

Report

Proposer: South Edinburgh Greens (decided on: 06/13/2023)

Title: South Edinburgh Greens

Report

1 Introduction

2 SEG is a sub-branch formed of two wards in the south of Edinburgh stretching
3 from Bruntsfield Links to the Pentlands. Morningside has c.200 members and
4 Colinton/Fairmilehead c.50.

5 Morningside has had a Green councillor since 2007 (Alison Johnstone 2007-12,
6 Melanie Main 2012-22, Ben Parker 2022-).

7 <https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/mgUserInfo.aspx?UID=2657>

8 Morningside has four councillors in total (currently Green, Labour, Lib Dem,
9 Conservative). Colinton/Fairmilehead has three (currently Labour, SNP,
10 Conservative).

11 Colinton/Fairmilehead has never been a target ward, although we do stand
12 candidates there (Helen McCabe in 2022).

13 SEG Activity 2022- 23

14 Maintaining SEG after the 2022 election campaign

15 The first SEG AGM was held on Thursday 9th June 2022 at the Eric Liddell Centre.
16 This was a hybrid meeting. Helen McCabe and Ellie Levontine were elected as Co-
17 convenors. Emma Willson was elected Vice-convenor.

18 In addition to the three 'office bearers' (as required by the standing orders),
19 we planned to have a small group of members who were prepared to be additional
20 'Organisers'. Together they would form an active team who could support each
21 other to run SEG, and support our councillor.

22 Emma and Helen swapped roles in September 2022. Aideen McNestry joined us as an
23 Organiser, and Susan Logie continued to coordinate Green News in large parts of
24 Morningside as in previous years.

25 **Green News in Morningside**

26 In conjunction with Ben we produced and delivered two editions of Green News.

27 Autumn/Winter 2022: 6000

28 Spring 2023: 6000

29 We decided to establish a target area which we would deliver to consistently
30 this year and in the future. The Greenest polling districts were chosen - ie
31 those where we came first or second in the 2022 elections. (If we were to
32 increase our delivery capacity then we might be able to extend this area in the
33 future).

34 We had a limited number of delivery volunteers with a few people doing a large
35 amount.

36 We held four Green News Action Days in conjunction with East Lothian Greens. The
37 students helped us deliver to the tenements of Marchmont which was a great help.
38 We hope this will become a regular thing.

39 **Communication with SEG members**

40 Aideen checked the Forest database for new members and emailed them a welcome
41 letter designed by Steve West.

42 Emma monitored the SEG Inbox and replied to emails.

43 Emma sent out updates to members (via Forest) and provided SEG content to the
44 branch newsletter where possible.

45 We continued with the WhatsApp group. We have around 20 members signed up at any
46 one time.

47 **SEG Monthly Meetings**

48 All our SEG meetings were in person this year. Due to an ongoing problem of
49 finding a suitable venue in Morningside - that is accessible, interesting and
50 affordable - we initially held monthly get togethers at the Cameo Bar in
51 Tollcross. From December it was decided to hold four meetings a year at the Eric
52 Liddell Community Hub instead. Cllr Ben Parker attended all these meetings.

53 **Liaison with the Branch 2021-22**

54 Aideen, Ellie and Emma all acted as SEG reps on the branch committee during the
55 year, attending branch meetings and following activity on Slack. Emma was also a
56 Policy Officer on the branch committee. Aideen attended Local Teams and
57 Membership working group meetings - and volunteered to send welcome letters for
58 local teams without the capacity to do so.

59 We held one Green Walk for the branch (March 2023) and some of our members
60 helped organise and/or attended those run around the rest of the city.

61 **Cross team activity**

- 62 • SEG and SEEG ran a stall on the Meadows in Summer 2022 and held a joint
63 meeting in March 2023.

- 64 • SEG invited the Fountainbridge/Craiglockhart team to their December
65 social.

- 66 • We helped initiate a get together of local team organisers at The Crannie
67 in Spring 2023.

68 **Community activity**

69 One or two members attended some community council meetings and engaged with
70 other groups such as Living Streets and Marchmont Neighbours.

71 **Membership**

72 Diversity: it seemed that a slightly wider cross section of society was
73 represented at meetings than in previous years, although there is still a lot of
74 work to do.

75 Membership numbers remained roughly the same.

- 76 • June 2021: 242 (198/44)
- 77 • June 2022: 257 (207/50)
- 78 • June 2023: 252 (203/49)

79 **Finances**

80 SEG did not have a budget (or a Treasurer) for 2022-23. We decided to keep
81 things simple and either ask the branch for reimbursement, or ask suppliers to
82 invoice the branch directly. Members contributed to refreshments at meetings. We
83 received funds from the branch for:

- 84 • Eric Liddell Centre meeting room

85 (3 sessions @ £52.00, 1 session @£72.50)

- 86 • Refreshments for Young Greens Action Day £34.00
- 87 • Elastic bands for Green News £10.00

88 Total = £272.50

89 **2023-24**

90 **New team**

91 The second SEG AGM was held on Thursday 8th June 2023 at the Eric Liddell

92 Centre. There were 5 people in attendance and Aideen McNestry was elected as co-
93 ordinator for 2023-24. Cllr Ben Parker gave an update of his year as a
94 Councillor and the group discussed future campaigning, including thoughts about
95 the upcoming General Election.

96 **Future plans**

97 There was a smaller than average turnout at our AGM and members at the meeting
98 considered what more could be done next year to encourage people to get involved
99 whilst also being realistic about what could be achieved. It was agreed that we
100 would try to resource monthly meetings - budget / venue dependent - and also
101 review our approach to Green News delivery as 6000 has been a difficult number
102 to get out this past year. We also discussed how greater integration with the
103 wider branch might help us to galvanise more members, and we discussed a need to
104 receive support from the branch to upskill new coordinators on how to send mail
105 outs using Forest, as well as other tips / tricks of how to be an effective
106 local organising team.

