

Anger over lack of funding for toilets in Portobello

Local businesses and residents have shared their frustration after Edinburgh Council failed to find funding for new public toilets in Portobello ahead of the summer season.

Hot sunny weather can draw thousands of people to the shore, overwhelming the existing toilets – and locals and business owners alike are saying that the current closing time of 6pm, which leads people to use streets and even gardens instead, is unacceptable.

Businesses themselves are becoming overwhelmed by the demand on their on-site toilets, facing hundreds of people using their facilities per day, often without paying.

Rikki Kuczynski, manager of the Esplanade restaurant off Bath Street, said: “It’s a big issue for us, especially on busy weekends when you’re filled with customers. We’re not talking about 10, 20 people, we’re talking about hundreds wanting to use the toilets.

“The biggest issue seems to be kids, having bonfires, having fun on the beach. When they come in, they trash the place in minutes.

“This is an ongoing problem, every year. It’s a problem for other businesses as well.”

Rikki said he thought the council should take action, and expressed that beachside destinations elsewhere often had ample public toilet provision, including showers and foot washing stations.

At present, there are two sets of public toilets near the beach – one at Pipe Lane, and the other one 300m in from the shore on Bath Street.

They only have toilets on site – though the permanent toilets proposed by the SNP group would have included showers.

He also said that groups of young people, especially later in the evening, could be abusive towards restaurant staff when refused access to the toilets.

Maciek Pagowski, manager of Miro's, a restaurant on the promenade, said: "I feel disappointed in the council – there's a mess everywhere. I don't understand why they can't find the money to fix this.

"I think the biggest problem is the 6 o'clock closing time. The neighbours are unhappy with people peeing under their windows – it's common sense, the council knows that every summer this place is busy. Closing toilets at 6pm is ridiculous.

"Obviously, we let disabled people, kids, and pregnant women use the toilets. But we cannot let everyone in, it's not possible."

Several local residents shared Rikki and Maciek's concerns, and some agreed that a substantial issue was the 6 o'clock closing time.

One, Craig Ellison, said the location and opening times of the toilets was a concern, saying: "The number of them, no, the location of them, yes.

"Most people are out drinking on the beach after they close,

and then they just piss on the streets, piss on the side of houses, piss on fences – it's disgusting.

“And the walk [to some of the toilets] is too far – if people have to walk more than, like, three minutes, they'll do what they want, really.”

Another local, Denise McGee, said: “They could definitely do with more public toilets, especially in the summer.

“It's something that would enhance the area, and I think people would really see the benefit of it.”

A third, Lewis, said: “The winter months aren't too bad, there's less footfall. But in the summer there's definitely an issue.

“May through to August, people are using the street and stuff like that. The bars and restaurants do their best, but public toilets would be better.

“I've lived here for two years and I've seen [people using the street] through winter and summer.”

However, not all residents agreed. One local, Agata, said the issue “was not much of a problem” to her.

By Joseph Sullivan Local Democracy Reporter