

Report

Proposer: Edinburgh Branch Committee (decided on: 06/20/2021)

Title: Branch Committee - Annual Report

Report

1 **Edinburgh Branch committee report**

2 *Annual Report 2021 (September 2020 to June 2021)*

3 It's been a busy 10 months for the Branch Committee. We've focused our efforts
4 on the Holyrood 2021 campaign and keeping the branch activities going despite
5 ongoing covid-19 restrictions. We would like to extend our massive thanks to
6 everyone who has been involved with the branch over the past year, particularly
7 during such difficult times.

8 We have changed the time of our AGMs to fall in line with when other branches
9 across the country have their AGMs, this report covers 10 months from September
10 2020 - June 2021.

11 **Holyrood Election 2021**

12 The biggest area of work for the Edinburgh Branch Committee over the past 9
13 months has been our Holyrood 2021 election campaign!

14 Despite uncertainty and restricted campaigning because of Covid-19 lockdown and
15 social distancing measures we had a record campaign in Lothian with returning
16 MSP Alison Johnstone and party co-leader Lorna Slater, both elected as regional
17 MSPs. The 50,000 regional votes cast for the Greens is by far the highest-ever
18 and the 12.7% vote share surpasses the 12.0% secured in 2003 to make it the
19 biggest Green vote ever in Scotland. Alison Johnstone has since gone on to be

20 elected as the first ever Green Presiding Officer at the Scottish Parliament.

21 As part of our campaign, volunteers across Edinburgh and West Lothian made more
22 than 200,000 deliveries of Holyrood election materials, and fundraised tens of
23 thousands of pounds. We saw the number of impressions of the branch Twitter
24 account rise by an average of 500% in the final 3 months of the campaign, and
25 hit a 4 year high for membership figures across Edinburgh and West Lothian.

26 We have also put in a large amount of effort to complete a thorough debrief and
27 review process, including writing handover and “lessons learned” document for
28 future elections, based on feedback from members, local teams, staff members,
29 candidates and the campaign board team.

30 We’d like to thank all of our volunteers for the amazing work that they did
31 during this Holyrood election campaign. It was a phenomenal effort with an
32 amazing result.

33 **By-elections and preparations for 2022 local elections**

34 In the past nine months we also contested two local authority by-elections. Our
35 first election was the Craighentiny & Duddingston by-election in Nov 2020- the
36 local team worked incredibly hard and secured a great result for Scottish
37 Greens, increasing our vote share by 4.1% and only 20 votes off Scottish
38 Labour’s result. Our second by-election was in West Lothian in Livingston South
39 constituency, our candidate here was Cameron Glasgow and we won 2.4% of the
40 total vote.

41 At our 2020 AGM we selected 16 candidates for Edinburgh Council elections in
42 2022. Over the past year, the 12 target candidates have been supported with a
43 Target Candidate Development Programme, which is designed to give target
44 candidates the knowledge, skills and tools to run local campaigns and be a good
45 councillor once elected.

46 **Branch events, meetings and trainings**

47 All of our events continue to be online due to covid restrictions this year. Our
48 events included:

- 49 • Big Burns Night In (BBNI) - organised by South East Edinburgh Greens sub-
50 branch. BBNI was held at the end of January 2021. It was a Burns night
51 celebration complete with music, poetry and speeches, a piping in and

52 toasting of the haggis, a prize draw raffle, even a ceilidh room. In total
53 over 144 households attended, and we raised £3,400 for the Holyrood
54 campaign. See videos here

- 55 • Also in January, we held a new members event, attended by more than 50
56 members, which was an opportunity for new members to meet representatives
57 from their local teams or representative groups, find out more about
58 Edinburgh Branch and how to get involved in the Holyrood election.

- 59 • In Feb 2021, we worked with Rainbow Greens to hold a session on the Green
60 Party's policy on trans-rights, what it means in practice and how we are
61 campaigning for trans-rights to be recognised in Scotland.

- 62 • As part of the Holyrood election campaign we held two topical branch
63 meetings on key policy areas in our 2021 manifesto - one on rewilding the
64 city with Alison Johnstone and Nadine Andrews, and one on warm homes for
65 everyone with Ben Parker, Kate Nevens and Mridul Wadhwa. In addition we
66 hosted a fabulous launch event with our top three candidates Alison
67 Johnstone, Lorna Slater and Kate Nevans and our co-leader Patrick Harvie.

68 **Membership and local teams**

69 As of June 2021 the number of SGP members in Edinburgh was 1,678 and 126 in West
70 Lothian. At the beginning of last year we saw a small drop off in numbers, this
71 has largely been attributed to people moving out of Edinburgh and some glitches
72 with the central system, something many local team members discovered when
73 contacting volunteers for the Holyrood election campaign. During our active
74 Holyrood campaign months our membership steadily grew month on month, taking it
75 to the record four year high reported above.

76 The membership and local teams working group led the In-Real-Life (IRL) part of
77 the Holyrood campaign. A key part of this was producing a number of briefings
78 ranging from our target to win election strategy to how to use Bulk SMS to send
79 text to members of local teams. A number of phone banking sessions were also
80 arranged to help find and match volunteers to local teams.

81 In addition to the Holyrood campaign, the local team officer helped support the
82 creation of West Edinburgh Greens - a new local team, and began working with
83 them on how they can be better plugged into Edinburgh Branch's work.

84 **Communications**

85 In Autumn 2020, we launched a brand new and beautiful Edinburgh branch website.
86 One Hundred thanks to Alison Neathey, for its creation and keeping it up to
87 date. Alison also led the coordination for the content for our two Green News
88 editions in winter and spring 2021.

89 Our policy officers Yasmin and Tristan have worked with our elected councillors
90 and MSPs to submit and share monthly reports on their work with Edinburgh Branch
91 members. Thank you Yasmin and Tristan.

92 Our communication co-convenor, Harriet Hall, has worked tirelessly to produce
93 regular, monthly Edinburgh Branch email updates to members. Harriet has also
94 helped to increase our social media use across all of our platforms (Twitter,
95 Facebook and Instagram) to communicate events, opportunities, and election
96 messages to members, voters and the local community - including coordinating our
97 multilingual get out the vote videos, see here. Big thank you to Harriet.

98 Gavin Corbett has continued to support elected members and the Branch to
99 generate local media coverage of Green Party impact and policy, including
100 regular Councillor columns in the Edinburgh Evening News.

101 The talents of photographers, website designers, editors, graphic and video
102 makers in supporting the development of our communications content have been
103 much appreciated throughout the year. Special thanks to Gordon Craig for his
104 rapid editing of videos, particularly through the Holyrood campaign and to Jenny
105 Smith for all her support with Branch social media content.

106 **Other committee business**

107 Other areas of committee business in the past ten months have included:

- 108 • Establishing an Accessibility, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group
- 109 • Ensuring our activities were COVID-safe and online meetings were held at
110 times more accessible to those with caring responsibilities
- 111 • Ensuring timely communications with branch members around the resignation
112 of Andy Wightman MSP in December 2020 and the resignation of Alison
113 Johnstone MSP upon her election as Presiding Officer in May 2021.
- 114 • Representing the Edinburgh Branch at all National Council meetings

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- Sharing information, documents and advice with other SGP branches to support them with their activities, including on our AGM processes and debrief from the Holyrood campaign