

# Welcome

The last few months have been a whirlwind of activity to say the least!

Since our last newsletter, we have been in the process of recruiting new staff here at Asbestos Action. Many people may already have spoken with our new Administrator, Aileen, and she is settling into her new role well. In addition, we are pleased to announce that two new part-time Benefit and Support Advisors will be taking up their posts very soon.

Asbestos Action continues to be busy with referrals with a notable increase in pleural plaques referrals. We anticipated this might happen once GP surgeries re-open as this is often the first step for many people in accessing X-ray appointments. So if you are visiting your GP or health clinic then remember to advise them if you have worked with or been exposed to asbestos – not all medical professionals routinely ask about asbestos exposure or workplace history but having it documented is an important part of your health assessments.

I have been attending a large number of meetings and advisory groups to ensure your voice and views are represented, including:

- The Asbestos Victims Support Group Forum
- The Mesothelioma UK Research Advisory Board Meeting
- The Cross Party Group on Lung Health
- Scottish Mesothelioma Network event

I have also made presentations to various bodies including Breathe Easy Fife and Breathe Easy

Clackmannanshire, CARF (Citizens Advice and Rights Fife), The Cross Party Group on Lung Health and Blue Badge Team.

Last year Asbestos Action completed a hands-on and enhanced awareness session with post-graduate medical students. The aim is to make sure future GPs are aware of the scale of the problem of asbestos-related disease as well as the key nuances to the assessments and needs of sufferers. It hopefully means that gaps in service – like the work history issues mentioned earlier – can be avoided. In 2022 we did one training session with GPs but it has proven so popular that in the first six months of 2023 we've already carried out seven more!

You will see in the newsletter a piece on the new EIA benefit which will be the Scottish version of IIDB when it is devolved to Scotland. I met with Mark Griffin MSP at the Scottish Parliament about why he thinks an Advisory Board is essential. We will show this at the AGM next month.

As always we'd like to thank you for your ongoing support in helping us reach as many sufferers and their families as we can and we will continue to campaign on behalf of you and your loved ones.



*Dianne Foster,  
General Manager*



**Asbestos**ACTION

# News

Helping, supporting, advising -  
to keep you informed

SUMMER 2023



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**Friday 28th July 2023:** AGM at RRS Discovery, Dundee

**December 2023:** Special event TBC, watch this space...

# LEGAL UPDATE: What are we doing to reduce the risk of today's children dying from asbestos disease in future decades?

That is the question we should all be asking our politicians. With over 5,000 asbestos deaths in the UK every year, and no sign of those numbers declining anytime soon, asbestos exposure remains, by far, the biggest cause of work-related deaths. It is said that 94% of asbestos deaths are "avoidable".

The good news is that due to the work of Asbestos Action and similar groups, more and more Scottish politicians from all parties, are willing to campaign at both Holyrood and Westminster, to fight for asbestos victims and address the "ticking timebomb" of asbestos in our ageing schools and public buildings.

MSP's such as Claire Baker and Marie McNair, have been prominent in their support, asking questions of the Scottish Government about asbestos victims being denied access to

justice due to time bar, or the absence of a strategic plan for phased removal of asbestos from our buildings.

April saw a Westminster Hall debate on "Asbestos in the Workplace" which followed a report in December from the Work and Pensions Committee calling for a national digital register of all buildings containing asbestos, and a target to remove all asbestos from non-domestic buildings within 40 years. These recommendations have been rejected by the Government who maintain it is safer to leave asbestos in buildings undisturbed. However, this fails to recognise the ongoing risk of unintended disruption or the fact that many of our schools and buildings built in the 50's, 60's and 70's have already reached the end of their design life and are degrading. Other countries, with fewer

disease cases have commenced phased removal schemes, aligned with net zero building solutions, so why can't we?

