

Heriot Community Council

Minutes of meeting, 2nd October 2024

Present: Sue Sharpe (Chair), Frank Connelly, Helen Brinkworth (minutes), nine members of the public

Apologies: John Williams, Gavin Whittaker, James Fletcher, Cllr. Neil McKinnon.

1. Minutes of July 17th accepted
2. AOB (Brought forward to first item)

Request by Nicola Williams for support to replace the bench at the junction of B709 and Shoestanes Road with a memorial bench for Mark Williams for 31st October.

SS. Bench at B709/Shoestanes junction installed by community council with windfarm funds and community manpower several years ago.

Nicola Williams (NW). Fully understanding of community effort involved and no disrespect to wanting to move it. Ideal spot to have a memorial bench with plaque in memory of Mark Williams with position overlooking land owned by Williams family. NW offered to take on the physical work (create plinth at new location and install bench), admin and cost to relocate the bench to new position and provide safe storage in the meantime. The aim is to have the memorial bench installed by 31st of October for the anniversary date. NW to take on all work for the installation of the new memorial bench.

Discussions were had about alternative locations, and it was agreed that HCC will seek public input. Type of bench will be a typical wooden bench, which is a change to the current one made of long-lasting materials. Agreement to preserve wildflowers in the area, with clearance maintained for easy access to the bench. Potential option for family members to add planters with flowers was discussed.

SS. To email all HCC members to update and gain wider agreement. Three present HCC members at the meeting stated agreement to go ahead.

3. Police crime report not received for last month. No reports of criminal activity from the public.
4. Planning applications.

Two dwellinghouses at Nettlingflat (24/01124/FUL)

Proposal to construct two residential properties and road access. HCC has received feedback comments about the application from five neighbours plus there was additional input from people attending the meeting.

Summary of issues raised: -

Additional traffic

- A report from SBC has previously said that the road up to Nettlingflat is already used at capacity.

- Residents feel that visiting cars to holiday let properties do not always understand road safety on a single-track road with passing places. Visitors do not always exercise enough care when navigating the very steep sharp bends up the hill.
- High level of concerned about adding more vehicle traffic to the road.
- The Breahill residential property is being used for short term holiday lets with room to sleep 12. Combined with the two holiday let properties next to it – this can result in a very large number of cars using the Nettlingflat road and attempting to find parking space by neighbouring properties.
- It is an adopted road and SBC property, so it is SBC responsibility to maintain it suitable for whatever use that happens.

Water supply

- Planning application states that the properties will be connected to a public water supply network which has been acknowledged as a mistake on the application.
- The nearest main supply is along the A7 and it is not viable to connect this to Nettlingflat properties due to distance and the supply capacity.
- Report of information from Ian Hamilton that he will install a new borehole. Further, that a new borehole has been made as required for the previous development but does not have a pump and is not in use.
- The existing private supply of water is shared with neighbouring properties and the additional burden could put this supply at risk.
- Holiday lets have a higher demand for water in general and in particular due to hot tubs which should be refilled between lets.

Holiday short term lets

- The two dwelling houses may in the future be used as short-term holiday lets after a request for a change of use. This would overwhelm the existing character of the area.
- A permanent restriction that they can only be residential properties is desirable.

Building work

- Waste is currently disposed of by burning in a skip. This may increase in frequency.

HCC response

SS. The current community council policy is to encourage organic growth of housing stock whenever possible.

HB. HCC should respond to the application asking that houses must not be short-term holidays lets as a permanent condition. A borehole must be made that is of suitable size for this development and the pre-existing properties. Also, that it must be connected and functioning for existing and new properties.

SS. HCC should include in our response residential concern about road traffic levels. Especially regarding holiday let traffic which do not know how to safely use the road and passing places.

SS. HCC in agreement to submit constructive objection to SBC planning.

5. Wind Farms

Wull Muir 2

- Currently in the hands of the Reporter, who is now examining the evidence, reports, etc. HCC has allied itself with the recently submitted report from an independent Landscape Architect.

