



# SOUTH MEADOWS ACTION GROUP (SMAG)

Deputation to the Transport and Environment Committee, City of Edinburgh Council on 29<sup>th</sup>  
January 2026

**Subject: Escalating urgency and accountability in the implementation of the Updated Communal Bin Hub Framework to address egregious harms to residents.**

**By:** Nick Hepworth and Kate McNairney, Co-Chairs, South Meadows Action Group, c/o  
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1. We represent residents and small businesses across South Edinburgh who continue to suffer serious and ongoing harm as a direct consequence of the City of Edinburgh Council's (CEC) Communal Bin Hub Project.
2. In response to a tidal wave of complaints from residents and representations by Councillors, MSPs and MPs on their behalf, CEC produced an 'Updated Review Framework' in November 2024 - an explicit acknowledgement that the original process was fundamentally flawed. These flaws have left hundreds of households dealing daily with:
  - chronic noise pollution;
  - persistent odour and pest infestation;
  - severe visual intrusion;
  - substantial loss of residential amenity, including the permanent removal of parking space;
  - demonstrable damage to the character and integrity of Conservation Areas;
  - reduction in property values and, in some cases, the failure of property sales; and
  - escalating anxiety and distress directly attributable to these impacts.
3. A particularly acute, damaging and inequitable impact occurs where the bin hubs are sited immediately in front of residents' front doors and across the entire front apron of individual properties.
4. The Updated Review Framework revised the criteria for siting bin hubs and requires the council. "with agreement and collaboration between residents, councillors, and officers" to protect "Resident amenity: Bin hubs should be sited in locations which minimise any negative impacts on resident amenity (if at all possible), meaning specifically the impacts of noise and odours and the impacts on privacy and outlook." The Updated Framework also changed multiple criteria 1, 2, 3 & 4C (ii) to allow greater flexibility and consideration of the impact on resident amenity.
5. It was felt at the time that application of the updated criteria would be a useful corrective measure, could mitigate future harm, and repair damage already caused.

6. In June 2025, a list of priority locations - representing the most irrationally sited bin hubs causing the most egregious harm - was compiled with the active involvement of our group. At that time, Waste Officers assured residents that these cases would be reviewed as a matter of urgency.
7. The reality since then, some seven months on, is stark. There has been no action. There has been no communication. There has been no accountability. Attempts by residents to engage with the Council have been ignored, in direct breach of the Council's own Customer Care Charter
8. Meanwhile, the consequences of these inappropriate bin placements continue to be imposed on communities. Fly-tipping, overflowing bins, obstruction of access, noise, odour and visual impact are routine. Homes have been devalued and blighted - sometimes impossible to sell. The impact on residents' mental health, wellbeing and quality of life has been profound and entirely avoidable.
9. The Council's sustained inaction sends a clear message: that it is either unwilling or unable to implement its own revised policy, and that the wellbeing of affected residents is neither of interest nor a matter of urgency. This is not an isolated administrative failure, but a pattern of inertia that reflects a disturbing absence of accountability.
10. We therefore call on the Transport and Environment Committee, to fulfil its statutory duty of scrutiny and oversight, to intervene decisively and to require the Council to act. Specifically, we demand that the Committee:
  - 10.1 **Provide a full and honest explanation** as to why the Updated Framework has not been implemented for a period now exceeding 12 months.
  - 10.2 **Publicly reaffirm and enforce** the principle that bin hubs should be: located where the impacts of noise and odours and on privacy and outlook for residents are minimised, and that this includes removal of those which span the threshold of a property; and that those causing demonstrable harm to amenity, will be relocated as a matter of necessity - not discretion.
  - 10.3 **Publish a clear, time-bound and transparent programme** for the review and relocation of bin hubs against the Updated Framework, setting out responsibilities, milestones and deadlines against which the Council can be held to account.
11. Should these reasonable steps not be delivered within two weeks of our Deputation, residents and SMAG will be forced to conclude that both the Committee and the Council lack the will to correct the damage caused by the Bin Hub Programme. In that event, we will have no option but to escalate this matter through coordinated community mobilisation, sustained media engagement, and formal escalation to MSPs, MPs, senior Council Executives, SEPA and the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.
12. We request a direct written response from the Transport and Environment Committee and its Chair within five working days, setting out precisely what action will now be taken.

