

#SP16 – Ben Macpherson SNP candidate for Edinburgh Northern and Leith



Ben Macpherson says that the thing he is most passionate about is social justice. As a qualified solicitor he is well-placed to know about this particular area.

He has given up his job with the biggest law firm in Scotland to fight this campaign which comes hot on the heels of the General Election last year when he was out on the doors with Joanna Cherry QC (who took what had been the seat held by Labour's Alistair Darling) and Deidre Brock who now holds the seat for Edinburgh North & Leith as well as Tommy Sheppard who won Edinburgh East.

Ben lives in the constituency he aims to win for the SNP, and has always lived in the north of the city. He has worked in renewable energy and read Politics and Philosophy at the University of York before graduating in Law from the University of Edinburgh.

He is young (well he is in his thirties!) and passionate about politics and helping people, and was a big support to the group Save Canonmills Bridge when they tried to take on the city planners.

[The Edinburgh Reporter #SP16 Ben Macpherson Edinburgh Northern & Leith](#) from [Phyllis Stephen](#) on [Vimeo](#).

The Edinburgh Reporter met Ben in Leith to interview him:

"I have been involved in campaigning for progress and justice for a long time. I've been a campaigner for the SNP for about

10 years, but that wasn't necessarily with the ambition of becoming an MSP. I decided to step up and have a go at putting myself forward for selection and then I was selected just last year.

"The reason I stood was that I now feel I have the experience, the knowhow and the passion to bring change and progress to this area and to add something positive to the parliament.

"There are several areas that I would concentrate on because I think that Scotland and Edinburgh Northern and Leith can move forward. We have made a lot of progress in the last 10 years. The SNP government has a record to be very proud of but there's more work to do. For example in housing we have pledged to build 50,000 affordable homes in the next parliament. I would want to see and do what I can to bring some of that affordable accommodation to this constituency. There are lots of development sites here, but crucially it's not just about building affordable homes it's about building high quality affordable homes, in terms of design, construction and location.

"I would press developers to work with communities, that's not just consulting communities, that's engaging with communities in order to bring about the sort of development that the community wants and that will help people in this area.

"It is about how we combine urban land reform and economic development to create a good sense of place. Community engagement is all part of that.

"I am a local. I grew up in and around Edinburgh Northern and Leith. This is my home. I know it well, and I know the different communities in it. I am determined to represent all of the communities of the constituency.

"I am committed to progress and justice and that's what has

driven me throughout my adult life both as a campaigner and in terms of what I have done politically. I bring all of that experience of leading campaigns and knowing how to speak up for people to this campaign in 2016 to get myself elected as an MSP.

“In addition I have professional experience; I am a trained solicitor. I undertook legal training because I thought that would help me in my efforts to bring about real change and progress and justice. My training at one of the best firms in Scotland has given me a good grounding and technical ability. I know how the economy works, how policy is implemented and how to represent people.

“Although I was not a criminal lawyer, preferring to concentrate on civil law, I do know about both areas of the law. People want politicians who have had experience outside of politics and I certainly have that. As well as my legal background I also worked in the renewable sector and the public sector. I bring a range of different experience which I think will be useful as an MSP.

“My approach to any problem is always a constructive one and this area has till now been represented by someone with that same kind of approach – although a different party!”

Malcolm Chisholm has retired from politics after a career including spells in both Westminster and Holyrood.

Ben continued: “Since becoming a candidate I have been doing a lot of listening and that combined with my local knowledge and living in the area has led me to several issues which I would like to take forward. One is to support creative industries. When I was growing up my father worked in design, my brother is an artist and I know how important these trades are to a local economy as well as the national one. The creative industries generate over £5 billion for the national economy and I want to work with the creative industries, doing

what I can to support them if I am elected.

“Community policing is also an issue which has been raised with me fairly often. It is of course a pressing issue in this area and I would do anything I could to support community policing. By working with the communities, engaging and being part of that process of enabling people to work together we have witnessed a drop in crime rates here of almost a quarter in the last nine months.

“Small businesses in the area need our support. The SNP government in office has supported over 96,000 small businesses through the Small Business Bonus Scheme. We’ve already allocated £40million to support investment in these businesses in the next parliament. These are a key part of our local economy and do great work in the constituency in terms of employing people.

“I think the SNP has a very strong record in government on the big national issues. In education for example, we have supported Higher and Further education and we will continue to do so. We launched a national framework to improve standards.

“In other areas such as the NHS there have been record amounts invested by the Government. £13 million will be allocated to providing more nurses and improving the service. With regard to renewables I would use my passion and experience in the renewable sector and as a lawyer to build a low carbon economy and to press towards our Climate Change targets.

“What motivates me is social justice. That is why I got involved in politics in the first place, and as a candidate that is what primarily drives me. Although the Scottish Government doesn’t control all the policy that I think we need to create a fairer society, I would like to do what I could in that area. We need to challenge Tory austerity which is in my view causing such unnecessary hardship for many people living here.

“To me the European Union brings many benefits to Scotland. We are part of an international country and an outward looking Scotland. I think that Europe brings security, but also that sense of looking forward. The EU is not perfect and I think like many others that there is room for reform, but to me that is the union of the future which will help Scotland compete with other countries such as China. We need to work together in Europe to uphold and promote the rights that we hold close like human rights and employment rights, the ability to live in a fairer society, and Europe assists with that.

“We have to vote positively to stay in as it is all about creating a more international Scotland and building a Europe that will be a strong passionate voice for human rights and fair economic development.”

Still photos courtesy of Ben Macpherson