

Meadows and Morningside Green News



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Spring 2012

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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.

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

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.

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."

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.

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 NEW DEVELOPMENT AT CRAIGHOUSE CAMPUS CONTINUES TO CONCERN LOCAL RESIDENTS..."

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."



Alison Johnstone MSP (left), with Rosy Barnes (centre) from the Save Craighouse Campaign and Melanie Main (right) Green Party Candidate at the Orchard on Craighouse Campus

What Are Your Views on City Hospitals?

NHS Lothian intends to redevelop the Royal Edinburgh Hospital on a phased basis, to make it a 'modern, fit-for purpose facility' with many of the services currently at the Astley Ainslie being moved there by 2016.

Green MSP Alison Johnstone commented: "We welcome NHS Lothian's plans to provide up-to-date, safe and dignified care for some of the most vulnerable members of our communities. Both the Astley Ainslie and the Royal Edinburgh Hospitals are significant parts of our area and the former, in particular has been associated as a hospital site since the 16th Century. We need to be clear about what services will be provided at the Royal Edinburgh; what will happen to the Astley Ainslie site; how this will be paid for; and what community benefit will be provided."

Melanie Main (pictured), Green Party candidate for Meadows and Morningside added:

"Both sites contain some wonderful green spaces. We would not like to see the community gardens on the REH site disappear. I am concerned that the NHS has recently restricted public access to the Astley Ainslie grounds, particularly in light of the possible sale of part of site for development in the near future."



YOUR VIEWS:

GETTING THROUGH THE ASTLEY AINSLIE

For many years the Astley Ainslie grounds have been used as a pedestrian and cycle route by local residents, including those who prefer it as a safer off-road way to and from two local primary schools.

Now the NHS wishes to discourage people from using the site and has permanently closed the east gate at British Heart Foundation Lane. Greens are actively supporting local community councils in their bid to keep the grounds open to the public. If you or someone you know has used the Astley Ainslie grounds as a route or for walking in the past or present, Melanie Main would like to hear from you: melanie.main@scottishgreens.org.uk 07775 665 499.

Local Greens Call For Open Consultation on School's Relocation

One of the city's best performing high schools, Boroughmuir, is in urgent need of repair or relocation to help maintain its standards.

Local Greens initially welcomed Edinburgh Council's announcement of a public consultation on the school's future, however, at a Full Council meeting Green Councillors were alone in supporting the School Council's preference for an open consultation to gather views of parents as a first step.

Instead, the so-called consultation is focussed on Council Officials' preferred option of a new site at Fountain Park, which still involves children being bused off site to sport facilities. An alternative option does exist, a plan for refurbishment of the existing site by an award-winning architect.

Green spokesperson Melanie Main commented: "The community's views on the school's future must be taken seriously and all options properly considered to achieve the best permanent solution. This consultation should not simply rubber stamp the preferred outcome of a few officials."

Meanwhile, Alison Johnstone MSP welcomed the arrival in January of Donald MacDonald, former head of Liberton High, as permanent Head Teacher at James Gillespies' High School. "I am delighted that the school community now has a strong leader to guide them through the challenges of the approaching redevelopment."

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.



FIGHTING FOR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

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.

From nursery to secondary schools, Greens continue to put children's educational benefit ahead of short term financial savings.

Greens Education spokesperson Councillor Alison Johnstone helped force the Council to provide more evidence on how pupils' education will benefit from changes to the management of secondary schools. "The Council have not presented any evidence to suggest the proposed reduction in staffing will have any educational benefits. Understandably, this is of great concern to teachers, parents and staff alike.

"We must place children at the centre of these decisions. A case for the cuts to senior secondary school posts has not yet been

made. It must be clear there is real educational benefit to children and not the Council's short term financial position. Such decisions could have an impact on current pupils and future generations and must be well informed."

On the same theme, Cllr Johnstone asked the Council for broader research into the impact of school starting ages and the costs involved in nursery schools. Alison said: "It's one thing to want to make savings through reducing the number of pupils delaying primary school entry, but we should only pass policy when we have broad and robust evidence on the educational benefits of school entry ages."

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 Melanie Main and the Edinburgh Greens win in the Edinburgh Meadows and Morningside 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 Melanie Main as the Green councillor for Edinburgh Meadows and Morningside 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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Postcode

Telephone

Email

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