Report

Proposer: South East Edinburgh Greens (decided on: 06/13/2023)

Title: South East Edinburgh Greens

Report

1 This report covers South East Edinburgh Greens' (SEEG) activities over the
2 period June 2022 to May 2023.

3 **Membership**

4 Our membership has increased from 233 to 241 members in our two council wards.

5 **Meetings and events**

6 It's been quite a quiet year, with no elections, so we've been happy to see some
7 new folk coming to recent meetings and events. It's also been useful to have the
8 chance to discuss local issues and what we can do practically to campaign on
9 these.

10 **Sub-branch Meetings**

11 Our meetings have been mostly hybrid this year. We had our first in-person
12 meeting in July at the Charteris Centre. The venue wasn't ideal for online
13 attendees and was expensive, so we returned to Nelson Hall as soon it was
14 available in October.

15 Some of the topics we've discussed: Diversity and Inclusion in our sub-branch,
16 the politics of the Festival, Car Free Holyrood Park campaign, Sheriffhall
17 Roundabout Public Inquiry and Holyrood Park Road.

18 **Festival Stall**

19 Some new members came to a meeting to talk about their concerns around the lack
20 of support for artists and performers in the cost-of-living crisis, and how
21 exclusive the Festival had become because of accommodation costs. An outcome of
22 this was a stall on The Meadows during the Festival where we promoted our
23 policies which support artists and performers, and gathered views about the
24 Festival from people passing by and stopping for a chat. The stall went well and
25 lasted all day, despite the weather.

26 **Joint Meeting with South Edinburgh Greens**

27 In March we headed over to Morningside for a special meeting with SEG where we
28 shared our ways of organising and campaigning experiences, and generally had a
29 good blether. It was a great meeting. Thanks to SEG for suggesting this.

30 **Co-operatives Meeting**

31 The April Branch Meeting on Co-operatives took place in Nelson Hall and SEEG
32 members were pleased to support the meeting with volunteers (on the door,
33 providing refreshments, setting up the hall and tidying up). With people active
34 in co-ops speaking about their experiences, members found it a really
35 interesting and eye-opening event.

36 **South Side Green Walk**

37 SEEG took our turn doing a Green Walk around the South Side in May. We wandered
38 around looking at some of the area's less-known history in tucked away places,
39 and talked about how the community was nearly lost during the 60s and early 70s
40 to plans for a six-lane highway right through it and University developments. We
41 started off at The Causey, home to a local public space campaign members
42 support. Over 20 people (members and friends/family) came along and most stayed
43 for the whole walk (which was quite long!) and ended up in Summerhall.

44 **Public Space campaigning**

45 SEEG members attending the branch meeting on local public space campaigning in
46 November, reported back to our December meeting that fruit growing and unloved
47 greens spaces had been discussed in their group and it was decided that we
48 should send an email out to members to see if they had green spaces locally that

49 could be better looked after and used by the community.

50 There wasn't much response but we have been looking at areas along the cycle
51 path from the Innocent Railway to the Skelf bike pump track. The first area
52 we've been exploring had already thrown up complicated ownership issues.

53 We also have an ongoing interest in a Car Free Holyrood Park campaign and have
54 started to look at how the four-lane Holyrood Park Road could be better used as
55 a public space.

56 **Green News**

57 We delivered editions in autumn and spring:

- 58 • Southside-Newington: 13,000 and 12,000
- 59 • Liberton-Gilmerton: 5,000 and 6,000

60 It's acknowledged that we are struggling to maintain full coverage of Southside-
61 Newington with numbers of delivery volunteers declining.

62 **Appendix – Office Bearers 2022-23**

63 The following people were elected as office bearers at our AGM on 9 June 2023:

- 64 • Ola Olsinova – Co-Convenor
- 65 • Guy Johnson – Co-Convenor
- 66 • Breck MacGregor – Branch Committee Representative
- 67 • John Palmer – Minutes Secretary
- 68 • Steve West – Membership Secretary
- 69 • Alison Neathey – Admin Secretary
- 70 • Caroline Barr – Social Secretary

Report

Proposer: Councillors Group (decided on: 06/14/2023)

Title: Councillors Group

Report

1 ANNUAL REPORT

2 From the Co-Conveners

3 On 6th May 2022, you elected 10 Green Councillors for Edinburgh. Since then,
4 it's been a whirlwind year full of political instability - not just in
5 Westminster and Holyrood, but here in the Council too. Despite the challenges,
6 we have worked hard to honour the promises we made to branch members (and the
7 public) to use our platform to fight for climate justice, to tackle inequality
8 and to build a city which works for everyone.

9 Casting our mind back to a year ago, it's funny to think about what we now know.
10 The year started with lots of negotiations, as Councillors and branch members
11 worked together to prepare a proposal to take Greens into administration for the
12 first time with the SNP group. Whilst this was ultimately unsuccessful, as a
13 last-minute Labour deal with the Tories and Lib Dems handed them control of the
14 Council, we remain proud of the robust, transparent and democratic process we
15 went through to try and get the best deal for the people of Edinburgh.

16 Since then, the group has been taking every opportunity to fight for climate and
17 social justice - whether that's by interrogating the crises in health and social
18 care, winning more action for biodiversity, or scrutinising the use of private
19 companies for Council business. We've worked with all parties - and none! - to
20 achieve real, tangible changes for our constituents, as well as trying to change
21 the very structures by which we do politics, talking about culture change,
22 access and inclusion in Council practices.

23 Our Councillor group is an extension of our branch, and nothing we achieve would
24 be possible without our members. We want to particularly thank Zoe, Rob and the
25 rest of the Edinburgh Committee who have been unfailingly supportive, as well as
26 Green MSP Lorna Slater, her staff team, the central office and the network of
27 Green Councillors across Scotland. Special thanks too, to Chas Booth and Jule
28 Bandel who have taken on the role of Communications Officers for the group this
29 year - spreading the Green message through press stories, twitter threads, and
30 memes (yes, really).

