



Blacket Association Newsletter

May 2024

OPEN GARDENS EVENING

Our annual open gardens evening will be held on Friday 7 June. For those who are new to the area, a number of residents allow us to have a look round their gardens, after which we adjourn for some refreshments and chat. The evening is open to current and former residents and their house guests.

We have three gardens on our list for visiting:

- Belleville Lodge, entrance via a side gate on Blacket Avenue
- 60 Blacket Place (Lindsay and Graham Dickson)

Both these will be open from 6.30pm.

- 1 Mayfield Terrace (Hazel and Walter Clark) will be open from 7.15pm and they will host the refreshments.

A suggested donation of £5 per person would be welcome, and payment can be made by cash on the day or directly to the Blacket Bank Account, details given below.

DATABASES

Our *membership* database is sadly out of date and we need to build up a new set of data, so we are asking ALL current paying members if they would kindly complete the Membership Application Form, which can be found on The Blacket Association website (blacketedin.org) under Join or Contact Us. If you do not want to fill this in, we would be grateful if you would confirm your details (Name and Address) by post to Susan Hezlet at 30 Mayfield Terrace, so we know you are a member and may add you to the new database. Please note this is separate to the *communications* database, and no emails will be sent using this database.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Annual Membership fee for the Blacket Association is £5 (although some residents choose to pay a higher amount). All funds go towards the activities that the Association undertakes for and on behalf of the residents of the Blacket area. If you don't currently pay a membership fee and would like to, you can set up a direct debit to The Blacket Association, Bank of Scotland a/c 00178862, sort code 80-02-24. Please also fill out the Membership Application Form described above.

If you would like to be added to our *communications* database in order to receive emails from The Blacket Association, please notify us via blacket.association@gmail.com. There is no requirement to become a member in order to receive our emails.

HOW DOES THE BLACKET ASSOCIATION DEAL WITH PLANNING MATTERS?

Every week, The Blacket Association Committee scans all planning applications (and applications for Listed Building Consent) made to the City of Edinburgh Council and tries to ensure that these will maintain the special character and appearance of the area. Our responses are made under the Blacket Association name. This means that, as a Committee, we are responding on behalf of the community, but of course residents can also object to or support any application.

In practice, one member of the Committee leads on this planning role and consults with the Committee about framing an appropriate response. At the moment, I am this member. Although this is not essential, I was trained and qualified as a planner and have worked professionally as a planning officer in both England and Scotland.

On the whole, the planners care a lot about Conservation Areas like ours and are keen to protect them from inappropriate development. They will also make sure that the neighbours who are likely to be affected are informed of the application so they can comment on it.

Our role as a Committee is, therefore, really a safeguarding one – making sure that a local voice is heard in these decisions, and that the planners are fully aware of the significance of a potential change or its local impact. Sometimes the Committee may spread the word about an application if it is felt that more than just the neighbours may be interested and have a view (for example, a major redevelopment). Most of the Council's decisions are delegated to planning officers but, if there are enough objections, a planning application will go to a committee for a decision; thus, the number of objections can be important.

Most of the planning applications made by home owners in the Blacket area are just fine. Residents are keen to improve their properties and bring room arrangements up to date: for example, by combining kitchen and dining areas to create large new living areas, often at the rear of a property overlooking gardens. The most common applications are for pruning or removing trees as they grow larger. Again, most of these are fine, and the Committee won't comment on them.

Our focus is on objecting to applications that we feel may have a detrimental impact on the special character of the area (for example, the demolition of a front wall for a car run-in) or on supporting applications that are likely to have a particularly beneficial local effect (for example, the restoration of a run-down property). The City of Edinburgh has published a detailed assessment of the character of the Blacket Conservation area, which identifies those features that make our area so special. This document provides the basis for our decisions, but we also draw on good planning practice in deciding what to do.

Richard Scothorne