There is a need for a strategic national plan. Scotland, with its industrial heritage, and asbestos legacy can lead the way. Those politicians who have demonstrated their support for asbestos victims deserve our praise and encouragement to build on the current momentum for change. How else will we protect our children from this avoidable harm?



*Fraser Simpson, Partner  
Digby Brown*

## New board member

### Beth Robinson CMIOSH

Beth joined the board in September 2022 after being involved in a variety of projects with the charity, including the LOCHeR Project at Dundee and Angus College and being a guest speaker at the 2019 AGM. Beth has been involved in the Health and Safety industry for over 20 years from her first job after university at Forman Construction, then working for Tayside Contracts before specialising in asbestos after joining the University of St Andrews. During her time at the University she was responsible for the management of asbestos throughout the campus. In 2015 Beth switched from the management side of the industry to the removal; where she has been working as a Contracts Manager for Gowrie Contracts for the last eight years. In her spare time Beth's main passion is playing rugby for Strathmore Rugby Club and enjoys trips away both within the UK and all over the world.



# Proposal for the Scottish Employment Injuries Advisory Council Bill

In June 2023 a bill was brought to the Scottish Parliament with the hope of setting up a body that would support people affected by workplace injuries and diseases.

The Scottish Employment Injuries Advisory Council Bill (SEIAC) – if enacted – would help start an independent advisory group to advise the Scottish Government about who is entitled to certain kinds of benefit payments.

At the moment the two most common kinds of benefits open to sufferers of asbestos-related disease in Scotland are:

- **Industrial Illnesses Disablement Benefit** – the IIDB is a benefit payment that a person can typically receive on a weekly basis after making an application to the DWP
- **PWCA payments** – a lump sum the Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers Compensation) Act 1979 someone can apply for from the DWP but (in most cases) for this to be successful someone already has to have been successful in securing an IIDB payment.

Both the IIDB and PWCA are government-funded benefits overseen by the DWP (the UK government's Department for Work and Pensions). In most cases only sufferers of more serious conditions like asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma will be successful in their applications.

But plans are underway to change the IIDB payment.

The IIDB was first introduced by the UK Government in 1948 and since 2020 applications for Scots have been assessed by the UK Government on behalf of the



*Dianne Foster & Mark Griffin MSP*

Scottish Government (with Scottish government footing the cost).

But the Scottish Government now has plans to replace the IIDB scheme with a new payment called Employment Injury Assistance (EIA). In addition to helping sufferers of asbestos disease the EIA is also expected to reflect illnesses and conditions that affect modern workplaces, for example many organisations have campaigned for illnesses like long COVID to be recognised.

## So what is the Scottish Employment Injuries Advisory Council (SEIAC) Bill?

The EIA would be a Scottish scheme overseen by the Scottish government but Asbestos Action has engaged with Central Scotland Labour MSP Mark Griffin about his plans for the SEIAC.

Mr Griffin hopes the SEIAC Bill (if passed) will create an independent council – made up of employers, union reps and medico-legal professionals – to advise the Scottish Government on the illnesses and diseases

which should be eligible for EIA and scrutinise the rules around it.

At present the IIDB benefit scheme hasn't kept up with jobs and workplaces in the 21st century and has all but ignored women's health and safety for decades. So this is another aspect of workplace health and safety – and legal rights – that the SEIAC would seek to improve.

The SEIAC Bill was lodged with the Scottish Parliament in mid-June. After a lead Committee is appointed, it is expected the Committee will undertake a call for evidence on the bill over the summer recess, with consideration beginning in the autumn.

Mr Griffin hoped to attend our AGM on 28 July 2023 but due to a prior engagement will be unable to attend in person. He has however agreed to compile a short video which will be shown on the day explaining the Bill in more detail – and explain how it impacts Asbestos Action service users as they seek to secure the service and support they deserve, while addressing any unfairness and scrutiny many people like lung cancer sufferers face when seeking benefit support.



