

GREEN NEWS

SPRING
2013



Meadows
& Morningside

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

Food for thought

From field to table – but how?

Green MSP Alison Johnstone argues we should take a hard look at how our food reaches us, and sets out how Greens want to transform the food industry in Scotland.



"The horse meat scandal is just the latest in a long line of food scares. Before it hit the headlines I had asked questions in parliament about the Scottish Government's slow progress on creating a Scottish Food Standards Agency. It is needed more than ever.

"Where our food comes from, convoluted supply chains and big companies' stranglehold on our food are issues that Greens have long campaigned on. Only when there's a national scandal do governments and the mainstream press take notice. Then we slowly drift back to the status quo.

"Ensuring the quality of the food we buy isn't only up to watchdogs and committees. As individual consumers, we can and should question where our food comes from and how many hands it has passed through before reaching us. We can choose to shop at locally-owned outlets, and even when we shop at supermarkets, choose local produce. Greens support local production and local shops because they keep profits in the local economy, and ensure that producers receive a fair price.

"So I want to see a market where food passes more directly from growers to shoppers, where shoppers have a better idea of where their food has come from, and where it's consumers who make the choice of what they eat, rather than the Big Four supermarket firms who currently control three-quarters of our grocery market.

"This is not just a pipe-dream. I recently met with Paul Holmbeck, the Director of Organic Denmark, who leads an industry which commands a huge market share. He emphasised the need for action on many fronts: from marketing to ensure consumer demand for better food, through to government action on planning and regulation which creates the conditions in which local producers can flourish. I also want to see more support for some of our fantastic community food projects which ensure that good healthy food is not just for the better-off.

"Too many governments have lost sight of the true cost of cheap, processed food. The time for a sustainable, local approach to food has come."

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 committees dealing with education and families, council scrutiny and audit and the police force. Melanie is the Green Bailie, undertaking civic duties such as Citizenship Ceremonies representing the Lord Provost and city. She sits on the Board of the Festival and Kings Theatres.

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 Brunstfield 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.

New vision for city centre needed, say Greens



TIME MOVES ON BUT THE VIEWS OF SOME COUNCILLORS AND BUSINESSES REMAIN ROOTED IN THE PAST, argues Green Councillor Nigel Bagshaw.

"They call repeatedly for greater car access to the city centre as the only way to make it thrive, but can anyone truly point to an example of modern city centre renaissance led by "more and better parking"?"

"It is understandable that businesses feel hurt by the way the tram project has been managed, but we cannot see a future in which city centre businesses compete in a race to the bottom with out-of-town

shopping centres or the likes of Amazon. It is a race they will always lose no matter how many city centre car-parking spaces are added or how cheap they are made. In the meantime, there is the huge cost of increased congestion and air pollution.

"What we need for our city centre is a new vision - one which builds from its incomparable setting and is enhanced by the far-

sighted Gehl Report, commissioned by the City Council; served by excellent public transport and cycleways; where walking is king and where parking priority is given to essential car-users like disabled people.

"In this kind of city centre, the retail offer may evolve - fewer chain-stores, more distinctively Edinburgh businesses - but it offers a vibrant future still.

Green Councillors in warning over 'welfare cliff'

SOME OF EDINBURGH'S MOST DISADVANTAGED RESIDENTS are teetering on the brink of a welfare cliff. That was the stark message from Green Councillors in presenting their 2013-14 budget proposals back in February.

Protecting the most vulnerable from the UK Government's welfare cuts was a major theme of the Green Budget. The party backed plans to introduce an Edinburgh Living Wage and support for people to get into jobs and training. The Greens also proposed a £10 million programme to tackle fuel poverty, creating at least 160 jobs and apprenticeships; extra help for parents on benefits looking for child-care to get back into work or training; and a fund to reduce the impact of the much-criticised "bedroom tax". Two Green proposals - on welfare advice, and on home adaptations for disabled people - were accepted in the final Council Budget.

Green Finance Spokesperson, Gavin Corbett, said "In the media we hear about the "fiscal cliff" all the time. But there's a welfare cliff too. Green Budget proposals focused on creating fulfilling work and training, helping the hardest-pressed with household bills and reducing some of the harshest welfare cuts in more than a generation. I am pleased that the Council accepted some of our ideas, but there is a lot still to do."



Council petitions: giving you your say

BOTH NATIONALLY AND HERE IN EDINBURGH, Greens have always been very keen to enhance the opportunities for citizens to engage with and participate in local politics.

Too often the Council seems uninterested and appears not to listen or care about real local concerns, so it is really encouraging to see people engage with the Petitions Committee, chaired by Green Councillor Maggie Chapman.

Maggie said "This Committee seeks to give a voice to members of the public who wish to raise local or general issues directly with Councillors and Council officials. It will also, hopefully, make the ways in which the Council deals with these issues more transparent. I am pleased that Committee meetings are webcast too, to reach the widest possible audience."

Maggie is working on taking the Committee out on tour into communities, rather than only holding meetings



in the City Chambers. She is also keen to have special Youth Committee Meetings, where young people's concerns are the focus of the Committee business.

