

Report

Proposer: Branch Committee (decided on: 06/26/2023)

Title: Branch Committee

Report

1 Annual Report 2023 (July 2022 to June 2023)

2 The past year has seen the branch move much more fully out of COVID-19
3 restrictions, returning to hosting lots of in person events but maintaining the
4 option for many to be accessed online, with some excellent events and member
5 engagement. At the start of the year we planned a busy programme, foreseeing
6 that this would be an election-free year and of course that was not to be, with
7 an unexpected by-election campaign in Corstorphine - Murrayfield providing an
8 opportunity to build and develop our campaigning capacity in West Edinburgh.

9 This was the first year of trialling our new branch structure, with a smaller
10 core committee and four working groups (see below). Overall this has worked well
11 and is a model we will continue with, although some groups had limited capacity
12 at times as a result of members dropping out or posts being unfilled from the
13 start of the year. This challenge of encouraging more volunteers to become
14 active on the committee is likely to be an issue again next year.

15 Despite this, yet again, the committee has done an amazing job of making the
16 branch activities, events, communications and campaigning work really well. We
17 would like to take this opportunity to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone who
18 has played a part in this over the past year.

19 Corstorphine - Murrayfield By-election 2023

20 The first by-election of the Council term was held on 10 March in

Corstorphine/Murrayfield ward. We had an excellent first-time candidate in Chris Young, and the West Edinburgh Greens led an energetic campaign, with a large number of leaflets delivered and areas canvassed for the first time in a ward that we have never previously targeted.

We secured 417 votes, 5.1% of the total. Although this represents a slight fall on our 2022 vote share, this was no reflection on the campaign, and appears to have been driven by a combination of external factors.

Policy and Campaigns

In addition to supporting the by-election campaign and developing new ways of sharing Councillor reports to members, the working group started the process of building capacity for branch members to campaign on local issues, outwith elections. The aim of this is to raise our profile and that of issues we care about, as well as try to achieve specific campaign wins. Following discussion at two branch meetings and with local teams, the overall theme of public spaces was agreed as the first campaign theme, with housing one for future action. Several specific public spaces campaigns were identified and some actions started, although this remains something to build on next year.

Events and fundraising

This year we moved to a mixed programme of some online only events with several branch meetings as hybrid events with an option to attend in person or join online. Our regular venue has the technology to make this possible and feedback seems to be that this works well and is something we should continue.

This year our branch meeting calendar was again very varied - thanks to Mariusz and other members who helped to organise these.

- Our first meeting of the year in July focused on housing, with talks from Patrick Harvie, Living Rent and Cllrs Ben Parker and Alys Mumford, providing a good opportunity for members to ask about the detail of our housing policies
- In September and November we focused on local campaigning, exploring what issues members would like to campaign on in the city. This resulted in a focus on public spaces for this year and interest in working on housing after that.

- Our October meeting gave an opportunity to hear about Green Yes and the Party's approach to the next independence campaign
- 2023 started with a new members' welcome event in January
- Our February meeting themed on Unionising Your Workplace was an excellent chance to hear from SGP Trade Union Group members and external speakers, who were able to offer advice and experience
- March was a busy month with a Q&A with Lorna Slater MSP giving members a great opportunity to hear more from Lorna on the detail of her work and a film showing of The Oil Machine
- In April we focused on cooperatives, hearing from a great range of speakers from a wide variety of Edinburgh based coops on how they operate and the benefits of this model
- May saw us focus on the Council's mobility plan, with time for members to discuss how they would like to see space prioritised in the city's high streets

In addition to our monthly meetings, committee members have organised a regular programme of Green Walks, which have been really popular as a way for members to explore the city and socialise outwith meetings. A very successful Auction of Promises was also held in December, raising £1200 for the branch as a result of members' generous donations and bids.

Membership and local teams

Our Branch work plan set a target of 2000 members by the end of the year. As of June 2023, the number of SGP members in the Branch was 1981, including 144 in West Lothian. These numbers are slightly down on last year but this may be a result of a clean up to the records by Party staff of lapsed members following the election. From the membership perspective the working group focused on supporting the local teams to contact new members and coordinated the "Getting to know the party" branch meeting in January 2023.

The working group also undertook a ward team survey, supported the branch structure review that is being promoted at the AGM and assisted teams in skills sharing between teams.

Members of the working group also contributed to the Corstorphine Murrayfield by-election campaign, helping the West Edinburgh team with elements like planning delivery runs.

Communications

The quality and frequency of communications this year has continued to be very high, with regular e-newsletters, Green News, a new events calendar and social media output ensuring members and others are well informed about the Branch's activities. Particular thanks again to Alison and other members of the communications group for all their work on this. Thanks also to our Councillors for trying out some new formats for sharing their monthly reports on their work, which have proved popular with Edinburgh Branch members.

Branch Workplan

At the start of the new committee year, the committee developed a workplan to guide our activities over the year. Actions are designed to help us achieve four aims:

- A. Increase the number of elected Green representatives
- B. Build our movement
- C. Run effective campaigns on our issues
- D. Operate in a transparent, inclusive and effective way

Some key actions that were achieved this year were:

- Drafting an election strategy for 2022-27 (which will be the topic for our July Branch meeting)

106 • Carrying out a review of branch structure (which has resulted in the
107 motions to be considered at the AGM)

108 • Carrying out a local teams/member/activist survey

109 • Creating and promoting a calendar of branch wide Green events

110 • Identifying two branch wide campaign themes to run to May 2024 (public
111 spaces and housing)

112 • Writing an MOU for the Branch and the Edinburgh Councillor Group

113 • Revising the methods of reporting to members by Councillors

114 Some areas that we have identified as a priority but where we did not make as
115 much progress as we would have liked because of capacity will remain a focus
116 next year. These include:

117 • Candidate development

118 • Improving accessibility of our activities

119 • Delivery of local campaigns

120 **Other Committee Business**

121 Other committee activities over the past year have included:

122 • Representing the Edinburgh Branch at all National Council meetings

- Holding a workshop to develop our Branch work plan

- Meeting with our Lothians MSP and the Co-convenors of the Edinburgh Councilor Group to ensure good communication

The branch was saddened to hear of the passing of long-standing member Bill Brockie in June. Bill played a key role in building our party in Edinburgh and led a remarkable life. [You can read a tribute to Bill's life from Gavin Corbett here.](#)

Treasurer's Report

This year it has not been possible to provide a report in advance of the AGM, as the outgoing Treasurer has been unavailable. The committee will work with the newly elected treasurer to ensure proper handover and a 2022-23 report will be made available at a later date.

Rob Gowans and Zoe Clelland

Branch Co-convenors

June 2023