

**Blacon Neighbourhood Alliance**  
**Neighbourhood Forum Application**  
**Question 5 Statement**

On 18 January 2023 five local residents who were keen on seeing their neighbourhood improve created the Blacon Neighbourhood Alliance ("the Alliance").

The Alliance registered with Cheshire West Voluntary Action and opened up a bank account with West Cheshire Credit Union.

A Constitution has been established for the Alliance, which has at its heart the key purpose of promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area of Blacon by:

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- Encouraging openness and transparency between all organisations about the services and plans for the area
- promoting community cohesion
- Improving partnerships with voluntary, social, statutory, private and charitable organisations
- To promote and gauge local attitudes to creating a Parish or Community Council for Blacon
- Supporting the development of a social enterprise business model to provide a Community and Employment Hub and additional facility provision for youth training, clubs and associations.
- Protecting, preserving and utilising community assets and green spaces
- Establishing a Blacon Community Trust

The objective of the Alliance is to progress the formal application for Neighbourhood Area and Neighbourhood Forum designation by Cheshire West and Chester Council and to establish itself as a community voice in Blacon.

The Alliance received guidance from Cheshire Community Action on its application for designated Neighbourhood Forum and Neighbourhood Area. Cheshire Community Action provided a map of the proposed designated Area; and liaised with the Principal Planning Officer for Cheshire West and Chester Council and the Manager of the Cheshire West and Chester Council Locality Team on behalf of the Alliance regarding support and resources.

The Committee has met approximately every two to three weeks since it was formed.

The Alliance held its first formal public community meeting on Wednesday 1 February 2023, to formally launch the Alliance and its vision for Blacon to become a Designated Neighbourhood Forum and Neighbourhood Area. The meeting was attended by around 100 local residents, including Councillor Little, a Blacon Councillor, several community group leaders, local media and guest speakers.

The Alliance presented at the Blacon Councillors monthly meeting on Tuesday 7 March 2023. Both Blacon Councillors were supportive and declared they would work with the Alliance; and were impressed and appreciative of the survey the Alliance supplied them with, and that members of the Alliance completed.

The Alliance was due to hold its second community meeting on Wednesday 29 March, unfortunately the meeting had to be postponed due to matters beyond the Alliance's control. Due to it being close to the Local Elections the Local Authority (Cheshire West and Chester Council) would not allow Council owned or managed premises to be used where members of a political party can attend, due to Purdah, which meant that the Councillors, Police and Crime Commissioner and Avenue Services

could not attend. The Commissioner and the Councillors have agreed to attend the meeting once it has been rescheduled.

The Alliance has a Facebook Group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/blaconneighbourhoodalliance>) which has over 1,100 followers.

The Alliance has secured in excess of over 250 registered members which we believe meets statutory requirements.

90% of members reside within the Area and the remainder either work, volunteer, or own a business in the Area.

57% are in the 45 and below age group bands, and 40% are in the 46 and over age group bands.

The Alliance is committed to ensuring increased participation from the younger age group bands (16-18 age group band 2% membership) and from young adults (19-25 age group band 5% membership) in the educational organisations within the Area, although our members include Blacon Youth Club, who have over 200 members, Blacon Dance troupes with over 100 members and Blacon Boxing Club with over 50 members, who's interest they directly represent.

The Interim Executive Committee of the Alliance has appointed a Youth Representative. The Youth Representative is responsible for listening and respecting the views of what other young people are saying about issues that affect them and to feed these views onto the Committee for consideration and action, if appropriate; and putting across the views of other young people – even if they don't agree with these views, whilst increasing the participation and membership of young people. The Youth Representative is defined as an individual over the age of 15 but under the age of 26.

The Alliance is also committed to increasing participation from 66 and over age group band - currently 7% members – although our membership does include over 60s support groups who represent their members, such as Active in Recovery who have over 30 members of their group and Here and Now, a social enterprise that supports many older people in Blacon.

A continuing aim of the Alliance will be to ensure that all community groups are communicated with regularly and encouraged to contribute to the development of the Plan.

Once Cheshire West and Chester Council has designated the Forum the intention is to hold an inaugural Annual General Meeting of the Alliance formally to elect the Officers defined in the Constitution.

The Alliance has already started the formation of Working Groups that will focus on key aspects of the development needs of the Area. The areas of priority were identified through a survey with our members that concluded a number of areas were of concern within the community, such as Housing, Healthcare, Estate Management and the lack of support and available facilities for the voluntary and community sector, lack of employment opportunities and after school activities. We have formed a number of Sub groups to deal with these priorities including:

**Forum Sub group-** To progress the Forum Application

**Blacon Community Trust Sub group** – To progress the development of the Social Business model

**Housing Sub group** – To establish communication between the provider and the community and develop a relationship to address the concerns raised within the Survey

**Health and dental care Sub group** - To establish communication between the provider and the community and develop a relationship to address the concerns raised within the Survey

**Youth and Community Sub group** – To ensure the community are kept informed and involved in the decision making, encourage membership of young people and promote Community participation.

We anticipate a significant focus on the needs of young people and future generations in Blacon. The target will be to draft a Neighbourhood Development Plan that can be put to a Local Referendum