

Graffiti Summit

18 January 2024, 2:00pm

Business Centre, City Chambers

Attendees

Name	Organisation
Cammy Day	Leader, City of Edinburgh Council
Miles Briggs	MSP
Representative for Jeremy Balfour	MSP
Scott Arthur	TEC Convener
Ali Roden	TEC CSO
Sanne Dijkstra -Downie	TEC Spokesperson
Stuart Dobbin	TEC Spokesperson
Christopher Cowdy	TEC Spokesperson
Murray Black,	Waste and Cleansing Operations Manager
Gareth Thomas	NES Officer – Graffiti
Keith Young	Waste and Cleansing Area Manager
Gareth Barwell	Service Director - Operational Services
Mike Pinkerton	Head of Communications
Cori Burnett	Senior Communications Officer
Rebecca Gordon	Communications Officer
Alex Gordon	Secretary, Longstone CC
Peter Williamson	Chair, New Town and Broughton CC
Marie McArthur	Old Town CC
David Happs	Police Scotland
Hannah McNicol	Scottish Government
Ross Blair	Director and Creative Producer, TrenchOne
Fiona Rankin	Head of Conservation, Edinburgh World Heritage
Simon Montgomery	Senior Technical Officer, Historic Environment Scotland
David Climie	Edinburgh District General Manager, Scottish Power
Mark and Craig	Spectrum Arts/Mainline Store
Alex Cowan	Scottish Parliament
Roddy Smith	Chief Executive, Essential Edinburgh
Liz McAreavey	Chamber of Commerce
Stuart Tooley	Edinburgh University

1. Context

Cllr Day welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the reasons this had been called –

- To engage with utility companies, who are often affected by unwanted graffiti on private property and roadside assets (Transport Operators, Rail Bridges, etc)
- The drive to focus on management of graffiti from politicians, businesses and members of the public.
- Maintaining the historic charm of the city whilst appreciating art in managed graffiti.

- Use of the Council graffiti service by the private sector and investment in the expansion of the service.

Officers provided an overview of the complex picture of graffiti in the city, crossing the boundaries between vandalism, street art, contemporary art, and heritage. Hotspots tend to be in high profile/high density areas however it was noted that reports do not capture the full extent city-wide.

Data was presented on the rates of offensive vs non-offensive and private vs public property. Requests for removal often come via various routes, via Elected Members, other Council departments, ad-hoc or one-off works which makes reporting difficult.

2. Prevention/Management

In recognition of the need for investment in the service, the Council allocated additional funding during 2023/24 for the City Centre and Town Centre Refresh and specifically, £530k for graffiti removal. The Service maintain a working relationship with Historic Environment Scotland and the University of Edinburgh, removing graffiti from these properties for a fee.

Officers are looking to develop recognised preventative measures, including Murals, Tolerance Zones, Legal Walls and community/school engagement.

3. Resources and Expansion of the Service

The Council have agreed to increase specialist removal vehicles from 1 to 4 as well as commissioning additional training for officers to address graffiti on sensitive/historic surfaces. Incident recording has been improved with the creation of a graffiti management database that allows input from the public, stakeholders and staff, as well as appropriate data sharing with Police Scotland and key partners. Officers are investigating a reduction of chemical use in the longer term to reduce the environmental impact.

The Council would appreciate engagement with Utilities and stakeholders to address graffiti on their property. The value of the service could be increased by providing, at cost, specialised graffiti removal.

4. Q&A

Cllr Day reaffirmed his commitment to tackling graffiti on public land and the need for firm commitments from partners to back this initiative with resources and finance. The following areas were discussed:

- Members were keen for ongoing discussion with utility companies to expand the CEC graffiti removal service and the potential for annual/ad-hoc cleaning contracts.
- It was acknowledged Edinburgh is an international destination and graffiti contributed to crime, and the perception of crime, in tourist hotspots.
- Other cities used utilities specifically for graffiti to divert away from historic sites. OR codes could also be used to create a graffiti tour.
- The balance between street artists and protecting historic sites was acknowledged.
- Graffiti tended to appear in areas which were derelict or already unkempt.
- There was potential for a bigger event bringing street artists to the city for projects in specific areas.
- There was a lack of awareness of tolerance zones and where these are.

- The art tends to be better in tolerance zones where the artist can work without fearing prosecution.
- The Marine Parade is a good example of a tolerance zone developing naturally.
- Concerns were raised over damage to stone from the paint – there were work arounds available such as boards being placed on top to mitigate against paint/water damage.
- Cleaning can cause more damage to the stone than the paint itself.
- There was a balance to find between valuing street art and managing vandalism.
- Concerns were raised over tolerance zones in the world heritage site attracting vandalism such as the case on Jacob's Ladder.
- Graffiti on utility buildings can increase risk of vandalism as they may appear empty/abandoned.

5. Actions

- 1) To agree HES will link in with CEC on removal methods and guidance.
- 2) To clarify if planning permission is required for graffiti removal in specific scenarios.
- 3) To investigate a potential art festival in the city with a focus on building up local artists, working with local children and promotion of tolerance zones.
- 4) To investigate within the graffiti policy if there is agreement on management of tolerance zones.
- 5) To investigate improved data sharing between the Police and CEC
- 6) To agree to reconvene with the request that partners consider the CEC graffiti removal service for their owning cleaning needs.