Hawick RFC to arrange any further fundraising needed to cover finalised costs for a mascot.

Applications were assessed and approved by a Panel comprising representatives of the 8 Community Councils within the Teviotdale & Liddesdale area, along with 2 members of the public.

Duncan Taylor commented that remaining funds from Pot B did not leave much for the next phase. It had seemed to him organisations were happier to apply for the bigger amount available from Pot B which they could do more with, rather than apply to Pot A where amounts were more limited and perhaps applicants were put off by.

The Vice-Chair agreed and considered the facility for the communities to make these decisions rather than SBC was a good way forward. It had been a worthwhile exercise.

Councillor McAteer congratulated HCC on their role in carrying out this exercise. With the Community Empowerment Act, a percentage of the Council's budget required to be handed over to communities to distribute, and this exercise had now fulfilled that criterion. Local communities were now benefitting which was what the Act was designed to achieve.

13. Proposed Meeting Dates

The list of proposed meeting dates previously circulated to HCC members was approved for 2022.

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

15. Correspondence – There was no correspondence for discussion.

16. A.O.C.B –

- (a) Wilson George advised he had heard that Selkirk and Eyemouth Community Councils were up and running with Place-related training through the Scottish Borders Community Council Network. The Chair undertook to have this verified.
- (b) John Campbell raised the ongoing issue with trees. He circulated some large pinecones which he had gathered from beneath a tree on council land in Havelock Bank. A resident there had complained that these pinecones regularly hit her 3-year-old grandchild when playing and she was concerned there were also tree roots under her house. His request was for the tree to be cut down.

Councillor Marshall advised that since the storms he had also raised the issue of trees requiring attention at Wellfield Bank and Havelock Bank with SBC. The tree of most

concern to him lay within the swing park at Wellfield, which was leaning to one side and had branches hanging down from it. He expressed his concern as to why such a tree was situated within a swing park in the first instance.

Councillor McAteer agreed that tree issues were an ongoing concern for all Councillors, and he suggested that HCC write to SBC expressing concerns using this tree as an example, as it would take some nasty accident before realisation of the need for action.

Councillor Ramage agreed that Councillors received many complaints about trees which were on a par with the number of complaints about potholes. Tree maintenance was a real issue.

It was agreed a letter be issued to SBC.

- (c) Brian Bouglas asked in terms of sustainability if the Community Council would consider the idea of planting a Christmas tree at Trinity Gardens rather than one being cut down and supplied annually. The Chair advised that he thought the ground belonged to SBC however the Treasurer advised that some of the Trinity Gardens ground belonged to Trinity Church. It was agreed to have the matter of ownership investigated.
- (d) John Campbell raised the matter of painting of bollards. Councillor McAteer confirmed that some had been painted, some in two different shades of green and others blue and gold. Public consultation would take place in the New Year for the public to decide what colour was preferred. Contrary to social media comments, he stated that funding for painting would come from SBC's Small Schemes Budget as painting was due to be carried out in any event.

Gordon Muir advised that the Hornshole Greenway had included a small survey on preference for painting of bollards, and he would share the outcomes with elected members.

- (e) John Campbell advised that when the Christmas lights were erected, he had noted the poor condition of some wall plaques situated around the town. He enquired as to the possibility of having these cleaned. The Chair considered these belonged to various Common Riding Clubs and would take this matter forward and report back to a future meeting.

17. Date of Next Meeting – It was agreed that the next meeting of HCC would be held on **Monday, 10th January 2022 at 6.30pm.**

The Chair wished everyone on behalf of HCC, a Merry Christmas, and a Prosperous New Year. He hoped to see everyone at the next meeting.