31 The year is ending as it began in many ways - with a Labour administration
32 relying on votes from right-wing parties to maintain control of a volatile and
33 lively Council. We don't know what the future will hold for Edinburgh Council,
34 but we hope this snapshot of our work over the past year will demonstrate that -
35 however and whenever we can - Greens will be steadfast in our fight for positive
36 change across the city.

37 In solidarity,

38 Alys and Ben

39 Green Group Co-Conveners

40 **COUNCILLOR ALYS MUMFORD**

41 Name: Alys Mumford

42 Ward: Portobello / Craigmillar

43 Portfolio: Finance & Economy

44 Committees: Policy and Sustainability committee; Finance and Resources
45 committee; COSLA Leaders (representing all Green Councillors in Scotland);
46 Edinburgh International Conference Centre Board; Edinburgh Award Panel

47 Biggest achievement from Portfolio:

48 The first thing I did, in my first Committee, was to bring a motion calling for
49 the council to adopt a gender-budgeting approach. Looking back on it now it was
50 probably trying to run before I could walk, but we managed to get it passed and
51 I think we are slowly getting the message across that economic decisions impact
52 on different groups in different ways!

53 Biggest achievement from your committees:

54 While we weren't able to get our budget through Full Council, we were successful
55 - a few weeks later - in passing our proposals for the fees and charges for the
56 council. This meant that we increased parking charges across the city in order

57 to reduce the cost of things like funerals and creating a fund to help community
58 groups access Council venues.

59
60 Most challenging thing:

61 As group Co-Convener, alongside Ben, I've been pushing hard to improve council
62 business practices, and to tackle the systemic discrimination which is built
63 into them – last minute deadlines, opposition to hybrid meetings and resistance
64 to the use of technology to name but a few. It has been exhausting to have to
65 keep raising the same issues, but we now have agreement that there is a need for
66 a radical review of how we do things, and I'm looking forward to working with
67 officers to make some positive improvements – we have a long way to go to make
68 the Council more accessible!

69 Council snack of choice:

70 I was a fan of the pink custard we had one month (because it matched my hair at
71 the time - intentional, I'm sure)

72 Most cringe thing you accidentally said on the record?

73 I described our tactical voting at budget time as 'shenanigans' to a reporter,
74 and it's stuck...

75

76 Best compliment you've received?

77 A lovely Councillor from another party emailed me to thank me for something and
78 said at the end "yer some wummin" which made me smile then and still does now!

79 **COUNCILLOR ALEX STANIFORTH**

80 Name: Alex Staniforth

81 Ward: Craigentenny & Duddingston

82 Portfolio: Empowering Communities

83 Committees you sit on (inc. Relevant boards): Policy & Sustainability, Finance
84 and Resources, Culture and Communities

85 Biggest achievement from Committee:

86 I ensured that an in-house option for operating 'mid market rent' properties
87 will be considered at the end of the next contract term.

88

89 Biggest achievement from your ward:

90 I asked for planters installed at the Seafield end of Portobello Prom, stopping
91 people from using it as a car park and allowing better access for pedestrians
92 and cyclists.

93 Most looking forward to next year:
94 Getting the night-life coordinator position approved and appointed to the
95 benefit of everyone involved in our night time economy.
96

97 Most disappointed not to have achieved (yet):
98 Our (joint SNP/Green) plan for a more progressive form of council tax didn't
99 quite get over the line in terms of the legal limits of our powers – but set a
100 good foundation for next time.

101 Funniest moment you've witnessed at Council:
102 Alys unable to control her laughter when a Tory councillor pulled a face at
103 Finance and Resources committee.

104 Council snack of choice:
105 Chocolate-covered coffee beans, my only way of ingesting that sweet, sweet
106 caffeine for the long days of full council.

107 **COUNCILLOR BEN PARKER**

108 Name: Ben Parker
109 Ward: Morningside
110 Portfolio: Climate and Environment
111 Committees you sit on (inc. Relevant boards): Policy & Sustainability committee;
112 Housing, Homelessness & Fair Work committee; Climate and Sustainability All
113 Party Oversight Group; COSLA Environment & Economy board; Edinburgh Community
114 Solar Co-op

115 Biggest achievement from Portfolio: In February, I successfully brought a motion
116 to declare a nature emergency. Since then, we have seen nature be given a much
117 higher profile in the Council – for example, we now have a dedicated “climate
118 and nature emergencies” section for officers to complete in all reports they
119 bring forward. Relatedly, there's also been a renewed focus on trees and tree
120 maintenance / protection in the Council – especially in relation to events in
121 parks – and this is certainly in response to the high level of scrutiny we've
122 applied to this issue. I'm now at a stage where officers and Councillors from
123 other parties are proactively getting in touch with me about nature / tree
124 related issues – that feels like good evidence that I've carved out a niche over
125 the year!
126

127 Biggest achievement from Committee: I've been pleased to push officers on issues
128 relating to accessible housing at Housing, Homelessness & Fair Work committee
129 and we're expecting a large programme of work to come forward on this issue over
130 the next year.

131
132 Most disappointed to have not achieved yet: There have been a number of
133 occasions where the ugly policy of “no recourse to public funds” has reared its
134 head – either through casework or at committee. Because of this toxic UK
135 government policy, the Council is limited in support it can offer some people in
136 need and the powerlessness I have felt on these occasions has been as
137 frustrating as it has been heart-breaking. On a more positive note, I have been
138 proud to raise this issue at committee and Full Council and we have made good
139 connections with campaigners working at a UK wide level on the issue as a result
140 of this.

141 Council snack of choice: Given the reaction of colleagues (and my part in nearly
142 killing off a Council officer who is allergic to citrus fruit during a meeting),
143 I have come to realise that my Council “snack” of eating at least one full pack
144 of satsumas a day is abnormal / excessive.

