

Communal bins – council “information event” did not offer important advice

At the first of several information events about the planned installation of more communal bins today it was not made entirely clear that it was also an opportunity for residents to have their say.

The first event for those living in the New Town was held for Broughton residents at Bellevue Parish Church on Wednesday. Until asked, the council officers did not actively promote the fact that they have access to an online feedback form, and that residents can make their views known – even at this late stage – by simply telling a council

officer this is what they want to do.

When The Edinburgh Reporter attended, there were several posters with information about the decision made by the Transport and Environment Committee in April 2021, and some photographs of particularly badly packaged recycling in and out of red bins – some of it actually strewn across the street. But nowhere that we could see had any information about any way to give feedback during the visit.

Council officers had images from a photo call they held recently when the various bins were laid out on the street for residents to see. (We did not hear about this or we might have our own photos.)

The council says it is consulting Edinburgh World Heritage and Historic Environment Scotland about how the new bins will look, as well as extra measures to “minimise visual impact”. The Cockburn Association stated earlier this year: “Interventions in the streetscape of the World Heritage Site detract, rather than add, to the special qualities. Installations of waste bins, new cycle infrastructure, pop-up venues, etc all seem to ignore the fact that Edinburgh is a World Heritage city.”

The leaflet produced by the New Town and Broughton Community Council (NTBCC) was in a box on the floor rather than immediately to hand. It contains much useful information about the process, and explains its objection to the proposed arrangements on the basis that there has been no consultation with residents.

NTBCC are running [an online campaign](#) to enable residents in their area to object to the plans. Residents are urged to write to their own elected representatives. Angus Robertson MSP for Edinburgh Central [has his own survey here](#).

The council has of course already pronounced in April on the way it will discharge its statutory duty to collect rubbish from households in the area. Their information states that this means residents will no longer have to store their rubbish in their homes, but simply dispose of it in a communal bin when they have it. There is also a promise that the service will be more consistent and will improve street cleanliness and recycling levels.

Councillors took a decision in April this year to create bin hubs “to make it easier for residents to recycle by ensuring they have access to a full range of recycling bins”. There has been little or no consultation with residents. According to the council officer we spoke to this is because collecting rubbish is a statutory responsibility.

The hubs will have bins for food waste, glass, plastic, tins, cans, paper and cardboard and landfill waste and will replace any [gull proof bags introduced under the previous administration in April 2013](#), with bins arranged within railings on the street in an arrangement like this:



Albert Street Leith

The council confirm that locating any bin hubs will be a balancing act between safety, the walking distance to a bin, the size of the neighbourhood and placing bins on the road rather than the pavement where possible, while avoiding

unnecessary street clutter.

As the government's Deposit Return Scheme has been delayed following an announcement at Holyrood today, it will continue to be necessary to provide bins for glass which will mean noise for anyone living close to the hub.

There are already around 18,000 communal bins in the city, some of which have truthfully seen better days. The council claims that most are emptied twice a week. It was explained to us in 2016 that large bins are often used by [people dumping trade waste](#) in them. This makes the bins too heavy for the council vehicles to lift and causes damage.

In the original report to council from February 2020, council officers suggest that: "Providing a more formalised hub will help the residents recycle more, reduce the number of collection points and enhance the streetscape."

The location of any bin hubs on roads will have to be approved through a Traffic Regulation Order process and these are not likely to be completed until 2023. Although it is possible to object to these orders, it is only possible to do so on the basis of road safety and traffic management and not for example on the basis of noise or appearance.

There is further information with maps [on the council website](#) about the likely bin locations in areas including Broughton, Inverleith, Comely Bank, Ravelston, Churchill, The Grange, Merchiston, and Dalry.

Other events are being held as follows:

Stockbridge and Inverleith residents

The event will be on Friday 19 November, from 11am to 3pm, at Number 7 a community café at 7 Raeburn Place EH4 1HU. [Location details here](#).

Old Town residents

The event will be on Wednesday 24 November, from 12noon to 4pm, at The Crannie 9 Cranston Street, EH7 7BE. [Location details here.](#)

New Town residents

The event will be on Friday 26 November, from 11am to 3pm, at the Rose Theatre Café 204 Rose Street EH2 4AZ. [Location details here.](#)

West End residents

The event will be on Tuesday 30 November, from 12noon to 4pm at Walpole Hall on Chester Street in the shadow of St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral. [Location details here.](#)