

THE BLACKET ASSOCIATION

(the “Association”)

MINUTES OF THE 56th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION

Held on 19th November 2025 at The Old Bell, Duncan Street at 7pm

Present: Susan Hezlet – Chairman and Communications (“SH”)
Ian Chisholm (“IC”)
Joanna Chisholm
Hugh Mackay
MaryAnn Julian
Bill & Janice Gammell
John Rosie
Liz Wickes
Alisoun Morton
Anne Sturrock (“AS”)
Alison Mowat
Patricia McDonald
Pauline Platt
John Usher (“JU”)
Caroline Sibbald
Anne Starsmeare
Mary White
Simon White
Pina Lang
Stanley Bird (“SB”)
Shaun George
Isabella Ennis
Anna Regaard
Ronaldo Miele
Hazel Clark – Minutes and Social Convener

Apologies: Muriel & David Graham
Craig McMahon
Jenifer Davidson
Colin Blair – Website Co-ordinator
Richard Scothorne – Planning
Stewart Whiting

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

SH, as Chair, welcomed everyone to the AGM. Copies of the Annual Report had previously been circulated by email and in printed form as the November Newsletter. SH advised that apologies had been received from those listed above.

2. MINUTES

The 2024 AGM minutes, as published and circulated in the AGM papers, were agreed as an accurate record.

3. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

The list of open actions was discussed. The table of actions at the end of these minutes has been updated accordingly.

4. ELECTION of the ASSOCIATION'S COMMITTEE (the "Committee")

SH advised that Craig couldn't attend the meeting but had overseen a smooth handover from Anne Henderson and is doing a great job as Treasurer. The official appointment of Craig McMahon as Treasurer was proposed by Hugh Mackay and seconded by Stanley Bird.

SH then announced that there were four current Committee members who were willing to be elected for a new term:

Stanley Bird's re-election was proposed by Joanna Chisholm and was seconded by Simon White.

Ian Chisholm's re-election was proposed by Hugh Mackay and was seconded by Patricia McDonald.

Susan Hezlet's re-election was proposed by Joanna Chisholm and was seconded by Stanley Bird.

Richard Scothorne's re-election was proposed by Ian Chisholm and was seconded by Anne Sturrock.

SH believes she has found a new recruit to join the Committee to maintain the Association's website, but will make an announcement once the person has confirmed. SH reminded the meeting that there was one more space for anyone who wished to join the Committee.

5. CHAIR'S REPORT

SH reported that the Association had held a lovely ceilidh in February. Huge thanks were due to the West Blasket Association ("WBA") who did a lot of the work and made it a huge success. The Committee has agreed to hold another ceilidh in a few years' time but will increase the price of the tickets.

Maggie is the longstanding Chair of the WBA. She approached SH over the summer, as the WBA were finding it hard to find volunteers on their committee. They had used Ian Carter to help them with planning matters, but he was stepping down due to health issues. Therefore, the WBA were keen to use our planning expert, Richard Scothorne ("RS"). RS has said he is happy to help the WBA going forward. The WBA have therefore realised that there isn't a need for our two associations to merge if RS is able to help them. Therefore, we will continue to work with the WBA going forward, but remain as separate associations.

IC has been making an inventory of the Association's items. Some of them are missing – a laminated map of the Blackets and a woven tapestry of the area. Simon White advised that he

had held the map for 10 years then gave it to a previous Committee member – maybe Fiona Salzen. IC agreed to ask Fiona Salzen to see if she still has it.

Action25.01 – *IC to ask Fiona Salzen if she holds the laminated map of the Blackets.*

Caroline Sibbald mentioned that the Blacket archives are within the University of Edinburgh Library Heritage Collections and asked if the Committee could please keep an eye on things. Caroline agreed to give SH the name of her contact there.

6. GRANGE & PRESTONFIELD COMMUNITY COUNCIL (“GPCC”)

IC advised that the new elected members of the GPCC are keen to increase their visibility so will start providing online newsletters. Residents should also check the GPCC website for updates. Attending a GPCC meeting is a good way to get hold of a local councillor – they all take turns – Liberal Democrats, Labour, SNP and Green.

7. TREASURER’S REPORT

SH is hoping to become a second signatory on the Association’s bank account but to no avail yet. CM is chasing this up as it will be useful in case of emergencies. The Association’s bank account remains healthy. The only thing the Association lost money on was the ceilidh, hence why ticket prices will be increased in future. The summer Open Gardens event was a big success.

