

Council elections 2022 – Kayleigh O'Neill – Forth Ward

Name Kayleigh O'Neill

Political Party Scottish Green Party

Ward Forth Ward, Edinburgh

What is your story?

I moved to Edinburgh for university when I was seventeen and completely fell in love with the city and how independently I could live here as a wheelchair user. I studied English at Edinburgh Napier University and graduated in 2020 during the first lockdown. In my last two years of university I got into student politics and was elected as Edinburgh Napier Students' Association's Equality & Diversity Officer for 2019-20.

In all my work I am keen to break down the barriers that disabled people face on a daily basis.

At this time I was also struggling with finding and keeping accessible housing – I was registered homeless for around three years. My experience with housing issues and desire to see a more accessible and independent Scotland made me join the Scottish Green Party.

After leaving university I started an internship with Euan's Guide, the UK's leading disabled access information website. I was a communications assistant and really enjoyed writing about and advocating for better access for disabled people. After this I worked for Inclusion Scotland setting up paid internships for disabled people in the public, third and private sector.

On the same day that the Scottish Greens joined The Scottish Government through the Bute House agreement, I joined co-leader and MSP Lorna Slater's team in The Scottish Parliament.

I am a caseworker for constituents across Lothian, which means I have seen the huge amount of influence that local authorities can have over people's lives.

What are the main issues you will campaign on ?

Green councillors have and always will continue to work towards policies that empower marginalised groups, help local communities thrive, and protect our green spaces. We'll ensure that the Council's commitment to a 2030 net zero goal is matched by real action. Edinburgh should be a child-friendly city, where children can play and travel safely. Homes should be genuinely affordable to rent or buy, and easy to keep warm. This is even more vital in the current cost of living crisis and as we do our bit to tackle the climate emergency.

I want to bring better accessibility to my ward, to Edinburgh Council and beyond. In Forth ward I am campaigning around the importance of local services and what is known as 20 minute neighbourhoods. I want better access to warm, safe, and affordable homes, and to improve our streets so that those who walk, cycle and wheel can get around safely. By investing in better active travel infrastructure we can reduce emissions and clear our lungs and waterways.

What do you consider to be your or your party's achievements or legacy during the last council session?

In the last council session, Green councillors did a lot to make Edinburgh a fairer, greener city. They worked positively and constructively to make the council itself a more equal, inclusive and representative body.

Our councillors:

- Led Edinburgh Council in declaring a Climate Emergency and setting a target of reaching net zero climate-changing emissions by 2030 with interim targets and an action plan
- Won support to adopt “Transport For All” pledges which will improve accessibility in all transport projects
- Urged greater transparency on the council’s gender pay gap and robust action to tackle it
- Sought to ensure that “affordable housing” is genuinely providing housing for those on low incomes by securing an assessment of the council’s policy and its effectiveness.

These are the sorts of changes that can only be delivered by Green councillors. We are showing the impact that we are having in Holyrood, with £145 million for additional teachers and school staff, the biggest investment in recycling for a generation and free bus travel for everyone under 22. We want to bring that same outlook and that same change to our communities here in Edinburgh.

What is the thing that few people would know about you?

In my last year of university I produced and hosted a podcast for our Feminist Society called A Podcast of One’s Own. You can still listen to it on Spotify!



Kayleigh O'Neill council candidate in Forth ward