



Blacket Association Newsletter

November 2025

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WEDNESDAY 19 NOVEMBER

The 56th Annual General Meeting of the Blacket Association will be held on Wednesday 19 November 2025 in the upper room of the Old Bell Inn, Duncan Street, with the AGM starting at 7:00pm. A free drink for those attending will be available from the downstairs bar from 6:30pm. Copies of the minutes of last year's AGM and the reports from the various committee members are given below. Please bring this newsletter with you, although there will also be a few printed copies available at the AGM.

All members, prospective members, friends and residents in the Blacket area are welcome – new members particularly so. All are invited to raise any points of interest that they would like to discuss.

- **Agenda**

- Minutes of the last AGM (6 November 2024) and actions arising therefrom;
- Election of committee members and office bearers;
- Chair's report;
- Grange and Prestonfield Community Council report;
- Treasurer's report;
- Shrubbery Working Party report;
- New Residents and Cards report;
- Neighbourhood Watch report;
- Website and Database report;
- Planning report;
- Proposed Changes to the Constitution;
- Any other competent business.

OFFICE BEARERS AND COMMITTEE 2024 - 2025

CHAIR/COMMUNICATIONS	Susan Hezlet
VICE CHAIR/ GPCC	Ian Chisholm
MINUTES	Hazel Clark
TREASURER	Craig McMahon
NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH	Stanley Bird
NEW RESIDENTS/CARDS	Anne Sturrock
PLANNING	Richard Scothorne
SHRUBBERY WORKING PARTY	John Usher and Stewart Whiting
WEBSITE	Colin Blair

MINUTES OF THE 55TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE BLACKET ASSOCIATION

Held on 6th November 2024 at The Old Bell, Duncan Street at 7pm

Present: Susan Hezlet – Chairman and Communications (“SH”), Anne Henderson - Treasurer (‘AH’), Stanley Bird (“SB”), Richard Scothorne – Planning (“RS”), Anne Sturrock, MaryAnn Julian, Caroline & Charlie Ross-Stewart, Muriel & David Graham, Derek Henderson, Craig & Louise McMahon, John & Caroline Sibbald, Hugh Mackay, Fiona Courtney, Phil Creswell, John Usher (“JU”), P Brophy, D Sherman, Evie Jamieson, Alan Paterson, Jan Conway, Arlene Doherty (“AD”), Hazel Clark – Minutes and Social Convener (“HC”)

Apologies: Colin Blair – Website Co-ordinator (“CB”), Stewart Whiting (“SW”), Ian Chisholm (“IC”), Walter and Susan Thomson, Penny & Don Gower, Bill & Janice Gemmell, Jenifer Davidson, Patricia McDonald

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 2023 AGM minutes, as published and circulated in the AGM papers, were agreed as an accurate record, with one spelling mistake to be corrected.

3. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

The list of open actions was discussed. Many residents felt that an urgent solution was needed for EV chargers as the planning authorities would not permit the creation of drive-ins. Alan Paterson mentioned that the chargers at Pollock Halls were now limited to 4 hours maximum which wasn't as convenient as overnight. SB advised that the location of EV charging points was a frequent issue on the GPCC agenda, but it still wasn't high on their list of priorities due to the lack of funding. 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 the Committee required a new Treasurer and asked for any volunteers to speak to her at the end of the meeting. The person didn't have to be an accountant or a book-keeper. Anne Sturrock was taking over from Arlene Doherty looking after new residents. Anne's election was proposed by Mary Ann Julian and seconded by Caroline Sibbald. John Usher and Stewart Whiting were joining the Committee primarily help with

shrubbery related matters. Stanley Bird proposed that John and Stewart be elected and their nominations were seconded by Hugh Mackay.

5. CHAIR'S REPORT

SH delivered her report. Residents of the eastern end of Mayfield Terrace were delighted about the installation of the 'gully' which had finally allowed flood water to drain away and it was working beautifully. A ceilidh with the West Blacket Association had been organised for February 2025 in St Columba's church hall. There would be a band and a caller and tickets would be £5 for adults, no charge for children. People should bring their own food and drinks. More information would be provided to residents by email.

SH notified residents that the consultation on whether Edinburgh should have a tourist levy was open until December if they wanted to have their say.

6. GRANGE & PRESTONFIELD COMMUNITY COUNCIL ("GPCC")

SB advised that there would be elections for the GPCC next year. The Council was currently reviewing the functions of the Community Council. SB found the GPCC rather frustrating - it has such a small budget, there is not much it can do. The police still never make an appearance.

