

## **Green councillors report to 2017 AGM of the Edinburgh Green Branch**

Given the revised timing of the AGM, this report is brief, comprising the 5-year report by the former Green Group of Councillors for 2012-2017, reproduced below, coupled with highlights since then.

### **1. Up until February 2017**

Our 5 year report from 2012-2017 is at <http://www.edinburghgreens.org.uk/site/wp-content/files/Green-councillors-2012-17-Final-report.pdf>

### **2. The pre-election period**

During the pre-election period, formal council business was relatively light. However, Green councillors secured early action, at the April full council meeting, on one of our manifesto asks, by winning council backing for Edinburgh to sign up to the Basque declaration on sustainable cities.

Other notable pre-election highlights included:

- Our manifesto launch which majored on our commitment to dramatically increase the scale of participatory budgeting in the city.
- A front-page splash and editorial and NGO backing for one of our three key election pledges – capping rent rises.
- Another front-page splash on another of our three key pledges: on social care.

### **3. Election**

The election itself saw our numbers rise from 5 to 8 Green councillors out of a total number of target wards of 11. It was disappointing to lose one sitting councillor in Nigel Bagshaw in Inverleith and to come very close with Gillian MacKay in Forth and Dan Heap in Sighthill/Gorgie. Nevertheless, 8 Green councillors is our highest ever number. We are listed below. All 8 are hugely grateful for the energy, talents and time from members and supporters to make this possible.

- Chas Booth, Leith
- Steve Burgess, Southside-Newington
- Mary Campbell, Portobello-Craigmillar
- Gavin Corbett, Fountainbridge-Craiglockhart
- Melanie Main, Morningside
- Claire Miller, City Centre
- Susan Rae, Leith Walk
- Alex Staniforth, Craigentenny-Duddingston

### **4. Post-election negotiations**

Immediately after the election the new group of councillors was supported by a wider team, drawn from the branch to look at what role Green councillors would play within the new council. A smaller team from within that group met with other parties on a number of occasions. However, while there was clear momentum towards an SNP-Labour minority coalition within the capital (with Green support on an issue by issue basis) it was also clear that Labour's centralised decision-making and the charged atmosphere around the UK general election was making proper negotiation impossible. While frustrating, we took the lead in recognising that interim arrangements were agreed and led in putting forward proposals which ensured essential council business was conducted meantime.

You can see some of our positions set out:

<http://www.edinburghgreens.org.uk/site/blog/political-direction-for-edinburgh/>

<http://www.edinburghgreens.org.uk/site/news/breaking-capital-logjam/>

<http://www.edinburghgreens.org.uk/site/blog/interim-council/>

More recently, the expected SNP-Labour coalition has now been formed, with the Greens committed to working both constructively and critically with that minority administration.

### **5. Post-election policy advances**

While the immediate aftermath of an election, with such a diverse result as in Edinburgh, involves lots of discussion about tactics and complex scenario-planning, the Green Group of councillors has made early action on policy priorities our main focus. Highlights so far include:

The first council meeting on 18 May backed a Green motion on a Low Emission Zone to tackle air pollution – the first policy pledge made by the new Council.

We have also highlighted our commitment to open up the council by increasing parent and pupil representation on the council's Education committee and have been developing our ideas for a Rent Pressure Zone in Edinburgh and a Living Wage Plus for care staff. Sadly, the tragic death of student Zhi Min Soh has thrust our commitment to active travel into the spotlight. See

<http://www.edinburghgreens.org.uk/site/blog/cycle-trams/> and

<http://www.edinburghgreens.org.uk/site/news/cycling-silence/>

### **6. Post-election ward work**

Much of our work in individual wards is really just starting to gear up.

In Fountainbridge-Craiglockhart, we have secured funding from Sustrans to work with Scottish Canals on canal towpath improvements. In City Centre, we are working on road safety at Abbeyhill for residents of sheltered housing at Croft-an-Righ.

In Portobello-Craigmillar, the current ward focus is on setting up a Friends of the Promenade group to push for development of the Promenade. In Southside-Newington ward the Skelf Bike Park is now running and proving very popular and Steve has been supporting efforts to find a way forward for the stalled Causey public realm project in the Southside.

Greens had a stall at Leith Gala Day on Saturday 10 June, where Susan Rae and Chas Booth, the Leith Walk and Leith councillors, had a busy 'drop-in' advice surgery. Greens also took part in the colourful Leith Gala Day pageant.

At the Planning Hearing on old Boroughmuir High planning application, Melanie presented a case of unacceptable traffic increases compiled from traffic local knowledge and published school travel plans, as part of the successful local campaign that led to the development being turned down. Cala Homes has now appealed to the Scottish Government.

In Craightinny-Duddingston we have helped a constituent get lighting back on the footpath to the Urban Eden development.

*Green Group of councillors, June 2017*