145
146 Best compliment you’ve received: On more than one occasion I’ve had meetings
147 with officers who have said words to the effect of “We always know that you will
148 read the papers thoroughly and ask the detailed and difficult questions” – that
149 makes me feel like I’m doing my job properly!

150 **COUNCILLOR CHAS BOOTH**

151 Name: Chas Booth
152 Ward: Leith
153 Portfolio: Planning
154 Committees you sit on (inc. Relevant boards): Planning Committee; Development
155 Management sub-committee; Licensing Board; Local Review Body (1), Local Review
156 Body (2)

157 Biggest achievement from Portfolio:
158 I worked with colleagues and stakeholders, including Living Rent, to strengthen
159 planning guidance on short term lets to make it clear that STLs which lead to a
160 further reduction of amenity for residents in mixed areas would not usually be
161 granted, along with further changes.

162 Biggest achievement from Ward:
163 Succeeded in persuading Transport Committee to grant a reprieve on the council’s
164 plans to demolish the Pride Bridge over Lindsay Road in Newhaven, and agreed to
165 work with the community to find an alternative way forward.

166 Most disappointed not to have achieved (yet)?:

167 Along with colleagues, I brought an amendment to Planning Committee to change
168 the council's definition of "affordable housing" to remove some of the tenures
169 which Greens don't feel are really helping people on low incomes, specifically
170 golden share and intermediate rent. This amendment was unfortunately voted down
171 by Labour, Lib Dem and Tory councillors.

172 Council snack of choice:
173 Coffee and biscuit from the member's lounge

174 Best compliment you've received:
175 As part of an email thanking me for my work to support the Leith Low Traffic
176 Neighbourhood: "I don't think we had realised quite how intrusive the traffic
177 noise had become until it was largely gone. The change really has been quite
178 dramatic."

179 **COUNCILLOR CLAIRE MILLER**

180 Name: Claire Miller
181 Ward: City Centre
182 Portfolio: Health & Social Care
183 Committees you sit on (inc. Relevant boards): Integration Joint Board (health &
184 social care), Transport & Environment Committee, Group Risk and Best Value
185 Committee, Joint Consultative Committee (the joint trade unions)

186 Biggest achievement from Portfolio:
187 I have been working really hard to bring out into the public domain a range of
188 different issues in health & social care which had been going on behind closed
189 doors without public scrutiny or democratic decision making. I've been
190 successful in raising awareness of the empty council care home at Drumbrae,
191 stopping consideration of closure of four other council care homes, showing the
192 impact of budget choices, and procurement of private sector care against the
193 political direction of our council for community wealth building and in-
194 sourcing.

195
196 Most challenging thing:
197 I've found it really hard to get to grips with the way the Integration Joint
198 Board governs health & social care. We've been advised not to be political and
199 elected members make up only a small portion of the board, but it's a highly
200 political subject and residents quite rightly view us as their representatives
201 when we make decisions about care homes, GP surgeries, mental health services
202 and much more.

203 Most looking forward to next year:
204 Now that I have learned more about the different health and social care services
205 that the council and NHS offer to our residents, and I've also taken on the role
206 of 'climate champion' for the IJB, I feel excited about working towards
207 meaningful changes and using my position to make improvements.

208 Weirdest email/request:
209 On the day Humza Yousaf was elected as Scotland's new First Minister, I received
210 an email from a constituent who had wasted no time and written to him
211 immediately about potholes, only to be directed by the FM's office to contact
212 their local ward councillors. I have to have admiration for both the resident
213 who decided that this was the ideal moment to get his attention, and also the
214 staff in the FM's office who decided just as fast that it was not.

215 Councilsnack of choice:
216 An americano and a cake from The Milkman on Cockburn Street will always help me
217 through any hangry moments.

218 **COUNCILLOR DAN HEAP**

219 Name: Dan Heap
220 Ward: Sighthill/Gorgie
221 Portfolio: Culture
222 Committees you sit on (inc. Relevant boards): Culture and Communities; Gorgie
223 Memorial Hall Management Committee.

224 Biggest achievement from Portfolio: Crossing both portfolio and ward, the
225 possible closure of the West Park Place studio in Dalry is a major threat to
226 arts provision in the SW of the city, and to the livelihoods of the resident
227 artists. I got Council backing to hold talks with the studio operators and the
228 artists, with a view to keep the studios opening, and it is unlikely the Council
229 would have done this without me stepping in.

230 Biggest achievement from Committee: There have been lots of smaller and medium
231 wins that add up. With Alex and the input of other Green Councillors, we've
232 strengthened the environmental and climate oversight of the festivals and other
233 big events. I was also pleased to be able to get support to expand tennis ball
234 recycling at the newly-refurbished tennis courts that are opening in the next
235 year, and to get the ball rolling on a slavery and colonialism audit of the
236 museum collections.

237 Biggest achievement from Ward: Despite having a majority opposed to it just

238 hours before the vote, I negotiated unanimous support for a motion to ensure
239 Gorgie Farm remains free to enter and in non-private sector hands when it
240 reopens.

241 Best compliment you've received: It is always a nice surprise to get genuinely
242 grateful e-mails from constituents you have been able to help. Recently, I got
243 the council to formally congratulate a new theatre group that has just launched
244 and which is having its inaugural performance in Saughton Park in my ward. They
245 seem genuinely touched that I had gone to the effort to do so, and I found that
246 touching too. I've had similar experiences with the West Park Place artists and
247 constituents who have reached out for help with housing and other issues.

248 Most "we've got this" moment:

249 There have been several Culture and Communities Committee meetings when Greens
250 have brought in more policy changes tabled at the meeting, despite being the
251 second smallest group. It shows how much prep and hard work we do, relative to
252 other, often better-resourced groups.