SH felt that the GPCC would however, be a useful thing for younger people to get involved in and SB agreed that it would certainly benefit from fresh perspectives. Mary-Ann Julian suggested that the GPCC may find younger people from the numerous university clubs who could be interested in joining. SB reported that the GPCC did have a university representative at one point but that he hadn't appeared at the last few meetings. The GPCC has a notice board in the university library – they were keen to also have one outside [the building] but that was proving impossible.

7. TREASURER'S REPORT

AH advised that the Association's accounts were pretty self-explanatory. The main concern was limiting expenditure in relation to the open gardens event. The £5 annual bank charge for residents' membership fees was about to start. Anne Sturrock led the meeting in a round of applause to thank Anne Henderson for serving as Treasurer these last few years.

8. SHRUBBERY WORKING PARTY REPORT

John Usher reported that Hugh Mackay had taken him and Stewart Whiting round the area to look at what required to be done in the various shrubbery areas. John was amazed at what Hugh and his team had achieved over the last 30 years. Trying to assist with the upkeep of the area was a huge job and could be a full-time job for 3 or 4 people. The next shrubbery working party was planned for 23rd November. The Council were now good at providing large tonne bags for dead leaves to be stored in for uplift. Going forward, John and Stuart were hoping to have a date in February, May, August and November for residents to take part in the shrubbery working party.

9. NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH REPORT

SB gave his report highlighting that there had been no recent physical crime, but that online frauds and scams remained the biggest issue. Now that the evenings were much darker, SB reminded residents to check that all their doors and windows were locked and that any bikes were locked and out of sight. If residents saw anything suspicious, they should call 999. AD reported that there had been a number of break-ins on Duncan Street where criminals had been removing doorbell cameras first. SB lamented the fact that the police reports received by the GPCC were quarterly in arrears.

10. WEBSITE AND DATABASE REPORT

CB was not present but his report was noted. SH reported that CB had done a great job of updating members' details. 46 out of the 137 residents on the contact database had signed the new form to show they are members. SH advised that the AGM attendance sheet this year contained a column in which residents could show they are members of the Association and encouraged new residents to join the Association.

11. PLANNING REPORT

RS presented his planning report highlighting that there were lots to be positive about, including the beautiful restoration of the wall and railings at 20 Blasket Place. There were plans to restore railings at other properties in the pipeline. Arthur Lodge's plans represented the careful restoration of one of the four Grade A listed properties in the Blasket. Three of the four had tried to get planning permission recently with varying degrees of success. The plans for the restoration of Newington Lodge also looked wonderful. In response to a question from a resident, RS advised that residents could sign up to receive notifications of local planning applications. There were sometimes up to six emails a week, but most concerned the removal of bushes or trees. It was agreed that SH should send out an email to residents informing them of how to set this up.

Action 2024.01 – Association to email residents explaining how to receive notifications of local planning applications.

In response to a query from John Sibbald, it was agreed that the Association should inform residents in the event of there being a major building project in the area.

Anne Sturrock mentioned that the list of planning applications used to be printed in the Edinburgh Evening News and agreed to find out if that was still the case.

Action 2024.02 – Anne Sturrock to find out whether the list of planning applications is still printed in the Edinburgh Evening News.

John Sibbald expressed his thanks to RS for all his hard work and expertise in keeping an eye on planning matters.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Discussions turned to the issue of broadband speeds and the fact that properties on the edge of the conservation area were able to get speeds of 900mbs. One resident in Dryden

Place reported that he had tried to get connected to City Fibre (which was installed along the pavements years ago) but was unable to do so due to an admin error which means the company thinks the area is already connected to City Fibre. This is very frustrating, particularly because BT Openreach isn't going to roll out fibre in the area until 29 January 2029. SB agreed to mention this issue at the next GPCC meeting.

Action 2024.03 – SB to mention inability of residents to connect to City Fibre broadband installed on the pavements at the next GPCC meeting.

Finally, SH and Anne Sturrock expressed their thanks to Arlene Doherty for her time on the Committee and her warm welcoming of new residents to the area.

The meeting closed at 8pm.

