

Council to spend a penny on temporary loos

Councillors agreed a plan on Thursday to install temporary public toilets in some of the key parks in Edinburgh and other 'hotspot' areas including the Meadows and Portobello dependent on funding to approved by Council next week.

The anticipated increased demand over the summer months for our outdoor spaces during the warmer weather means that more facilities are now badly needed. There have been complaints all over the city of people using quieter streets as "outdoor" toilets.

An additional £450,000 from Covid funds, if approved, will fund the project. A list of the exact locations for the toilets is being compiled, and will be published. The project will ensure that the toilets provided also meet accessibility needs.

The council has not yet reopened all public toilets in the city. There are nine facilities which remain closed.

A [plan](#) for new and improved permanent public toilets across the Capital, following a review of existing facilities, was also approved by members of the Transport and Environment Committee, on the basis that funding can be identified.

The plan is to build new public toilets in popular parks such as Inverleith and Leith Links and in premier parks where provision already exists the toilets will be upgraded to meet modern hygiene standards. Consultation will also be carried out with community groups in these and other areas such as Colinton, where the community may already be progressing their own projects through a Community Asset Transfer.

The plan also includes more modern facilities being built in local town centres as part of the development of new Council hubs. The review found providing purpose-built toilet blocks with small cafes in local town centres would provide unnecessary additional competition to local businesses and so councillors have approved new facilities being provided in the multi-service 'hubs' being created as part of the '20 minute' neighbourhood approach. This will be particularly beneficial to disabled and elderly residents looking to access Council services.

Improved signage to major travel hubs, which all have public toilets, is also being considered as part of the plans.

The community toilets scheme will also continue when Covid guidance allows and communications will be improved to make sure people know where the facilities are.

In the longer-term, payment to businesses to open their toilets for general public use will be phased out as provision across the city improves.

There are currently [seven public toilets open](#) at busy 'hot spots' and reopening the Council's other permanent facilities will remain under review and they will reopen when practicable and when public health guidance allows.

The Scottish Tourist Guide Association lodged a written deputation calling for some action. They said: "If the city is to return to its past success in attracting visitor, we must improve provision, address cuts and extend hygiene and hand

washing facilities.”

Here is the Convener talking to The Edinburgh Reporter about the addendum introduced by the SNP Labour coalition at the Environment Committee on Thursday.

Cllr Lesley Macinnes, Environment Convener, said: “As we ease out of lockdown over the next few months outdoor recreation and meetings will become even more important for people, particularly during spells of warmer weather.

“We recognise that an increased number of public toilets is going to be needed to allow residents and visitors to stay longer to enjoy our beautiful parks, beaches and other open spaces. There have been reports of people toileting in and around these areas and I really hope that providing additional temporary facilities, if funding is approved, helps to put a stop to that.”

Cllr Karen Doran, Environment Vice-Convener, said: “We’re very proud of our beautiful parks and beaches, which are particularly busy during periods of warmer weather and I’m really pleased we’ve managed to find funding, which now just needs to be approved, to help ease the situation with more people meeting and exercising outdoors. To make our stunning city even more welcoming and accessible , we’ll try to find the funding we need to allow us to initially focus on improving facilities in premier parks on a permanent basis.

“We’re already planning for ‘hubs’ in our town centres as part of ‘20 minute communities’ and accessible, clean modern toilets as part of these ‘hubs’ is the best solution for local provision going forward.”