253 **COUNCILLOR KAYLEIGH O'NEILL**

254 Name: Kayleigh O'Neill

255 Ward: Forth Ward

256 Portfolio: Equalities

257 Committees you sit on (inc. Relevant boards): Planning Committees, Education,
258 Children & Families Committee, Edinburgh Waterfront All Party Oversight Group,
259 Forth Green Freeport cross-party sounding board

260 Biggest achievement from your portfolio:

261 As Equalities spokesperson I have worked across every committee and with all
262 portfolio holders. My personal achievement is starting my Dropped Kerb campaign
263 where I will be auditing every street in my ward and reporting this to the
264 Council to take action on.

265 Biggest achievement from your committee:

266 In Planning committee, I am most proud of the instances that I have raised
267 accessibility as a factor or issue when determining applications. Officers have
268 told me that this is an area they now think of and take seriously when reporting
269 – a small but major win!

270 Most challenging thing?:

271 The most challenging part of being a Councillor so far is the extremely dated

272 attitude of what a Councillor should be and how one should act!

273 Biggest surprise this year:

274 The biggest surprise of the year has to be my resilience as a young disabled
275 women in politics; being an elected official is a difficult job, but I could not
276 be more grateful of where I have gotten to and where I'll go next.

277 Council snack of choice:

278 My committee treat is a hot cup of hot chocolate from the Member's Lounge coffee
279 machine – no matter how warm it is inside and out!

280 Best compliment you've received:

281 The best compliment I have received came from a student at an event I was
282 sponsoring with Trinity Academy. They told me that my work is "so simple and
283 boring but so important!" I'm taking that as a compliment.

284 **COUNCILLOR JULE BANDEL**

285 Name: Jule Bandel

286 Ward: Inverleith

287 Portfolio: Transport

288 Committees you sit on (inc. Relevant boards): Transport and Environment
289 Committee, Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee, Transport for Edinburgh
290 board, South East Scotland Transport Regional Partnership

291 Biggest achievement from Committee:

292 I have terrible memory, so I'll go with a recent example: I got committee to
293 agree that parking your bike in a secure cycle hangar should on principle be
294 cheaper than parking a car – seems pretty intuitive, but some car parking
295 permits still cost less than the annual charge for a cycle hangar! We are now
296 going to explore various options for making cycle hangars more affordable.

297 Biggest achievement from Ward:

298 The piece of casework I'm proudest of was helping a young autistic constituent
299 get their reasonable adjustments at school reinstated. I spent a lot of time
300 emailing and phoning people about it before their first day of term and it was
301 such a relief when I heard the school had reconsidered their decision.

302 Most challenging thing:

303 Although councillors are supposed to work (and are paid) part-time, the workload
304 has been much higher than I was expecting. It's been challenging balancing this
305 with the degree I'm still trying to complete, and a lot of the time I've felt

306 like I'm half-assing* two things, so I'm looking forward to being able to really
307 focus on councillor-ing once I've handed in my dissertation.

308 *Editor note: Jule might feel this way, but this is definitely not how it is
309 perceived!

310

311 Best moment you've witnessed:

312 Long days in committees are exhausting, and councillors tend to stop having a
313 filter around 4pm which is when things often get funny. My personal favourite
314 moment was the Lord Provost asking councillors "are we all agreed?" after the
315 Tories proposed something and Susan – who was joining online and had forgotten
316 to turn off her mic – loudly bellowing "No!!!" from where she was displayed on a
317 huge screen.

318 Most cringe thing you've accidentally said on the webcast:

319 Trying to end a speech about supporting better bike storage in schools that I
320 didn't prepare in advance: "It's got bikes! For kids! What more do you want!"

321 Best compliment you've received:

322 I've developed somewhat of a reputation at Transport and Environment Committee
323 for always having a thousand questions on the reports at Agenda Planning
324 Meetings – Scott Arthur may make comments about it, but I'm taking it as a
325 compliment that I've done my homework.

326 **COUNCILLOR STEVE BURGESS**

327 Name: Steve Burgess

328 Ward: Southside-Newington ward

329 Portfolio: Education and Pensions

330 Committees you sit on (inc. Relevant boards): Education, Children & Families
331 Committee; Pensions Committee; Corporate Parenting Board; Placing in Schools
332 appeals panel; Consultative Committee with Parents; Steering group on Learning
333 for Sustainability; Committee on Pupil Student Support; The Royal Company of
334 Merchants Endowment Trust; Torness Local Liaison Committee

335 Biggest achievement from your portfolio?:

336 I secured backing from Education committee to set up a steering group to develop
337 Learning for Sustainability in schools which includes Climate & Nature
338 emergencies. Every school will now have a teacher with half-a-day a week
339 dedicated to developing their school's activities. We are also looking at
340 ramping up 1.5MAX to develop climate projects between schools across the world.

341 Biggest achievement from your ward:

342 Won approval from Culture & Communities committee for a proposal to turn a
343 disused bowling green in Prestonfield into a community growing garden. A local
344 consultation led by Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust is happening later
345 this summer.

346 Most looking forward to next year:

347 As part of 'Project Forth' Lothian Pension Fund officers are proposing to do
348 away with the council Pensions committee and replace it with a 'professional'
349 board which would remove democratic oversight of pensions investments by
350 councillors and any chance of achieving divestment. We are hopeful this will be
351 rejected by the council.

352 Most "we've got this" moment:

353 It's been amazing to see how capably our newly elected, young councillors -
354 several in their 20s (!) - have taken on key roles, including Co-Convenership of
355 our group with enthusiasm and energy – the future is bright green indeed!

356 Best moment at Full Council:

357 A standout moment this term was when Susan and I held hands under the desk in
358 full council as we voted to keep the Tory budget in the ring in order to oust
359 Labour's climate-unfriendly budget. This resulted in a perhaps the most
360 staggering event when the Labour Group then voted with Tories for the LibDem
361 budget which included support for compulsory redundancy and privatisation of
362 council services but at least it contained essential funding for climate work!