SUMMARY of OPEN ACTIONS:

REF	ACTION	RESP	STATUS
Action21.01	The Committee to come up with policy regarding provision of electric car charging points in the Blacket Area for submission to the Council.	Committee	Council has this under review – ongoing.
Action22.01	SB to ask university residence rep at GPCC meeting to stop blowing leaves onto Blacket Avenue.	SB	Still happening so SB was still asking them to stop
Action23.01	RS to find out whether the planning department were going to insist that the Thrums Hotel rebuild the listed wall it had taken down.	RS	There has unfortunately been no enforcement by the Planning Dept - CLOSED
Action23.02	RS to find out what the new building at the Thrums Hotel would be used for.	RS	2004 class 7 use hotel/hostel which means they can house anyone who doesn't require care – CLOSED
Action23.03	RS to ask the owners of the Thrums Hotel to fix the damaged pavement and clean up the shrubbery on Blacket Avenue.	RS	Ongoing

REF	ACTION	RESP	STATUS
Action23.04	RS to investigate practices elsewhere re private companies who can install car charging points into lampposts or bollards for details.	RS & SB	Ongoing – SB to continue to chase GPCC for an agreed format going forward.
Action23.05	IC to mention Duncan Street corner plot and Mayfield Terrace flooding issue at GPCC meeting.	IC	Done – CLOSED
Action24.01	Association to email residents explaining how to receive weekly notifications of local planning applications.	SH	
Action24.02	Anne Sturrock to find out whether the list of planning applications is still printed in the Edinburgh Evening News.	AS	
Action24.03	SB to mention inability of residents to connect to City Fibre broadband installed on the pavements at the next GPCC meeting.	SB	

2025 AGM REPORTS

ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND OFFICE BEARERS

After the 2024 AGM, Craig McMahon agreed to take on the role of Treasurer and there was a smooth handover of the Bank Account with Anne Henderson. We now need to formally elect him to the post.

Stanley Bird, Ian Chisholm, Susan Hezlet and Richard Scothorne have all signified they are willing to be re-elected for a new term. Sadly, Colin Blair has said he would like to stand down and nominations are sought for an able person to look after the website and databases.

CHAIR'S REPORT

In February, our first joint ceilidh with the West Blasket Association (WBA) was held with virtually full capacity of tickets sold and the evening was a great success, with all ages taking part. Thanks mostly go to the WBA's social events committee who took on much of the planning and work on the evening. We agreed that we will run this joint event again in two to three years' time, perhaps with a higher ticket price to cover the cost.

Over the Summer, I had several friendly discussions with Maggie Stevenson, the Chair of the WBA, with a view to forming much closer ties between the two Associations. The WBA went so far as to putting out a consultation to its members, and that returned a favourable view of more informal cooperation, in particular where Planning issues arise across the Blasket Conservation Area.

The Association owns various odd art works, printed material and gardening items. During the year, the Vice Chair has been taking stock and building up a written list of what is held and where it is. If you know of any items that IC may be unaware of, please contact him.

Susan Hezlet

GRANGE AND PRESTONFIELD COMMUNITY COUNCIL REPORT

Elections to the GPCC and other Community councils took place in March 2025 After nearly five years as chair, Ian Chisholm demitted office but continues to represent the Blasket Association on the GPCC. This link enables us to keep-up-to-date with Council activities. The GPCC has an important statutory role as regards planning applications.

Minutes of GPCC meetings are available on its website: grangeprestonfieldcc.org.uk.

Meetings are open to any resident who can attend in person. Residents are encouraged to check the functions of the GPCC on the website.

The new GPCC is keen to establish more community engagement and find out what residents want. To this end an online Newsletter will be launched shortly to which the Blasket Association will contribute.

Ian Chisholm

TREASURER'S REPORT

THE BLACKET ASSOCIATION

Summary of Accounts for the year ended 31 August 2025

	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>
Opening Bank Account as at 1 September	£4,325	£3,934
<i>Income</i>		
Subscriptions	£750	£685
Card sales	£160	£70
Open Gardens – bank transfer	£110	-
Open Gardens – Cash collected	£255	
Ceilidh ticket sales	£241	-
	<u>£1,516.00</u>	<u>£755.00</u>
<i>Expenditure</i>		
Printing	£147.50	£57.60
Landscaping and plants	-	£92.00
Open Gardens	£313.19	£65.70
AGM drinks	£149.50	£108.35
Cockburn Association	£40.00	£40.00
Website costs	£35.31	-
Ceilidh costs (hall, band and welcome drink)	£449.00	-
Bank service charges	£8.50	
	<u>£1,142.70</u>	<u>£363.65</u>
<i>Increase in funds</i>	£373.30	£391.35
Closing Bank account as at 31 August 2024	<u>£4,698.30</u>	<u>£4,325.35</u>

Craig McMahon, 27 October 2025

SHRUBBERY WORKING PARTY REPORT

With the help from many willing volunteers, we continue to try to keep the green areas around the Blacket looking fresh. Over the year we have organised regular shrubbery sessions, these are well attended and the community spirit on show during these events is compelling. Please continue to help look after this special area of Edinburgh. Simple measures include clearing the leaves from the gutters and pavements outside our

properties, picking up any litter we see. Also, please feel free to help with any general pruning/tidying up of the shrubbery areas outwith these organised sessions. The next planned session will be the weekend of 22/23rd November for a leaf clean.

