

# **Council to consider cracking down on loud buskers**

**A crackdown on “nuisance busking” in Edinburgh is being considered by the council following “challenges” dealing with excessive noise during this year’s summer festivals.**

The issue has been considered by the local authority for several years but now residents and businesses are to be asked for feedback on which parts of the city should accommodate busking and amplified sound.

And the responses could go on to inform the creation of a by-law giving the city greater powers to take action on street performers who are too loud.

Cllr Neil Ross, who has led calls for better enforcement, welcomed the move and said people across the Capital have told the council that “amplified sound in public spaces can be extremely annoying, very distracting and detrimental to normal working and domestic life” and were looking to the local authority to find a solution.

His LibDem colleague Cllr Hal Osler added there is a perception you can “do whatever you like” with regards to busking in Edinburgh “because nothing ever happens”.

Currently, the responsibility of dealing with noisy buskers lies with the police rather than the council.

A report said the annual review of the Summer Festivals 2022 “highlighted the challenges of busking in the city”

however guidelines are unclear for when action should be taken by officers, who “simply need to form an opinion that the noise is annoying”.

Paul Lawrence, Director of Place at The City of Edinburgh Council, added that police “don’t see this as a particular priority for their resources unless it reaches levels of significant criminality”.

He said nuisance busking is an “ongoing issue in many cities,” adding: “There are quite a lot of front line officers who have done their level best to advise buskers and talk to buskers. A lot of buskers are quite savvy and basically say ‘not much you can do mate’.”

Mr Lawrence said it was maybe time to “go a bit further” and explore the possibility of creating a bye-law which would allow the council to take matters into its own hands to a greater extent.

This could take up to 18 months, officials said, and would require Scottish Government approval before coming into effect.

Head of legal services Kevin McKee said such a policy “cannot replicate any existing legislation”.

He added: “It must be specific to the problem that it seeks to address and therefore it must be based on evidence in order to show that that’s the case. So there needs to be an evidence gathering exercise in advance.”

A survey will being launched in the new year will seek feedback on:

- Particular hot spots where busking and amplified sound should be avoided
- Any locations or zones where busking and amplified sound could be accommodated and managed

- Times of day and year when busking and amplified sound could be accommodated and managed

Consultation with residents and businesses will also seek evidence of the “issues associated with the amplification of sound in public spaces” which will be reported back to council “to consider whether there would be sufficient justification to proceed with preparing a bye law”.

by Donald Turvill

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