

GREEN NEWS

AUTUMN 2012



Meadows & Morningside

TOLLCROSS - MARCHMONT - GREENHILL - BRUNTSFIELD
MERCHISTON - MORNINGSIDE - GREENBANK - BRAIDS



Greens will open up Edinburgh

FOLLOWING ELECTION SUCCESSES IN MAY THE NUMBER OF GREEN COUNCILLORS IN THE CITY HAS DOUBLED from three to six. One of their early priorities has been transforming the 'we know best' culture which led, in the past, to debacles over trams, tenement repairs and school closures.

Already the Council has agreed to a Green request for a year-long pilot to 'webcast' council meetings so that everyone can see what goes on in the City Chambers. Other Green commitments being pursued include introducing a petitions committee -

which will allow anyone to raise a public concern directly with the council - and ending the secrecy with which the Council budget is set.

Green Group convenor, Steve Burgess has been actively raising these and other ideas with Labour and SNP leaders. He said: "The City Council needs to rebuild trust with Edinburgh. All parties recognise that but there is still a long way to go. Some of the suggestions made by Council leaders are welcome and Greens will support them. Other ideas might result in decision-making becoming more closed and we'll challenge those all the way."

A cycle-friendly Scotland?

GREEN MSP ALISON JOHNSTONE MAKES THE CASE FOR CYCLING.

"Cycling in Edinburgh can feel like riding an obstacle course, with potholes and junctions to negotiate while fighting for space with faster, heavier vehicles.

"Getting people cycling makes sense on many levels, yet there isn't the funding or leadership that is needed from the Scottish Government, though

there are big opportunities to get more people active, reduce pollution and congestion and save everyone a massive amount of money.

"After the tragic death of a number of cyclists in Edinburgh, I pushed for a cycle safety summit, which the Minister for



Your Green Councillor

DID YOU KNOW THAT IN MEADOWS AND MORNINGSIDE YOU HAVE A GREEN

COUNCILLOR? One of the four councillors who represent you is Melanie Main.

Melanie is one of six Green councillors in the city and serves on the Education, Families and Children Committee, the Audit



Committee that scrutinises the work of the Council, Lothian and Borders Police Board, and is a director of Festival and Kings Theatres. She is also a Bailie, undertaking civic duties representing the Lord Provost and the city.

Melanie lives locally with her husband and daughter. She played a key role as a Marchmont Community Councillor for six years, including two years as chair. Melanie was instrumental in setting up Bruntsfield Living, the local residents and traders group.

Since being elected she has been actively supporting local traders, working to protect local green spaces and helping dozens of constituents with problems.

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Transport agreed to. I led the first ever debate in the Scottish Parliament on cycling, and I have set up a Cross Party Group to try and build consensus among politicians and different road users.

"There has been little progress on reducing pollution from transport, but making cycling safer and more attractive would get more people out of their cars and improve air quality. We're only spending about £20m a year across Scotland on all aspects of cycling but the transport budget alone is over £2000m and the health and sports budgets could back better cycling too. The Government wants 10% of journeys made by bike in 2020, but there's no way that thousands of extra cyclists are going to be convinced onto our streets without a proper increase in funding.

"If you agree, please let your other MSPs know and let's push harder for that vision of Scotland: a cycle-friendly nation."

Greens back Scotland's first community re-use centre



LOCAL GREENS HAVE BEEN PUSHING for Scotland's first community Re-use and Repair Centre to be based in Edinburgh.

Over the last 18 months a group called Remade in Edinburgh has been building up a network of volunteers and a business case for a new type of service modelled on a pioneering project in Brixton in London. The project would aim to take in surplus household and

computer items and re-condition them for use, developing new skills along the way.

Green councillors Steve Burgess and Gavin Corbett have been working with Remade to secure council backing for the group's search for premises and to develop a business plan. Meanwhile Green MSP Alison Johnstone hailed the project as a potential feather in Edinburgh's cap. She said: "One of the real success stories of the

last five years has been social enterprise the Bike Station, which has put thousands of old bicycles back on the street. Remade aims to do the same for household items and computers, providing low cost goods, developing fast-disappearing skills of repair; and saving council tax payers money in avoiding landfill tax. It is a win-win-win that Edinburgh must support."

What next for Craighouse?



FOLLOWING NAPIER UNIVERSITY'S SALE OF THE HISTORIC SITE AT CRAIGHOUSE, developers' proposals have been evolving, currently standing at around 170 homes, including 100 new build.

Council policy clearly states the open land should not be built on. Any application must make a convincing case as to why policy should be set aside. Public access through much of the site now appears under threat.

Frustration flooding Greenbank

RESIDENTS AT THE SOUTH END OF GREENBANK ROAD HAVE SUFFERED FROM FLOODING in their houses and gardens for the past three years despite a new flood prevention wall.

Despite accounts by residents of the situation, no agency would take responsibility and so nothing was done that resolved the flooding.

Green Councillor Melanie Main became involved after further flooding this summer:

"The frustration of residents was palpable when I met them. People have had their lives put on hold for three years, with children unable to play outside in their sewage-strewn gardens, and house foundations beginning to suffer.

"I am determined to ensure the problems are fixed once and for all: Meetings have been held on site with the Council's Director of Transport and officials. We now have commitments and agreed deadlines for each part of the solution. Council staff are working with the residents and a new trust and confidence is starting to emerge."

Green Councillor Melanie Main said: "Major consideration must be given to protecting the long-term sustainable future of the grounds and historic buildings. The developers have not yet done enough to convince me that their proposals are good for the long term future of the site."

Action group Friends of Craighouse's petition against development, with over 5500 local signatures is still open.

