

Report

Proposer: Edinburgh Greens Branch Committee (decided on: 09/15/2020)

Title: Report: Branch Committee

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Annual Report 2020

Events over the past year have affected us all in many different and unexpected ways. None of us knew at the last AGM that another general election was imminent when we took up our positions! And, like communities across the world, we've been struggling to navigate our way through the health and economic crises caused by COVID-19. The committee has nevertheless worked hard over the past year running campaigns, holding events and training sessions and continuing to work constructively with our councillors, MSPs and the national party. We would like to extend our thanks to everyone who has been involved with the branch over the past year, particularly during such difficult times.

Branch events, meetings and trainings

We've run a range of branch events and meetings over the course of the last 14 months. We have sought to improve the accessibility of these events by introducing welcome teams to help people feel comfortable and supported when joining us at events, and by introducing a budget set aside for accessibility. We also increased our fundraising activity at events, introducing raffle collections to fundraise for room hire costs and support the branch. From March - at the outset of the COVID pandemic - we successfully shifted to hosting our events exclusively online. We will continue hosting events this way for the foreseeable future.

Events have included:

- An evening in conversation with Magid Magid (while he was still an MEP!) in February 2020, hosted by the Edinburgh Young Greens. The event was attended by over 100 participants and you can watch the conversation with Magid [here](#).
- Panel discussions with: local youth climate strikers and our co-leaders Patrick and Lorna; Edinburgh Green councillors on the impact of coronavirus on their work; Councillor Gavin Corbett and SGP co-leader Lorna Slater about a Green Recovery for Edinburgh.
- A meet-and-greet 'green freshers fair' for new and existing members, where we all got to meet our elected reps and members of various party working groups and committees
- A number of training and strategy days, including: an event to re-energise our local green groups, providing skills to support fundraising and run events; events to encourage under-represented groups to get involved in green politics; and a participatory strategy day to set our main objective for the next three years
- Co-hosting the 'Green Yes' kick-off event at the start of 2020 with the national party. Our very own Julia Bandel was a key speaker alongside Ska Keller MEP.
- An online quiz social event MC'd by our lovely MSPs Alison and Andy, including a questionable rendition of The Wombles

Our AGM was postponed from June to September due to COVID.

Elections

Importantly throughout the year there has been focus on the 2021 Scottish Parliament election and 2022 Edinburgh City Council election. Despite this, we have still been kept busy facing a snap Westminster Election and several by-elections too:

Westminster General Election - December 2019

Work on the snap-election began as early as October, selecting candidates to stand in all constituencies covered by the Edinburgh branch. The branch agreed with the proposal to stand in all Edinburgh constituencies and Livingston, in addition to the Falkirk branch leading in the Falkirk East and Linlithgow constituency.

It was recognised that the campaign was not going to elect our first Scottish Green MP, however the main campaign aim was successfully focussed on engaging members across our target wards for future elections whilst fundraising all our election costs (c.£11,000).

We were delighted to return the highest Green vote share in Scotland with Claire Miller in Edinburgh East and to have offered all voters across Edinburgh the opportunity to vote Green. Full results from the election are below:

- Edinburgh South – Kate Nevens, 2.7%
- Edinburgh East – Claire Miller, 4.3%
- Edinburgh North & Leith – Steve Burgess, 3.3%
- Edinburgh South West – Ben Parker, 2.4%
- Edinburgh West – Elaine Gunn, 1.9%
- Livingston – Cameron Glasgow, 2.6%

Thank you to everyone involved in the campaign.

Holyrood Election - May 2021

The planning for the Holyrood campaign started in summer 2019 with a lessons learned meeting looking back at the 2016 election. This was followed by

organising a hustings and the selection of Lothian regional list candidates, announced at the October 2019 conference in Inverness. The list is topped by Alison Johnstone, Andy Wightman and Lorna Slater. A full list of our candidates can be found [here](#).

The Lothian Regional Campaign Board has met monthly since January 2020, with discussions covering key topics including finance, fundraising and interface with the national campaign. The campaign launch took place online on 12th September 2020 with input from Alison, Andy and Lorna, as well as other speakers.

Council Election - May 2020

Early planning to recruit council candidates began in November 2019 with a “So you want to be a councillor?” event. The candidate selection process for Edinburgh is ongoing, with the second phase due to commence imminently. The West Lothian candidate selection for the 2022 election is planned to begin in late Autumn 2020.

By-elections

Preparations are underway for the Craighentilly & Duddingston council by-election on 12th November 2020, with Ben Parker selected as our candidate following an online hustings. The branch is also looking to support a candidate in the Livingston South by-election scheduled for 5th November 2020.

