

Blacket Association: Annual Report – 2007 / 2008

At the time of preparing these notes in early Autumn it is difficult to think beyond what counts as Summer as having been pretty miserable, and memories of better times are difficult to recall. A similar sort of description applied last year also which is not encouraging. The lack of a need for watering the shrubberies is perhaps another, more positive, way of looking at it. As regards the Association's business and personnel, it was with great regret that we saw the departure of John Cruikshank as Chairman, but were glad to welcome Ray Footman as his successor. The opportunity was taken to make a modest presentation to John to mark his many years of service to the Association.

Open Gardens

Looking at the facts it could be argued that we have had two Open Gardens evenings this year, because of delaying the 2007 event until early September. On that occasion, in the Gerrard's garden, we enjoyed perfect weather, and an excellent attendance. Roll forward to this year's event and on 20th June we had the largest turnout for many years, with the party in the Chairman's garden on a very pleasant but fairly cool evening for the time of year. The way the weather is going we just have to be thankful that we manage to choose dry days.

Traffic and Parking

There is again not very much to report this year, although currently (in the 'new year') there is additional through-traffic within Blacket because motorists are avoiding delays caused by the temporary closure to southbound traffic of Dalkeith Road south of the East Mayfield junction because of utility works. This is most unfortunate because it could last until December, but there is little we can do about it.

In May damage was caused to a Blacket Pillar at the Blacket Avenue/ Dalkeith Road junction by an unidentified lorry and the Pillar was dismantled for safety. We are having difficulty in getting the Council to move forward with reinstatement of the Pillar.

A problem was identified with parked vehicles causing potential obstruction for emergency vehicles at the Dalkeith Road end of Mayfield Terrace, and a solution has been agreed with City Development. This involves extending the double-yellow line restrictions on the north side of the road westwards to a point in front of 27 Mayfield Terrace where the carriageway is wider. This will be taken forward through the necessary legal process by the Council.

The Website

It seems appropriate to report next on www.blacketedin.org, which has been up and running since February. We hope that you find it an attractive and useful facility and welcome comment and any relevant information you have to propose for inclusion. The feedback has been relatively modest to date, and communication via the website links has been very limited. We will continue to circulate information in hard-copy format while posting the same information on the website, but the benefit of the website is that we can update information which may not justify production of a general circular.

Planning

The Association submitted objections, along with other amenity organisations, to the wording of Planning policies in the proposed Edinburgh City Local Plan and a Local Plan Inquiry is taking place between September and December, and will not be completed until 2009.

The Planning Department have supplied copies of the recently prepared Character Appraisal document for the Blacket Conservation Area which describes the distinguishing features and details which make our area special. A copy of this document is being delivered to all households with the AGM papers for information. This will provide a reference in relation to planning proposals which residents may either be contemplating or have reason to comment upon. One such proposal which may affect us all before too long, although currently inactive, is development of the former Rowans Nursing Home site in Alfred Place. The proposals for a large sheltered housing development, notified at the time of last year's AGM, were subject to much discussion. Robust comment made to the architects led to us receiving in February another set of plans for a combination of a Care Home and sheltered accommodation. Since that time there has been no further communication from the architects though the opportunity was taken to keep all members informed, via a special issue of the Newsletter (also accessible via our website) both on the background and general line that had been taken, in liaison with the local residents' action group.

The Minto Hotel has finally restored grass to the front garden, to comply with an Enforcement Order from the Council, but continues to ignore undertakings given to the Licensing Board about use of the rear garden.

Neighbourhood Watch

An up to date report will be provided at the AGM and will indicate that the incidence of crime continues to be variable. We probably have less crime than in the wider area but that is no consolation to those whose houses or cars have been broken into or damaged. Taking precautions by removing opportunities for criminals, and being vigilant, do help and the approach of darker evenings makes this a good time to review security.

Blacket Landscape Project

Activity has revolved mainly round trees this year. Sadly we have lost a diseased Elm and a diseased Lime in the Blacket Avenue bed beside Belleville Lodge. Plans are in process for replacement of both of these in due course. The Council are compiling a record of all trees for which they have responsibility, which is why there are now 'tags' attached to all our trees.