363 **COUNCILLOR SUSAN RAE**

364 Bio (all essential)

365 Name: Susan Rae

366 Ward: Leith Walk

367 Portfolio: Housing

368 Committees you sit on (inc. Relevant boards): Housing, Homelessness and Fair
369 Work committee; Regulatory subcommittee; Licensing subcommittee; Jean F Watson
370 Bequest committee; Lothian Homes Trust, Edinburgh Living LLP; Baillie

371 Biggest achievement from Committee:

372 I was irritated to have to raise concerns about lengthy delays to lift repairs
373 again but I'm now pleased that the Council is finally taking action and we have
374 commitment to a multi-million pound investment for new lift repairs over the
375 next 5 years.

376 Biggest achievement from Ward:

377 I'm excited about the tram project now being complete in Leith, but I'm also
378 proud of the work I've done with Leith Chooses. Post-COVID, it has been a very
379 challenging landscape and despite cuts to budgets, we've been able to secure a
380 future for Leith Chooses, including extra funding for next year.

381

382 Most surprising thing this year:

383 That a wee boy in a hatchback thought that, from a standing start, he could
384 knock over a 5ft woman (me) stood in the road as a human bollard blocking a
385 pedestrian crossing at an old left turn (London Road). I was not expecting that
386 this year I would have to literally put my body on the line for this job but
387 there we are!

388

389 Most looking forward to next year:

390 The decline and fall of the Labour, Liberal Democrat and Conservative pact, and
391 final fall of the Conservative Government in Westminster! But also, the
392 introduction of a pavement parking ban which will finally see us be able to take
393 some action on Leith Walk against the worst offenders.

394 Best moment at Full Council:

395 I never pre-write my speeches and on budget day I was so horrified about how
396 things were playing out that I did stand up and speak to our proposal for the
397 Housing Revenue Account (HRA). I explained that the only way to get rid of
398 poverty is to get rid of the HRA / make fundamental changes to how it works!

399

400 Funniest moment you've witnessed at Council?:

401 When Alys and Ben submitted our amendment to the Business Plan, Kevin Lang
402 (leader of the Liberal Democrats), inflated with righteous indignation, railed
403 against the amendment on the grounds that they had done too much work and it was
404 taxing for him to read it all. Better still ,he then felt compelled to apologise
405 for his comments at the next Full Council meeting.

Report

Proposer: North Edinburgh and Leith Greens (decided on: 06/26/2023)

Title: North Edinburgh and Leith Greens

Report

1 We are pleased to publish below report which showcases what we have done during
2 the last twelve months.

3 After a very busy period during Edinburgh local elections the branch members
4 were happy to catch their breaths but afterwards got quickly back to work
5 organizing in its local area. Below is a list of our accomplishments.

6 **Elections**

7 At our AGM 12th June 2023 the following party members were elected to the Sub-
8 Branch committee:

- 9 • Co-Convenors: Tara Coldwell Brock and Mariusz Cebulski. Proposer: Fraser
10 May, Seconder Ian McCormick.
- 11 • Membership Secretary: Ian McCormick. Proposer: Katy McCormick, Seconder:
12 Tara Coldwell Brock.
- 13 • Ordinary Member: Lennie Sefton. Proposer: Susan Rae, Seconder: Mariusz
14 Cebulski.
- 15 • Ordinary Member: Nick Gardner. Proposer: Susan Rae, Seconder: Caro
16 Wilkinson.

- 17 • Social Media Secretary: Michael Tucker. Proposer: Tara Coldwell Brock,
18 Second: Ben Moverley Smith.
- 19 • Secretary: Ben Moverley Smith. Proposer: Lennie Sefton, Second: Max
20 Wagner.

21 **Expansion and renaming of the branch**

22 The Leith and Leith Walk sub-branch started working closely with the
23 neighbouring Fort ward during the local elections, helping the party gain its
24 first councillor there. Even after the successful election it was realised that
25 the local Forth team still needed help in keeping Green presence and momentum in
26 the area. Because of this the two parties continued to cooperate sharing
27 resources and volunteers. At some point the idea of an official merger started
28 to be discussed. After discussing the matter with our members, councillors and
29 Edinburgh Branch a decision was made that the existing Leith and Leith Walk sub-
30 branch should merge with Forth ward. This has been completed March 2023 with the
31 sub-branch changing its name to North Edinburgh and Leith Green Party.

32 **Meetings**

33 The branch continued to run monthly meetings every second Thursday of the month
34 until this year, when after surveying our members, a decision was made to move
35 meetings to second Monday of the month, as that was the preferred day to meet.
36 With COVID restrictions being gradually lifted throughout 2022, the branch
37 started organizing hybrid meetings and continued to do so. In some cases, the
38 monthly meetings were replaced with social events like litter-picks or pub
39 outings.

40 **Events**

41 The branch organized a stall at Edinburgh Climate Festival and Leith Gala in
42 2022 and 2023. The most recent Gala was very successful with a lot of visitors
43 asking about our party and taking part in a survey about short term lets.

44 The branch also started regular litter picks in the area as a way to engage our
45 members, promote the party and help local environment.

46 Finally, the branch might have taken its first step in direct action when we
47 stopped drivers doing an illegal turn on Leith Walk, alongside other community
48 organizers.

49 **Membership**

50 The membership of Leith and Leith Walk seems to have flatlined at 393, almost
51 the same as it was at the start of this committee's term (390). This is not the
52 full story as the national party went through all membership data in 2023 and
53 removed people not paying their dues and thus no longer members of the party.
54 This means that our last year's membership number was overinflated, which
55 obscures the fact that 56 members have joined since June 2022. Forth ward has 81
56 members and has grown by 9 members in the last twelve months. The total
57 membership of Norh Edinburgh and Leith Green party currently stands at 474.