Membership, local groups and representative groups

Membership

Our membership figures as of September 2020 are: Edinburgh 1,434 and West Lothian 98.

Over the course of the last year we saw an encouraging growth in the branch membership. Between July 2019 and June 2020 it had risen from 1,445 to 1,566 in Edinburgh and 96 to 104 in West Lothian. However, there has been a marked reduction in recent months. This could be explained by ongoing issues relating to the move of the party database from Civi to Forest It is also possible that the pandemic and resultant economic difficulties have led some people to cancel their memberships.

We are aware that many local teams are also struggling to track membership

111 levels and details and we are working with the national party to help put this
112 right. A number of members are also not currently receiving our emails due to
113 the party database inadvertently opting them out from bulk emails. The national
114 party is aware of this problem and currently working on a fix.

115 The membership working group developed a strategic plan in February 2020 with a
116 number of priorities for facilitating engagement with the branch membership and
117 attracting new members. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced some of these ideas to
118 be delayed, but the working group has made significant progress on drafting
119 welcome letters for new members in consultation with local teams. These are
120 nearly ready to be rolled out, ideally sent at the first instance by local teams
121 in wards where this is possible.

122 We have not been receiving membership capitations for the past couple of years
123 while the national party sorts out a new workable and sustainable system. The
124 new system should begin and capitations should restart following elections in
125 May 2021.

126 Local teams and sub-branches

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129 Our local teams and sub-branches are active, hosting regular meetings and
130 events. Most have managed to move activities online following COVID-19.

131 Late last year, we delivered a “Green Party into action!” training day to
132 support local teams better engage with their membership. As part of the
133 Westminster election campaign, we were pleased to see local teams put this
134 training into action, with activists out in wards right across the city,
135 including in West Lothian too. Though COVID has restricted the ability of our
136 teams to get out door-knocking, we will be able to resume Green News deliveries
137 from October, and local teams have been making plans for this.

138 We have also worked with local teams to support them to manage their membership.
139 We have produced “Welcome” letters for local teams to share with new members,
140 and supported teams to conduct phone rounds too. Most recently this has been
141 with the Craigentiny and Duddingston local team and West Lothian sub-branch, in
142 advance of their respective by-elections in November.

143 Representative groups

144 The national party’s Women’s Network relaunched in late 2019 and a
145 representative from the group has sat on the Edinburgh branch committee since
146 then. We have also worked with other rep groups including Rainbow Greens and

Disabled Greens to ensure the committee has a positive dialogue with those groups. We hope to support the party in establishing a Greens of Colour rep group in the coming months.

The committee worked particularly closely with the Women's Network to support women and non-binary nominees for Holyrood 2021, and with the Rainbow Greens to help ensure our gender balancing mechanisms are inclusive of non-binary candidates.

The city-wide Edinburgh Young Greens group relaunched in February and the group are making plans with the Edinburgh University Young Greens to support the election campaigns in 2021 and 2022. Representatives from the Edinburgh Young Greens have been particularly active in helping organise, run and host a number of branch events over the course of the year.

Other

Cllr Derek Howie has joined the party having resigned from the SNP. He will sit as an independent in the council but work constructively with the Green Cllr group.

Communications

Our communications team have kept up their great work this year. We have established a slick process for producing video content to share online - including recording branch events to share with members who are unable to attend in person.

The branch website is being redeveloped with a fresh look and improved functionality, and is set to be launched in tandem with the Craighentenny-Duddingston by-election.

While we did not print a Spring 2020 issue of Green News because of Coronavirus, Autumn 2020 issues for our ward areas are currently in draft, and will be out to local teams in early October. We have an excellent and comprehensive set of party guidelines on what it means to do leafleting during the pandemic.

The talents of photographers, website designers, editors, graphic and video makers have been much appreciated throughout the year.

Other committee business

We have established new ways of working on the branch committee this year. We

expanded and consolidated a working group structure to encourage more people to get involved with the branch. Our working groups are:

- Membership and local teams: looking at ways of engaging our current membership by working with local team leads to inspire members to get active locally/branch-wide
- Communications: helping to organise all aspects of the branch communications; social media, print publications (Green News) and press; developing an online Media Library which has since been adopted nationally
- Events/Fundraising: helping to run events and fundraising activities, both at the local team and branch-wide level
- Accessibility: concentrating on making the branch processes/activities (events, communications) accessible and inclusive for all members

As part of the committee elections this year, we revised the role descriptions and introduced a process for gender balancing the committee. We have also introduced a [new AGM website](#) to make the process for electing a new committee and running the AGM easier.

We have also done lots of working tidying up the internal filing systems to make sure that no important documents are lost between committees, and introduced new tools and programmes to help record meeting minutes and actions.