John Usher and Stewart Whiting

NEW RESIDENTS AND CARDS REPORT

Since the last AGM, several new Blacket Proprietors have been welcomed with a Blacket Greetings Package personal delivery, enclosing a Card of Welcome and the latest Newsletter plus card samples. We hope all new residents are settling in well and enjoying living in very special leafy area of Edinburgh. I much appreciate alerts telling me when new neighbours are expected to move in so that we can be quick off the mark!

Our Blacket Greetings Cards (The Blackadder Orchid and Blacket Place East Pillars) are selling well at the new reduced price of 12 for only £3. This special deal will not last for ever, and so orders are welcome via the Blacket e-address.

We've found a further stock of Christmas Wreath Christmas cards which are currently on offer for the same price (12 for £3) – so if you would like to see samples of any/all cards I will have them for sale at the AGM and can sell them - or receive orders there.

Anne Sturrock

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH REPORT

This year we had some serious thefts of and from motor vehicles which seemed to specifically targeted. Unfortunately, though the vehicles were found, they had been stripped. We recently sent out advice about how to secure your cars especially if you have keyless fobs to open doors and start the engine. As in previous years, the main risks remain on-line scams. We circulate alerts about the most common ones, how to spot them and how to avoid being caught by them. Remember never, ever give out your security details! Your bank or building society or whatever will never ask for them.

As the nights get darker earlier, check your security lights and padlock external gates and sheds/garages and fit locks to your bikes and get them marked. We still have a member of the Committee on the Grange & Prestonfield Community Council which is attended occasionally by local Police Officers so that we can pass on any information and/or advice heard there. In conclusion, "Be Vigilant" and if you see or feel that something isn't quite right, report it!

Stanley Bird

WEBSITE AND DATABASE REPORT

The website has been maintained and kept up to date for all recent news and events throughout the year including photos from the ceilidh in February.

Colin Blair

PLANNING REPORT

The only major local application that has caused concern recently has been in the no man's land of Ratcliffe Terrace, which falls between the Blacket, Grange and Craigmillar Park Conservation Areas. The application was from 2 developers, working together to clear the site opposite the petrol station and provide 181 student bedrooms in a substantial 4 storey block filling the whole site and extending back to border on houses in South Gray Street.

We objected on the grounds that the development was too large, affected houses on South Gray Street, and involved demolishing the historic and appealing Edwardian Lads' Institute building and the stone cottage (now a barbers) next door to the B listed Leslie's Bar – we feel that both these buildings are of local importance and should be retained.

Both the applications were refused and a wide range of reasons given, including *'the development has not demonstrated that existing characteristics and features worthy of retention on the site and in the surrounding area, have been identified, incorporated and enhanced through its design'*, and, *'the demolition and replacement of existing buildings has not been adequately justified in terms of the whole life carbon footprint'*.

One of the developers has now submitted a notice of intent to demolish the Lads' Institute and the garage behind it. But the demolition does not seem to be consistent with the reasons for refusal, as it doesn't consider the potential or otherwise of retaining all or part of the Lads' Institute, and it fails to justify the demolition of the buildings on the site in terms of the whole life carbon footprint of a potential replacement building. We have been advised by the planning department that *"The CLP application does not assess the merits of the building and is the applicant testing nationally set permitted development rights for demolition. There is no scope for public consultation on this type of application. This will be assessed in due course. Historic Environment Scotland have produced a report into the cultural value of the building and this may be used by them to inform any future listing of the building."* It is quite a step from HES producing a report to listing a building so, despite the fact that the notice is not a subject for community consultation, please keep up the pressure through your Councillors and others you know.

Richard Scothorne

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

There will be two separate votes on parts A) and B). The constitution states that a two-thirds in-person majority is required to pass the changes and at least 25 people must attend the meeting. Below is the 1990 Constitution with proposed 2025 Amendments marked up in red.

A) BLACKET ASSOCIATION BOUNDARY

The creation of the Blacket Association pre-dated the creation of the Blacket Conservation Area in 1972. The Conservation Area extended westwards to beyond Upper and South Gray Street, north across Salisbury Road and east across Dalkeith Road to include Spence Street and some buildings on the Pollock Halls site. The creation of the West Blacket Association covered all the property along both sides of Minto Street and west to the edge of the Conservation area, while the Blacket Association has supported residents on Spence Street, Salisbury Road and Dalkeith Road, some of whom are members of the Association. Our work has involved a range of planning matters, while residents in this wider area have involved themselves in our social activities and offered their gardens in our open garden event.

