

West Lothian Council may stop using wheelie bins

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter

Bin bunkers for storing rubbish underground could be introduced in West Lothian to replace wheelie bins.

Councillors backed a motion from SNP group depute leader Councillor Frank Anderson to investigate the use of the bunkers in neighbourhoods where there are a large number of flats – including in his Craigshill ward.

“This is probably the future”, he told fellow councillors.

There are some in Edinburgh and Glasgow. The bin bunkers are in the process of being introduced in Liverpool, and are already installed by Oxford and many other English councils.

The bunkers, known as Underground Refuse Systems (URS), are rapidly becoming the norm in cities across Europe.

With a large 3,000 to 5,000 litre capacity these are communal rubbish bins buried beneath chutes.

They cut the amount of refuse collection required, eliminating the need for wheelie bins. They also cut down on vermin and other issues associated with above ground storage of waste. The schemes are also kinder to the workforce in that they cut out heavy lifting by collectors, as special vehicles move the containers.

Cllr Anderson became aware of the systems through his connection with the Association for Public Service Excellence. According to that organisation the use of URS slashes the annual costs of rubbish collection per household from £70 per year to around £30.

A pilot scheme was proposed for Craigshill at the West Lothian full council meeting last week.

Councillor Anderson said: "I live in hope we would be unanimous on this."

He suggested the Craigshill site, between two blocks of flats in Victoria Street, which is notorious as a dumping ground, would be ideal for a pilot project.

He suggested going further than the motion, and making it a condition of all new housing developments.

Seconding the motion councillor Diane Calder said the scheme could also boost West Lothian's already good record on recycling. Flatted properties do not currently take part in the recycling schemes and the introduction of another bin for householders was "perceived to be a problem especially in flatted areas."

There would be capital outlay but costs could be met through shared contracts and would also be offset by efficiency savings in such things as the number of refuse collection journeys needed and also through low cost funding or regeneration funds.

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