

GREEN NEWS

SPRING
2019



Liberton
& Gilmerton

THE INCH - LIBERTON - MOREDUN - ALNWICKHILL
GRACEMOUNT - GILMERTON - SOUTHHOUSE



Thousands of young people demonstrated on 15 March. Green Cllr Mary Campbell won Council support for their strike

Climate emergency

The United Nations has warned us and our children have taken it to heart. Climate-changing pollution must be halved by 2030, to avoid catastrophic world-wide impacts.

The Scottish Parliament is considering new national pollution targets and Green MSPs and environmental groups are pressing the Government to recognise this 2030 Climate Emergency. The challenge is to set an early date by which Scotland will be carbon-neutral. Green MSP Alison Johnstone said: "Scotland has a real opportunity to continue to lead the world on climate change, but only if the Government agrees to set an early zero-carbon target and then act on it."

PETITION Back the Scottish Greens' call for a Climate Emergency Bill at greens.scot/climate-emergency

WRITE TO your local councillor in support of the '2030 Climate Emergency' action plan.

See article inside for more info and where to get a letter template.

Divest from fossil fuels now

Edinburgh Council has investments worth £150m in companies which exploit oil and gas, through the Lothian pension scheme.

We have to move away from these sources of energy rapidly, if we are to avoid irreversible climate breakdown. All eight Green councillors have signed a pledge to get the Council to divest from fossil fuels; please write or speak to your local councillors and MSPs and ask them to sign up too!

If you'd like a letter template, email seeg@scottishgreens.org.uk.

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It's clear! Edinburgh wants a cleaner, greener city

Edinburgh's residents have delivered a strong message to the Council: they want a cleaner, greener city!

After running surveys and workshops in which 5,000 residents took part, Edinburgh Council have delivered the findings to councillors. 73% of respondents want reductions in the amount of traffic in the city centre, while 75% want

some streets to be permanently traffic-free. Low emissions zones were also highly supported in the survey, with restrictions on large goods vehicles and an increase in park & ride facilities being mooted.

Residents were clear that congestion and air pollution made the city a less attractive place to live and work, with motorists also being in favour of efforts to reduce these.

Green spokesperson on transport Cllr Chas Booth said:

"People in Edinburgh realise things have to change for the better in their local environment. Trying to push ever-increasing traffic, noise and pollution into the city's streets isn't workable. We need to take the decisions now so that future generations have a much more pleasant city to live in."

Our city: raising the funds we need

Greens have secured promises from the Scottish Government which allow local Councils to raise more money themselves.

The promised changes will mean councils can invest in their services. They include the powers, if councils choose, to introduce new levies to make significant improvements in their areas. The Government will also act on throw-away plastic bags and drinks cups.

What is this levy on workplace parking?

It's a proposed charge that some employers will pay if they have 10 or more car spaces for staff. Funds raised will improve our city and public transport.

- It's NOT a tax on individual motorists
- Councils can choose whether or not to set it
- It can be targeted at the most congested areas
- Electric car recharging spaces can be free
- Hospitals won't pay it
- Residents can be protected from overspill parking
- Councils in England already have this power

There will also be cross-party talks to agree and legislate on fixing the broken Council Tax. Cllr Steve Burgess said: "All these changes restore an element of local democracy and accountability."

Tourists to 'Stay n Pay'

Cllr Steve Burgess first proposed in 2011 that councils should have the power, if they choose, to levy a small, daily charge on visitors to the capital. The Council has agreed, after further consultation, to start using this option now being provided by the Scottish Government. The funds raised will be used to improve the city centre for residents and visitors alike.

Re-use plastics

In our last edition we highlighted the concerns of young activist Katri Hastings and Cllr Burgess about throw-away cups.



Now the Scottish Government is planning to introduce a 25p charge.

"We welcome this initiative. Step-up with your own cup when getting your coffee on the go," said Cllr Burgess.

After an intervention by MSP Alison Johnstone, the Green budget package agreed with the Scottish Government includes an increase to the charge on plastic bags to 10p.

"The original charge has been an outstanding success, but there is still residual use we need to tackle," Alison said.

Flood fears for new Burdiehouse school

Councillors have approved a new school on the site of the former Burdiehouse Primary School, despite a serious risk of flooding to the site.

