



## **Observations on the litter/waste bins on Calton Hill, as of 18 March 2025**

In my advancing years I have been taking my early morning walk up Calton Hill every day since July 2023. My route is up the Greenside Path, turning onto Hume Walk, cutting up to the top of the hill, and around the outside of The Collective, before returning the way I had come up. On occasion my return route has been extended by joining Regent Walk at its west end, continuing to its east end to join Hume Walk, and following this round to its junction with Greenside Path, and then down.

Calton Hill is an incredible asset in the centre of an incredible city. I consider myself fortunate to live close to the bottom of the hill, and providing me with the opportunity for a healthy daily exercise whilst experiencing close-up the natural rhythm of the seasons and our unpredictable weather. This all added to, on most days, by wonderful views in all directions, and, not unusually, encounters with other early morning visitors caught up in their own interests – wedding photo shoots are popular.

An unfortunate but fairly regular interruption to my pleasurable routine is the jarring of my senses by the sights of litter. The top of the hill is where most is seen, although the various walks/paths are not without the occasional hotspot. Interestingly the presence of litter is extremely variable day to day. On many occasions the hill has appeared virtually clear, but unfortunately those days are in the minority.

Although Calton Hill attracts hundreds of visitors each day, I do not consider sightseers are generally irresponsible in their disposal of litter – although no doubt some are, a casual attitude being the source of that litter that appears on or beside the many paths. In my daily observations the main sources of litter are through the secondary actions of gulls and other birds raiding full and overflowing bins, and by the indifferent attitude of late-night revellers who leave their cans, bottles and take-away wrappers wherever they consume the contents.

Whilst the above are the sources of litter the natural feature of Calton Hill means it is exposed to high winds, resulting in any loose litter being spread widely. Very strong winds sometimes blow the most exposed bins over. The hill's exposure to high winds can in fact be of assistance in presenting a clean hill to visitors. Calton Hill Conservation Trust, through its litter pick days, is well aware of the litter that is blown off the top and finds its way onto the lower slopes.

Of course, litter management is everyone's responsibility. First and foremost, it is a personal responsibility, and secondly, it falls on the civic authorities – a challenging task in all large cities.


I do consider that how an attraction is presented can influence how it is respected. Whilst a well-presented attraction is unlikely to significantly influence the behaviours of those not recognising, or choosing to ignore, their personal responsibilities, it will tend to influence those with a casual attitude towards litter.







My perceptions are that the regular sight of litter, and of a seemingly haphazard and poorly maintained array of litter/waste bins on Calton Hill, gives the impression that it is unloved and uncared for.

Attached is the result of a survey/audit of the bins on Calton Hill that I carried out on 18 March 2025. The comments and suggestions are my thoughts on how the management of litter, and the visitor experience, can be improved by the deployment of bins. It is recognised that no account has been taken of cost constraints, or the operational decisions on the frequency of emptying bins by the civic authority.

Gerry Wells, Calton Hill Conservation Trust

No.	Picture	Estimated capacity in litres based on standard sizes	W3W location	Location description	Mobility	Issues?	Comment - GW	Suggestion - GW
1		240	kite.cages.atomic	looking to Leith from turning circle at top of hill	bolted down	Modern medium sized black bin (ref.B below) in good condition. Well used and quickly filled, hence regularly raided by gulls/magpies.	A generally good bin. Bolted down, good condition, gaffiti free. Issues: i) not gull proof so should be emptied before it is full, ii) capacity too small for usage? Often waste is left beside this bin, iii) although location is understandable - a lot of foofall passes it and is well used - it is prominent and interrupts views from the the hill looking towards Leith.	Replace with double sized bin (ref. C below) and relocate to be adjacent to east wall of The Collective - bolted down
2		240	also.mass.fears	beside notice board, looking to Leith from turning circle on top of hill	free standing	Newer medium sized green bin (bevelled corners). Door closure issue. Well used and quickly filled, hence regularly raided by gulls/magpies. Exposed site, occasionally blown over.	Old and worn. Door no longer closes? Close to bin above - sited next to main notice board on top of the hill. Issues similar to no.1 although it is not so well used. Free standing means it does get moved about, and due to exposed site can be blown over.	Replace with double sized bin (ref. C below) and relocate to be adjacent to east wall of The Collective - bolted down
3		1280	level.stocks.lofts	in front of east wall of The Collective	wheeled, not always locked	Three bins in close proximity to each other. Do not appear to be used much. Sometimes provide fun for vandals who attempt to push them off the hill with ensuing spillage.	Unclear what these bins are meant to achieve - assumption is to provide extra capacity. They seem little used by visitors to the hill. Location of one of them has varied around the top of the hill. Industrial looking - out of place on the hill. Their mobility makes them a magnet for irresponsible high jinx.	Remove
4		240	warns.parade.tidy	by east entrance to The Collective	free standing	On other side of entrance to above three bins. Newer medium sized green bin (bevelled corners). No significant spillage issues noted.	Old and worn as with no.2 although perhaps in better condition. A good location for a bin.	Can be removed if suggestions for no.1 and no.2 were carried out
5		240	dated.supply.tribune	one of two bins city-side of path round south wall of the Collective	free standing	Older medium sized green bin. Regular door closure issue. Well used and quickly filled, hence regularly raided by gulls and magpies. Exposed site, occasionally blown over.	Issues are similar to no.1 - not gull proof, and capacity, compounded by being free standing and liable to being blown over due to exposed location. This bin suffering from old age and door does not easily shut - often found wide open. In my view big issue with positioning affecting visitor experience. Located in sight lines across the city and towards the castle. An easy resolution to latter issue is to relocate across the path to sit adjacent to south wall of The Collective.	Replace with double sized bin (ref. C below) and relocate to be adjacent to south wall of The Collective - bolted down
6		240	atomic.chained.storms	one of two bins city-side of path round south wall of the Collective	free standing	Older medium sized green bin. Well used and quickly filled, hence regularly raided by gulls/magpies. Exposed site, occasionally blown over.	Same issues as with above bin, although the door of the current bin appears to stay shut more readily.	Replace with double sized bin (ref. C below) and relocate to be adjacent to south wall of The Collective - bolted down
7		240	plates.volunteered.fakes	on south edge of turning circle at top of hill	free standing	Older medium sized green bin. Door closing mechanism broken. Recently set on fire - has been repainted since photo. Exposed site, has been blown over. Not gull proof.	Issues similar to other bins of this vintage. Not used as much as above two bins.	Remove