Despite all this work and engagement, the Constitution of the Blacket Association still only refers to the 'Five Streets' of Blacket Place, Blacket Avenue, Dryden Place, Mayfield Terrace and Alfred Place. The Committee are keen to formalise the long-standing engagement with the wider area east of Minto Street by formally including Spence Street and the relevant parts of Salisbury Road and Dalkeith Road. This will help us become a more inclusive organisation and ensure that all residents living in the Blacket Conservation Area are clear

about where they can go for support and involvement. This won't affect the scale of our work or weaken our work on the Five Streets, as we are currently supporting residents across this wider area.

The Committee proposes to add words to this effect to the Object statement of the Blacket Association to ensure that these residents feel included in our work and activities.

B) TERM OF OFFICE FOR CHAIR

In recent years the convention has held that the Chair serves at most two terms of office but this is not explicitly stated in the Constitution. The Committee proposes adding words to that effect and revising titles including Chairman to Chair.

CONSTITUTION OF THE BLACKET ASSOCIATION

(as amended at the Annual General Meeting on 19 November ~~1990~~ 2025)

Name

The name of the Association shall be The Blacket Association.

Objects

The objects of the Association shall be the conservation and improvement of the general amenity of the area comprising Blacket Place, Blacket Avenue, Dryden Place, Mayfield Terrace, Alfred Place, ~~Spence Street and those parts of Salisbury Road and Dalkeith Road that fall within the boundaries of the Blacket Conservation Area~~ and the properties therein with a view to preserving the architectural attractions gardens, and residential character of the neighbourhood and its surroundings; to encourage a public awareness and a responsible attitude towards such amenity attractions and character; to cooperate with relevant local authorities and other bodies who may have an interest in said area and by whom or with whose assistance or interest the objects of this Association may be furthered; and generally to act in all matters affecting the area, impinging on its surroundings and the interests of the residents in such area.

Membership

Membership shall be open to all who are resident in said area, owners of property in said area not resident there, and also such other persons interested in the aims of the association who shall be approved by the Committee.

Office-Bearers and Committee

The Office-Bearers of the Association shall consist of Chair~~man~~, Vice-Chair~~man~~, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer. The Committee shall consist of the Office-Bearers and not more than seven further elected members, insofar as possible representatives of the said streets.

The Office-Bearers and other Committee members shall be elected to serve for three years at a time, but only one-third of the Committee, as near as may be, shall relinquish office each year. Retiring Office-Bearers and Committee members shall be eligible for re-election.

In addition to the members so elected the Committee may co-opt up to three further members, provided that the number of co-opted members shall not exceed one-third of the

total committee at the time of co-option. Co-opted members shall be entitled to vote at meetings of the Committee. Any casual vacancy on the Committee may be filled by the Committee and any person appointed to fill such a casual vacancy shall hold office until the next AGM and be eligible for election at that meeting. **The Chair may not normally serve for more than two consecutive terms.**

The Committee shall be responsible for running the affairs of the Association and may take decisions on its behalf in accordance with the wishes expressed by General Meetings.

Expenses of Administration

The Committee shall, out of monies received by the Association, pay all proper expenses of administration and management of the Association and shall use the residue of such monies as it thinks fit for or towards the objects of the Association.

Subscription

The subscription shall be as may be determined by the Association and shall be levied per household per annum.

Meetings

An Annual General Meeting of the Association shall be held in or about October of each year to receive the Committee's report and accounts and to elect Office-Bearers and members of the Committee. Other special meetings of the Association may be called by the Secretary at the request of not less than 10 members of the Association provided that not less than 10 days' notice be given.

Amendments

This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority of members present at an Annual General Meeting or Special Meeting provided that 10 days' notice of the proposed amendment has been given, and that not less than 25 members are present and provided that nothing here in contained shall authorise any amendment permitting the expenditure of funds of the Association on any object which is not charitable.

Dissolution

If the Committee by a simple majority decide at any time that it is necessary or advisable to dissolve the Association, it shall call a Special Meeting of the Association, of which meeting not less than 21 days' notice, stating the terms of the resolution to be proposed thereat, shall be given. If such a decision shall be confirmed by a two-thirds majority of those present and entitled to vote, and voting at such meeting, the Committee shall have power to dispose of any assets held by or on behalf of the Association. Any assets remaining after the satisfaction of any proper debts and liabilities shall be given or transferred to such other charitable organisation or organisations having objects similar to the objects of the Association, as the Committee may determine.