

West Blacket Association Annual General Meeting November 24 2008

Present: Brian Charlesworth (Chairman), Evelynne Hill (Treasurer), Mike Hunter (Secretary), Ian Carter, Chris Theobald, Rosemary Wake. Elma Alexander, Deborah Charlesworth, Georgina Clayton, Mike & Dorothy Cloughley, Alice Foster, Jackie & Richard Grant, Eva Hammerson, Ron Hill, Helen MacDonald, Peter McGowan, Peter Milne. John Leadbetter (Community Beat Officer, Lothian & Borders Police, St Leonards), Cllr Gordon Mackenzie.

Apologies: Irene Brown, Helen Cassels, Pam and Christie Duncan, Jane & John Griffiths, Cllrs Steve Burgess, Ian Perry & Cameron Rose

Minute of West Blacket AGM December 2007. Tabled and approved.

Chairman's Report: Brian Charlesworth welcomed everyone, especially new members: the role of the Association, as outlined in the Newsletter, is to keep a vigilant eye on planning applications, to report apparent violations to Planning Enforcement, and to send representatives to community organisations such as the Grange/Prestonfield Community Council, South Edinburgh Local Environment Forum and periodic meetings with Southside/Newington Councillors. Our general aim is to maintain the character of the area and (if possible) improve it, as an architecturally distinguished and unusually pleasant part of the city.

During 2008, we have:

a) Received printed copies of the Character Appraisal for the Blacket Conservation Area – note that “The planning authority and Scottish Ministers are obliged to protect Conservation Areas from developments that adversely affect their character”. The Appraisal provides the framework within which planning decisions are made & new developments are supposed to show how they take the character of the Conservation Area into account.

b) Noted restoration of lawn in front of the Minto Hotel, as an example of vigilance by both West Blacket & Blacket Associations. We don't always oppose proposed alterations; we cooperated with a Duncan Street resident concerning alterations that were initially refused permission by Planning.

c) On a less positive note, the West Blacket Committee has been somewhat diminished by resignations and departures. We are very much in need of new Committee members, although most of the work is done by our Secretary, Treasurer and Planning Liaison Officer.

Brian & Deborah Charlesworth anticipate leaving the West Blacket area during early 2009, and we may therefore lose our Chairman.

Treasurer's Report: Tabled and spoken to by Evelynne Hill.

We have bank and cash balances of £ 607.18, and a surplus of £ 3.26 during 2007-8

Election of Officers & Committee: Our articles of association provide for re-election of officers after 3 years. Nominations for these positions, by members of the association, were invited in the newsletter, but none have been received. Other members of the committee were willing to continue*, but new members would be welcome by election or co-option. Alice Foster offered to serve on the Committee, and was duly nominated and elected. Proposed by Ron Hill and seconded by Mike Cloughley that the existing officers and committee be re-elected. Approved without objection.

Neighbourhood Watch:

At the West Blacket Association AGM in December 2007, it was reported that the NHW no longer had street reps in every street in the area. Jane Griffiths proposed, therefore, to circulate crime reports by email, and all members present provided their email addresses for this purpose. This new arrangement was reported in the WBA November 2008 Newsletter, delivered to some 280 households, with an invitation to subscribe by emailing to westblacketNHW@gmail.com: unfortunately, this has not succeeded in recruiting new NHW members. PC John Leadbetter reported that in setting up a 'Guest House Watch', he had written to 60 guest houses but received only 3 replies: however, when visited in person, virtually all the guest houses responded. PC Leadbetter offered to carry out a similar West

Blacket NHW recruitment drive by visiting houses in the area. Mike Hunter suggested that the westblacketNHW@gmail.com address could also be used by members to report non-urgent crime concerns. These would not be processed automatically, but screened for possible malicious or otherwise inappropriate comments before forwarding. Urgent concerns should in any case be reported directly to Lothian & Borders Police.

Grange/Prestonfield Community Council:

Mike Hunter, nominated by the West Blacket Association as a Community Councillor, reported that the GPCC was now successfully established within its first year, with a capable committee and active subgroups for planning, traffic, environment & licensing. We have published our first newsletter, delivered to some 8000 households, and have a website (www.GrangePrestonfieldCC.org.uk) which has details of meeting dates & minutes, contact addresses and a discussion forum.

The Community Council has held 2 public meetings, at the Reid Memorial Hall & West Mayfield Church Hall, to discuss proposals to extend Controlled Parking to the South of Zone 7, essentially as far as Zone S1 to the West, the suburban railway to the South and Dalkeith Road to the East. These proposals, which are likely to be approved, no longer allow visitors to West Blacket to find free parking nearby.

Local History Group:

Rosemary Wake reported that there had been one meeting of this new group (March 2008), attended by people from four of the seven streets in the area. The group looked at old maps and materials and the draft for the history section on the website. Much of the talk was on the fairly recent past, for example, shops, traffic arrangements for trams at the Salisbury and Minto junction, and the 'pill box' at the same junction during WW2. The next meeting would take place in January 2009.

The major activity had been redoing the history web pages. Preparing material had taken longer than anticipated, partly because the amount of detail about streets was uneven. Much of the historical research undertaken by Ron Hill was now accessible on-line, together with information and links to assist those investigating the past for themselves, whether for school projects or their own interest. The aim had not been to be comprehensive from the start but to establish something which could grow as contributions came in. The history section was now up on the WBA website and members of the Association were invited to visit it. Thanks were due to Ron Hill and Mike Hunter for their diligence in applying their technical skills to the creation of attractive webpages.

A number of new members signed up to join the group at the end of the meeting.

Any Other Business:

There was extensive discussion including -

1. It may be possible to apply to City Council transport budget for resurfacing of South Gray Street
2. A pedestrian crossing in Causewayside/Ratcliffe Terrace would be desirable (Peter McGowan)
3. Duncan Street remains a 'rat run' (Jackie Grant) but has a low priority for traffic calming.

These matters will be pursued by the WBA Committee

Draft Minute, Dec 2 2008

Mike Hunter

Hon Sec, West Blacket Association

**[Note: Chris Theobald had notified the Secretary of his intention to stand down from the Committee after 15 years service, including a period as Secretary. Neither the Chairman nor the Secretary announced this: neither did we propose a vote of thanks. Apologies to Chris]*