Greystone Knowe. Public Local Inquiry November 2024 DPEA Ref: WIN-140-9

- The pre-meeting was cancelled by the applicant, requesting a deferral until the results of a review of the MOD objection could be determined. The MOD has objected on the grounds that the turbine vibrations would interfere with the Eskdalemuir array, but the array's capacity is currently under review. The Reporter has now agreed to look at the other evidence and review the MOD objection when more is known. A new pre-meeting is scheduled for November.

Updates on other current applications in Heriot area:

Torfichen Wind Farm, Longcroft Wind Farm, Ditcher Law, Scawd Law etc.

- Scawd Law developers are hoping to set up a community liaison group with local community councils.

6. Shoestanes Woodland

Public request for the location plan and letters to be made available electronically. To be published on website by HB. (This has now been added to heriot.info)

Report from Gavin Whittaker:

James Fletcher and I met with Isaac, who represents the Shoestanes woodland managers. They have agreed in principle to allow the community to purchase approximately 1/3 of the field closest to Heriot Station, including the swamp, with a view to:

1. Providing an area where we can relocate the playpark and maybe some associated community assets.
2. Allow a community woodland to be developed
3. Allow rejuvenation of the swamp so that it can become both a wildlife haven and an educational area, with boardwalks, etc.

James and I would like permission to apply for funding on behalf of the CC to fund a landscape architect to look at the possibilities for what could be done with the area to benefit the community and wildlife.

If this proves viable, we'd want to use this to justify applying for funds to purchase the area, probably with a mix of grants from other wildlife grant funders. The idea would then be to set up a CIC (Community Interest Company) to manage the area – there may be other ways to work this, but the first step is to get a workable project together with a landscape architect.

Public Discussion:

Interest in the possibilities for the community from owning some of the land.

Road access to Shoestanes Farm is still owned by the forestry track (it was withdrawn from the recent farm property sale with only 2 days' notice). It will need to be improved for forestry logging and planting. Planting may not require the road to be improved. Possibly only in 30 or 40 years will they need to improve it to good road access for extracting logs. After use it will only be reinstated to previous quality. It is unknown about road maintenance in between this usage.

Local understanding is that keeping a certain amount of land as open/farmed fields for two years is a condition of the planning permission. This may complicate or prevent the sale of land to the local community.

HCC. Agreement to apply for funding for landscape architect on condition we have in writing from landowner about the land being available for sale.

7. Community Funds

Microgrant applications

- £635 for bonfire night equipment. Granted, but question to be answered of where it will be stored. We need to keep an inventory of items as a condition of the grant so that everything it will be available for other community groups to use.
- £160 for toddler rollercoaster to Heriot Baby and Toddler Group. Granted.

FC. We have received annual £650 grant from SBC.

FC. The wind farm panel in November will be talking about what to do with funds and explaining possibility to save some funds for future use, similar to the setup of an endowment fund.

Suggestions for use of money:

Can wind farm money subsidise electric bills for local people or pay the standing charge for electricity bills? Can we arrange to fund ongoing maintenance at the hall?

AOB

- a) Philippa Gilhooley has emailed HCC requesting feedback on the 40mph road zones in Heriot.

Public comment: Introducing quiet roads. Purpose of lower road speed limits is trying to change the driver mindset to understand that this is a "quiet" road where the driver should take more care due to greater likelihood of encountering pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.

HCC will ask for opinions from community via email and Facebook.

- b) SS. New council members are needed for HCC. Three of the current members would like to stand down. Helen White (HW) expressed interest in a position on HCC. New members can be co-opted into the council.

Suggestions.

- Hold a social event
 - Look for a young person to join the council invite people to a social meeting.
 - Use current social events to make people more involved and aware of what we do
 - Create special interest groups to do certain tasks
- c) Bonfire night. Saturday, the 9th of November. FC to ask about insurance and look for quotes.
- d) Christmas tree. Of attending members, yes, this is wanted. HW to assist with acquiring a tree. There may be a local tree that can be cut down and used. Suggestion that we should plant a tree to decorate in the future every year.

Meeting end at 20:45. Next meeting on the 20th of November