

Inverleith Green News



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Spring 2012

A CLEARER VIEW ON COUNCIL PROJECTS

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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;

developing proposals to allow big businesses to profit running everyday public services.

The first set of proposals, for emptying your bins and cleaning the streets, were rejected by the Council in November. Green Councillors were among the few who opposed privatisation from the start.

Greens reject such plans because we want citizens to have their say in how their services are delivered.



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.

Greens Say No To Privatisation

The Liberal Democrat-SNP led Council in Edinburgh has pushed forward plans to privatise a wide range of local services. The scheme is called "Alternative Business Model" and it is being vehemently opposed by the Edinburgh Greens.

Everything from waste collection to providing school meals has been targeted. The Liberal Democrats and the SNP have spent around £3million of council tax payers' money on

Privatisation would mean services being run to suit the contractors, not residents. We are clear that public services must be protected. They should be run for the public good - not private profit.

Green Councillor Maggie Chapman said: "This proposal to allow big business into the Council was always deeply flawed. With huge pressure on Council budgets it is unforgivable that the Liberal Democrat-SNP

administration wasted £3m on a process that was always going to fail.

"We will continue to oppose the Liberal Democrat-SNP plans to hand services over to profit-motivated big business. The Council needs to focus on how to support residents in dealing with the cuts being forced on it by the Westminster and Holyrood governments. It should not be wasting time and money on exotic PFI-style schemes."

INVERLEITH PARK - DEVELOPERS OR PEOPLE FIRST?

Inverleith Green Group has joined local people in welcoming a City Council U-turn on plans for Inverleith Park.

The Council's original plans were for luxury private housing but, in late 2011, it agreed to reclassify the land as green space and consult the community on future plans for its use. This change of heart came about as a result of a vocal, well-informed campaign which received overwhelming public support.

Nigel Bagshaw (pictured), Green candidate for Inverleith, was an active member of the campaign and said: "The Council U-turn is welcome but the outrage that the plans caused and the money that was spent on the property consultants could have been avoided if the Council had consulted properly in the first place.

"Communities simply should not have to fight to save treasured assets like parks, open spaces, schools, swimming pools, and libraries. They should be able to trust the Council to protect them.

"We need Councillors who will avoid putting communities under such constant pressure and who value amenities which enhance quality of life. Councillors should be on the side of communities, not commercial developers.

"I want to see planning policies introduced that are strongly against building on the city's precious green spaces and communities to have a real say in the planning process. The current ban on community groups speaking at the Planning Committee should be ended and participatory planning processes should be introduced to include more people in the Council's decision making and ensure that they have their say."



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.

Greens Back North Edinburgh News

Local Green campaigner, Nigel Bagshaw, tells Inverleith Green News why he backs community newspapers.

Last March the funding was pulled on a newspaper that had served its community for 30 years despite Inverleith Neighbourhood Partnership, on which I sit, unanimously agreeing to recommend continued support for it.

The North Edinburgh News (NEN) raised the profile of grassroots campaigns and helped local people bring about change and improvements

to their area. It publicised local events and provided a communication channel for many voluntary community groups across North Edinburgh.

There is clearly a huge appetite for truly local reporting and independent journalism in the area which reflects local concerns, especially at a time when many people feel disengaged from democracy and unable to influence the decisions that affect them and their environment. Local papers like the NEN, question, campaign and hold

those in power to account but that, unfortunately, may be the very reason why their funding has been withdrawn.

This withdrawal of funding contrasts completely with massive sums spent each year publishing the Council's own magazine, Outlook. It may provide information but is not news and it does not provide an independent voice. The money spent on it would be far better spent on community newspapers which represent much better value for money.

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 (pictured) 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



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.



TWENTY REALLY IS PLENTY

Local Greens have backed 20mph zones for the area. According to Inverleith Greens, introducing 20mph speed limits helps reduce pollution, encourages walking and cycling, makes streets more sociable, and dramatically increase survival rates to 97% if hit by a car.

able to get around in safety. I want to extend 20mph limits and other road safety measures where communities ask for them and particularly where accident rates are at their highest."

The group also argues that zones can be introduced without costly and complex traffic calming measures and that many local authorities across the UK have already adopted 20mph as the standard speed limit in residential areas. Some areas are now looking at adopting 20mph on all roads where people live, work and shop.



Father of three, Nigel Bagshaw (pictured) added: "Everyone has a right to be safe on our streets. Children need to be able to walk to school and older people need to be

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 Feith 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.

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 Nigel Bagshaw and the Edinburgh Greens win in the Edinburgh Inverleith 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 Nigel Bagshaw as the Green councillor for Edinburgh Inverleith 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

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Please return this form to:
 Edinburgh Greens
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 Edinburgh EH6 5QR
 or email:
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Promoted by Nigel Bagshaw on behalf of the Scottish Green Party, both at 20 Graham St, Edinburgh, EH6 5QR, and printed on recycled paper by Trinity Mirror, Stanley Boulevard, Blantyre, G72 0BN.