

Capital's newest political party aiming to shake-up election

A new political party launched in Edinburgh is urging voters to back 'people not politicians' ahead of the general election this week.

After starting up less than two months ago, Edinburgh People is fielding five candidates – one in each of the city's five constituencies.

Founder and leader Marc Wilkinson – who himself is standing in Edinburgh South-West – described the party as a “people-led movement”.

He said: “The key objective is to represent the interests of the people of Edinburgh first and foremost and to provide them with a voice – but more importantly than that a voice that is listened to.

“Our strategy to achieve that aim is to do it without relying on career politicians . . . who are free to vote without being whipped by their party and free to vote and represent their members from their party from their local area.”

However due to getting “such little notice” about Thursday's poll, Edinburgh People's hopefuls will appear on the ballot paper as independents. “It takes two to four months to register a new political party with the electoral commission,” he explained. “So the party's name will not appear on the ballot paper. The important thing for everyone to remember is

our names.”

Until five weeks ago the idea for a new party was a “theoretical construct of mine,” Mr Wilkinson said. “But since Rishi Sunak’s announcement of the snap election we’ve mobilised at an incredible pace.

“Truth be told it hinged on a crowd-funder that was started on Tuesday the 4th of June, and literally on Thursday the 6th we secured £4,500 in funding.

“The following day was the deadline for submitting our nominations to the council, so at 3.30 the following day, we were in the City Chambers and we paid our two-and-a-half thousand pounds, that’s the cost of five candidates to stand. That money was only received the day before. Divine intervention of whatever it may be was making it happen.”

He added Edinburgh People was founded on “very democratic” principles with a “one member, one vote” system. “The members propose policy, if ten per cent of the members support the policy it goes to a vote and we require a two-thirds majority for policies to become party policy.

“At the moment we have voted on some [policies] – one of them includes women’s rights. That policy is to protect safe spaces for women, whether it be in toilets and changing rooms, to not changing the definition of the word woman.

“The objective right now is to really inspire hundreds, if not thousands of people from Edinburgh to join the party because our first bi-annual general meeting is going to be in September where we’re going to have a lot more members and we’ll have a lot more policies being put forward.”

Since launching, he said, “hundreds” of “politically homeless” ex members of other parties have been in touch with him about getting involved.

'Stepping stone to something more realistic'

Recognising the odds are stacked against his efforts to get candidates sent to Westminster under a first past the post system, Mr Wilkinson admitted this election is "basically a marketing campaign".

And his sights are set on the next Scottish election where proportional representation will increase his chances of success.

"What we are doing right now is the first stepping stone to something that is far more realistic," he said. "It is completely unrealistic for Edinburgh People to really have an MP sitting at Westminster."

Eventually he wants to see a 'people party' set up for each of Scotland's eight regional constituencies.

"In the Lothians region in 2021 the Green Party secured around about 12 per cent of the vote," he said. "So through the proportional representation system the Greens secured two MSPs from Lothians. Our target is to achieve six per cent of the vote in all eight regions, at which point each of the regional people parties will secure one MSP each, which would actually be one more than what the Greens secured in 2021 which allowed them to become a junior partner in a coalition government."

Edinburgh People's Edinburgh East and Musselburgh candidate Jane Gould said she has never been involved in politics before but is "fed up" with the current system.

"I've had issues and I've tried contacting my own politicians and filling out surveys and petitions and so forth and you just never seem to get a proper answer or make any difference

to anything.

“Myself and four others decided to throw our hat in the ring last minute. None of us have come from a political background but we really bought into the whole theory of this which is never elect career politicians again, elect people. We’re just ordinary people.

“What we won’t be is just people who have been in a political job all their life and have no real experience of life. We are people who have lived in the community, we’ve done jobs, we’ve been parents, we’ve taken part of things, run businesses.

“My personal opinion is there’s far too much corporate money and corporate influence that comes into politics and that’s really what’s disrupting the system – we want to tackle that as an issue.”

All candidates standing in Edinburgh South-West are:

- Scottish Labour Party – ARTHUR, Scott
- Scottish National Party (SNP) – CHERRY, Joanna
- Reform UK – HARPER, Ian
- Scottish Greens – HEAP, Dan
- Scottish Family Party – LUCAS, Richard Crewe
- Scottish Conservative and Unionist – WEBBER, Sue
- Independent – WILKINSON, Marc Richard
- Scottish Liberal Democrats – WILSON, Bruce Roy

All candidates standing in Edinburgh East and Musselburgh are:

- Scottish Liberal Democrats – DUNDAS, Charles
- Independent – GOULD, Jane Mackenzie
- Scottish Greens – GRIMM, Amanda Faye
- Scottish Conservative and Unionist – MUNRO, Marie-Clair
- Scottish Labour Party – MURRAY, Chris

- Scottish National Party (SNP) – SHEPPARD, Tommy
- Reform UK – WINTON, Derek Steven

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter