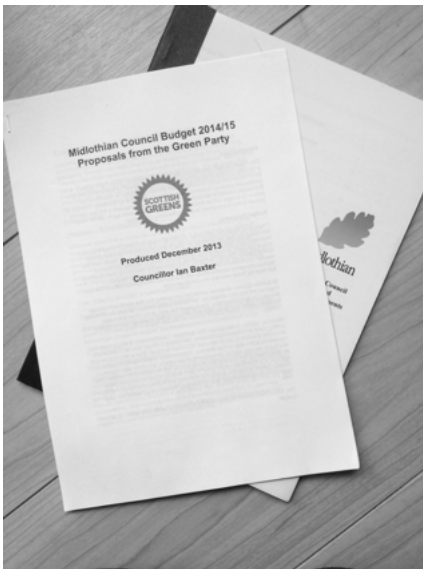




The Green alternative - Publicly owned renewable energy to avoid cuts to services



Green Budget to protect services and cut CO₂ emissions

A Green Budget proposal which would have removed the worst of the SNP Administration's cuts was put forward to the December meeting of Midlothian Council - the meeting at which the 2014/15 Midlothian Council Budget was set.

Green proposals included scrapping the cuts to learning assistants, school crossing patrols and opening hours at Recycling

Centres as well seeking to phase out music tuition charges over five years. It also included proposals to introduce Webcasting of council meetings to improve openness and public scrutiny.

To pay for this, the Greens proposed investment in council owned renewable energy as well as fast-tracking moves to save energy within the council and the scrapping of the Midlothian News council free sheet.

However, the Green Budget was opposed by both SNP and Labour Groups on the council, although the SNP has offered to work with the Greens to investigate the feasibility of our renewables proposals.

Councillor Baxter, who formally presented the budget, said, "Based on investigations by other councils, there's huge potential for Midlothian to take a lead in developing publicly owned renewables like wind, solar and small-scale hydro. If we can reduce or eliminate the need for service cuts over the next few years and cut our carbon emissions at the same time, it would be madness not to do so".

The full Green Party Budget proposal can be downloaded from the 'Publications' page of our web site, or contact us and we'll send you a copy.

Green Budget at a glance

- Remove cut to 10 Learning Assistants
- Remove cut to lunchtime school crossing patrols
- Remove cut to opening hours at Recycling Centres
- Target £65,000 energy savings in council buildings
- Phase out music tuition charges over 5 years, beginning with 20% cut to charges in year one
- Introduce Webcasting for council meetings
- Invest in publicly owned wind, solar and micro-hydro power, beginning with a single 500kW turbine
- Scrap Midlothian News council free sheet, distributing £10,000 of savings to community councils

Bonnyrigg Leisure Centre

A decision has again been postponed - this time to 24th June - for revised and new bids to be submitted. The decision taken at the council meeting means there is a real risk that most of the building will be demolished, retaining only the back hall for soft play. We will continue to support keeping the whole building for the community - and if you do too, please contact all Midlothian's councillors to let them know ahead of the all important meeting on 24th June.

20 mph zones

We're continuing to press for the introduction of 20 mph zones across Midlothian where people want them, with Lasswade and Polton Road a priority. The council's proposals are due to go out to consultation in the summer, following which we hope there will be no further obstacles to progress.

Cauldhall

Midlothian Greens backed local communities which tried to stop the opencast coal mine near Rosewell. Midlothian Greens' Convener Malcolm Spaven was at the forefront of the Stop Cauldhall campaign and we're continuing to watch developments closely to ensure adequate planning controls and restoration bonds are in place before any coal is extracted.

Cyclists

Do you commute to or from Bonnyrigg by bicycle? If so, please get in touch. We're pressing Midlothian Council to invest more in off-road cycleways to encourage commuters and recreational cycling.

General and dog waste bins

Midlothian Council is reviewing provision of general and dog waste bins across the town and more bins should be on the way! Get in touch if there's somewhere you think needs one and we'll see what we can do to help.

Broadband

With the Openreach national Fibre Broadband 'commercial' programme having ended in March, Cllr Baxter has been pressing for areas missed out, like Hopefield, to be upgraded as soon as possible in the Scottish Government's 'Next Generation' programme. BT say this may not be until 2017 - which he thinks is unacceptable and will continue to push to have these areas prioritised.

Allotments

A report was produced costing the provision of allotments, at Cllr Baxter's request, following which he has had discussions with the SNP Administration, suggesting that a small part of the old Hopefield Primary site should be considered. Although the Administration is supportive in principle, as yet no commitment has been given on how many allotments will be provided or where.

Councillor Ian Baxter's contact details

Telephone: 0131 663 4294 (Home)
07792 720421 (Mobile)
0131 271 3094 (Council)

Email: Ian.Baxter@midlothian.gov.uk (Council)

Surgeries:

2nd Monday of month (7-8pm), Bonnyrigg Primary School

3rd Wednesday of month (6-7pm), Poltonhall Recreation Ground meeting room

Please note: There are no surgeries during school holidays

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