

# West Blasket Association

## Annual General Meeting

December 4 2007

**Present:** Brian Charlesworth (Chairman), Evelynne Hill (Treasurer), Mike Hunter (Secretary), Ian Carter, Chris Theobald, Rosemary Wake. Elma Alexander, Ellen Bard, Gwyneth Bruce, Helen Cassels, Sandra Carter, Deborah Charlesworth, Mike Cloughley, Jackie Grant, John & Harriet Fulford, Helen MacDonald, Iain & Fiona MacLaren, Margaret Muir. Tina Kelly (Secretary, Craigmillar Park Association), Barry Edmonds (Community Beat Officer, Lothian & Borders Police, St Leonards), Cllrs Steve Burgess, Ian Perry & Cameron Rose.

**Apologies:** Mary Bell, Helen & Philip Bennett, Jane Griffiths, Ron Hill, Prof & Mrs Alan Thomson. Insp Tom Galbraith, PC John Leadbetter. Cllr Gordon Mackenzie.

**Minute of West Blasket AGM November 27 2006.** Tabled and approved.

**Chairman's Report:** Brian Charlesworth welcomed everyone, especially new members, Councillors elected to Southside/Newington in May 2007, and representative from L&B Police. Newcomers were reminded that the history and aims of the association are described in the newsletter and website. Our main activities during 2006-7 have been:

- (i) Regular meetings of the committee at approximately 2 monthly intervals, at which planning policies and applications are discussed, sometimes objecting (not always successfully) on the grounds that they go against the spirit of the conservation area;
- (ii) Members of the committee serve on several organisations which act as interfaces to the Council;
- (iii) Social events: a planned garden visit for June 23 2007 was cancelled due to the weather.

Brian was concerned that the Planning Dept have not always responded adequately to WBA interests: there have been instances where proper procedures have not been carried out; there has been a lack of response to letters from the association (eg notification of outcome of planning decisions); there has been a lack of enforcement (eg unapproved replacement of lawn by paving at the Minto Hotel). [Ian Carter pointed out that the new Planning Act 2008 may improve matters. Cllrs Cameron Rose & Steve Burgess are members of the Planning Committee, and are therefore unable to comment ahead of committee decisions: Cllrs Ian Perry & Gordon Mackenzie are not so constrained and will be willing to help]

**Treasurer's Report:** Tabled and spoken to by Evelynne Hill. Our finances are very healthy and we could consider using funds to support local amenity. Deborah Charlesworth proposed replacing a small tree which has been removed in South Gray Street. Cllrs promised to support this.

**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. Proposed by Jackie Grant and Ian MacLaren that the existing officers and committee be re-elected. Approved without objection.

**Neighbourhood Watch:** In the absence of street reps, Mike Hunter summarised the history of West Blacket NHW. One year previously a NHW member had spotted a break-in in South Gray Street and reported this to L&B Police. The suspect was apprehended within the hour! However, two street reps having now left the area, it was not clear that the NHW would continue. Community Beat Officer Barry Edmonds assured members of full support from L&B Police. House insurance premiums are often cheaper in NHW areas. Crime reporting procedures have been improved, and analysis of crime reports will be used to target resources. A proposal from Jane Griffiths to circulate crime reports to members by email was welcomed : the Blacket Association are proposing to try this in their NHW also. All members present provided their email addresses, which Mike Hunter will forward to Jane Griffiths. We may invite all members to participate, but they must be assured that their contact details will not be used for any other purpose. Crime reports should concentrate on actual incidents, rather than general exhortations to take care.

**Local History Group:** In the absence of Ron Hill, Rosemary Wake explained the aims of the proposed local history group, illustrating these with an example of a fascinating 19th Century crime in Middleby Street. Several members accepted an invitation to join the group.

**Grange/Prestonfield Community Council:** Mike Hunter, nominated West Blacket member, reported on 2 meetings held to date. At the first meeting, interim officers were elected. At the second, working groups were established for Planning, Licensing, Roads&Transport and Environment. Another group will set up a website to advertise meetings, but not until it has been decided whether to change the name of the Community Council.

**Any Other Business:** Deborah Charlesworth had attended a meeting of the Environmental Forum, which concerns litter, potholes, streetlights etc. She reported new arrangements in place for street bins to have contact details, timetables for drain cleaning and sweeping of leaves at least annually. It is likely there will now be 2 Environmental Forums in south Edinburgh: Morningside & Southside. Cllr Ian Perry reported that the new Neighbourhood Partnerships (replacing Local Development Committees) will be more inclusive, and will devolve decision making. The sale of Birss & Sons Joiners, reportedly to Kushi's, does not leave the Upper Gray / Duncan Street site in single ownership, and development there may not occur in the near future.

Mike Hunter, Hon Secretary  
West Blacket Association