



Edinburgh Green Councillors' Report for April 2016

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Improving Public Participation - Opening up Edinburgh

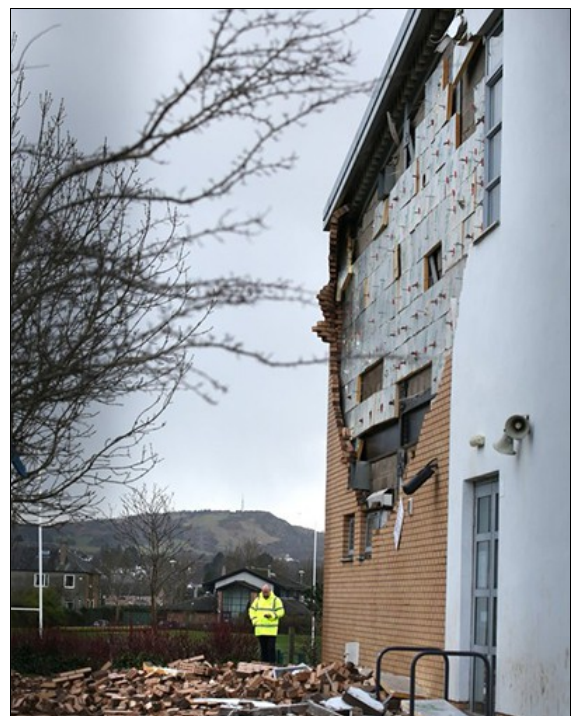
As Convenor of the South Central Edinburgh Neighbourhood Partnership, Melanie Main, supported by Steve Burgess, has delivered the City's largest single Participatory Budgeting event called [South Centraf Decides](#) totalling £214K on 30th April at the Methodist hall, Nicolson Square – all residents of Southside/Newington and Meadows/Morningside wards are encouraged to come and vote on 44 projects put forward by the community including grants for local organisations, roads & footway repairs and environmental projects.

In SW Edinburgh, Gavin Corbett also championed the extension of participatory budgeting in the form of [Grand a Grand](#) which was a big success in engaging young people. Gavin also took part as a case study for the Improvement Service on councillor use of social media and is currently being shadowed by the Local Government Information Unit on a project to chart what a councillor does.

Greener Jobs

Another huge issue for the Council but playing out largely behind the scenes is the likelihood of a billion-pound, Government funded, 'City Deal' which Green Councillors [have been pressing](#) to be a turning point in getting the City on a sustainable footing (such as investment to generate low-carbon jobs) rather than just polluting business as usual. As the City Deal looms nearer Economy spokesperson Gavin Corbett is seeking to enlist NGOs and others to address what a green City Deal would look like.

Gavin Corbett has also been backing a petition from social enterprise, Reunion, to ensure that social enterprise is integral to canalside regeneration, rather than simply multinational chains. As a board member of Remade Gavin has been looking forward to its expansion into a re-use shop, the Remakery.



Supporting Communities & Neighbourhoods

By far the biggest issue in Edinburgh recently has been the scandal of 17 PPP schools closed because of faulty construction. Education spokesperson Melanie Main appeared on STV's 6pm News pushing for the 7600 displaced pupils to have suitable alternative accommodation, and Greens continue to lead the way in [demanding a full inquiry](#) into the fiasco following their call at the Council Policy committee on the 12th of April.

Melanie, along with Chas Booth, has also been recently working with parents to ensure that there will be a long-term strategic plan for Gaelic Education in the city and developed through an active partnership between the Council and parents.

On Planning Committee, Nigel Bagshaw helped save Telferton Allotments from being built on and likewise at Ravelston Quarry saved a protected nature area from development. Nigel has also been successfully insisting that appropriate contributions to future tram works are sought from developers, in face of some reluctance from others.

Greens Welfare Reform spokesperson, Steve Burgess has been actively challenging the idea of [cutting £1m from Council run and supported welfare advice services](#) at a time when the most disadvantaged in the City are suffering from massive Tory cuts to welfare – to the value of £227m in the Edinburgh area. Greens understand that advice for people, particularly about maximising their income, is crucial in reducing the impact of these cuts.



Sustainable Transport

As Green Group Transport spokesperson Nigel Bagshaw has been supporting the extension of the 'School Streets' project to block off vehicle access at drop-off and pick-up times and also the roll-out of 20 mph zones across the City. Nigel also called for review of school crossing service to be kept in-house and the saving made be used to be out towards crossings currently without provision – sadly this was rejected by the Lab/SNP Coalition.

Melanie Main won agreement from Council officers to draw up plans after a community consultation to reclaim streets for residents in Greenbank and Braidburn by narrowing roads, changing street layout and making traffic one way.

Steve Burgess has been supporting [Edinburgh Playing Out](#) in their campaign for regular, low-cost, local street closures, to allow children to play and neighbours to meet, by bringing the issue to the Council Policy committee and winning agreement that an application procedure and guidance should be published by the Summer.



Promoting Renewable & Efficient Energy

An initiative of Green Cllrs way back in 2010 took another step forward when the Council formally agreed establishment of ['Energy for Edinburgh'](#) a Council energy services company to bring forward energy efficiency and renewable generation in the City. When the Tories opposed the company at a recent Council meeting, Cllr Chas Booth won Council backing to replace their representative on the EfE interim board.

At Health & Housing committee in April, Chas Booth, as a former advisor to Government on energy

conservation, was able to put a strong argument for communal district heating schemes rather than individual electric storage heaters to replace heating in twenty council housing schemes. Greens want tenants' energy bills reduced and to be affordable in the long term, at the same time ensuring climate-changing pollution is minimised. Sadly, the committee didn't agree, preferring hundreds of less expensive electric storage heaters.

At Policy Committee, Steve Burgess proposed that the major projects in the city's Strategic Energy Action Plan (SEAP) for reducing energy use and climate-changing pollution, be risk-assessed to see if they might need Council support to be realised. The proposal was subsequently agreed by the Climate Change Sustainability Working Group.

Highlights from Green Councillors' Wards

In Fountainbridge-Craiglockhart Gavin Corbett has been his hands dirty, literally, with community clean-ups in Shandon and on Water of Leith, as well as engaging the local school and businesses in the Clean, Green Hutchison campaign.

In Inverleith Ward, Nigel Bagshaw continued to make progress on maintaining and upgrading land and links between Drylaw and Telford, now made much easier as a result of the Council making a compulsory purchase of land for future tram extension (which Greens have also actively supported).

In adjoining Meadows-Morningside and Southside-Newington wards, Melanie Main and Steve Burgess have welcomed a decision by the City's Local Access Forum to assert four public Rights of Way through the Astley Ainslie hospital site. This means that any future owner of the site will have to make provision for people crossing the site during and after development of the site.

Finally the Green Group would like to extend our thanks to volunteers Annabel Smith, Claire Miller, David Johnstone and Mary Campbell who have been coming into the Chambers to help us with our work. If any member is interested in volunteering for the Green Group please get in touch.