Learn more at <http://www.facebook.com/friendsofcraighouse>

Astley Ainslie access remains closed

DESPITE PLEAS FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS, united local Community Councils and Councillor Steve Burgess, NHS Scotland are refusing to reconsider their closure of the vehicle and pedestrian entrances on South Oswald Road.

The entrances were well used by local people including parents and children as part of their

routes to school to St. Peter's and Gillespies' Primaries.

A survey in June by the Grange Association, showed that on one day 1,100 visits were made on foot or by bicycle into the site. 35% were hospital related and well over 700 were as a through route or to use the site itself, e.g. for recreation or dog walking.

Green Councillor for Meadows/Morningside, Melanie Main said, 'At a time when the NHS are seen to be encouraging active healthy lifestyle for all, reducing access to this wonderful green open site makes no sense. The right of local people to make their way through the Astley, as they have done for generations, must be safeguarded.'

For more information about the Access to Astley Ainslie campaign email melanie.main@scottishgreens.uk

Your green space NEEDS YOU

MANY LOCAL GREEN SPACES HAVE FRIENDS GROUPS, explains Green Councillor Melanie Main:

"Friends group are instrumental in protecting and caring for our parks, and supporting them is a great way to meet your community."

If you missed Braidburn Valley Park's annual Tea in the Park Fun Day, why not help out at the autumn clean-up? Sunday 7 October from 2.00-4.30pm www.braidburnvalleypark.org.uk

If the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links are your local green space, then why not join one of the monthly Saturday morning clean-ups run by Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links? www.fombl.org.uk

Reclaiming Greenbank Road

GREENBANK ROAD SUFFERS AS A WELL-KNOWN 'RAT RUN' BETWEEN COLINTON AND MORNINGSIDE.

Residents at the north end of the street secured Green Councillor Melanie Main's support in their bid to have the road closed to through traffic: "There is a will amongst residents to reclaim the road for the families who live there. Unlike Greenbank, modern housing developments are designed to prevent rat runs, so there must be a solution."

Melanie would like to hear from residents and has called a meeting at Greenbank Church on 9 October, 7pm.

See edinburghgreens.org.uk for more details

LIVING LOCAL...

United front in Bruntsfield digs in

Bruntsfield community's reaction to Sainsbury's arriving by stealth in their midst has been not just to shop elsewhere, but to actively support the local traders in fighting for the kind of high street they want. Bruntsfield Living, a residents and traders association has emerged, and local Green Councillor Melanie Main is proud to be a founder member. See http://bit.ly/Bruntsfield_Living for details.

Karen Mackay, owner of local children's clothing shop Nippers, has started 'Digs-In', a venture to set up a fruit and veg shop run by and for locals.

The project is gathering pace, so if you would like to be part of it contact Karen on 228 5085, at nippers4kids@btconnect.com or pop into her shop at 131 Bruntsfield Place.



Green Councillor Melanie Main with New Leaf's Linda and Derek

Turning over a New Leaf in Marchmont

Linda and Derek who opened the New Leaf health food shop in Argyle Place, Marchmont in 1998 retired in August. They will be very much missed and we wish them well. The new team, Dee, Will, Neus, Karen and Sophie are taking over as the New Leaf Cooperative and re-opening this Autumn. They will be doubling the floor size, offering a bike delivery service and, rumour has it, making their own peanut butter! www.newleafcoop.co.uk

The Forest in Tollcross

A huge welcome to the Forest Café, who have transformed the corner of Brougham Place and Lauriston Place from an eyesore overrun by graffiti to lively buzzing space at the heart of Tollcross.

Described as "a volunteer-run, collectively-owned, free arts and events space masquerading as a vegetarian café", the café began in 2000 in tiny premises in the Grassmarket and has grown in size and reputation.

Open 10am - 11pm. <http://blog.theforest.org.uk>

Green councillors lead calls for property repair reform

GREEN COUNCILLORS HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY PUSHING FOR PROGRESS ON A PROPERTY REPAIR SCANDAL which has left many home-owners with outstanding work and soaring bills.

The service, which started out as a stop-gap where owners in flats could not agree work on areas like roofs and walls, gradually came to be the normal way of organising such works in the capital. Over time, practices have become lax and, at worst, highly-publicised examples of collusion between council officers and contractors have been exposed.

The result has been home-owners over-charged or left with shoddy or incomplete work. Similar problems have emerged in the way the council maintains its own buildings.

Back in August, leading Green councillor, Steve Burgess pressed for assurances that a backlog of cases

would be cleared within a year (by October 2013). He has also been seeking to make sure that a replacement service is based firmly on what owners want; and that there will be proper accountability when work is done.

Fellow Green councillor Gavin Corbett has been meeting with the project team developing the new service. He said: "Edinburgh needs a common repairs service. The tragic death of a young woman from falling masonry in a city centre building a few years back shows starkly the consequences of getting it wrong and Edinburgh is a city of tenements and older buildings.

"But the property repairs scandal has, alongside the mis-management of the trams project, scarred the reputation of the City Council. I firmly believe that it is not simply a matter of individual competence or corruption but



of a culture where the customer was remote from what was going on.

"So any new service needs to do three things. Firstly, to give owners the assistance they need and want to organise repairs among themselves; secondly, to draw in the expertise of organisations like housing associations to help manage and maintain buildings; and, thirdly, to make sure that never again does a service get so out of control.

"It will take time to restore confidence. But the work needs to be done."

Contact your local Greens

Melanie Main is your Green Councillor for the Meadows and Morningside area.

Contact Melanie on 07775 665 499, 529 3181 or melanie.main@edinburgh.gov.uk. Meetings by arrangement.

 @melaniemain

You can also contact your Green MSP, Alison Johnstone at alison.johnstone.msp@scottish.parliament.uk or 0131 348 5000

Edinburgh Greens

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