

West Blasket Association

NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2022



Photos provided by residents who attended our Street Party in May

Who are we?

The WBA is an amenity association for part of the Blacket Conservation Area, from Salisbury Place to West Mayfield and from Upper and South Gray Streets to Minto Street. Our 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 and recycling, and on Planning Applications under consideration. We also hope to encourage good neighbour relations through Neighbourhood Watch and by organising some social events for our members. If you are not already a member, please join us.

During lockdown from March 2020, and varying restrictions since, we have continued to function with appropriate social distancing. Committee meetings have been held by Zoom, allowing us to monitor, discuss and comment on Planning matters. Now that many restrictions have been lifted, we have reconsidered the safety of recommencing social events, at least for those fully vaccinated and not especially vulnerable.

Planning Matters

Work on the student housing development at 20 Duncan Street has continued throughout the year and is due for completion within a few weeks. As a result of (approved) variation applications, some for building-control or practical reasons, the completed building will provide 27 units rather than the initial 22. Two of these, rather than one, will be accessible rooms, and relocation of the lift will now provide access to all rooms and levels. The owner of the site is willing to provide neighbouring residents with an opportunity to look round the development once work is completed but is currently very busy.

There are and have been building works during the year on previously approved developments, mainly in Upper and South Gray Streets. Unfortunately however another year has passed without anything significant or constructive to report on the other unfinished site at the corner of Duncan Street with Upper Gray Street. We finally succeeded in having our complaint about the foundations acknowledged by Planning and investigated by Planning Enforcement. While they agreed that the townhouse foundation nearest to Upper Gray Street is too close to the site perimeter they merely referred this to the project architect to explore and seek approval for a technical solution. Nothing further has been heard since that decision in June but it would be optimistic to anticipate construction in the coming year because of the deepening economic downturn. This makes it particularly important to address the hazardous situation with the Upper Gray St pavement but no substantive response has been forthcoming so far from the Council to our complaint.

Beyond our immediate area we added our objections to the following large development proposals in the surrounding area: **East Newington Place:** a substantial student housing block in place of large garages adding to existing student housing in the street. This was refused by the Council but an appeal has been made; **Cameron Toll Shopping Centre:** layout changes, trees removed for a large hotel and also introducing residential blocks in the north corner of the site.

WBA Street Party 2022

A small silver lining on the dark cloud of 'the Covid years' was a realisation of the importance of local community, and the joy of face-to-face meetings. WBA celebrated this with a street party for residents on 22nd May this year.

The weather cooperated beautifully, and the party was enjoyed by several nonagenarian residents of long standing, as well as families with young children who have moved to the area recently, and everyone in between.

Sincere thanks to St. Columba's Church, especially Jim Meehan, for offering their hall and facilities in Upper Gray St. Ian Laing treated us to some wonderful fiddle music, and Charles Warlow's tombola, with prizes donated by local businesses, raised £297 for the British Red Cross appeal for Ukraine. Thanks also to Chrissie Heughan for paper making and Lucy Warlow for face painting.

The street was closed to traffic, so pedestrians and cyclists were king, along with some early-years drivers of the world's most popular car, the Cosy Coupé (which unfortunately evaded all the many cameras around).

Thank you to the many people who helped, with baking, washing up, bringing flowers, delivering flyers, moving tables, serving drinks, and a special call-out to Linda and her lists! All in all, it was a joyous gathering of friends and neighbours, with old connections remade and new links forged.



WBA Spring Clean

In March 2022, we had a ready band of 15 WBA volunteers who over two half days assisted with sweeping up litter, organic debris and doing some weeding especially in Middleby Street. The Council had supplied bags, gloves, litter pickers, some brushes and shovels to allow us to undertake the job and were delighted with our community initiative.

The grand total of 50 bags were filled, deposited by the Dental Clinic and collected by the Council later. We also did some clearance of the Dental clinic corner with their permission which was full of litter, leaves and weeds. Since then NHS Estates Dept have spread gravel and killed a buddleia growing out and disrupting the alignment of their wall.

The locale certainly looked much more spruced up in Spring!

Another late Autumn clean-up is proposed for early December 2022 !