# Meet the specialists

## Agnes Whyte MBE, Chair, Breathe Easy Fife

### We asked Agnes

**Q.** What do you like most about your job?

**A.** Watching people enjoying an event, day trip or holiday that I have organised. Having the opportunity to be able to involve people in our charity to give them a sense of purpose and let them know that they are making a difference to others.

**Q.** Biggest work challenge?

**A.** Saying NO. Which then sometimes causes problems with spinning all the plates.

**Q.** How do you like to relax away from work?

**A.** Go out for lunch with friends to catch up with them.

**Q.** Your ideal holiday?

**A.** I love a road trip - usually in USA. Over the years have visited many of the 50 states and later this year will tick off a few more.

**Q.** Favourite film?

**A.** I don't really watch films much but probably Mamma Mia.

**Q.** Favorite meal?

**A.** Definitely something Mexican, probably fajitas or maybe an Italian carbonara or nice BBQ on a sunny day. I like most food especially if I don't have to make it.

**Q.** Person you would most like to meet and why?

**A.** Sir David Attenborough. He has led such an interesting life.

**Q.** Your favourite guilty pleasure?

**A.** Chocolate... and it must be Cadburys.



## Fundraising and Donations

Thank you to everyone who had donated or fundraised for us as always, a few to mention...

### Fundraising

Paul Jarvis took part in the Black Rock 5 and raised a massive £1,337

Sam Nicolson walked the West Highland Way with his friend Greg Morrison and so far has raised £2,225 in memory of his dad John Nicolson.



