

#SP2021 – Mev Brown – Reform Party

Mev Brown is a freelance journalist, and a would-be politician. He has been a candidate a couple of times before and is now number 2 on the Reform Party regional list for Lothian.

He explained that he joined the Reform Party as a result of knowing Brian Monteith for many years. Monteith was one of the first Conservative MSPs elected to Holyrood. He also knew the director of marketing, Martin Green, and met the leader of the Reform Party, Michelle Ballantyne. It was Ballantyne who resigned as a member of the Conservative Party in January 2021, heading up the Reform Party in advance of the election.

Mr Brown said: “Michelle does want to make some change. One of the problems at Holyrood is that there is this single issue of independence and people are either for it or against it – they don’t want to talk about the issues that affect people’s day to day lives. When I speak to people on the doorstep they have trouble remembering what changes Holyrood has made to their lives. A lot of people wonder what MSPs do for a living at Holyrood and not a lot seems to be getting done.”

The party is standing 36 candidates across Scotland and Mev says that while the majority may be former Conservatives, there are others from different parties. He thinks what brings them together is the desire for change and the lack of change from the mainstream parties.

He said: "Holyrood is basically a single issue, a one-trick pony – it's independence or saving the union.

"I worked in the homeless sector for 18 years. I've got real concerns about alcohol abuse, drug abuse, homelessness, mental health, housing supply housing market, and none of the parties none of the parties are talking about those in any significant way.

"Others have their own issues, but having worked in the homeless sector for 18 years I really want to see some change there. Everybody will have their own area of expertise, their own area of interest, but this is a universal concern. Michelle Ballantine herself worked in the NHS for many years. She is a qualified nurse and really wants some reform in the NHS. It is not the most efficient of organisations. "

He mentioned that the council is also one of those big organisations where there is a lot of management and not many people to do the job. When you talk to people who are really doing the jobs it is admin which is top heavy – front line workers never seem to get the resources. These always seem to go to middle managers.

He continued: "I would stress that I have been active in politics since 2004 and I have spoken to thousands of people over the years who always seem to say that they are over-managed. That is where the resources go when what they really need is more workers to do the job.

"If you talk to a police officer then they will groan about paperwork, and is a really big issue for them. They have something like 200 forms to complete when discharging their duties, and that takes them away from patrolling the streets."

One of the main issues Mev wanted to talk about was the drugs problem. He has extensive experience in dealing with people who have this kind of issue. He explained his disquiet about the methadone programme which is set up to help people get off

drugs.

I am passionate about politics. It's the opportunity to bring about meaningful change.

He said: "In the homeless sector the mortality rate of people on the methadone programme was huge. The number of people who come off the methadone programme is not a success story – it is simply that they have died. The political elite wants to hide everything from voters. They don't want voters to know the truth.

"In my personal experience, the majority of the large majority people that came off the methadone programme come off because they're dead.

"It is a massive problem in Scotland and we are by far the worst in Europe. For a developed nation to have the drug-related deaths that we have in Scotland is absolutely shameful.

"We have a political establishment that's committed to hiding the truth, as opposed to dealing with it."

But rather than supporting what has been hailed by politicians at Holyrood as a life-saving policy, he is dead set against the minimum pricing on alcohol strategy introduced by the SNP. He explained: "There are a lot of holes in the minimum unit pricing policy – it won't work, and is a stupid policy. When stats look bad, politicians often change the way they are collected and presented. Also MSPS have a child-like innocence in thinking all problematic drinkers pay for alcohol. It would be surprising if alcohol consumption has gone down during the lockdown. I have been looking at some Canadian researchers and the party will be developing a strategy on this."

Brought up in St Andrews, Brown moved to Edinburgh when he left school and has never left. He was previously Chief

Spokesman for Business for Britain in Scotland, Mev joined the Conservatives in 2004 and stood in Edinburgh East in 2005. He spent a few years in the Territorial Army – he was going to join the military from school but studied computer science instead at Napier. He then went on to work for Ferranti Defence Systems which he found really interesting and challenging work. He then moved to the oil and gas sector and worked in recruitment of healthcare professionals to work in the US. After 9/11 anticipating a general downward shift in demand for recruitment and the possibility of a recession, this led to him moving into the homeless sector working for various charities. With his new knowledge of the homeless he began writing letters to the editor and then became a guest columnist for a selection of newspapers, beginning another chapter in his life as a journalist.

He joined the SDP in 2019, winning 114 votes in the Edinburgh South West constituency, campaigned for Better Together to defend the union, and was also affiliated with Vote Leave.

The full list of candidates in Edinburgh and Lothian is published [here](#).

