

**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**  
**31 MARCH 2016**  
**APPENDIX I**

**Question from Councillor McAteer**

The Executive Member for Community Safety

In light of recent police reports identifying individuals being charged with being concerned in the supply of class 1 dangerous drugs, namely heroin, in the Hawick, area can Councillor Moffat detail what formal drugs awareness programmes or arrangements are in place to educate the young and vulnerable in the Scottish Borders. Does the current trend require us to revisit existing associated education and enforcements arrangements and what reassurance can we provide local residents including parents and children that the police and authorities are in control of this worrying development?

Reply from Councillor Moffat

I welcome the recent activity in Hawick and other Borders towns by Police Scotland as part of their local priority to tackle substance misuse which features in the majority of current Police Multi Member Ward plans.

I understand Local Police officers supported by Specialist Police resources will continue to act proactively to target those supplying controlled drugs on an intelligence led basis.

Scottish Borders Council continues to provide specific drugs education in schools as part on the wider Wellbeing agenda.

This is supported, by Police Scotland via the six Locality Integration Officers in Scottish Borders and the Divisional Police Drugs and Alcohol Officer.

The Locality Integration Officers support schools through any emerging issues as well as delivering inputs at larger scale multi agency events such as Crucial Crew (P7 age) and Safe T (S5 age).

The Divisional Police Drugs and Alcohol Officer directly supports the Scottish Borders Alcohol and Drugs Partnership and the Scottish Borders Council's Education Service to review the ongoing educational policy on drugs matters and is also able to respond to any emerging issues.

In addition, a multi-agency Drugs Trends Monitoring Group is held regularly within the Borders General Hospital where the latest trends and issues are discussed and appropriate actions identified including any educational requirements.

**Question from Councillor Marshall**

The Executive Member for Roads and Infrastructure

Can the Executive Member for roads and infrastructure provide the following information concerning the responsible roads network across the Scottish Borders:

- a) How many claims have been made against the council with regard to damage caused to vehicles as a result of pot-holes or similar road defects
- b) How many applicants were successful
- c) How long on average is it taking for each claim to be processed end to end
- d) How many rejected claims are subjected to appeal and ultimately successful
- e) What are the current costs to the council and what are the projected costs by the end of the financial year 2015/2016.
- f) How do the costs for 2015/16 compare to 2014/15

Reply from Councillor Cook on behalf of Councillor Edgar

In response to the question I have examined figures for financial year 2014/15 and 2015/15 and have used your numbering in my reply: -

- a) 136 claims were made in 2014/15 and to date 82 have been made in 2015/16
- b) 25 applicants were successful in 2014/15 and to date 6 applicants have been successful in 2015/16
- c) This information is not held by the Council and we have asked our insurers, Zurich, if they can provide any data on this matter.
- d) This information is not held by the Council and we have asked our insurers, Zurich, if they can provide any data on this matter.
- e) Costs in 2014/15 were £5,656 and projected costs for 2015/16 are £2,100.39
- f) See per previous point.

The figures above exclude the recent court settlement associated with the bridge at Broughton.

#### Supplementary

Councillor Marshall asked if Councillor Cook agreed that given the horrendous condition of the Borders roads that we could not keep giving reassurances to the public while just doing “sticking plaster” repairs. Councillor Cook stated that this was a misguided statement and did not accept this position and that the Council made every effort and had provided additional money within the budget. It was important that the public provide details of any potholes so that repairs could be made.

#### **Question from Councillor Logan**

##### The Executive Member for Roads and Infrastructure

Do you intend to bring a report to this Council, outlining the potential, or otherwise, of a Scottish Borders Decriminalised Parking Enforcement Scheme?

##### Reply from Councillor Edgar

Yes, it was the intention to bring a report to Council.

#### Supplementary

Councillor Logan asked that given the problems with parking the report be brought forward as soon as possible. Councillor Edgar advised that following the withdrawal of traffic wardens the decision on how to move forward with traffic management in our towns is one of the most significant ones that the Council has had to face. Following an earlier report on the subject to Council an officer / member group was set up to investigate the various options open to the Council. That group has concluded its investigations and made its recommendations. Those recommendations were discussed by Corporate Management Team and officers were asked to undertake some further work before reporting back again to APWG. This happened on 8 March when there was a full and frank discussion of the options open to the Council. Following the report earlier this month further high level discussions are to take place prior to a report coming before Council.

