

CRAMOND'S PUBLIC TOILETS – OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE

Consultation on Proposed Submission to City of Edinburgh Council from Cramond & Barnton Community Council, 2020

1. BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Preparation of this Submission to the City Council has been prompted by –

- a. **The 'Re-opening of Public Conveniences' Report to the City Council's Policy and Sustainability Committee** (July, 2020), which –
 - recommended measures to re-open priority public toilets following Covid-19 closures, including those at Cramond; and
 - stated that ... *A long-term strategy for public conveniences in Edinburgh needs to be accelerated in light of the current circumstances and the 'new normal', up-grading current toilets would be costly and some may require to be 'mothballed' and new purpose-built facilities created which would better utilise assets.*
- b. **Increasing concerns amongst the community and visitors regarding the appearance, condition and standards of facilities and hygiene, and lack of all-abilities access to, and provision within, Cramond's toilets.** Such concerns are exemplified by the 63% of respondents to a questionnaire at the Cramond Visions Exhibition (CBCC, 2017), who considered that Cramond's toilets were amongst the principal aspects which let Cramond down as a place to live in or visit. This is one of the most readily achievable improvement projects identified by the Visions project.

1.2 In summary, **this Submission –**

- i. **highlights the need and opportunity to replace or refurbish Cramond's toilets to provide a facility, which meets modern needs, expectations and standards and caters for all abilities of user** - in terms of site access, amenities and hygiene, including no-touch flushing, paper dispensing and hand-washing/drying facilities to help reduce virus spread;
- ii. **presents a spend-to-save opportunity for the Council** - including suggestions for the siting and funding of a new facility and re-purposing the current building to bring income to the Council. Importantly, modern design and equipment can save water, energy and staff costs;
- iii. **seeks dialogue with the City Council on this submission and its commitment to assess the feasibility of replacing Cramond's public toilets.**

2. ASSESSMENT OF THE TOILETS AND POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF CLOSURE

- 2.1 Table 1 (overleaf) provides an outline assessment of the toilets at Cramond. It demonstrates that these fail to satisfy Equalities legislation requirements and the quality and hygiene standards expected by the community and its visitors.
- 2.2 Closure of the toilets, rather than their relocation and/or up-grading, is an obvious option, but would be strongly opposed by residents, visitors and businesses, as closure is likely to -
 - a. prove counter-productive to national and City Council policies and initiatives to promote active lifestyles and active travel - as the provision of such facilities can influence the activities and comfort of walkers, runners, cyclists and others;
 - b. increase anti-social toileting – as experienced during the Covid-19 closures, with visitors toileting behind the toilets and urinating elsewhere;
 - c. result in demands by non-customers to use toilets in local cafés, galleries, Cramond Inn and Cramond Kirk Halls, with potential abuse of staff if requests are refused
 - d. cause inconvenience and/or distress to visitors – especially elderly visitors, young families and people with a disability or health issue, who may require urgent/frequent use of toilets, and may deter future visits
 - e. be deleterious to Cramond's and the wider City's reputation amongst tourists and others.

Table 1. Assessment of Cramond's Current Public Toilets

Considerations	Negative Features	Positive Features
1. Location	- topography and property boundaries restrict/prevent all-abilities access	+ central location in Cramond Village + close to Harbour and Promenade
2. Appearances and Arrival	- dingy building, in shade, with wired-up windows and 'heavy' wooden doors gives unwelcoming initial impressions - entrance to Gents at back of building is poorly signed and is obscured from surrounding area - thereby it may be threatening and attract urinating when toilets closed	+ 'green' setting and traditional building may be attractive to some users
3. Internal facilities	- unattractive décor and fittings - poor maintenance - poor lighting: issues for less-sighted users - no disabled users' toilets or space for wheelchairs + carers - no provision for parents with different gender children - no heated water for hand washing or low level sinks for children + wheelchair users (hand washing vital for virus protection) - basic facilities, surfaces and maintenance result in limited hygiene standards	+ basic toilet facilities + CEC staff keep toilets clean
4. Accessibility	- access to building and facilities does not meet Equalities Act requirements	
5. Maintenance	- older building and fittings result in high maintenance requirements, costs and staff inputs	

Photo 1. 'Welcome' to Cramond's Toilets
(flaking stonework, fenced-up windows, weeds on roof)



Photo 2. Interior (Ladies)
(damp, flaking paintwork)



Photo 3. Interior (Ladies)
(missing sink, towels in open bag, flaking paint)



Photo 4. Interior (Gents)
(no hot water, boarded up sink unit)



3. OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO CRAMOND'S TOILETS

3.1 The City Council's intention to prepare long-term strategy for public toilets offers scope to develop a new approach to provision at Cramond and to use Cramond as a test-bed for similar approaches at popular seaside, greenspace and urban locations across the City.

3.2 **Key opportunities identified by the Community Council are –**

a. relocating toilet provision to a site directly accessible from the Promenade or Car Park – in either case, enabling all-abilities access. Four potential sites have been identified (see Plan A, overleaf) - all owned and managed by the Council –

A. N.E. corner of land occupied by existing toilets, but accessed from the Promenade. This is the Community Council's preferred site.

