

# **Bid to stop travellers using Midlothian car parks**

**Unauthorised traveller camps have caused around £80,000 in damage to University of Edinburgh sites in Midlothian in recent months, it has been claimed.**

The university has asked Midlothian planners to give it the go ahead to introduce heigh restricting barriers at its East Bush facilities in the county to tackle the ongoing issue.

In its planning application, it says travellers are regularly using its car parks without permission.

It says: "Regular use of the campus car parks by the travelling community (without request) has cost £80,000 in damage repairs in the last few months."

A recent report on travellers accommodation in Midlothian for the council revealed the number of unauthorised sites springing up each year has rocketed from just one in 2019 to 18 last year.

An official campsite jointly operated at Whitecraig by Midlothian and East Lothian Council was closed three years ago amid claims of extensive vandalism, leaving no formal stopping place for travellers.

At the time of the report it was suggested the local authority worked with the university and Police Scotland to manage the sites.

It said: "It is clear from the evidence that the number of known encampments has increased in Midlothian with an average of seven per annum between 2019 and 2023.

"Police Scotland data records the majority of these at the Edinburgh University owned Easter Bush Estate near Roslin. It is not known why the number of encampments has increased; a formal encampment process should improve communication between all parties and allow greater interaction with the Gypsy/Traveller community."

The new planning application from the university asks for permission for five vehicle height restricting barriers for the campus which lies around eight miles south of Edinburgh, in between Penicuik, Roslin, and the Pentland Hills Regional Park.

No details of the damage caused by the travellers have been given. University of Edinburgh declined to comment.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter