

Report

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

Title: Report: Branch Committee

Report

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:

- 24
- An evening in conversation with Magid Magid (while he was still an MEP!)
25 in February 2020, hosted by the Edinburgh Young Greens. The event was
26 attended by over 100 participants and you can watch the conversation with
27 Magid [here](#).
- 28
- Panel discussions with: local youth climate strikers and our co-leaders
29 Patrick and Lorna; Edinburgh Green councillors on the impact of
30 coronavirus on their work; Councillor Gavin Corbett and SGP co-leader
31 Lorna Slater about a Green Recovery for Edinburgh.
- 32
- A meet-and-greet 'green freshers fair' for new and existing members, where
33 we all got to meet our elected reps and members of various party working
34 groups and committees
- 35
- A number of training and strategy days, including: an event to re-energise
36 our local green groups, providing skills to support fundraising and run
37 events; events to encourage under-represented groups to get involved in
38 green politics; and a participatory strategy day to set our main objective
39 for the next three years
- 40
- Co-hosting the 'Green Yes' kick-off event at the start of 2020 with the
41 national party. Our very own Julia Bandel was a key speaker alongside Ska
42 Keller MEP.
- 43
- An online quiz social event MC'd by our lovely MSPs Alison and Andy,
44 including a questionable rendition of The Wombles

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

46

47 **Elections**

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

52 Westminster General Election - December 2019

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

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

62
63 We were delighted to return the highest Green vote share in Scotland with Claire
64 Miller in Edinburgh East and to have offered all voters across Edinburgh the
65 opportunity to vote Green. Full results from the election are below:

- 66 • Edinburgh South – Kate Nevens, 2.7%

- 67 • Edinburgh East – Claire Miller, 4.3%

- 68 • Edinburgh North & Leith – Steve Burgess, 3.3%

- 69 • Edinburgh South West – Ben Parker, 2.4%

- 70 • Edinburgh West – Elaine Gunn, 1.9%

- 71 • Livingston – Cameron Glasgow, 2.6%

72 Thank you to everyone involved in the campaign.

73 Holyrood Election - May 2021

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

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

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

85 Council Election - May 2020

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

91 By-elections

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

97 **Membership, local groups and representative groups**

99 Membership

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

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

110 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

127 Local teams and sub-branches

128

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

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

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

154
155 The city-wide Edinburgh Young Greens group relaunched in February and the group
156 are making plans with the Edinburgh University Young Greens to support the
157 election campaigns in 2021 and 2022. Representatives from the Edinburgh Young
158 Greens have been particularly active in helping organise, run and host a number
159 of branch events over the course of the year.

160 Other

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

164

165 **Communications**

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

170

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

174

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

179

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

182

183 **Other committee business**

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

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

- 187 • Membership and local teams: looking at ways of engaging our current
188 membership by working with local team leads to inspire members to get
189 active locally/branch-wide

- 190 • Communications: helping to organise all aspects of the branch
191 communications; social media, print publications (Green News) and press;
192 developing an online Media Library which has since been adopted nationally

- 193 • Events/Fundraising: helping to run events and fundraising activities, both
194 at the local team and branch-wide level

- 195 • Accessibility: concentrating on making the branch processes/activities
196 (events, communications) accessible and inclusive for all members

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

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