



**Blacket Association Newsletter**

**November 2023**

## **AGM WEDNESDAY 15 NOVEMBER**

The 54th Annual General Meeting of the Blacket Association will be held on Wednesday 15 November 2023 in the Old Bell, Duncan Street, with the AGM starting at 7:00pm. A free drink for those attending will be available from the downstairs bar from 6:30pm.

Copies of the minutes of last year's AGM and the reports from the various committee members are given below. Please bring this newsletter with you, although there will also be a few printed copies available at the AGM.

All members, prospective members, friends and residents in the Blacket area are welcome – new members particularly so. All are invited to raise any points of interest that they would like to discuss.

### **Agenda**

- Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting (9 November 2022);
- Election of committee members and office bearers;
- Chair's report;
- Shrubbery Working Party report;
- Neighbourhood Watch report;
- Treasurer's report;
- Website and Database report;
- Planning report;
- GPCC report;
- Sustainability Group report
- Any other competent business.

## **OFFICE BEARERS AND COMMITTEE 2022–23**

CHAIR/COMMUNICATIONS	Susan Hezlet	30 Mayfield Terrace
VICE CHAIR/NEWSLETTER	Ian Chisholm	11 Dryden Place
TREASURER	Anne Henderson	4 Mayfield Terrace
MINUTES/SOCIAL SECRETARY	Hazel Clark	1 Mayfield Terrace
NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH	Stanley Bird	4 Dryden Place
PLANNING	Richard Scothorne	7 Alfred Place
WEBSITE/CONTACTS	Colin Blair	Arthur Lodge
NEW RESIDENTS/CARDS	Arlene Doherty	56 Blacket Place
SUTAINABILITY GROUP	Anne Starsmeare	13A Blacket Place

# THE BLACKET ASSOCIATION

(the “Association”)

## MINUTES OF THE 53rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION

Held on 12th November 2022 at The Old Bell, Duncan Street at 7:05pm

**Present:** Ian Chisholm – CHAIRMAN AND NEWSLETTER EDITOR (‘IC’)  
Susan Hezlet – COMMUNICATIONS (‘SH’)  
Anne Starsmeare – SUSTAINABILITY REPRESENTATIVE (‘AS’)  
Stanley Bird – NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH (‘SB’)  
Arlene Doherty – NEW RESIDENTS (‘AD’)  
Anne Henderson – TREASURER (‘AH’)  
Hazel Clark – MINUTES AND SOCIAL CONVENER (‘HC’)  
Bertram & Elspeth Zank – 8 Dryden Place  
Jan Conway & MaryAnn Julian – 14 Mayfield Terrace  
David Starsmeare – 13A Blacket Place  
Hugh Mackay – 10 Mayfield Terrace  
Chris Jeffrey – 21 Salisbury Road  
Alan Paterson – 62/1 Blacket Place  
Caroline Sibbald – 50 Blacket Place  
Anne Sturrock – 34/1 Mayfield Terrace  
Patricia McDonald – 7 Blacket Place  
Colin Blair – Arthur Lodge

**Apologies:** Mhoraig Blair – WEBSITE CO-ORDINATOR (‘MB’)  
Richard Scothorne – PLANNING (‘RS’)  
Hazel & Paul Fletcher  
David Steven  
David & Janice Jenkins  
Aiden & Fiona Courtney  
David & Muriel Graham  
Joanna Chisholm  
Bill & Janice Gemmell

### 1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

IC, as Chair, welcomed everyone to the AGM. Copies of the Annual Report had previously been circulated by email and in printed form as the November Newsletter. IC advised that apologies had been received from those listed above.

### 2. MINUTES

The 2021 AGM minutes, as published and circulated in the AGM papers, were agreed as an accurate record.

### **3. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

The list of open actions was discussed. IC advised that the location of EV charging points was something the Council had under review, but that it was not currently high on their list of priorities. There had been a number of planning applications made to knock walls down to make way for charging points. These were currently being refused but that might change in the future. In the meantime, residents could use the charging points at Pollock Halls nearby.