St Crispin's, a special school currently situated in Blackford, is to move into a new building next to Burdiehouse Burn. Unfortunately that site is currently used as a flood plain for the Burn, so the Council will need to spend extra money to strengthen the existing berms and move the flood plain downstream.

"The plans for the school look fantastic and I'm sure the pupils will love it," said local Community Councillor John Nichol, "however I have serious concerns that the Council are underestimating the flood risk. In a world suffering from climate change, the Council should be reducing these risks and future-proofing our buildings."



Gridlock shows future for Drum St

A 'perfect storm' earlier this year that led to gridlock around the Gilmerton area showed what the future could be like for Drum Street.

An accident on the city bypass meant that cars had to be diverted into Gilmerton. Unfortunately there were already utility works in the area which had restricted traffic in some streets. The combination of the two events led to gridlock in the area.

Green campaigners fear that this shows a bleak future for Drum Street and the surrounding area. There are three housing developments currently ongoing around Gilmerton Station Road, and Bernard Hunter want to build a retail park and hotel on their existing site.

Local resident David French said:

"It's clear that Drum Street can't cope with the amount of traffic which is about to swamp it. Edinburgh Council needs to take a look at the infrastructure in the area and come up with a plan to cope, with a focus on sustainable modes of transport such as walking, cycling and buses."



Climate emergency action plan

Green Councillors have won the unanimous backing of Edinburgh Council for a '2030 Climate Emergency' proposal.

Council has agreed to set an Edinburgh climate pollution target in-line with UN recommendations, and develop an action plan to reduce the City's impact on climate change.

Edinburgh is among scores of UK councils to have now declared a 'Climate Emergency'. The action plan will come back to the Council for approval in May.

Green councillors, however, are critical of the SNP-Labour Coalition approach. Cllr Steve Burgess said;

'We have proposed a £3m fighting fund to tackle the City's climate-changing pollution but disappointingly this has not yet been backed by any other party'.

Please support Edinburgh action on the Climate Emergency and contact your local ward councillors (www.writetothem.com). If you'd like a letter template email: seeg@scottishgreens.org.uk.

Fairer benefits

“One of my proudest moments as an MSP!” said Alison Johnstone about her role in establishing the new, fairer Scottish social security system that gives support for everyone to play a full role in their communities.

The foundations were set with the launch of the Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment, to be followed in the summer by Funeral Expense Assistance.

Disability payments

Alison’s concerns include the half million Scots who claim one of the disability or carers’ benefits. Face-to-face assessments for payments are often distressing and stressful. Thousands of Disability Living

Allowance (DLA) claimants have had lower awards, or lost their entitlement.

Green proposals to outlaw face-to-face assessments, where the evidence is already available, were unanimously adopted by the Scottish Parliament last year. We should now have high hopes for a more humane way of assessing eligibility for Scottish social security.



Alison Johnstone MSP launching Women and Welfare Summit

Photo: Jammica Honey

Who cares wins

Carer support must recognise the contribution of those who care for more than one person. The Young Carer Grant - a Green manifesto proposal - should also be payable to all young people providing care.

Housing updates

Empty homes

Green councillors welcomed Edinburgh Council’s support for their proposal to appoint a dedicated empty homes officer.

City Centre Green Cllr Claire Miller said: “With over 1,500 private homes empty for longer than a year, Edinburgh has a major opportunity to boost housing supply and ease pressure on scarce land by helping get these properties back into use.”

Short-term lets

Edinburgh Council has new guidance for landlords of short-term lets, including necessary permissions, safety of premises, managing visitors, plus a portal to report problems properties.

Green MSP Andy Wightman’s amendment to the Planning (Scotland) Bill on short-term lets has passed Stage 2. There’s a useful Q&A about this on Twitter: bit.ly/Amendment45

Diary Dates

GILMERTON/INCH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

meets at Gilmerton Library, 3rd Monday of the month at 6pm

LIBERTON AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL

meets at Liberton Kirk Centre on the last Monday of the month at 7pm

SOUTH EAST EDINBURGH GREENS

meet at Nelson Hall , 5 Spittalfield Crescent EH8 9QZ on the 2nd Thurs, 7pm. Open to all Green supporters

Contact your local Greens



Ward Greens: Contact John Nichol (john.nichol@scottishgreens.org.uk) to get involved in Green activity in Liberton & Gilmerton and around the city.

Your Green MSPs:

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