Paul Jarvis



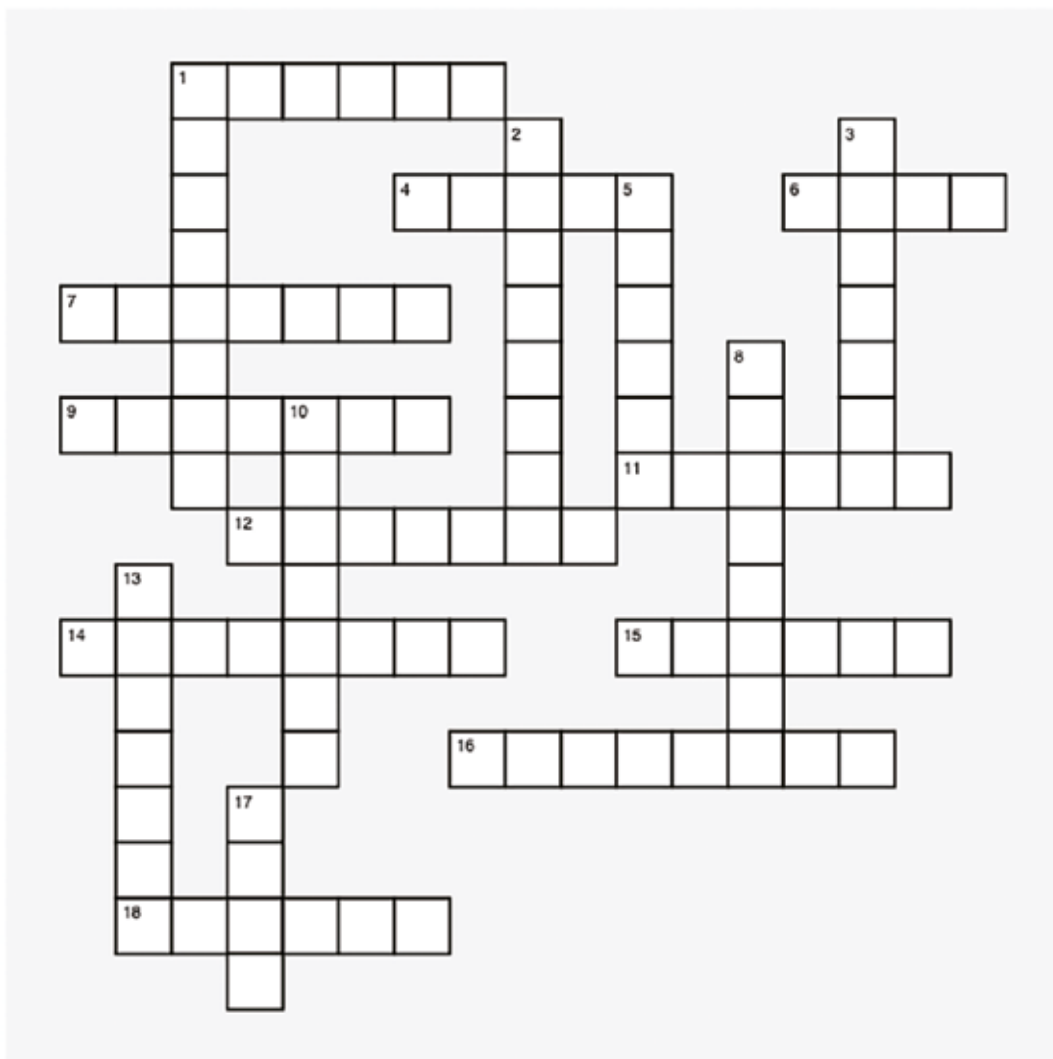
Sam Nicolson & Greg Morrison

### Donation

We received a massive £5,000 donation in memory of Wilma Whyte who sadly lost her fight to Mesothelioma. We are extremely grateful for any donations we receive as it enables us to continue to do the important work that we do so thank you.

A massive thank you to everyone from Asbestos Action!

# Summer Crossword



## ACROSS

- 1) Beachgoer's pride
- 4) Surfer's hangout
- 6) Dog days month
- 7) Rod & reel sport
- 9) Disk you whisk
- 11) Make a bed?
- 12) Roughing it, perhaps
- 14) Treat on a stick
- 15) Alfresco meal
- 16) Parlor treat
- 18) Bermuda \_\_\_\_\_

## DOWN

- 1) Beach attire
- 2) Worker's respite
- 3) Not indoors
- 5) Tramping on the trail
- 8) Outdoor cookout
- 10) Lake activity
- 13) Ballpark fare
- 17) Summer cooler

**ANSWERS:** 1. Suntan, 2. Vacation, 3. Outside, 4. Beach, 5. Hiking, 6. July, 7. Fishing, 8. Barbecue, 9. Fritsbee, 10. Boating, 11. Garden, 12. Camping, 13. Hotdogs, 14. Popsicle, 15. Picnic, 16. Icecream, 17. Pool, 18. Shorts

# How you can help - donations:

## How to donate

- Complete the **form below** and send cheque to "Asbestos Action"
- JustGiving - [www.justgiving.com](http://www.justgiving.com)
- **Standing order** (contact us for information)

### Your details

NAME:

ADDRESS:

POSTCODE:

TELEPHONE:

EMAIL:

### Donation amount - I wish to donate (please tick):

£10     £20     £30

OTHER £:

**GIFT AID – important** (please tick):

#### Boost your donation by 25p for every £1 you donate

I want to Gift Aid my donation and any donations I make in the future or have in the past four years, to Asbestos Action. I understand that I must pay an equal amount of UK income tax at least equal to the tax that Asbestos Action will claim in my donations in each year (*currently 25p for every £1*).



SIGNATURE:

DATE:



## About Asbestos Action

Asbestos Action is a charity that relies almost entirely on donations from appreciative sufferers and their families.

The charity was founded in 2002 by a small group of sufferers to assist those diagnosed with an asbestos-related condition.

We are committed to helping anyone affected by an asbestos-related condition, from supporting sufferers and their families after diagnosis to home visits to help fill in complicated benefits forms.

With a small staff of five the charity punches well above its weight in providing this emotional and practical support.

You're the reason we can keep providing our vital service, so no one has to face asbestos-related disease alone.

Donating can help us to support more sufferers and their families who have been affected through no fault of their own.

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