58 The co-membership secretaries Ian and Tara continued to engage new members by
59 sending welcome emails, calling them and organizing new members meetings. They
60 have provided a warm welcome to all members which helped engage them with the
61 party.

62 Achievements of the membership committee are:

- 63 • The committee agreed a job description for the post of membership
64 secretary.
- 65 • The membership secretary wrote a new member welcome procedure to ensure a
66 structured approach to contacting new members.
- 67 • The membership secretary created a new member tracking form on Greenbox.
68 It is being used to improve new member communications.
- 69 • All 57 new members were contacted with at least an email welcome and where
70 appropriate, a phone call.
- 71 • A new member social event was organised in May with two new members
72 attending. All new members from January were invited including a hand
73 delivered invitation.
- 74 • A Leith and Lieth Walk member survey was undertaken to engage members and
75 find out the type of activities they were interested in and any barriers
76 they faced. The survey received 42 responses (about 11% of membership).
- 77 • A report was produced summarising the results of the member survey.
78 Actions taken as a result included re-introducing Green walks, running
79 litter picks, and changing the day of meetings.

- 80 • At the start of the year Leith and Lieth Walk sub-branch had 401 members.
81 There are currently 467 members in the combined North Edinburgh and Leith
82 sub-branch.
- 83 • The membership secretary gave a membership report at every sub-branch
84 meeting to keep members aware of issues and successes.

85 **Membership goals for this year are:**

- 86 • Review job description taking regard to other committee positions filled
87 following the AGM.
- 88 • Review member welcome procedure in order to improve process and increase
89 the number of new members we speak to.
- 90 • Continue to use tracking form in order to ensure that all new members
91 receive an appropriate welcome.
- 92 • Consider hand delivering a welcome letter to new members as a matter of
93 course.
- 94 • To organise a new member social event every three months.
- 95 • Carry out 2023 membership survey in July/August for Leith, Leith Walk and
96 Forth. Review and refine questions in questionnaire. Aim for better
97 response rate.
- 98 • Better analysis of the survey in order to encourage greater member
99 engagement.
- 100 • Develop actions to increase membership. In particular to organise an
101 invite a friend to join campaign in January.
- 102 • Aim for all reports to be written and stored on Greenbox.

103 **Finances**

104 The branch expenses were driven by room hire in Leith Community Center and Out
105 of the Blue Drill Hall (200 pounds) and sending bulk text messages to our
106 members to encourage them to volunteer (83 pounds). We've also paid 50 pounds to

107 reserve our spot at Leith Gala but those were covered by donations taken at the
108 event.

109 **Green News**

110 Our party newsletter "Green News" continues to be one of the best ways of
111 spreading our message to voters. We've organized deliveries both in Autumn and
112 Spring delivering about 15 thousand leaflets in our sub-branch area.

113 **Councillors and MSP work**

114 The North Edinburgh and Leith Sub-branch is proud to have 3 elected councillors
115 as well as be home to MSP and Scottish Government minister. All four were happy
116 to share their work and achievements from the last 12 months.

117 **Lorna Slater**

118 ◦ We have now had Greens in government for two years, and there has
119 been some difficult times recently with the DRS and the obfuscation
120 by the UK Government. There is expected to be more tough times ahead
121 with the introduction of new Green policy and the anticipated
122 reaction of the Press. However, to get real change, we just have to
123 keep pushing as a party.

124 **Kayleigh O'Neill**

125 • Portfolio: focus this year on access and mobility. Work has been put into
126 income maximization for the people of Edinburgh, making sure people due
127 income support have the info required. Funding has also been approved for
128 a dropped kerb programme in Edinburgh. This is needed as of 17,000 kerbs
129 which need to be dropped only 50 have been done so far. A policy motion
130 has also been approved that the new city plan will have a gendered lens
131 that puts women at the forefront of policy.

132 • Ward: this year has mainly been dealing with requests and information on
133 bins, parks, green spaces. Kayleigh also took on the task of doing a
134 dropped kerb audit of her ward.

135 **Susan Rae**

136 • Policy: Susan has been working with councillor Ben Parker on housing

137 policy where they have split the portfolio. Susan has taken on social
138 housing where due to her work £5.5 million has been awarded to fix all the
139 lifts in the high-rise buildings around Edinburgh. Susan has also been in
140 contact with Edinburgh University to try and get a response regarding the
141 university's housing policy over the summer months.

- 142 • Licensing board: Susan has mainly spent her time dealing with licences for
143 short term lets, and dealing with adult entertainment venues, where she
144 will be organising sessions on how to organise unions in precarious
145 working environments.

146 Chas Booth

- 147 • Ward: There has been a great response to the save Pride Bridge campaign,
148 where the council has agreed to find a community solution. The paid
149 parking extension has been underway, and although there have been a few
150 bumps, Chas and the council officers have been working through the issues.
151 The LTN has received a positive response, people are very happy about the
152 reduction in traffic and newfound tranquillity at the shore.

- 153 • Planning Committee: There has recently been guidance received on Short
154 Term Lets (STL) planning applications, and it is still difficult to get an
155 STL in mixed areas where it would lower the amenity of the area.

156 Plans ahead

157 The new committee will meet soon to discuss the sub-branches committee for the
158 next twelve months. This will include figuring ways of improving membership,
159 getting members involved in our work, planning or campaigns and events.

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

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

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

28 **Policy and Campaigns**

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

38 **Events and fundraising**

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

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

- 45 • Our first meeting of the year in July focused on housing, with talks from
46 Patrick Harvie, Living Rent and Cllrs Ben Parker and Alys Mumford,
47 providing a good opportunity for members to ask about the detail of our
48 housing policies

- 49 • In September and November we focused on local campaigning, exploring what
50 issues members would like to campaign on in the city. This resulted in a
51 focus on public spaces for this year and interest in working on housing
52 after that.

