

FRIENDS OF THE MEADOWS & BRUNTSFIELD LINKS

Report on toilet inspection: 1 December 2014

Three members of our Committee, two male and one female, made a tour of the public toilets at present open on the Meadows and Links, on the afternoon of Monday 1st December. We found that on the whole they were clean and tidy, with adequate provision of toilet paper and soap. The hand driers were working. However, the drinking fountains did not appear to be working in any of the toilets.

1. Toilet at south end of Bruntsfield Links

All was in order, except that the water in the wash-basins (female) did not appear to be working (as well as in the drinking fountain). They were OK in the male toilet. The disabled toilet was visited with the appropriate key two days later: this was in good order. On this occasion the female toilet was being used by a youngish woman. These toilets are certainly used, even in winter.

Some external repair is needed: the gutters need cleaning and roof repairs need attention.

2. Toilet at east end of Meadows, near Magnet Playground

The gents' toilet was closed, apparently owing to a fire. When was this? How long has it been closed? When we visited, a youngish man was desperate to use the toilet. He had been on a walk up Arthur's Seat, and had come back into town: this was the first public toilet he came across, only to find it was closed. He was on a visit from Glasgow. We took pity on him, and stood guard while he used the ladies' toilet. On the face of it, he was the kind of person who could have visited a local pub: but *he was looking for a public toilet!*

The ladies' toilet was in reasonably good order. It included a disabled toilet (not inspected). But there were cleaning materials littering the floor of one cubicle. The local café near the play-park was shut, so no alternative toilet was available.

3. Middle Meadow Walk, near Lauriston Place

These male and female toilets are both down some steps, so there is no provision for the disabled. They were clean and in good repair, except for one male cubicle that was out of order. They are certainly well used. There are no plugs in the basins, but since there is no hot water, this probably doesn't matter too much. The taps tend to stay on long after they are needed: they are the press-button type. Again, no drinking water was available.

4. Croquet Pavilion and Cricket Pavilion

At our work party on 29 November we learned that there used to be a public toilet at the Croquet Pavilion (now used as a tool store). Since there is plumbing there (inside for the Club), could it not be resurrected as a public toilet, with disabled access?

However, the real need is for a toilet near or at the Cricket Pavilion. The Pavilion Café only has one small unisex toilet, which can just about cope with patrons of the café, but certainly cannot accommodate the general public. As we have said before, a major problem in the summer, when there are barbecues and excessive drinking, is already that of public urination, both female and male. *We need another toilet.* Since there used to be a public toilet at the Cricket Pavilion, the drainage still exists, and only has to be reclaimed before it deteriorates any further. One of our committee members who is an architect has commented: ‘I am pretty sure the problem will be partially blocked/cracked sewer due possibly to tree roots.’ The viability and cost of toilet provision here needs to be professionally assessed.

Also, there is a shortage of facilities for disabled people. It is ridiculous to suggest that disabled people can visit local cafés instead. In fact recent research reported in the media on 6 December suggests that a large proportion of shops, cafés and pubs do not have disabled toilets. To take away those that already exist on the Meadows and Links would seem to be discriminatory in the extreme.

CONCLUSION

We do not think there is any justification for closing these toilets on the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links. On the contrary, we consider there is a good case for providing one more, preferably at the back of the Cricket Pavilion, where the drainage already exists. This should include disabled facilities. No doubt work needs to be done to repair the drainage and build new structures, but we think that proper toilets in an area of such obvious public need, even in winter, are essential.

If necessary, in order to cover costs, a modest charge could be made. People would soon get used to the idea that when out, they need to carry an appropriate coin, just as disabled people need to remember to take their special key with them. It would be particularly discriminatory against disabled people to remove these facilities, which are often very hard to find elsewhere. It is also unhelpful to suggest that elderly women, for instance, or mothers with young children, could seek toilets in local pubs if those on the Meadows were closed.

We have now heard that the Council’s own estimate of use of these toilets is in fact quite considerable. The figures are given below. Also, the existing male toilet at the east end of the Meadows that is closed needs to be repaired and reinstated as soon as possible.

Heather Goodare, on behalf of Fombl, 6.12.14

| | Winter | Summer |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Bruntsfield Links | Gents: 120 – 150/ day Ladies: 80 – 100/ day | Gents: 350 – 400/ day Ladies: 250 – 300/ day |
| Hope Park | Gents: 150 – 200/ day Ladies: 125 – 150/ day | Gents: 300 – 350/ day Ladies: 200 – 250/ day |
| Middle Meadow Walk | Gents: 100 – 125/ day Ladies: 60 – 80/ day | Gents: 200 -250/ day Ladies: 125 – 150/ day |