The hustings events had happened but IC was unsure whether the carol singing had taken place. The table of actions at the end of these minutes has been updated accordingly.

### **4. ELECTION of COMMITTEE**

IC reminded the meeting that he had done two, three-year terms as Chair of the Committee, which was the maximum permitted under the Association's constitution. IC was delighted to propose that Susan Hezlet be nominated as the new Chair. Her nomination was seconded by HC and AS, so SH was therefore duly elected as the new Chair of the Association with effect from the end of the meeting. SH thanked IC for his hard work over the last six years and expressed her pleasure that he would be staying on the Committee as Vice-Chair.

Anne Henderson, Stan Bird and Richard Scothorne were all renominated and re-elected for another three-year term on the Committee. IC advised that Mhoraig Blair was handing her role as Website co-ordinator over to her husband Colin Blair. IC nominated Colin and HC seconded his appointment.

IC highlighted the fact that the Constitution states that the Association can have office bearers plus no more than seven other members, which meant that there was room for more people to join if they were interested.

### **5. CHAIR'S REPORT**

The Chair delivered his Report. The Covid-19 pandemic had meant there had been a lack of social events for years but that the Platinum Jubilee party, in June in Alfred Place, had been a big success. Discussions ensued as to whether there should be a social event for the King's coronation in May 2023 and a garden party too in June.

### **6. WEBSITE AND DATABASE REPORT**

Mhoraig Blair was not present but her report was noted. It was agreed that the website had improved greatly under Mhoraig and that was sure to continue under Colin's tenure.

### **7. TREASURER'S REPORT**

There were no questions on Anne Henderson's report. The most notable point made was that the Jubilee party had been a huge success and had even made a profit.

### **8. NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH REPORT**

Stan Bird highlighted the main points of his report, which were that online scams remained the biggest issue. The Committee would continue to send out emails warning residents of the latest scams. It was noted that car key theft was becoming an issue in the Trinity area of the city.

## 9. SHRUBBERIES WORKING PARTY REPORT

The Chair thanked Hugh Mackay for the work done during the year by him and his team of volunteers for their planting, pruning, weeding and clearing of leaves. Hugh advised that there would be a team effort to collect fallen leaves on 26 November, if able-bodied residents were available to help. The Council would supply brushes, bags and shovels and would collect the full bags afterwards. Discussions ensued about the valuable work Hugh and his team do but that new blood was definitely required going forward. Anyone wanting to join the SWP should please get in touch with Hugh at 10 Mayfield Terrace. Bertrand mentioned that the university residence often blew their leaves out onto Blacket Avenue. SB advised that the university residence had a representative on the GPCC so he could mention the issue to him at the next meeting.

***Action22.01 – SB to ask university residence rep at GPCC meeting to stop blowing leaves onto Blacket Avenue.***

## 10. PLANNING REPORT

RS's planning report was discussed and it was noted that a wall at the Thrums Hotel was to be taken down as it was unsafe. The original stone would be re-used when it was rebuilt.

Caroline Sibbald told the meeting that her house backs on to the Minto Hotel and that they had had huge problems with them. The development started with the owners originally saying that a wall was unsafe and had to come down, and them promising to rebuild it. They didn't do so and ended up getting planning permission to build on a larger area as a result. IC advised that RS was an expert in this area and was wise to this ploy. AD mentioned that, as the planners are so overwhelmed with the amount of work and lack of employees, the whole system was not functioning well at all. AH gave the example of the garage at the west end of Mayfield Terrace which has become a B&B, showing that the planning department isn't properly adhering to the conservation area rules.

IC noted that there had been 12 trees taken down at Pollock Halls, and he would check whether the proper permissions had been sought beforehand.

***Action22.02 – IC to check whether permissions to take down 12 trees at Pollock Halls were given before their removal.***

Elsbeth Zank told the Committee that builders at 16 Blacket Place were currently 'ripping it to pieces'. IC said he would check with RS to see whether the proper planning application for changes had been submitted.

