

## **2024 NTBCC Environment Committee Annual Report**

NTBCC, as already reported here, seeks to match the committee structure of the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC). However, for several years, NTBCC has placed Transport and Environment into two separate committees in contrast to the City Council which combines these two areas in a single committee. The work of the CEC Transport and Environment Committee does undertake noticeably more work in the area of transport matters than environment ones. In addition, certain items that might be considered as environment ones such as Parks and Greens Spaces are overseen by the City Council's Culture and Communities Committee which NTBCC mirrors. Similarly, the Council's Planning Committee is responsible for overseeing the World Heritage Site. The following sets the main areas of work undertaken by the Environment Committee during 2023/04 while recognising that environment matters often overlap with what was happening with Transport-focused initiatives such as with Picardy Place.

### **Refuse Collection Services**

The main environment issue in which NTBCC was involved during 2023/24 was the proposal made by the CEC in April 2021 to change arrangements for refuse collection in the New Town and Broughton area. This was part of city-wide strategy but had very particular implications for the World Heritage Site. NTBCC has helped to support a trial in certain streets that currently have kerbside collections for new arrangements for recycling. The lessons of the recycling trial are relevant not only to streets currently with kerbside collections but may provide an alternative to particular streets served at the moment by communal bins. NTBCC has also been involved in wider aspects of the roll-out of the Communal Bine Review beyond the trial.

#### *Recycling Trial*

The street associations involved in the trial of the new recycling arrangements have continued to work with the Council and their members to progress the pilot of the changes to dry mixed recycling (now being collected on a weekly basis), reduced capacity of non-recyclable waste collection (new smaller black sacks) and increased food waste recycling (new education campaign and issue of new caddies). In November, as part of the trial, representatives from most of the trial streets visited the Millerhill Food Waste Processing plant. This impressive facility converts food waste from across the City and elsewhere into green electricity and liquid fertiliser. All attendees thought that this was a very worthwhile visit and we are looking to arrange further visits. Recycling rates across the trial streets continue to be higher than previously and based on recent monitoring food waste collections are 20% higher than before the campaign started. Council staff remain enthusiastic about the benefits of the new arrangements, and it is expected that they will be continued through much of the New Town once the limited trial is completed.

#### *Communal Bin Review*

The Council published plans to introduce new communal bin hubs in the George Street area and the Old Town. This will constitute Phase 5A of the roll out of the communal bins. We visited the locations of these proposed bin hubs, attended the drop-in sessions and provided comments to the Communal Bin Review team. Once these and other comments have been considered, the Council will issue TRO to confirm their locations. These will be unlikely to be installed until next year. Work will then progress on Phases 5B and 5C, but we are seeking discussions with Council staff on their plans for engagement with residents in those areas. There also continue to be issues with communal bins installed under previous Phases which we are monitoring.

### **Air Pollution**

The Environment Committee continued during 2023/24 to review the CEC's annual Air Quality Progress Report which contains quality monitoring data, local pollutant trends and emerging issues in Edinburgh. The report forms part of the Council fulfilling the requirements of the statutory Local Air Quality Management Framework. No parts of the New Town and Broughton is an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) for which an action plan may be produced when statutory objectives are not being met.

The CEC updated its Air Quality Action Plan which had previously been out for consultation. The Plan is designed to improve air quality under eight themes: Low Emission Zone (LEZ); Strategic Transport; Behavioural Change to Active Travel; Public Transport; Low Emission Vehicles; 2030 Climate Strategy; Integrated Policies and Guidance; and Domestic Emissions. The Plan outlines the actions that will be taken to improve air quality in Edinburgh between 2024 and 2028, with a particular emphasis upon the introduction of the LEZ (see Transport Committee report).

### **Street Cleansing**

The Environment Committee continues to review the Street Cleansing Performance Reports of the CEC. The City Council had agreed in February 2023 to increase expenditure on gully cleaning, fly tipping, graffiti and street sweeping. This was to be rolled out over the course of the year and NTBCC will in due course consider reports on what improvements have been achieved.

The Environment Committee has also kept under review the CEC's Litter Bin Siting Policy which was developed during the year. It remains to be seen what impact the policy will have, in particular in relation to the priority for siting of bins in main arterial routes and other high footfall and through route areas, main areas of commerce and retail, proximity to fast food and takeaway retailers, and public transport hubs. The problem of litter in areas of the New Town is in need of serious resolution. In January the Committee Convenor attended a CEC organised 'Round Table' on graffiti in the City which is also a growing as a serious problem. The results from the 'Round Table' are still to be fed back.

### **George Street & First New Town**

A variety of Community Councillors over 2023/24 participated in the CEC's consultations on various aspects of the major proposed changes to George Street, Castle Street, Hanover Street and Frederick Street. A final operational plan for Edinburgh's George St and First New Town (GNT) was approved in June 2023 along with updated designs. There were however several outstanding issues to be resolved, particularly relating to access and street furniture, in which NTBCC has been participating.

### **World Heritage Site**

During the year the Convenor of the Environment Committee along with other Community Councillors and those from various residents associations undertook a review of the management and protection of the World Heritage site as part of the Committee's responsibility for the Public Realm. It was agreed that there needs to be further engagement with the City Council and Edinburgh World Heritage Trust by NTBCC and its associated residents association. The engagement is intended to result in clarity around responsibilities and governance arrangements and to give local residents a significant role in promoting and protecting the World Heritage Site. NTBCC during the years started a process to engage with CEC in respect of helping local residents to obtain a better understanding of the implications of policies and regulation to manage energy consumption in response to the climate crisis for old, listed buildings.

**Peter Williamson,**  
**NTBCC Environment Committee Convenor**  
**2 June 2024**