There followed a discussion about why the Association charges residents to attend the Open Gardens. Simon White argued that the Association has such a healthy bank account that it should be paying for the drinks provided. SH reminded the meeting that residents are making a voluntary contribution at the Open Gardens. Patricia McDonald expressed her agreement with Simon that the Association was holding too much money in its bank account. IC advised that the Association had subsidised the ceilidh. SB felt that the Open gardens event was more accessible for people than the ceilidh. IC agreed, and said the Committee would discuss the issue of payment for the Open Gardens event at the next Committee meeting.

Action25.02 – *The Committee to discuss whether the drinks at the Open Gardens event should be paid for by the Association going forward.*

Caroline Sibbald said it would have been helpful to have some of the Association’s money spent on professional advice regarding the issues with the Thrums hotel and other ways to help protect the Blacket area.

Simon White asked whether the Association could pay for a new tree on the west side of Blacket Avenue where there was only a tree stump. SH explained that it was not regarded as environmentally friendly to dig up stumps now, as they become a habitat for wildlife.

Anne Starsmeare asked if the bushes can be trimmed on Blacket Avenue as it’s hard to see traffic coming. JU agreed and said that the Shrubbery Working Party will have a look.

Action25.03 – *The Shrubbery Working Party to trim the bushes on Blacket Avenue to improve visibility for drivers at the Blacket Place junction.*

8. SHRUBBERY WORKING PARTY REPORT

John Usher reported that over the last year there had been four dates organised for people to come and help clean up the Blacket area. These had been well attended, and the Council had provided tonne bags to collect up the trimmings and leaves. The next session is this weekend coming where the team will be concentrating on the pavements and gutters.

9. NEW RESIDENTS

Anne Sturrock welcomed to new residents to the meeting. She explained that she pops a welcome pack through the letterbox when people move in. She is selling cards this evening and also has Christmas cards at home if anyone would like to buy some. Anne made a plea to current residents to please let her know of any new residents moving to the area.

10. NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH REPORT

SB gave his report highlighting that online scams and frauds remain the most frequent type of crime. He gave the usual reminder to keep bikes, garages and sheds locked up, especially when the daylight hours are so short. Residents should not leave car key fobs near the front door as criminals can clone them through the door.

11. WEBSITE AND DATABASE REPORT

CB was not present but his report was noted.

SH encouraged everyone to ensure they are on the contact database – you don't have to be a member – but you will receive emails. The member database is for people who are members of the Association. Residents can register themselves as a member on the Association website – it only costs £5 per household per annum, not per person in the house. Membership is also open to people who aren't residents e.g. those who have moved away from the area. Also, residents who aren't members will still have their interests protected.

12. PLANNING REPORT

RS was not present but his planning report was noted.

In relation to on street charging, Edinburgh Council are slowly extending this including to Prestonfield Avenue. Sciennes has two chargers with four parking places. There is a real lack of charging places in the Blackets leading to an increase in planning applications for driveways.

The planning application at 13 Dryden Place received 26 objections, but was still passed. However, the owner had withdrawn the new entrance from the application so the approval did not cover that. Simon White commented that it is so important to stop these types of planning applications going forward – once one is approved there will be no stopping them.

13. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

There followed two votes – one on a change to the Blacket Association boundary and one on the term of office for the Chair of the Association, with the details as set out in the AGM notice.

SH counted the number of members present, and, as there were 26, a quorum had been reached.

SH explained that the first vote related to changing the Blacket Association boundary to match the boundary of the Blacket conservation area, minus the areas covered by the West Blacket Association, which only left Dalkeith Road, Spence Street, Salisbury Road and the two big houses in the Pollock Halls area to potentially be added.

SH advised that the Association was created before the conservation area, therefore it made sense to match the two areas up. There followed a discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of extending the Association's area, with many residents thinking it would make Richard Scothorne's job on planning advice, more difficult. IC pointed out that Richard has already acted on behalf of residents in these other areas so it would be a rationalisation of existing practice. Anne Starsmeare felt that the Blacket Association would have a greater identity if it stayed as it is. Small is beautiful and has much more force. Hugh Mackay pointed out that the Association has an interest in what happens on Salisbury Road. He dealt with planning issues for a few years and felt that several uncontrolled and selfish planning applications had an impact on Blacket Place. All the people who the Association is considering assimilating have gardens overlooking Blacket properties. Therefore, to disregard them is to lead to a serious erosion of our position as the five streets.

