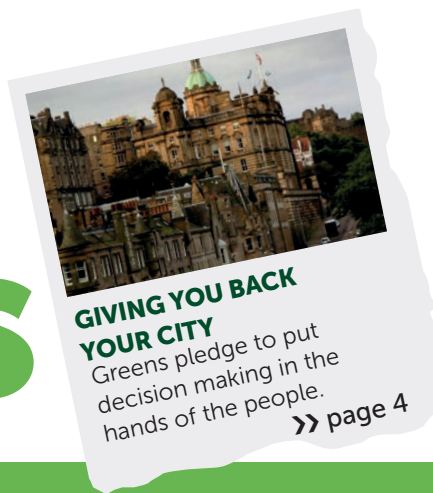


# City Centre Green News



Abbeyhill - Canongate - New Town - Haymarket - Old Town

Spring 2012

## A CLEARER VIEW ON COUNCIL PROJECTS

Green councillors demand end to secrecy in project delivery.

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# Working to Make Edinburgh a Better Place

Edinburgh is a fantastic capital city – but it has been let down badly by poor leadership. The Greens in Edinburgh have a fresh and exciting agenda for the city and look set to build on the support they have maintained during 2011. They are asking you to look at their record and back them in the May 2012 local government elections.

In the Holyrood elections, Greens were the only opposition party to hold their ground, and not lose any seats. Green MSPs Patrick Harvie and Edinburgh's Alison Johnstone (pictured) continue to represent Green values of fairness, caring and sustainability in the Scottish Parliament. They have fought to protect Scotland from Westminster

welfare cuts and ensure that Scotland's energy economy is built on renewable resources.

Since 2007, when Greens first sat on Edinburgh's Council, its three Green Councillors have campaigned to keep Council services publicly run. They have worked to protect the hearts of our communities by saving schools, community centres and green spaces. They have won measures that keep our streets safer and less polluting and our neighbourhoods thriving places we're proud to live in.

Greens now pledge to:

**GIVE** Edinburgh back to its citizens, involving our communities more in decisions that affect them;



Edinburgh Green MSP Alison Johnstone represents Lothians in the Scottish Parliament, and is a leading figure in Green campaigns in the city.

**CREATE** more green jobs and support Edinburgh's local businesses and high streets;

**PRIORITISE SPENDING** to prevent problems before they require more costly solutions; for example by continuing to support campaigns like Splashback! to save Leith Waterworld

and retain a local facility that helps children and families stay active and healthy.

It's time for a fresh, new Council in Edinburgh - voting Green next May will help ensure the Council puts giving power back to its citizens, sustainable jobs, well-being and fairness first.

# City Air Pollution Breaks Safe Limits

Edinburgh Greens are calling for the Council to act on rising levels of dangerous air pollution in the city. Air quality in several areas is so poor that it is breaking World Health Organisation air pollution safety standards, meaning the Council is facing fines from the EU in 2015.

For several years parts of the City Centre, Corstorphine and Great Junction Street have breached safety standards and in November last year

several more areas including Southside, Gorgie, Tollcross and the New Town were added to the growing list of pollution hotspots. Their biggest hazard to health is nitrogen dioxide from vehicle exhausts, which is linked to respiratory illness. Micro particles, so-called PM10s, are also dangerously high in some parts.

Greens' City Centre candidate Julita Mazurek (pictured) commented: "Although the Council is responsible

for air quality in the City it has failed to bring pollution within safe limits. It's completely unacceptable to have our population exposed like this."

Last year Green Councillors called for the urgent adoption of Low Emission Zones, where only less polluting vehicles are allowed. But the Council has stalled the process, while waiting to see if the Government will introduce LEZs this year. Greens argue the emissions criteria should be

sufficiently stringent to improve air quality as traffic in the City continues to rise.

Ultimately, Green Councillors concluded, the Council may have to think again about introducing a congestion charge that would help reduce traffic pollution in the city as a whole.



# PROTECTING OUR GREEN SPACES

Edinburgh Greens believe we must be the custodians of our green spaces and protect them from unwarranted encroachment.

Councillor Alison Johnstone is delighted that the Save Inverleith Park campaign succeeded in its fight to stop the proposed sell-off of an integral part of the park. Members of the Green Party were active in the campaign and a petition of over 8,000 signatures was presented to the Lord Provost. Campaigners now want it designated as 'open space' to protect against future development.

**"PRESERVING PRECIOUS GREEN SPACES IN OUR CITY IS ESSENTIAL..."**

Despite this particular success, Cllr Johnstone warned that green spaces in Edinburgh continue to be under threat. Alison said: "We cannot afford to be complacent. The new development at Craighouse Campus continues to concern local residents who value this historic beauty spot as a place to meet, walk and play."

The developers propose building new houses on the site and converting the existing historic buildings into homes. Alison Johnstone said: "I share local residents' concerns that this development will restrict access to this well-used landscape and increase traffic across the site. Preserving precious green spaces in our city is essential for the health of our environment and the health of everyone."



Cllr Alison Johnstone joins Nigel Bagshaw local community council chair and Green candidate for Inverleith, and members of the Save Inverleith campaign outside the City Chambers.

