

Corstorphine/Murrayfield by election – Pete Gregson – Independent candidate

Pete Gregson is standing as an independent candidate in the March by election.

He has always been firmly against the building of the CCWEL in [Roseburn](#), and firmly behind the traders in Roseburn receiving some compensation for loss of business during the construction phase, even though that would be an unusual use of council funds. He said he worked with the businesses on council petitions for about four years asking for this.



Pete Gregson independent candidate at the

Corstorphine/Murrayfield by election on 9 March 2023. Photo © 2023 Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

He said: "It is tragic what happened in December when the LibDems and the Tories couldn't agree with the SNP group before the meeting on a form of words that would suit everybody. For that reason they didn't get the money. It was petty party politics."

He was out leafletting when we met, and bemoaned the fact that he has been "fleeced" by someone who said they would deliver leaflets for him and put them in a bin instead.

He believes the main issues in the ward are parking and road changes, and "what the council calls traffic calming" and potholes. He would like the council to be much more efficient and said that if he is elected he could still have some impact. He said: "We have a council at the moment which is hung in many ways, it's a minority administration and no-one has a clear majority. In that kind of atmosphere independents can be kingmakers. They might want my support for something."

"For years I did not want to be an independent. The problem is that you are excluded from the party system that monopolises local government. I am an ex community worker and I see that councillors could do so much more than waving their hands at a committee meeting. They should essentially be part of active citizenship getting people together to discuss the environment they live in."

We discussed the matter of the CCWEL with Mr Gregson asking if he was responsible for the years of delay caused by the government inquiry. He said: "I think it was badly budgeted from the beginning. They said it would cost £7 million in 2015, and that seemed to go up to £20 million seven years later. This was not sensible costing. It was never costed properly." Gregson claims to be a cyclist who cycles six miles every day.

He thinks that there should be more social activities for young and old. He said: "Corstorphine Community Centre (CCC) which is the only social centre in the ward has an outreach programme and they want to do things with more people in their communities. Where I live there's 50 per cent more elderly people than in any other ward in the city.

"And so if people want to get involved in some kind of social activity, CCC is ideally placed for that kind of thing. As a councillor I can pull together groups of people to partake in these kind of activities. So it would support their outreach programme by leafletting doors, by having meetings by asking people if they want to try something like tea dances or men's shed out. Any kind of social activity which gets people out of their houses and socialising together would be great. CCC needs all the help it can get."



Pete Gregson Independent candidate Photo © 2023 Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

"I am against any more student accommodation. It takes away space for family housing. Forty years ago students didn't live

in big blocks paying £1200 a month storing up debt for the future. These are crazy rents. I know as my daughter is at university. You can buy a house for that much. It is a scam, the number of students who are living in these blocks and giving away their future earnings. Why not give it back to residents and return to student lodgings with a landlady or landlord just like we did all that time ago. There are loads of people with extra space and who could do with the extra money. Where is the problem?

"I have written to all the universities and none of them do student lodging schemes. The council could work with them to create something very suitable. Likewise Home Share.

"This is a great scheme where you have an older person who has a student coming to live with them and they get a cheap rent in exchange for shopping now and then. There are so many ways you can solve Edinburgh's accommodation crisis. Building ever more massive blocks of student accommodation isn't the one.

Gregson lives in the ward. He said that until 2015 "the council had a policy of Quiet Roads and off main street cycling and paths which were close to where pedestrians were. One of the joys of cycling is not fighting your way up a main road with thousands of cars, even if you are on a protected track as there are still many cars next to you with all the noise and dirt pollution they produce. The joy of cycling is being at one with nature. Cycling on a busy main road isn't being at one with nature.

"If you look at how people commute where I live they do not come down Corstorphine Road. They come through the parks, over the golf course, through the quiet part of Balgreen and Roseburn Park. That is the natural desire line. Most cyclists if they have a choice prefer a quiet route over a very busy road. You might add two minutes to your journey."

When asked if women were expected to use these off street

paths at night he replied: "I am not sure that what we have is ever going to be like Holland. You know there are various reasons why people don't cycle. I love cyclists and I would like more people to cycle. Two key factors in Edinburgh are the weather and the number of hills. I would argue that you can't engineer those two issues away.

"People will not take to cycling in the way the council thinks it will because it is not just about being in a protected lane. They could use bollards, which would be cheaper. So rather than spending £20 million and involving major engineering works you could run bollards – which they have done for Spaces for People and if it is being used and if you can demonstrate that that protected strip is getting an increase in cycling then build a protected lane. But without having done that it is all wishful thinking. It is all pie in the sky.

"They don't actually know how many people are going to use this. So they ignore all the potholes in Edinburgh, blow a load of money when we've already got a very good cycle route from Roseburn to Haymarket called National Cycle Route 1. It's fur coat and nae knickers thinking. We deal with the superficialities but forget about the nitty gritty."