

West Blasket Association Annual General Meeting November 27 2023

Present: Maggie Stevenson (Chair, **MS**), Nigel Cumming (Treasurer, **NC**), Mike Hunter (Hon Sec, **MJH**), Kate O'Brien (Membership Secretary); Ian Carter, Lucy Charrington (**LC**), Alice Foster, Evelyne Hill, Charles Warlow, Cathie Wright; Judy Alexander, Tom Barnes, Helen Bennett, Philip Bennett, Laura Bradley, Chris Busby, Jane & John Griffiths, David Hope, Ron Hill, Roger Pountain, Duncan Robertson, Jane Rubens, Colin Stevenson, Stephen Tomolillo, William Walker (**WW**), Stuart & Nathalie Wallace, Mathew Williams (**MW**).

Apologies: Sandra Carter, Louise Robertson, Rosemary Wake.

1. **MS welcomed everyone**
2. **Minute of AGM November 2022** tabled. *Approved nem com*
3. **Chair's Report.** *Script attached as Appendix.*
Ensuing discussion included
 - a) The meeting of **LC** and **MS** with Cllr Pauline Flannery on Tue Nov 21 had been very useful in producing an admission that City Of Edinburgh Council had been unable to contact the developers of the UGS/DS corner site, and that the Council should therefore accept responsibility for making the pavement safe.
 - b) **WW** reported that personal correspondence with Euan Lawrence, previously involved in proposed developments, established that he still retains at least some financial interest.
 - c) In answer to **LC**'s enquiry on behalf of the Association, Cllr Flannery had ascertained that CEC plans for rapid on-street EV charging points are based on charging Hub Areas, a map of which locations can be found on the Council website. Currently there are no plans for EV points or hubs in the West Blasket area.
 - d) As several residents have discovered, and utilised, potholes reported to the Council are rapidly made safe by temporary patches. However full resurfacing, as seen recently in part of Causewayside, is due in Upper Gray Street 'soon'.
 - e) **MW** asked what communications there had been with National Library of Scotland, since the previous AGM when the oil spillage from their UGS building was reported. **MJH** had written to NLS Director & CEO, Amina Shah, as instructed, on Dec 11 2022, and received a personal reply on Dec 19. In this, she confirms that the incident was reported to SEPA and Scottish Water, who were both satisfied with measures taken, and referred me to Operations & Maintenance Manager, Charles Sclater, for further information which we received by email on Jan 9 2023.
 - f) Chris Busby had set up a Domestic Insulation Group, operating chiefly by a "WBA Home Energy Efficiency" WhatsApp group, to share strategies for older housing. Some members were invited to an in-person meeting, and contacts with other groups are being established. New members are welcome.
4. **Treasurer's Report** (tabled).
NC reported that finances remain healthy, with increases in membership (from 74 to 85) and subscription income (from £307.52 to £361) probably resulting from interest generated by the May 2022 Street Party, and a balance (bank & cash) of £1408.50 swelled by reduced expenditure on social events
5. **Election of Office Bearers and Committee**
MJH reported no nominations to, or withdrawals from, the Committee.
6. **Helen Bennett's talk** on her work with the RBGE's Historic Photography Collections, illustrated with archive photographs, was much appreciated.
7. **The meeting concluded** about 830pm

Appendix to AGM minute: Chair's Report

WBA is an amenity association for part of the Blacket Conservation Area, whose main purpose is the preservation and improvement of the general amenity of the West Blacket area. This includes consultation with the Council on their plans for parking, traffic, recycling and planning applications under consultation. We hope to encourage neighbourliness through the local WhatsApp group, Neighbourhood Watch and some social events.

Planning

Unfortunately, there has been no further work on the Duncan St/Upper Gray Street corner site. Ian Carter has written to the Council and Councillor Flannery over the past year to try and to get some action. In an effort to raise this matter further, Lucy Charrington and I met Councillor Flannery, in mid November. Cllr Flannery was generous with her time. It was noted that the damaged pavement issue near the foundations was raised with Cllr Rose in Oct 2020. Since that time, the damage has worsened, buddleia has taken root and the barricades which the Council organised last January 2023, have further narrowed the pavement. The barricades were erected around the site in response to a pedestrian accident in early Dec, 2022 (a Blacket resident required an overnight hospital admission). Cllr Flannery agreed that the pavement, was not functioning as a pavement and was a Council responsibility. The Council have been unable to contact the developer. Cllr Flannery agreed that the narrow pavement is at a tricky junction/corner, pushing pedestrians onto the road. Cllr Flannery is trying to get Paul Lawrence (Director of Place, Council) to visit the site to view for himself our WBA safety concerns.

(Planning permission granted 2016, Foundations completed July 2019)

General Amenity

Potholes...I and Matt and maybe others have reported potholes in Upper Gray St and Duncan St – please keep reporting as it helps to prioritise. Recent new machine “pothole killer” has done 2000, more budget allocated by Council now.

Resurfacing of Causewayside done in Oct 2023, junction Salisbury/Grange Road junction will be completed January 2024 & hopefully Upper Gray St in 2024.

Autumn Street Leaf Sweep

We did organise this but the Council unable to supply equipment recently.

Historic Buildings

WBA Home Energy Efficiency – Chris Hayes, local resident in Duncan St initiated a local Whatsapp group to share energy efficiency ideas in listed buildings – he hosted an evening with informative slides on this topic in Sept, which we shared through the WBA email system and Whatsapp group?

Other Green Issues

EV charging - we raised this with Cllr Flannery who said there are no wide infrastructure plans for on-street charging. Some EV charging points planned on the pavement near the Old Scottish Widows Building. No further news on The Quiet cycling Route 30.

Social Network

WBA had a very quiet year with no Social events, in contrast to the previous year.

We propose to have a WBA meal and French evening early in 2024.

Also Cllr Flannery did mention that students, of which there are many locally, are keen to be more involved in community. (Stuart Tooley, Ed Uni community student liaison person)

The WBA WhatsApp group continues as an informal network, its main purpose being to allow the exchange of practical information and to offer or receive help locally. ie from surplus apples, lost cats to tradesmen recommendations.

Neighbourhood Watch: Kate O'Brien continues to send out Police and other advice via email alerting members to security matters, physical and online.

WBA History Group: I understand this continues, some people are members. Rosemary & Ron are involved to share items of local historical interest.

I would like to thank all those on the Committee and others for their contribution to the Association.

Maggie Stevenson

Speaker: Helen Bennett is a volunteer at RBGE, and in the past 12 years has been investigating the Historic Photography Collections there. Helen I am looking forward to hearing about your work.