- 53 • Our October meeting gave an opportunity to hear about Green Yes and the
54 Party's approach to the next independence campaign

- 55 • 2023 started with a new members' welcome event in January

- 56 • Our February meeting themed on Unionising Your Workplace was an excellent
57 chance to hear from SGP Trade Union Group members and external speakers,
58 who were able to offer advice and experience

- 59 • March was a busy month with a Q&A with Lorna Slater MSP giving members a
60 great opportunity to hear more from Lorna on the detail of her work and a
61 film showing of The Oil Machine

- 62 • In April we focused on cooperatives, hearing from a great range of
63 speakers from a wide variety of Edinburgh based coops on how they operate
64 and the benefits of this model

- 65 • May saw us focus on the Council's mobility plan, with time for members to
66 discuss how they would like to see space prioritised in the city's high
67 streets

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

73 **Membership and local teams**

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

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

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

87 **Communications**

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

95 **Branch Workplan**

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

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

103 Some key actions that were achieved this year were:

- 104 • Drafting an election strategy for 2022-27 (which will be the topic for our
105 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

- 123 • Holding a workshop to develop our Branch work plan

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

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

130 **Treasurer's Report**

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

135 Rob Gowans and Zoe Clelland

136 Branch Co-convenors

137 June 2023

Report

Proposer: Lorna Slater MSP (decided on: 06/28/2023)

Title: MSP

Report

Update from Lorna Slater, your Green MSP for the Lothian Region

In March I was delighted to be re-appointed as the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity under the new First Minister, Humza Yousaf. This reappointment follows a party Council meeting where members agreed unanimously to continue with the Bute House Agreement (BHA).

We worked with Council to convene a meeting on the day of the SNP leadership announcement so that members could give a clear steer on how they wanted the party to react to the SNP leadership election.

Patrick and I are very excited to build on the successes of the BHA thus far and deliver even more for the people of Scotland and our environment. Humza Yousaf has made clear that he will continue the vital work that we are doing to deliver for people and planet.

It hasn't always been easy. You might have seen recently that the Tories in Holyrood tabled a 'vote of no confidence' in an effort to remove me. This was simply a political game and a stunt. This was unsuccessful but we know it was never designed to work - it was designed to intimidate me, and it didn't succeed in doing that either.

The latest polling has the Scottish Greens winning a record number of MSPs in the next Holyrood election - some even say we could win three MSPs in Lothian! We are only growing stronger. As a branch I'm really looking forward to

21 developing an election strategy and a system for selecting and supporting our
22 candidates and delivering a larger MSP group.

23 I'd also welcome feedback on other formats or communication styles for the month
24 updates to branches or if there is anything else I can do to ensure I'm
25 available to members for questions or discussions.

26 Ministerial Update

27 **We're making progress towards a new national park, the Circular Economy Bill has**
28 **been laid before Parliament and the Natural Environment Bill will go out for**
29 **consultation over the Summer. We've also secured another round of the Nature**
30 **Restoration Fund and the Recycling Improvement Fund which will be game-changing**
31 **for Scotland.**

32 Work that everyone will have been watching unfold is that of Scotland's **Deposit**
33 **Return Scheme**, which was due to launch this August. Unfortunately this was
34 rendered inoperable on time after Tories in Westminster refused to grant
35 permission to the scheme under the 'Internal Market Act'.
36

37 The Tories using powers that they awarded themselves after Brexit to sabotage a
38 policy that they don't like. In doing so they have hugely and irreversibly
39 undermined devolution while costing millions of pounds worth of investment and
40 hundreds of jobs.

41 The decision to effectively block the scheme will also have a terrible
42 environmental impact at a time when we need to be reducing emissions and taking
43 climate action. It would have been a game changer and would have represented a
44 massive step forward for our relationship with recycling and waste.

45 A wonderful - and very newsworthy! - visit I want to share is my **recent trip to**
46 **the Isle of Rum**. I had a great time visiting islanders and hearing their views
47 on the future of the state-owned Edwardian palace Kinloch Castle.

48 At COP15, the UN's Biodiversity Conference I spoke for Scotland on behalf of
49 sub-national governments around the world, pushing for ambitious outcomes, power
50 and resources from all in order to tackle our nature and climate crises.

51 Co-leader and MSP Update

52 **Our office helps hundreds of people every month with a variety of issues. We**

53 **have helped constituents fight for over £6,000 of social security benefits from**
54 **the DWP, helped house homeless families across the Lothians, supported Ukrainian**
55 **refugees access the support they need, push against vital bus services being**
56 **cut, and helped over one hundred people with accessing the healthcare they**
57 **needed coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

58 I could not do what I do without the hard work, support and initiative of my MSP
59 office staff. Kayleigh, who you may also know as Cllr. O'Neill, manages my
60 office ensuring all day-to-day activity runs smoothly. We also have Zayneb, our
61 Campaigns & Comms officer, and our Casework officers Kelly & Nariese.

62 This month we also said goodbye to Cami who was my Parliament assistant and
63 first ever member of staff. He won't be going far however as he will now be
64 working full time with our central team and party to do Digital Comms.

65 As co-leader I had the great privilege of **speaking on Calton Hill at the Our**
66 **Republic Rally**. I spoke about the chance to replace them with an elected head of
67 state who can speak up for the powerless.

68 This year we have started ramping up our local engagement and campaigns thanks
69 to our new Campaigns and Communications Officer. With the help of local
70 councillors we are looking to open up our **Holyrood Park** work again which will
71 look at old legislation around the city's historic green space.

72 In West Lothian we have begun work to help the biodiversity, safety and save the
73 beauty of **Linlithgow Loch**. Our team have held a number of stakeholder meetings
74 and will be formally engaging with the community very soon. We are also
75 supporting campaigns around **bus infrastructure** and the work to **save Howden Park**
76 **Centre** which is a community theater that hosts local shows and youth groups.