# Our Enterprising City Needs More Green Jobs

**Greens are pledging to stimulate Edinburgh's economy while protecting the environment and creating more green jobs. But just what makes a job green?**

The United Nations defines a green job as one that, "contributes substantially to preserving or restoring environmental quality." This means that if your work involves ways in which you help society to become more energy efficient, to improve the quality of the housing stock, to generate renewable electricity or to reduce householder's heating bills, then you already have a green job.

Edinburgh Greens pledge to create green jobs while addressing other issues facing the city by:

**INSULATING** every home in the city, helping to improve the energy efficiency of homes and taking people out of fuel poverty.

**INSTALLING** solar panels on every Council-owned property, helping the Council to generate much needed funds and helping tenants reduce their power bills.

**MAKING** more public transport options available; making it easier to move around the city as well as get in and out.

**UPGRADING** boilers to the most energy-efficient models, making savings for householders on their energy bills.

**BUILDING** more social housing on Edinburgh's many brownfield sites, instead of developing executive housing on green belt land far from any amenities.

There's no secret to green jobs: they are the welders and plumbers, engineers and builders that are already living next door to you. Greens want more of them working across the city to make a fairer, greener Edinburgh.

# Greens: No Council Contracts for Tax Dodgers

**There is a great deal of accumulated wealth in the country. But there are far too many people, from large corporate firms to the local 'black economy', who are dodging paying taxation. Without tax, our schools, hospitals and public services will grind to a halt.**

Greens have demanded an end to Council contracts for companies that dodge tax. Currently in the UK around £70bn a year in tax is illegally evaded and another £50bn is avoided or not paid in time according to the Tax Justice Network. That amounts to nearly a billion pounds every year for Edinburgh. Greens believe that avoiding tax – and this includes everyday taxes – is wrong and even worse when the Council is being forced to make cuts by the Westminster and Holyrood Governments.

Green Councillor Maggie Chapman has demanded the Council stop using companies that avoid tax and so stop supporting tax avoidance.

Currently Vodafone, who allegedly avoided £4.8bn of tax on a merger deal, provide the Council's mobile phone contract. She said: "Vodafone can't have their cake and eat it. Either they avoid tax and we boycott them or they pay their tax and win public contracts. I'm fed up with profiteering private companies dodging tax when they make money on the back of services we all pay for. Such companies should never be considered for public contracts. Edinburgh's share of the Vodafone £4.8bn could help us avoid cuts to vital local services."

Green MP Caroline Lucas is proposing a bill at Westminster to make it more difficult for companies to avoid tax. The bill will make it easier to recover billions of pounds of lost tax by forcing companies to be more transparent in their accounting. Caroline Lucas said: "The first aim of this Bill is to tackle the scandalous reality that around 500,000 companies every year appear not to be paying tax in the UK."



# EDINBURGH MUST ADOPT FIVE-POINT WELL-BEING PLAN FOR A FULLER LIFE

Many in Edinburgh enjoy a very high quality of life – but we need to make this possible for everyone. Green Councillors have called for Edinburgh to “go beyond money” in improving lives, in a city where well-being is within everyone’s reach.

Drawing on independent research from the New Economics Foundation, Greens want the Council to help people achieve “Five Ways to Well-being”. The concepts have been adopted in NHS Lothian’s strategy for mental health and well-being, but Greens want Edinburgh Council to go much further in promoting them.

Green Councillor Steve Burgess (pictured) said: “Feeling secure economically is crucial for your well-being, for instance having a secure job and a pension. Or a decent place to stay. That requires a stable economy, not one based on growth at all costs and then slump.

Steve emphasised the most important factor for well-being is the quality and support of personal relationships. “It is encouraging to learn that, once basic needs are met, we can lead happier, more fulfilling lives without spending more money.”



## FIVE WAYS TO WELL-BEING

1. Connect with the people around you, with family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Invest time in developing these relationships as the corner stones of your life.

2. Be active. Exercise makes you feel good, particularly if you find an activity you enjoy that’s right for your level of mobility, whether walking, dancing, playing games, cycling, or even singing.

3. Take notice: be aware of the world around you. Spot the beautiful, notice the unusual. Reflecting on your experiences helps you appreciate what matters to you.

4. Keep learning: try something new, or rediscover an old interest. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things makes you more confident.

5. Give. Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Join a community group, volunteer your time. Look out as well as in. Linking to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding.

[www.neweconomics.org/programmes/well-being](http://www.neweconomics.org/programmes/well-being)



Alison Johnstone with supporters of the Moving Planet March

## Why Leith Biomass is a Wasted Energy Option

While Greens have been campaigning globally – they are also energetic in acting locally too. Councillor Alison Johnstone joined protesters at the Moving Planet march in September to the Scottish Parliament. The event called for a sustainable energy future and highlighted a national problem which has global implications – the four proposed unsustainable Forth Energy biomass plants at the ports of Dundee, Grangemouth, Rosyth and Leith.