B. Adjacent to Cramond Inn car park - accessed from the Promenade;

C. Woodland strip - east of the steps from the Promenade to public Car Park.

In each of the above locations, the toilets would be directly accessed on the level from the Promenade and built into the sloping land adjacent to the Promenade.

D. Cramond Car Park - with all-abilities access available from the Promenade via the ramped access to the east of the Car Park.

Archaeological remains and the location of utilities may influence the choice of site.

b. purpose-built public toilets with high standard of amenities - including wcs, hand-washing/drying provision and associated facilities (e.g. baby-changing accommodation, disabled units). This could comprise –

i. **a series of linked individual toilet units** - each with their own entry (photos 5-7); or

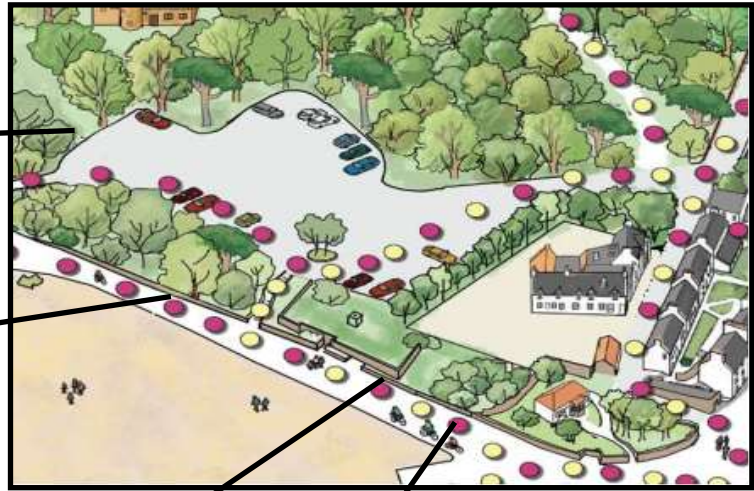
ii. **a single toilet building** - with single, or separate male/female entrance(s) (photo. 8).

In addition to standard facilities, provision should include at least one disabled toilet unit and possibly a 'Changing Places' toilet (<http://www.changing-places.org>). Given the seaside location, consideration should be given also to providing shower cubicle(s).

Plan 1. Potential Locations for Relocation of Cramond's Toilets

Site D. Car Park

Site C. Woodland strip between Car Park and Promenade



Site B. Between Inn car park and Promenade

Site A. NE corner of site of existing toilets

Photo 5. Row of Toilet Units, Portreath, Cornwall



Photo 6. Toilet Units, Kirkgate Park, Kinross



Photo 7. Toilets, Christchurch, New Zealand



Photo 8. Toilets, Yellowcraigs, East Lothian



Relocated or refurbished toilets at Cramond could either take the form of –

- i. **conventional toilets** – with cleaning undertaken by on-site or visiting staff, but with the installation of modern, low maintenance, fittings (e.g. floor and wall surfaces, wcs, washbasins, hand-drying facilities, grab rails) to minimise maintenance and cleaning requirements;
- ii. **self-cleaning toilets**– various forms of semi-automatic, self-cleaning toilets are available (e.g. <https://www.toilitech.com/>; <https://www.euromodul.rs/products/public-toilet-facilities/>). The benefits of self-cleaning systems include low water/energy consumption, staff costs savings and higher hygiene standards. Disadvantages may include users' wariness of automation (e.g. being locked in, self-opening doors), children's presence not being detected by the unit's sensors, delays in entry due to self-cleaning cycles, and higher capital and maintenance costs.

Key components of the toilets may include –

- floor flushing/drying/sweeping
- automatic dispensers (soap, paper)
- security systems (alarms, monitoring)
- automatic sliding doors
- toilet cleaning/disinfecting
- automatic lighting
- occupancy detection system
- coin/contactless payment systems.

3. **Entry Charge** – a modest entry charge (e.g. 40p or 50p) could contribute towards capital and running costs. This should include a contactless payment facility, for hygiene benefits and to cater for users who may not be carrying cash. Although a charge may deter some users and prevent use by those not carrying change or a payment card, it can deter loitering and anti-social behaviour (e.g. drugs use, vandalism).

4. REPURPOSING CRAMOND'S CURRENT TOILETS BUILDING

- 4.1 Should the recommended relocation and provision of a new toilet facility be agreed, then the current toilets building could be repurposed to provide a new amenity, such as –
 - arts and crafts gallery
 - café, wine bar or bistro
 - activity centre (e.g. active travel hub, fitness centre).

Future uses and potential operators could be identified through a feasibility study or open-tendering process.

5. TAKING FORWARD PROPOSALS FOR CRAMOND'S TOILETS

- 5.1 The Community Council will consult the Cramond community through its own and local partner organisations' social media sites, newsletters and information boards. Subject to support from within the community, the Community Council will submit this Paper to the City Council and seek discussions with relevant staff and elected members in respect of the proposals and how these may be progressed.

INVITATION TO COMMENT

Feedback on this Paper and indications of support for new or refurbished toilets at Cramond are invited and should be forwarded to the Community Council via cramton17@gmail.com by Sunday 30th August .