

Report

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Title: Branch Committee - Annual Report

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Edinburgh Branch committee report

Annual Report 2021 (September 2020 to June 2021)

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

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

Holyrood Election 2021

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

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

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

- Also in January, we held a new members event, attended by more than 50 members, which was an opportunity for new members to meet representatives from their local teams or representative groups, find out more about Edinburgh Branch and how to get involved in the Holyrood election.
- In Feb 2021, we worked with Rainbow Greens to hold a session on the Green Party's policy on trans-rights, what it means in practice and how we are campaigning for trans-rights to be recognised in Scotland.
- As part of the Holyrood election campaign we held two topical branch meetings on key policy areas in our 2021 manifesto - one on rewilding the city with Alison Johnstone and Nadine Andrews, and one on warm homes for everyone with Ben Parker, Kate Nevens and Mridul Wadhwa. In addition we hosted a fabulous launch event with our top three candidates Alison Johnstone, Lorna Slater and Kate Nevans and our co-leader Patrick Harvie.

Membership and local teams

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

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

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

Communications

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

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

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

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

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

Other committee business

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

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

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