

Opinion – Cllr Ashley Graczyk speaks out on vandalism at Sighthill Park

Cllr Ashley Graczyk is independent councillor for Sighthill/Gorgie ward.



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Over the last week, Edinburgh's popular Sighthill Public Park has been subject to a spate of senseless vandalism with the local greenspace, community woodlands and

even the rugby pitches targeted.

Wheelie bins were set alight around the perimeter of the American Football Field using petrol cans, some were torched in the middle of the playing field putting the pitch out of action as plastic and metal had melted into the pitch. The practices for youths, juniors and varsity teams had to be relocated. Local residents living near the park even complained of local property and bins being stolen.

I was at Sighthill Park early last week to see the damage for myself and was absolutely horrified at what I saw. I also met and spoke with the Council Park's team who were there to repair the pitches by levelling the area and clearing up all the debris and litter.

What was even more shocking was the escalation of violence directed to the fire service who attended the scene over the weekend, after all the repairs and clear up by the Council and Edinburgh Napier University earlier in the week. The fire service could not deal with the fires until arrival of the Police as they were being threatened by youths hurling burning items at them.

Glass bottles have been deliberately smashed up on the pitches and the surrounding areas of the park, and I have received complaints from local dog owners, some even had their pets taken to the vet due to glass cuts in their paws.

It is just awful to see these acts of vandalism happen in our well-loved and public owned park. This is immensely upsetting and disheartening for the local community who love and use this beautiful green space. It is also disappointing for council officers, and other stakeholders who have put so much work into this community asset for the enjoyment of all.

I find it so disheartening to see this senseless activity at one of the best parks in Edinburgh with precious green space,

great facilities and enjoyed by many people. I'm determined to do everything I can to ensure the public will have every opportunity to enjoy an inspiring community asset in our lovely public green space.

I have already immediately requested that the council removes the burnt debris and broken glass as soon as possible, and have liaised and sought reassurance from the council that the facilities, the park, including the community woodlands, will receive continued care, attention and planned maintenance going forward.

I have also contacted the local police for an update. They are now working to identify the individuals and take appropriate action. I have liaised with the police to increase community police patrols in the area to try to prevent further damage and that they continue with their prevention and intervention work within the vicinity. I encourage anyone who has seen, or heard anything to please contact the police as soon as possible.

One of the reasons I have a community greenspace initiative called [Sightpark House](#) is because I am really keen to see these kinds of issues addressed with more positive community action with the aim of making our community a better place for everyone. Some of the projects include Friends of Sighthill Park, dedicated to promoting, maintaining and improving the green spaces of Sighthill Park for people to use and enjoy. There is also a Sighthill Woodlands project, a local greenspace resource for promoting and supporting biodiversity in our local woodlands. If anyone is interested in getting involved, please get in touch with me.

Another project we have is a Keep Sighthill Broomhouse and Parkhead Clean campaign, to increase more sanitation resources in these areas so we can improve the local standards to help keep our area clean. The sister campaign, Keep Gorgie Clean, has been running for a few years and there has been a marked

increase of reporting in Gorgie Dalry area. We are keen to encourage everybody to use the appropriate services for waste collection and to manage their rubbish responsibly so the Council can improve their waste service.

We hope to encourage people to report any fly tipping, litter or dog waste that they see in their local area, by taking photos and reporting via Twitter to [@edinhelp](#) (one of Edinburgh Council's official Twitter accounts) with specific location (we find this the quickest and easiest method).

Alternatively, please report it by email, phone, or using The City of Edinburgh Council's online forms via their [website](#). Hopefully, progress can be made now that certain issues have been identified and addressed.

<https://sightparkhouse.wixsite.com/greenspace/>

Cllr Graczyk gave us these photos which were supplied to her by local residents.