***Action22.03 – RS to find out whether planning permission for changes to 16 Blacket Place has been granted.***

Bertrand Zank questioned whether there was any point in the Blackets continuing to be classified as a Conservation Area. The rest of the meeting agreed that, although the planning department often makes disappointing decisions, it is still worth our while doing what we can to protect the area.

## 11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Discussions moved to public transport, with residents lamenting the Council's refusal to renew electronic bus signs showing the times of forthcoming buses. IC advised that the Council will not be renewing broken ones as most people now have apps on their smart phones doing the same job. The number of bus stops was also being reduced to try to speed up the buses.

SH advised that there was no lighting on Blacket Avenue outside the nursery. IC informed the meeting that the Blacket route for cycling would be happening soon, in two phases. Blacket Place and Blacket Avenue would probably become one-way in the next few months.

The meeting closed at 8:00pm.

**SUMMARY OF OPEN ACTIONS:**

<b>REF</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESP</b>	<b>STATUS</b>
<b>Action21.01</b>	<i>The Committee to come up with policy regarding provision of electric car charging points in the Blacket Area for submission to the Council.</i>	<b>Committee</b>	<b><i>Council has this under review – ongoing</i></b>
<b>Action21.02</b>	<i>The Chair to arrange for another husting for residents to question local councillors in advance of the forthcoming local elections.</i>	<b>IC</b>	<b><i>Done – closed</i></b>
<b>Action21.03</b>	<i>The Chair to ask Becky Colgreave to organise carol singing in Alfred Place in December.</i>	<b>IC</b>	<b><i>Done – closed</i></b>
<b>Action22.01</b>	<b><i>SB to ask university residence rep at GPCC meeting to stop blowing leaves onto Blacket Avenue.</i></b>	<b>SB</b>	
<b>Action22.02</b>	<b><i>IC to check whether permissions to take down 12 trees at Pollock Halls were given before their removal.</i></b>	<b>IC</b>	
<b>Action22.03</b>	<b><i>RS to find out whether planning permission for changes to 16 Blacket Place has been granted.</i></b>	<b>RS</b>	

[End of Minutes for 2022]

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## **ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND OFFICE BEARERS**

After last year's numerous changes and renominations of committee members, the only member requiring renomination this year is Hazel Clark, our minute and social secretary. Hazel is happy to be renominated.

## **CHAIR'S REPORT**

This being my first year as Chair of the Blacket Committee, I am delighted that Ian Chisholm has agreed to continue his diplomatic work as Chair of the Grange and Prestonfield Community Council (GPCC). We have an excellent and effective committee, so there is very little for me to do apart from looking after the email correspondence. In March, Mayfield Terrace had a complete refurbishment of the road and several residents commented that they would like to see the setts returned. The tarmac is more practical and peaceful but I would like to see the beautiful gutter stones back and then the water might drain away. In June, we held our Open Gardens Day which was a great success and many thanks are due to the Ross Stewarts for hosting the refreshments in their beautiful garden.

## **SHRUBBERY WORKING PARTY REPORT**

After the reforming of the Blacket Association in the 1960s, the Blacket shrubbery was in theory the responsibility of the Council to maintain. In practice, it was neglected and became a dumping ground. Eventually, the Association negotiated an arrangement with the Council whereby Blacket residents formed a Shrubbery Working Party and restored the shrubbery to its former glory. Since then, residents have provided much support in maintenance such as pruning and fallen leaves collection, while the Council has maintained the trees and given other help such as shovels and bags for collecting leaves.

**For action:** Three core shrubbery working party members are now in their 70s and wish to retire. New younger Blacket residents are urgently needed to maintain the shrubbery work. Volunteers please.

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH REPORT**

The Association has received no reports of physical break-ins or robberies within the area. The issue of most concern and a subject on which we receive the greatest number of alerts from Police Scotland is online crime – financial, credit card scams and tricking people into divulging banks account details and passwords. It cannot be repeated often enough – your bank will never ask you to divulge your passwords. If you receive a call supposedly from your bank – hang up and call them back on a number that appears on e.g. a bank statement. Given that the nights are darker and longer now, it would be worthwhile checking locks on garages, sheds and gates and securing bikes and garden equipment.

