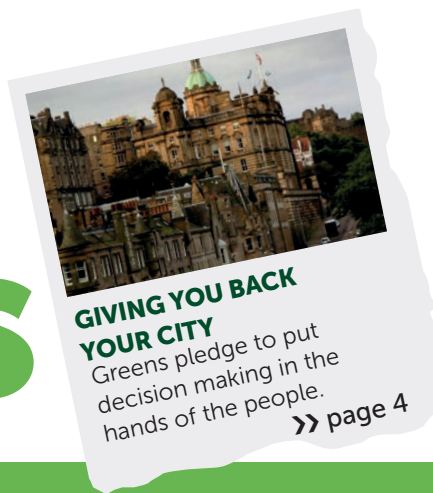


Leith Green News



Western Harbour - Newhaven - Leith - Leith Links - Seafield

Spring 2012

"LEITH DECIDES" RUNNING AGAIN

Public consultation on council spending to continue.

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GREEN SPACES UNDER THREAT



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LEITH ENERGY PROJECT GRANT

Wind turbine scheme wins backing.

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SUSTAINABLE ENERGY OPTIONS



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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.

LEITH WATERWORLD CLOSURE 'A BETRAYAL'

Greens have attacked the decision to close Leith Waterworld as 'a betrayal' following a vote in Council in December. A Green motion to keep the much-loved local pool open was defeated, with SNP, Lib Dems, Labour and Tories all voting for closure.

The decision has devastated leisure facilities, especially for disabled and younger people who enjoyed the warmer water that Leith Waterworld provided. Greens pointed out that the January closure goes back on a

previous commitment to keep the pool open at least until the refurbished Commonwealth Pool opened its doors.

Speaking after a Splashback! campaign meeting to save Waterworld, Green Party candidate for Leith Chas Booth (pictured) said:

"As a dad myself, I've often enjoyed the facilities at Leith Waterworld with my daughter. To think the children of Leith will no longer have that opportunity is heartbreaking. The Council also seem to have ignored the

potential negative impact on the local economy, since Waterworld attracted visitors from across Edinburgh, the Lothians and beyond."

Councillor Alison Johnstone, Green Party Culture and Leisure spokesperson on the Council, tabled a motion at the Council's Full Meeting in December. She called for the Council to work with Edinburgh Leisure to ensure the pool remains open and for an Equalities Impact Assessment to be undertaken to inform any future decision about

Waterworld.

Alison said: "It would be ironic if part of the legacy of Scotland's 2014 Commonwealth Games was the closure of a unique and well-used facility, enjoyed by people across Lothians."



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.

Greens Give Communities Power Over Funding

The successful Green initiative to give the community a say over how Council grants are spent is returning in 2012. The scheme, named 'Leith Decides', allows community groups to apply for funding, which is then allocated on the basis of a public vote.

Greens have argued for the principle to be used in other areas of spending, and have supported existing initiatives to allow communities more control over spending priorities. Spending has already been partly devolved in areas like minor road improvements.

The first round of Leith Decides saw over 350 people brave winter weather to decide how £17,000 of local grants should be spent. A total of 20 local groups benefitted ranging from parent councils to a drumming group to the Out of the Blue art space.

Green candidate Chas Booth said: "Giving people the opportunity to decide how their money is spent runs against the instincts of most politicians. But Greens want the views of many more people included and to allow people to make as many decisions

as they can. Decision making then becomes more transparent and the chances of the right decision being made improves.

"This isn't something that should only apply to small grants to local groups. Local communities could make decisions about much more than the Council currently allows. I'd like to see many more spending decisions gradually devolved to communities. It will make for better decisions and more support for public services."

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



Greens Call For Clarity Over Leith Docks Proposal

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 have called for clarity following an announcement by Forth Ports and Edinburgh Council of an alternative development framework for Leith Docks. Instead of the longstanding suggestion which would see 18,000 new homes built around the docks, the new proposal, which was announced in November 2011, is for a renewable energy hub alongside smaller housing developments. It is envisaged that the hub would serve the offshore renewables industry expected to spring up in the North Sea over coming years.

However, concern has been expressed that the proposal has been cooked up by Council Officials and Forth Ports with no discussion or

consultation with local people about the plans. The recent Edinburgh Local Development Plan publication asked a single yes/no question about the proposals.

Local Greens candidate Chas Booth said:

“While moves to bring ‘green collar’ jobs to Leith will be welcomed, it’s essential that local people are fully consulted about any proposals. The Council and Forth Ports must be more open, and provide greater clarity to local people about what they propose. Consultation with local communities must involve genuine dialogue, not simply a ‘take it or leave it’ afterthought to the planning process.”



LEITH GROUP WINS UP TO £80K FOR COMMUNITY ENERGY PROJECT

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 Leith 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.

A community group in Leith has been successful in securing up to £80,000 funding for the UK's first community owned urban wind-turbine.

Greener Leith, in partnership with PEDAL, Portobello Transition Town, won the money in the EnergyShare online vote featuring more than a thousand projects from across the country for a project at Seafield sewage works. The money will be used to take the project to the planning stage.

The Leith project won the prize by around 50 votes out of 30,000 cast in a nail-biting finish.

Chas Booth, local Green campaigner, and one of the volunteers involved in the project, said: "This wind turbine will be the first in a UK city to be owned by the community. It will help to fund local projects, and deliver a more sustainable City. The project is not built yet, and there are still many hurdles to overcome but if it gets the go ahead it will be a real boost for Leith. It could also act as a very visible symbol of hope and inspiration to other communities, in the way that Fintry and Gigha have done before."

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 Chas Booth and the Edinburgh Greens win in the Edinburgh Leith 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 Chas Booth as the Green councillor for Edinburgh Leith 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:
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 20 Graham Street
 Edinburgh
 EH6 5QR
 or email:
 edinburgh@scottishgreens.org.uk

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