#### **Question from Councillor Scott**

##### The Executive Member for Planning and Environment

What are the Council's proposals for replanting the 150+ trees, which were subject to a TPO and which have been felled at Tweedbank?

##### Reply from Councillor Smith

I want to thank Cllr. Scott for this question. I recognise that comment on the removal of the trees has appeared in several of the local newspapers. However answers to this and other questions relating to the Tapestry can be found on the Council's website, in the Public Access documents related to Planning. The reference is 15/00806/FUL.

Here Cllr. Scott can find a Tree Felling Plan dated 17th July 2015, an Arboricultural Assessment dated 16th September, and a paper on Amended Landscape Softworks dated 29th September. I am happy to provide Cllr. Scott with copies of these. The Arboricultural Assessment gives the Consultant's views on 314 individual and identified trees, with his recommendation for removal or retention of each.

May I read para. 2.3.

"Little post-planting management of the trees appears to have been undertaken, with the result that many of the younger trees have become very narrow and drawn due to mutual competition for light. Much of the planted under storey has been suppressed by the larger trees with little light reaching the woodland floor during the growing season."

It is this situation which is now being addressed.

There are no proposals to replant the 150+ trees which were subject to a TPO and which have been felled. The planning authority is entitled to give permission for the felling of trees covered by a TPO. This proposal was considered and approved by the Planning and Building Standards Committee when the planning application was approved. That decision had regard to the poor condition and lack of effective management of the wooded area. Two conditions were imposed which are relevant to this question:

Condition 1 requires a landscape plan, including management scheme for the (remaining) woodland, to be submitted before development commences. Condition 9 requires that only the trees identified for removal should be removed. It also requires that the development itself then needs to abide by a tree protection plan.

Neither of these conditions has to be agreed at this stage as development has not commenced. Tree removal does not constitute a commencement of development. The project team are aware of the conditions and proposals will be submitted for agreement before development starts.

#### **Question from Councillor Fullarton**

##### The Executive Member for Roads and Infrastructure

Could you give an update on the Bellwin Fund Applications and the capital required to complete the repairs. A list of projected repairs would be helpful and the likely subsidy from Scottish Government.

##### Reply from Councillor Edgar

The storms have caused widespread damage to the Councils infrastructure and officers have determined that then scale of repairs cannot be undertaken within the 2 month post event period. . Scottish Government has agreed an extension to the timescales to the 30 June 2016 for general road and infrastructure repairs and an extension to the 30 September 2016 for works in rivers and embankments.

To date some 300+ individually identified works have now been designed and prioritised with the exception of some bridge and river works, current progress is that around 40% of the programme has been completed. A copy of the programme will be forwarded to Councillor Fullarton by my Asset Manager.

The works are being undertaken on a cost plus basis, there is no overall estimate of the cost to undertake all repairs, but a figure in in excess of £3m is our current best estimate. This Council will be responsible for funding the first £508k of these works from existing reserves.

##### Supplementary

Councillor Fullarton commented on the level of expenditure by Northumbria Council and suggested that we should match the level. Councillor Edgar advised that we followed the Bellwin Formula for our claim and could only apply for flood damage to roads.

#### **Question from Councillor Cockburn**

##### To the Executive Member for HR & Corporate Improvement

How does the current level of staff absenteeism compare to the level of staff absenteeism of 5 and 10 years ago?

##### Reply from Councillor Cook

There has been a targeted approach to improving attendance levels over the last 5 years and this has seen a gradual improvement in absence levels.

The % of days lost to sickness are as follows-

2006/07 5.6%

2008/09 5.23%

2009/10 4.96%

2010/11 4.81%

2011/12 4.32%

2012/13 4.87%

2013/14 4.57%

2014/15 4.52%

2015/16 still to be calculated at year end although indication is 4.10%