

Councillor calls for canal graffiti prevention

Graffiti and vandalism along the Union Canal in Edinburgh is damaging its historical value and enjoyability, a local councillor has warned.

Conservative councillor Neil Cuthbert has put forward a motion to the next full Edinburgh Council meeting calling for action to improve upkeep of the 203 year old waterway.

Cuthbert wants to see collaboration between the council, Scottish Canals and Historic Environment Scotland to develop an action plan to 'protect and restore' the route's 'built heritage'.

In his motion, he writes: "Portions of the canal corridor, in common with other parts of historic Edinburgh, are increasingly affected by graffiti and vandalism, which detract from its historical significance, visual amenity, and recreational value for residents and visitors."

Most of the graffiti and vandalism takes place between Kingsknowe and Fountainbridge, where much of the canal route is along Georgian-era bridges and viaducts that carry it over streets, railways and the Water of Leith.

The canal starts at sea level in Falkirk, and travels 51 kilometres to its end in Fountainbridge, with most of its route sitting at 73 metres above sea level.

Canal boats looking to traverse the waterway climb most of the

height difference between the waterway and sea level through the Falkirk Wheel, a massive rotary boat lift built in 2002.

Most of the route from Falkirk through to Edinburgh has a walkway adjacent to the canal, which was historically used as a towpath for horses pulling barges.

On Twitter/X, he wrote: "I've submitted a motion to Edinburgh Council to protect the Union Canal's historic built heritage from graffiti and vandalism.

"As a Scheduled Ancient Monument, this Georgian engineering marvel deserves better protection."

In his post, he also says he was writing to Scottish Canals and Historic Environment Scotland ahead of the 8 May council meeting where the motion will be discussed.

His motion asks the council to investigate how other councils and government bodies handle preventing graffiti along historic waterways 'while respecting the heritage value of the structures'.

Further, it asks the council to spend more money on tackling the graffiti problem, and improve public education about the history of the canal to encourage 'community stewardship' of it.

Finally, it asks that the city place specific 'heritage protection' measures into the next update of the city's strategy for the canal.

By Joseph Sullivan Local Democracy Reporter