

# GREEN NEWS

SPRING  
2019



## Southside & Newington

ST LEONARDS – SCIENNES – THE GRANGE  
PRESTONFIELD – BLACKFORD – NETHER LIBERTON



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

## Nicolson Street high on pollution

**Nicolson Street is one of the most polluted streets in Scotland.**

The new air quality monitoring station beside Southside Community Centre shows heavy traffic is emitting nitrogen dioxide at illegal unsafe levels.

Green Cllr Steve Burgess met with air pollution campaigners who advise that a 'Low Emission Zone', to penalise polluting vehicles entering the City, would reduce harmful pollution.

# 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](https://www.greens.scot/climate-emergency)

**WRITE TO** your local councillor in support of the Greens '2030 Climate Emergency' Action Plan  
More info and a letter template: [www.edinburghgreens.org.uk/site/climate-emergency-support](https://www.edinburghgreens.org.uk/site/climate-emergency-support)

## 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](mailto:seeg@scottishgreens.org.uk).



Photo: Ian MacNicol

# 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.

# LOCAL PLACES

**SOUTHSIDE & NEWINGTON** has always thrived because local people have been prepared to fight to keep places and improve streets for community use. Over the years there have been successes and some losses, but never apathy.

## Around St Crispin's

### Relocation and allotments

Residents are asking what next for the school site when St. Crispin's special school relocates from Watertoun Road off West Savile Terrace to Burdiehouse.

Savile Area Residents' Association has raised concerns about the future of neighbouring allotments if the school site is sold by the Council for housing.

### Watertoun play equipment - your views sought

Meanwhile Cllr Steve Burgess is also keen to get residents' views about having some natural play equipment on the grassy area at Watertoun. A local parent has the idea of raising funds for this.

**If you support the idea contact [steve.burgess@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:steve.burgess@edinburgh.gov.uk)**

## Updates

### Aah - a delay

Delays in the NHS timeline mean the sale of the Astley Ainslie Hospital is not now expected to take place before 2025. The Astley Ainslie Community Trust, exploring the potential for a community-led development of the site, now have more time to prepare a bid.

With a grant from the Scottish Government's Making Places initiative, they sought ideas and inspiration from local residents during March; see [www.aact.scot](http://www.aact.scot) for details. They particularly need the views and enthusiasm of young people in the area!

## Safe school routes

**Parents and carers at Sciennes and Preston Street Primary Schools have their work cut out to make routes to schools safer for children.**

### Sciennes

Signs banning traffic along Sciennes Road at drop-off and pick-up times are often ignored. Cllrs Steve Burgess and Alison Dickie have secured agreement to introduce 'build-outs' to improve the visibility of these signs.

Parents are working towards closing Sciennes Road and extending the playground. Contact [steve.burgess@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:steve.burgess@edinburgh.gov.uk) for information.

### Preston Street

Two years ago funds were allocated to build a zebra crossing at the St Leonards end of Bernard Terrace, for pedestrians and children walking to school. The community is frustrated by lack of progress in implementing this plan.



## Prestonfield - nursery site

**What's happening to the former Princess Elisabeth nursery in Prestonfield?**

Local people were upset when the nursery was closed in 2010 and the land later sold by the Council. Mature trees were cut down, building work started and stopped, and then no action.

Green Cllr Steve Burgess has been talking to the new owners, the Maharishi Foundation, who assure him that building is about to start on homes for its members. They hope to include a meeting room that the local community can use.

### Serenity Cafe closure

The sudden demise of Serenity Cafe last November was a terrible blow to the addiction recovery community, who depended on its safe space and services. Volunteers were still delivering Green News with a feature promoting Serenity, when parent charity COMAS went into liquidation.

Former staff and volunteers have been offering ongoing support, and are consulting on the next steps. A new support project is being planned.

[facebook.com/SerenityCafeEdinburgh](https://facebook.com/SerenityCafeEdinburgh)

# 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](https://bit.ly/Amendment45)



Green News is delivered to you by volunteers, including Éloi - our youngest volunteer!

# Contact your local Greens



**Your Green councillor:** Steve Burgess is the Green councillor for Southside & Newington. Contact Steve [steve.burgess@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:steve.burgess@edinburgh.gov.uk) or 0131 529 3274 to arrange a convenient time to meet at a local venue, your home or the City Chambers.

**Your Green MSPs:** Alison Johnstone and Andy Wightman on 0131 348 5000  
Email Alison: [alison.johnstone.msp@scottish.parliament.uk](mailto:alison.johnstone.msp@scottish.parliament.uk)  
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