

Call for more 'little libraries' in city's less affluent communities

Edinburgh Council is being urged to help boost the roll-out of 'Little Free Libraries' across poorer parts of the city.

Weatherproof boxes where people can access and donate books are dotted around the capital as part of a worldwide movement which aims to improve access to reading. Greens city councillor Dan Heap said there were already a "fair number of them" locally, but they were often located in "places of affluence" and he wants to see a "more even spread".

Currently there are nine such book exchanges in Edinburgh registered on the official Little Free Libraries website and more listed with the Edinburgh Tool Library, which builds and installs the boxes.

"I live near one, I live near two actually and I pass them every day. I think they're a really good idea," Cllr Heap said ahead of a council meeting where he will request officials to draw up plans to bring the service to more communities.

However he stressed they are "not an alternative to normal libraries" but "an extra". He added: "I think it's a really accessible way for people to access books. I think we should be creating lots of different opportunities for people to read and this is one of them.

"When I've been researching this it's the Edinburgh Tool Library that's been driving a lot of it in terms of actually

building most of them.

“It’s just about facilitating what’s already going on to make sure everyone has access to these.

“It’s not a huge task – it’s a small box that needs to be in a suitable location, it’s just a matter of identifying the suitable location, getting the permission to put it up, making it and then starting it off with some book stock. It’s not difficult, it’s just making sure we’re starting that process and bringing the right groups together and that’s maybe not always done.”

The councillor for Sighthill and Gorgie said the boxes cost between £200 and £300 to manufacture and “generally are very well stocked”.

He said: “You can contribute if you want to, so when I do it I always take one with me and leave it – but there’s no hard and fast rules. Not everyone is in a position to leave one but I think people who can leave one do.

“I have also thought maybe the library service could donate some books.”

Cllr Heap said it’s also possible to install solar panels on top of the bookcases so users can charge their phone.

He added: “There’s one just about to open in Portobello and you can just sit there reading and it’s a non-stigmatising way to charge your phone if you can’t afford to charge it at home. That’s really something we could look at as well.

The Culture and Communities Committee will discuss his motion on Little Free Libraries on Thursday (December 7).

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter



Leamington little library. Image: Dan Heap