



AACT Trustee Candidate Statements

Our SCIO Constitution calls for a Board of Trustees consisting of between 7 and 13 Trustees, the majority of which must be Members. We advertised for Members to join the Board of Trustees in early 2022.

These are the nominees for the Board of Trustees (listed in alphabetical order). You can read their candidate statements below.

- Elizabeth Brough
- Stuart Buchanan
- Maggie Carson
- Rebecca Hackett
- Mike Hall
- Sara Stevenson

At the meeting the meeting chair will move to elect all nominees in a single vote.

If you are not able to attend the meeting, you may register your vote by emailing proxy@aact.scot clearly indicating whether you vote for the set of candidates. A “Yes” vote indicates that you vote for the set of candidates above, a “No” vote indicates that you do not vote for the set of candidates above. There will not be a vote on individual candidates.

Elizabeth Brough

I heard wind whooshing and twigs pinging as my hood came down over my eyes and I fell through the air . . . only to be snapped up and set right-way-up by my mum. It seemed entirely magical, the trunk red and old and the texture soft and layered on the strong tree trunk.

These are some of my early memories of the Astley Ainslie - a place of wonder and delight, where we played and ran and climbed and learned. Growing up in Morningside, I have many memories of weekends and summer evenings spent adventuring and exploring the grounds with my wee brother.

I count myself lucky to still live locally with our first baby on the way. We’re looking forward to introducing them to similar adventures at this historic, green and vibrant site.

In the years since climbing trees at Astley Ainslie, I’ve honed skills in leadership, community engagement, and business operations lending to my current role as Chief Operating Officer at an events business.

The opportunity to secure the future of such a great local space for local people would allow me to put my skills to use by:

efficiently and effectively working with members to bring to life your hopes for the space

bringing AACT members activities, representation, and updates

advocating on behalf of our community to the key stakeholders who have an input on the future of the site

Community matters. People, places, and services must serve the community as a whole. We each have something to give and lots to get from our local community and I look forward to being a part of bringing about an interconnected, nature-filled, and respectful environment for people and families to flourish and thrive in for years to come.

Stuart Buchanan

I have been a member of the AACT for a number of years as a member of the Steering Group and now Executive Committee. I helped organize the Visioning Exercise in 2018 at the Eric Liddell Centre.

For the last year I have been Convener of the AACT Executive Committee, organizing and chairing meetings of the Executive. I have been particularly active in the Feasibility Study and Governance sub-committees. I also manage the AACT website and occasionally put together the monthly Member's Update.

I was brought up near the Astley Ainslie and now live nearby with my family. My children enjoy exploring the greenspace. Both they and I value it immensely and strongly believe that it should remain a community resource in keeping with the intent of David Ainslie.

I have a background in software engineering and program management and try to use these skills to help the AACT.

Maggie Carson

Since joining the AACT Executive Committee in 2020 I have been actively campaigning to promote and protect the wonderful trees in the hospital's grounds.

I am running an ongoing tree befriending campaign to encourage everyone who values this green space to befriend their favourite tree. This has proved popular. Recently, with the support of several retired Occupational Therapists, we obtained permission from the NHS to erect two tree plaques to commemorate the significant role the hospital has played in the development of Occupational Therapy Education in Scotland.

In terms of media coverage I have worked to increase the profile of AACT locally by writing for 'Edinburgh Life' magazine and the 'Edinburgh Reporter'. I am indebted to the Guardian for responding to my request for a national article on the need to protect the Astley Ainslie's green space.

I have networked extensively both at in person and online events and via my own Twitter account to ensure AACT is recognised as a community group with a clear purpose and strong voice. I have been rewarded with offers of practical support and interest from a wide range of local and national organisations and invitations to attend events such as the launch of Edinburgh's Million Trees City Project. I was also pleased to be invited to give an illustrated talk on the trees in Astley Ainslie as part of the London Urban Tree Festival in March 2021.

With regards to fundraising, I am happy to report that I have been awarded an Edinburgh University green micro-grant for our tree project. I also devised a tree quiz and have distributed almost 500 copies. Thank you to everyone who has bought and/or sold these.

I hope you will consider re-electing me as there is much that still needs to be done to safeguard the trees.

Rebecca Hackett

I am a local resident who is passionate about the future of the Astley Ainslie site and keen to play a part in helping ensure it benefits the community. Having lived around the site for the past four years I have spent much time enjoying the green space. We use it as a quiet route to James Gillespie's Primary school from Blackford Hill – appreciating the limited traffic in comparison to the other options. I have also spent many happy hours there with my children – playing in the woods, enjoying the wildlife, and making the most of the elderflowers and apple trees in the grounds. I believe the site has a huge potential for the future and that community involvement in decisions to be taken are fundamental to ensure that the full range of options are properly considered.

As a Senior Civil Servant with nearly twenty years' experience in the UK Government, Scottish Government and EU institutions, I believe I have much to offer as a Trustee. I work in a complex, fast-paced and multi-faceted environment but abide by the standards of the Civil Service Code at all times, meaning I am honest, impartial, objective and act with integrity. I have a strong understanding of the principles and practical implementation of good governance, including decision making, communication and engagement, accountability and strong financial management. As a policy professional and someone with extensive negotiations experience, I am adept at assessing options, analysing information and making the case for a particular course of action. As a Trustee I would bring my professional experience and personal interest to support the work of the Trust. I would act at all times in the charity's best interests and would ensure that I play an active role in the effective running of the organisation.

Mike Hall

I am a local resident, living just to the west of Astley Ainslie for nearly twenty years. I have been involved in AACT for three of those, mainly as Treasurer, but have contributed in various other ways too.

My career until recently was as a scientist in the pharmaceutical industry, where I worked on various stages of the medicine development process, from early trials through to the start of commercial production. As well as training me to experiment, consider all the evidence, and report findings, this also gave me an insight into the importance of working with people in different roles, compliance with regulations, and the value of attention to detail. I think all of these will be useful to AACT as a charity in future as it strives even more to do things in the right way.

I have contributed to and helped run other community organizations in the past, both in Edinburgh and further away. Here in Edinburgh I was Treasurer of Transition Edinburgh South for several years, which ran community-focussed outreach projects with paid project workers funded mainly by the Climate Challenge Fund, in which I also participated as a volunteer interviewer and as a community gardener.

I am very aware of the benefits of Astley Ainslie to the public as well as to patients and staff of the NHS. I would like to see these remain intact as I think they will be even more valued and appreciated in future.

Sara Stevenson

My interest in the grounds of the Astley Ainslie is two-fold - it is a green site essential to the natural life of the area and to the health of the people, both those who enjoy the land, and those who are convalescent in the NHS care.

The NHS has for something like 50 years now maintained rather than cared for or improved the landscape - for example, the Jordan Burn, trapped in a culvert, should be released; the locked walled garden should be re-opened and the debris of fallen glass houses removed.

It is publicly owned land, a major gift to the nation, which should not be privatised for the benefit of commercial builders or built over for private housing, car parks and roads.

There are a number of good and viable buildings on the land, which could be converted to other good and positive uses - the pleasures of learning and knowledge - which would enhance people's lives, expand their interests and allow them to engage with a new sociability. The land could be partly used for gardening, partly for more natural purposes.

I have been involved with AACT for four years now, and I am the editor of the journal, Leaves. I have been a resident on the north side of the site for 30 years.