

Council to consider reopening some public toilets

At next week's council meeting the councillors will discuss the reopening of some of the public toilets that the city owns.

This was first raised as a concern by Conservative councillor for Portobello/Criagmillar, Callum Laidlaw. [He lodged a demand](#) for the reopening to allow those gathering on beaches and at parks to have somewhere to relieve themselves. In recent weeks Police Scotland have issued 28 Fixed Penalty Notices to those doing so out of doors which is an offence.

The matter was deferred until 9 July as it was not simply a matter of reopening the conveniences, but also ensuring that the council could comply with government guidance on matters such as queuing, physical distancing and cleaning routines.

Government guidelines have now been released and so a council report by the Director of Place recommends that some of the public toilets can be reopened. But it is recognised that public toilets are one of the places where there is a high risk of transmission of the Covid-19 virus.

There is no statutory obligation on the council to run any public toilets at all and consequently no grant aided expenditure is available to back the move. Before the pandemic, council teams were responsible for 16 public conveniences, opening and closing them and also cleaning and restocking. There are 14 people on this mobile team, but five

of them are off work due to Covid-19 restrictions and also other health matters. Previously the council engaged seven agency staff. The cleaning regime will have to be more rigorous than before to protect customers and staff, and will probably require staff to be permanently sited at each of the toilets.

The current budget for public conveniences is £282,926 and the additional cost of staffing each of the toilets to be reopened will cost an additional £143,500.



Edinburgh Ross Bandstand one of the public toilets which may reopen – credit The City of Edinburgh Council

Adam McVey, Council Leader, said: “The city is slowly starting to return to a ‘new normal’ and as more restrictions are gradually eased we know a lot of people are out enjoying our beautiful parks and beaches, and more recently returning to visit the many and varied quality shops and other businesses Edinburgh has to offer. We are reopening some toilets to ease the situation but I would ask that everyone is respectful they’re when out and about. Plan ahead and if you’re caught short, get home to use your own facilities if there are none open nearby.

“It’s only possible to reopen some public toilets in busy areas as we must make sure we’re following government guidance and putting in all of the necessary measures required such as additional deep cleaning and physical distancing to keep everyone safe. The cost of reopening can’t be underestimated but it’s important that we do all we can to support our communities and combat the negative anti-social behaviour some of our residents have experienced.”

Depute Leader, Cammy Day, said: “We know the situation is far from ideal, but we have limited resources and the priority here must be protecting public health. We’ll keep everyone updated as soon as it is possible to reopen all of our toilets

safely. Until then we'll be using signage, our website and social media to keep everyone up to date with health and safety measures we're putting in place and which toilets are open when.

"Assuming the report is approved, and all health and safety measures are put in place, selected public toilets would reopen on Monday, 13 July. This would be on a temporary basis until 30 October from 11am to 6pm, seven days a week. A further review will be carried out in September and an update report will be considered by councillors in October. This report will outline details of customer numbers, costs incurred, and any updates on public health advice."

Public toilets to reopen 13 July – 30 October from 11.00 to 6.00pm until 30 October 2020. All of these arrangements will be reviewed in September.

- . Pipe Lane in Portobello
- . Hope Park in the Meadows
- . Ross Bandstand in Princes Street Gardens
- . the Courtyard at Saughton Park
- . Bruntsfield Links
- . Hawes Pier, South Queensferry
- . Cramond



Saughton Park where the public toilets may be reopened.