Speaking at the rally, Alison said: “The proposed Leith Biomass plant would be a large-scale power station

burning imported wood from other parts of the world. The campaigners have accurately shown the widespread effects of this development. This is not just a local issue of unnecessary disruption and pollution, but part of a growing problem linked to global issues such as destruction of forests and human rights abuses of other communities. This is not the sustainable energy of the future we are looking for.

“I look forward to working alongside other campaigners and activists that want to work towards a more realistic and genuinely sustainable energy future for Edinburgh.”



## Greens Demand A Clearer View of All Council Projects

**It’s simple: local services that fulfil the needs of local people. So why hive off services to arms-length companies we can’t inspect and can’t control? Greens have called for an end to Edinburgh Council’s policy of running council services and projects, including property companies and the trams, using wholly owned companies.**

Councillors have been unable to answer serious questions about the tram project because of the Ltd’s company status. The argument that this is about ‘commercial confidentiality’ simply does not wash anymore with Edinburgh voters.

Green Councillor Maggie Chapman has demanded an investigation into wholly owned Council companies such as tie Ltd.

She said: “It’s time to make sure that Council services and projects are fully transparent. Having arms-length companies may prevent the Council properly discharging its duty of oversight over these projects. And boy, didn’t we need more oversight on trams?”

“One of the key lessons from the trams debacle is that we must avoid creating secretive companies to deliver projects.”

Greens demand that the details of all Council contracts and the accounts and papers of wholly owned companies should be made readily available to members of the public, in exactly the same way as Council reports and minutes are today.



# LIGHTS GOING ON ALL OVER TOWN

## Greens Will Give Edinburgh Back to the People

Edinburgh Greens have pledged to give citizens back their city. Over the past four years Edinburgh has suffered from gross mismanagement and massive damage to its standing and reputation. Too many decisions have been taken behind closed doors by people unaccountable to the voters. The Council has ceased to serve its people and local communities and instead is serving the interests of a tiny elite. The Greens will stop this, and will give power back to the people of Edinburgh.

The trams disaster and the grotesque waste of £3 million on proposals for the failed 'Alternative Business Model' privatisation scheme are a wake-up call to all of us. Greens have called for an investigation into companies such as tie ltd, which was responsible for the tram project failure.

Greens have opposed removing the local power to fund local projects with the decision-making being handed to unaccountable officials. Greens have also piloted the popular £eith Decides project to allow people in local neighbourhoods to decide who benefits from Council grants.

Greens want to create an open and transparent administration that doesn't hide what it is doing from citizens. Greens want a Council that involves the people of Edinburgh. For too long the Council has discounted the people of Edinburgh, and placed its trust in vested interests.

Only when we make the Council answer to the people of Edinburgh, not national and multi-national corporate interests or personal agendas, will we be able to avoid another tram crisis or privatisation fiasco. The Council can then concentrate on what matters to ordinary people: creating jobs, caring for our neighbourhoods, educating our children and looking after the vulnerable.

The 'City Lighting Strategy' being considered by the Council has dismayed those who want to see Edinburgh's energy use and climate-changing pollution reduced. It proposes that many more buildings around the city are lit up at night to "support Edinburgh's role as the economic, cultural and ceremonial capital of Scotland."

Greens point out this would increase energy use and pollution just as budgets are being squeezed. The Council is obliged to contribute towards the national target of reducing climate-changing pollution by 42% by 2020; the strategy's main aim should be to reduce the amount of carbon-based electricity used in lighting the city.

Greens' City Centre candidate Julita Mazurek said: "When we need to be saving energy, to suggest more lighting of buildings at night seems foolhardy. I'd like to see the lighting strategy completely rewritten to emphasise the huge potential for energy saving. The city should be replacing existing lighting with more energy efficient technology, such as LED lights, and drawing power from renewable energy sources."

The Council's Planning Committee will be asked to approve a final strategy in March.

## SINGING FOR A GREEN FUTURE

Award-winning singer- songwriter KARINE POLWART is to host a special event for the Green party at the end of March.

Karine said: "I'm delighted to be hosting this evening to help the Greens gain even more councillors. The party is not beholden to millionaire backers or big companies yet its message needs to be heard even more urgently than ever." Karine Polwart appears on 28 March at Greyfriars Kirk. Tickets £12 (£8 conc) from www.thebooth.co.uk or 0796 702 1708. See also www.karinepolwart.com

## Can you help?

Can you help Julita Mazurek and the Edinburgh Greens win in the Edinburgh City Centre Council Elections, and help to tackle the issues raised in this newspaper? You can make the difference! Remember that the elections use a transferrable vote system, and your ward has several councillors. Even if you don't vote Green first, you can still help by voting Green with your second or third vote.

Yes, I will help by:

- Voting Green to elect Julita Mazurek as the Green councillor for Edinburgh City Centre on 3 May
- Putting up an election poster in my window
- Delivering some leaflets in my area
- Doing some paperwork, such as stuffing envelopes
- Making a donation
- Joining the Scottish Greens

Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone

Email

Please return this form to:  
 Edinburgh Greens  
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 Edinburgh  
 EH6 5QR  
 or email:  
 edinburgh@scottishgreens.org.uk

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