# TREASURER'S REPORT

## The Blacket Association

### Summary of Accounts for the year ended 31 August 2023

	2023 £	2022 £
Opening Bank Account as at 1 September 2022	3340.96	2922.97
<i>Income</i>		
Subscriptions	670.00	770.00
Card sales	20.00	-
Jubilee Party income	-	1541.20
Open Gardens income	422.00	-
	<u>1112.00</u>	<u>2311.20</u>
<i>Expenditure</i>		
Printing newsletter/AGM	75.00	36.00
Landscaping and plants	73.40	445.00
Domain name	-	97.20
Jubilee Party expenses	-	1275.01
Open Garden expenses	330.65	-
Cockburn Association	40.00	40.00
	<u>519.05</u>	<u>1893.21</u>
Increase in funds	592.95	417.99
Closing Bank account as at 31 August 2023	3933.91 =====	3340.96 =====

#### Treasurer's Report

The Open Gardens was a great success and we were delighted that more residents than expected attended resulting in a small surplus from the event.

Subscription income in 2022 included a £100 donation from a long-standing resident.

Anne S Henderson, 1 November 2023

## WEBSITE AND DATABASE REPORT

The Blacket Association website is periodically updated for the latest minutes/committee meetings/local events etc. including photos from last year's Platinum Jubilee Street Party and this summer's Open Gardens event. We have also added Hugh Mackay's historical work on the five streets in the 20th century, including some images. We continue to welcome any suggestions for local matters that you would like to see included on the website.

## **PLANNING REPORT**

Two developments are currently underway.

1. The approved house by the multi-award-winning Richard Murphy Architects on the garden ground at 82 Dalkeith Road was (predictably) followed by an application – by another architect – for two semi-detached houses on the same site, which we objected to along with a number of neighbours. These were approved, despite the substantial discrepancy in density and design quality, and the shape of these is now becoming clear.
2. The long-standing saga of the extension to the Thrums Hotel is drawing to a close. Following initial refusals and a change of architect, the approved freestanding building is now being fitted out, so the worst period of congestion and on road parking is coming to an end. We worked with the owner to try to ensure that disruption and risk were minimised during the construction phase. While we made clear our preference for no development in rear gardens, this building is relatively modest and uses high-quality materials and finishing.

Meanwhile, an application to create a drive in at the Category A-listed 23 Blacket Place was refused. This attracted 15 objections (including the Blacket Association) and 4 support comments. Just for clarity – current policy means that it is extremely unlikely that any drive-ins will be approved in the Conservation Area.

A similar application at the B-listed 10 Blacket Place was refused, and the Council insisted on full reinstatement of the boundary wall when one was created without permission in Spence Street. However, the application raises the wider issue of accessibility to car charging points. This is of growing significance for the area, and the current local provision (on the Edinburgh University Pollock Halls site) is clearly inadequate. We will be working with the Council to find appropriate ways forward for the area.

## **GPCC REPORT**

Ian Chisholm continues to represent the Blacket Association on the Grange and Prestonfield Community Council (GPCC) and is the Chair of the GPCC. This link enables us to keep-up-to-date with Council activities. Minutes of GPCC meetings are available on its website: [grangeprestonfieldcc.org.uk](http://grangeprestonfieldcc.org.uk).

## **SUSTAINABILITY GROUP REPORT**

This was formed in December 2021 as a response to COP26, as a way to highlight the issues raised by climate change. Since then, the Group has produced three sustainability papers, which have been included in the Association's biannual newsletter. Topics relating to green issues have included: support for shopping locally; performance of supermarkets; low-carbon central heating; secondary glazing; and electric cars.

The Sustainability Group is keen to work with all Blacket residents, in order to drive awareness of climate change, its effect and what can be done to reach the targets of COP26.

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**