SH called for a vote and the tellers counted the following:

For – 10

Against – 13

Abstentions - 3

Therefore, the amendment to extend the Association's boundary to match that of the Blacket conservation area was not carried.

The second change to the Association's constitution was as follows:

The Chair may not normally serve for more than two consecutive terms.

SH called for a vote and the tellers counted the following:

For – 24

Against - 0

Abstentions – 2

Therefore, the proposal to amend the Association's constitution was carried.

The change to the reference in the Association's constitution from "Chairman" to "Chair" was passed by a two thirds majority.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Food waste bins weren't collected last week and SH advised that residents could contact the council via their website to let them know that their bin had been missed.

In relation to the Open Gardens event in 2026, SH lamented that we need new volunteers to offer up their gardens for viewing and someone willing to host the drinks afterwards. Simon White said

he would host, providing his wife agrees. For insurance purposes, SH reminded residents that access to the garden had to be possible from the street, not through the house.

Alison Mowat announced that she and Liz Wickes had started a petition to stop traffic speeding along Blacket Place and thanked those residents who had signed it. Traffic was also illegally turning right from Minto Street. Pauline Flannery (Lib Dem Councillor) had explained that the Council is looking at another area which they consider to be more urgent. Therefore, the Council is unlikely to do anything about making Blacket Avenue one-way unless there's a serious accident. After some discussion, it was agreed that the Association, and residents individually, should ideally put pressure on the Council to make Blacket Avenue one-way from the west by going along to GPCC meetings.

Action25.04 – the Association, and residents individually, should ideally put pressure on the Council to make Blacket Avenue one-way from the west, by going along to GPCC meetings.

The meeting closed at 8:35pm.

SUMMARY of OPEN ACTIONS:

REF	ACTION	RESP	STATUS
Action21.01	<i>The Committee to press the Council to come up with a policy regarding provision of electric car charging points in the Blacket Area for submission to the Council.</i>	<i>Committee</i>	<i>Council has this under review – ongoing. CLOSED as very similar to Action 23.04</i>
Action22.01	<i>SB to ask university residence rep at GPCC meeting to stop blowing leaves onto Blacket Avenue.</i>	<i>SB</i>	<i>Still happening so SB was still asking them to stop. Ongoing.</i>
Action23.03	<i>RS to ask the owners of the Thrums Hotel to fix the damaged pavement and clean up the shrubbery on Blacket Avenue.</i>	<i>RS</i>	<i>Ongoing. Now complete and JU cleaned up the excess tarmac they had dumped. CLOSED.</i>
Action23.04	<i>RS to investigate practices elsewhere re private companies who can install car charging points into lampposts or bollards for details.</i>	<i>RS & SB</i>	<i>Ongoing – SB to continue to chase GPCC for an agreed format going forward. The Council doesn't have a budget for this so is relying on private investment.</i>
Action24.01	<i>Association to email residents explaining how to receive weekly notifications of local planning applications.</i>	<i>SH</i>	<i>Residents just need to fill in the online form on the Council's website to receive emails. DONE – CLOSED.</i>

REF	ACTION	RESP	STATUS
Action24.02	Anne Sturrock to find out whether the list of planning applications is still printed in the Edinburgh Evening News.	AS	This has been superseded by the link on the Evening News website. DONE - CLOSED.
Action24.03	SB to mention inability of residents to connect to City Fibre broadband installed on the pavements at the next GPCC meeting.	SB	Update – it was working in some areas. BT Openreach are able to put fibre cables along telegraph poles. Ongoing.
<u>Action25.01</u>	IC to ask Fiona Salzen if she holds the laminated map of the Blackets.	IC	
<u>Action25.02</u>	The Committee to discuss whether the drinks at the Open Gardens event should be paid for by the Association going forward.	Committee	
<u>Action25.03</u>	The Shrubbery Working Party to trim the bushes on Blacket Avenue to improve visibility for drivers at the Blacket Place junction.	SWP	
<u>Action25.04</u>	Association, and residents individually, should ideally put pressure on the Council to make Blacket Avenue one way from the west, by going along to GPCC meetings.	All	