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### **Note on SMAG**

*South Meadows Action Group (SMAG) was established two years ago in response to persistent shortcomings in the planning, siting and mitigation of Bin Hubs within our area. SMAG works with over fifty local members on behalf of all residents, is an accredited group of the Marchmont and Sciennes Community Council, and works in coordination with resident bin hub groups across Edinburgh.*

## Appendix to SMAG Submission to TEC, 29<sup>th</sup> January 2026

A selection of views in 2025 in our Conservation Area:

These photos show the visual impact of so many bin hubs, encouraging fly-tipping. But they cannot show the smells of open bins, the noise of crashing glass, nor the disappointment and anger of residents to see their personal space abused like this.



**These bins are over-loaded, attracting other rubbish and offering succour for vermin**



**No-one can claim that these food bins are hygienic**

**Food waste bins should be nowhere near a food shop!!**



???



**No 'Council Notified' notice on this one!**

**Now that we can 'cross the street', one of these hubs should go!!**





**The latest in street furniture: hideous!!...how would like to see this every day as you walk out? Or sit in your garden? Or put up with the noise & smell outside your door? Bin Hubs are Rubbish!!**



**A Glass bin about to tip over?**



**Windy days in Marchmont open the bins**



**Bins are never secured**



**Roll up!:  
Marchmont  
General Stores!!**



**This could be Birmingham!**



**Calor gas is dangerous in the hands of children**



**Windy days in Marchmont open the bins**



**A Chair for a Councillor?**



**To conclude:**

- Loss of Residential Amenity,
- Damage to a Conservation Area,
- There are too many bin hubs,
- Bin Hubs of 6 bins outside peoples' homes are too big,
- Residents' gardens are being despoiled,
- Chronic noise pollution
- Persistent odour and pest infestation,
- The bins aren't emptied fast enough,
- They are never locked,
- Resident anxiety from these Bin Hubs,
- Damage to property values,
- They encourage fly-tipping.

**Fewer, more specialist hubs, in appropriate locations would serve better. Ask the residents where to put them!!**



## What Residents in Marchmont think\* about the Bin Hubs!

All Councillors should be obliged to come and experience the results of their appalling decisions.	<b>The Council's Bin Hub Project has made my family's life a misery</b>	We see ...the fly tipping every time we open the door or curtains. We are walled in by our community's waste.
Worst of all is the noise – the constant crashing of bin lids, glass and collection lorries	I thought the Council were there to serve the community....apparently not!	Living with a bin hub means the absence of guaranteed rest
The sheer ... powerlessness I feel ... is overwhelming. To look at and hear the bin hubs every day and know [that there is] just a faceless [CEC] framework that cannot be interacted with.	<b>The beautiful view is obliterated every time I walk out or open the door!</b>	<b>Now my home has been taken from me too, my place of refuge has become a place of refuse</b>
I no longer enjoy being in my garden which is hugely unsettling.	I want to leave but where would I go?	<b>... the impact on my life has been severe .... the amenity of this flat, our home for 45 years, has been completely destroyed. We feel bullied by the council</b>
An ambulance was called to 19 Warrender Park Crescent and had to park with difficulty some distance from the door	<b>...we are soon to be a slum, we can remove the Conservation area tag line.</b>	Noise late at night disturbing our dog....when [he] hears bottles emptied late at night he barks in fear
...the unfairness of having the bin hub directly outside my home and the ugliness of it.	The bins are outside my sitting room window. The noise during the day is unsettling	I am 5 foot tall and 70 years old and it is difficult for me to open the bins and launch my bin bag in to the smallish hole.
<b>It is extremely noisy ... really impacting sleep as my bedroom is front facing. I am unable to study for my exams as a university student.</b>	fly tipping is multiple times every week.	The rules make no sense. One person can over-rule the majority
'When they overflow with rubbish people leave bags at the site.'	The bars to delineate 'bin hubs' are difficult to see. Two neighbours have damaged cars...	<b>... fly tipping... at the bins, on the pavement, directly outside my gate</b>
The bins are unsightly and not fit for purpose, many are already damaged	Several [on the stair] report disappointment with the Council. '...don't trust the Council' ' Feel betrayed'.	When the rubbish men come, cars can't pass. People get angry.
	The noise from the glass bins causes a lot of disturbance during all hours of the day	

\*Accredited comments passed to the South Meadows Action Group in 2024/25