

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF CRAIGMILLAR PARK ASSOCIATION
THURSDAY 25th October 2018
at 7.30pm in CRAIGMILLAR PARK CHURCH HALL

PRESENT: Ronald MacArthur (Chair & Acting Secretary, Liz Philp (Treasurer), 4 members of the committee, Councillor Cameron Rose and 52 members of the association and the public.

APOLOGIES: Ian Murray MP, Willie Grieve, Allen Simpson, Hilary Vandore

1. WELCOME

Ronald MacArthur thanked members for coming, and also said that thanks were due to Craigmillar Park Church for letting us use their hall - enabling us to offer refreshments at the end of the evening. Thanks also to Liz Philp for acting as minutes secretary.

2. MINUTES OF THE 2017 AGM

Copies were available at the meeting. Their approval was proposed by Kay Boulton, seconded by Peter Bottomley and accepted by the meeting as a correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING (and not covered elsewhere) None.

4. CHAIR'S REPORT

Ronald MacArthur reported that the Committee had, during the last year, been monitoring closely two major developments in the area – the East Suffolk Road former playing field site and the Royal Blind School site. On the playing field site work is progressing on 10 semi-detached houses. The first of these were supposed to be completed this month, but this has not happened, so the proposed final completion date of next March seems unlikely. There is considerable concern over the future of the remaining land on the site. Planning permission was granted on condition that a public access open space was to be provided, but how this will be progressed is in doubt. The CPA is being ever-vigilant in watching this development. As for the Blind School site, the Chair reported that a public relations exercise was mounted in the spring, with a graphic, but not very detailed, presentation. This included a very high building next to the railway line, which is causing concern to those who live on the south side of Mentone Gardens, upon whom it would have a considerable impact, however no Planning application has been submitted as yet. CALA Homes were invited to send a representative to this AGM but did not respond.

The Chair outlined the role of the Craigmillar Park Association. He explained that as a result of our Constitution says that we look very closely at all planning applications in the CPA area every week. We work closely with Tony Harris, of the Grange / Prestonfield Community Council, who is most expert and knowledgeable in these matters. In the past year we have made 3 objections to planning applications – one was refused, one was passed and one has gone to appeal. There is a current application which is of some concern – to turn the Abcorn Guest House at 4 Mayfield Gardens into an HMO for 15 people. There followed much discussion of this application, which is worrying especially residents of Bright's Crescent. Speakers from the floor and Councillor Cameron Rose gave some background information to the matter – such a large development is effectively for a hostel and, while we are aware that homes need to be provided for those in need, too many in one area can create problems. We wish to satisfy ourselves that Edinburgh Council inspects these HMOs as often as it should.

5. FINANCIAL STATEMENT and REPORT FROM TREASURER

A Receipts and Payments account for the year ended 31st August 2018 was circulated at the meeting. Liz Philp, treasurer, reported a deficit of £27.66. Although overall subscriptions are slightly down, the cost of our newsletter is not as high as it used to be. We are in the healthy position of having £5,000.49 in the bank. The accounts had been independently examined and will be submitted to OSCR if accepted by this AGM. The accounts were then duly accepted by the meeting, (proposed by Merrilie Cameron and seconded by Christine Simpson). Willie Grieve was appointed as Independent Examiner (proposed by Liz Philp and seconded by Ronald MacArthur).

6. ELECTIONS OF OFFICE BEARERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Kay Boulton and Keith Oliver have resigned from the committee and are not seeking re-election, they were thanked for their efforts. Wilma Elton is due to resign by rotation but is willing to continue and has been nominated for re-election by the committee. Christine Simpson is willing to replace Kay as Vice Chair. Ronald MacArthur and Liz Philp are willing to continue as Chair and Treasurer respectively. A composite motion for all these changes was proposed by Merrilie Cameron and seconded by Marilyn Higgins and accepted by the meeting.

7. NATURE STRIPS

Wilma Elton spoke about the work which has been undertaken by a group of public-spirited volunteers over the past year which the CPA has supported financially, paying for occasional heavy work by a professional gardener and the purchase of some tools. It was made clear that the CPA cannot instigate work of this kind or manage it but we are able to donate funds towards such a worthy endeavour. Wilma explained how the volunteers in the five Nature Strips between Craigmillar Park and Mayfield Road had first got together, motivated by a desire to do something to improve the neglected state of the Nature Strips. They commissioned a Conservation and Biodiversity report and liaised with Ian Morrison of the Council Forestry service and are now following the main recommendation of this report, i.e. trying to eradicate the laurel, both Portuguese and Cherry, as both are invasive species which crowd out and damage other plants. Mike Shields, the Green Space Officer for Edinburgh, has been extremely supportive of the group's work, arranging for green waste to be removed, providing bulbs and assisting with the laurel cutting. He recently arranged for volunteers to visit the Inch Nursery and has allocated £400 from his limited budget for shrubs for the strips. The response from local residents has been very positive and an appeal to buy trees to replace the laurel raised more than £300. Wilma thanked those who had donated so generously and also her fellow volunteers, especially Simon Gage, Louise Baker and Graham Miller, the local lumberjacks. Disappointment was expressed at the lack of progress in strip 1 by the Forestry Service. Ian Morrison who had been the guest speaker at last year's AGM had promised to carry out extensive tree work in strip 1, but only one dead tree had been removed so far. One resident at the AGM said she and her husband were uneasy about the removal of the fencing round strip 5 as she feared it might allow intruders to enter her garden over the boundary wall or encourage dog fouling and she didn't like the stone edging. Wilma agreed this was inadequate at the Lygon Road end but said that soon larger rockery stones were going to be acquired and set properly into the ground. Wilma said that she hadn't noticed much dog fouling, but in all the strips plastic poo bags were being found in a weekly clean up by a D of E Award schoolboy. She noted that absolutely no greenery had been removed from the strip adjacent to the garden of the aforementioned lady, although there was a particularly large laurel beside their property which might be causing structural damage. The resident at the Wilton Road end had requested the removal of laurel as it deprived him of all light into his gable end windows and had damaged his drains. She emphasised that volunteers would not carry out any work which would jeopardise the security of any residents and reminded those present that it was important to think of future generations and start to restock the strips. They are a beautiful asset to the area. The Chair expressed the Committee's admiration of all the work done – a sentiment echoed by the assembled members

8. GUEST SPEAKER

DONNA McARDLE FROM BRIDGEND COMMUNITY FARMHOUSE (BIG)

Donna spoke with much enthusiasm about the transformation of a derelict 18th century farmhouse on Old Dalkeith Road into a thriving locally owned community hub. They run many creative activities – growing, cooking and eating food, building a bothy, fixing bikes, learning to play an instrument and other activities. Their vision is to help people who are affected by the lack of training, education, health and social isolation issues linked to poverty to work together with a shared purpose, to live healthy, socially-connected lives. They run courses and weekly drop-in days for volunteers and special community events as well as a range of outreach activities in the surrounding areas. Rooms can be rented by outside groups. The volunteers are a mixed group – retirees, young people, people referred by the council social work department. The farmhouse itself has been lovingly restored. It is a phoenix risen from the ashes of neglect.

9. A.O.C.B. None.

There being no further business, the formal meeting ended at 8.55pm and was followed by refreshments.