She said "I am excited about the opportunities this Committee affords the people of Edinburgh. We need to open up the council, take people's concerns seriously, and prove to them that we are listening and acting."

Local bus services, Council management structures and religious observance in schools are just some of the topics brought to the committee so far.

To find out more about the Petitions Committee, or to start your own campaign, go to www.edinburgh.gov.uk/petitions.



Which is more obtrusive? The bike shed discretely situated in this front garden, or the car parked outside?

Bike sheds stay in conservation areas: common sense prevails

In December, the Council agreed to overturn officers' recommendations to remove a bike shed in Bruntsfield setting the scene for changes in planning policy.

Cycle campaign group SPOKES has been highlighting the tension between council transport policy and planning policy as households were refused permission for, or told to remove, modest-sized bike sheds to the front of their homes.

Greens and SPOKES supported a Hartington Gardens householder submitting a retrospective planning application for a bike shed threatened with removal. The planning department since dropped a second enforcement action on a householder in Craighouse.

Local Green Councillor, Melanie Main said "I am delighted that common sense has prevailed. More people are doing exactly what the Council is asking, and getting on their bikes

each day, so reducing demand for cars, which affect the appearance and feel of a street far more than a well-designed bike shed. For some, a secure shed makes the difference between cycling regularly or not.

"I think it is perfectly possible to allow modest-sized, well-designed bike sheds that are sympathetic to an area. But this needs to be about more than small steps - planning policy itself must adapt to the transport realities of the 21st century."

Craighouse case remains unconvincing

DEVELOPERS' PROPOSALS for the historic Craighouse site have received a massive 1179 objections.

Additional information has been submitted and the public has until 5th April to make any further comments.

Local Green Councillor Melanie Main said "Although the proposal has not changed and previously-made comments remain valid, people might want to comment on the additional information. I for one am not convinced that the financial case for enabling development has yet been made."

Learn more at www.facebook.com/friendsofcraighouse or www.edinburgh.gov.uk/planning (Ref. no 12/04007/FUL)

Concerns over condition of The Meadows

STAGNANT POOLS AND LARGE WET MUDDY AREAS are

evidence that the Meadows has not recovered from the past twelve months' appalling weather and the compaction from heavy lorries used by major events held last summer.

Meadows and Morningside Green Councillor Melanie Main is pressing for urgent action: "Unless there is a year's respite from these events for this precious space, the risk is that for the rest of the year less land will be available for the community as a whole.

"The Meadows is open public space for nurseries and after-school clubs, student groups, local sports and fitness clubs - for everyone, in fact. Their needs must come first."

NEWS IN BRIEF.....



Astley Ainslie: Get Active, Keep Access

For generation local people have had the pleasure of walking in and through the Astley Ainslie Hospital grounds. (See Autumn 2012 issue at www.edinburghgreens.org.uk) Rumours about sale of the hospital and creeping closure of the site to the public have concerned Greens for some time. The Access to Astley Ainslie campaign aims to safeguard access to the site for future generations and is currently gathering evidence on who has used and crossed AA over the last few decades.

If you can help, we would love to hear from you: melaniemain@scottishgreens.uk

Community Grocers for Bruntsfield

Residents formed a group earlier this year with Green Councillor Melanie Main as its chair, to establish a community-owned and supported not-for-profit green grocer in Bruntsfield. This dedicated small group of locals is working hard to make the Community Grocers a reality. Now they need support from the wider community.

Details:

www.diginbruntsfield.co.uk
www.facebook.com/diginbruntsfield

M&M CALENDAR

Ours is a community with lots going on. Here are some dates for your calendar. Contact us if you want your event added here:

- **Greenbank Road and Lane Safety Campaign**
South Morningside Primary School
Monday 29th April
7.30pm
- **Meadows Volunteering**
1st Saturday of the Month 10am
www.fombl.org.uk
- **Braidburn Valley Park Spring Clean and Butterbur Bash**
Sunday 21st April 2-4pm
www.braidburnvalleypark.org.uk

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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Greens: listening to local issues and driving neighbourhood campaigns

ACROSS THE CITY, GREENS ARE BACKING NEIGHBOURHOOD CAMPAIGNS; harnessing the resources and expertise in the Council, and helping to forge positive relationships between neighbourhood residents and Council staff.

The highest-profile of these campaigns is Splashback's bid to run the currently closed Leith Waterworld as a community enterprise. Since the May 2012 election Leith Green Councillor Chas Booth persistently championed the community case for re-opening and shared the delight of campaigners as funding and Council backing was secured.

In South Edinburgh, Councillor Melanie Main has recently agreed to chair the steering group for *Dig In*, Bruntsfield's community owned Grocer with a difference, she commented "The community's desire for a local shop that sells fruit and veg became apparent when Sainsbury's bought Peckhams a year ago. I am delighted to be able to support the highly motivated group now working to make this a reality."



Cllr Melanie Main, one of six Green Councillors working with neighbourhood groups on community campaigns

Convener of the Green Group, Cllr Steve Burgess, said "Residents know that they are really being listened to when Green Councillors take up their concerns and wishes. We help communities realise their aims and we work together, council and neighbourhoods, to find real solutions."

Find out more

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