8		240	trick.elder.grid	below Nelson Monument at junction of Rock Path and west end of Regent Walk	free standing	Older medium sized green bin. Well used and quickly filled, hence regularly raided by gulls/magpies. Since survey this has been set on fire again.	Issues similar to other bins of this vintage. Greatly affected by graffiti and being set on fire. An eyesore. Not in exposed position but a poor first impression for visitors on reaching top of the steps up Rock Path. A bit of a diversion for refuse collectors to reach this bin - not sure if this affects the attention it gets. Since survey of 18 March this bin has been set on fire again, but has now been repainted black (noted 15 April) - huge difference in appearance.	Replace with double sized bin (ref. C below) - bolted down
9		240	scar.trader.bravo	east end of Regent Walk at south end of Hume Walk	free standing	Older medium sized green bin. Can be affected by gull/magpie raids. Has been put on fire at some point.	Issues similar to other bins of this vintage, although not filled so rapidly as elsewhere on the hill, hence not the same gull raiding issues. Needs coat of paint after fire damage.	Replace with double sized bin (ref. C below) or medium sized bin (ref.B below) - bolted down
10		240	rewarding.spare.palms	south-west end of National Monument Circuit at path up to Nelson Monument	free standing	Modern small sized black bin (ref.B below). Can be affected by gull/magpie raids..	The second modern bin on the hill, after no.1. Looks like temporary location at moment due to work on the Nelson Monument. Capacity issues.	Possibly replace with double sized bin (ref. C below) - bolted down
11		1280	cotton.fence.hedge	midway along Observatory Drive level with National Monument	wheeled	Appears little used. Gradually creeps down the path, but is not such an attraction to vandals as the ones at the top of the hill.	Comment as with no.3. Appears little used. Incongruous for site.	Remove
12		240	lake.hurls.crust	east end of Observatory Drive at junction with Hume Walk	free standing	Older medium sized green bin. Can be affected by gull/magpie raids.	One of the older style bins, but in better condition? Could do with being bolted down on a level surface. As can be seen from the photo - currently it has a haphazard unattended look about it. Similar issues of capacity/regularity of emptying leading to gull/magpie scattering of litter	Replace with double sized bin (ref. C below) or medium sized bin (ref.B below) - bolted down
Ref: New bins in use in city								
A		120	small					
B		240	medium	two of these are on Calton Hill				
C		480	large double bin	this example is outside Register House				

D			gull proof experimental	introduced to Princes Gardens		quite tall and bulky		
			"gull proof" experimental when not emptied			If bins are over filled the gull proof flap will get stuck open.		
Ref: New location for additional bins								
			cups.rust.pretty	Observatory Walk round west wall of the Collective looking over St James Centre			Loose litter/cans frequently found here. Popular walk way, and view point for sunsets - gathering point for late night revellers. No bin here at present. It is accessible for refuse collectors to wheel bins round to lorries at other end of The Collective.	Place a double sized bin (ref. C above) in this location, on The Collective side of the path , perhaps beside one of the two benches - bolted down.
			shunts.basin.scans	Observatory Walk round north wall of the Collective looking towards Leith			Popular spot with two benches here but no bin. It is accessible for refuse collectors to wheel bins round to lorries at east end of The Collective.	Place a double sized bin (ref. C above) or medium sized bin (ref.B above) in this location, on The Collective side of the path , perhaps beside one of the two benches - bolted down.
			bags.vague.arrange	Beside bench opposite the view point and information point on Hume Walk			There is a bench here which frequently has litter left beside it. It is accessible for bin lorries to reach via Hume Walk, but this may need to involve navigating bollards.	Place a double sized bin (ref. C above) or medium sized bin (ref.B above) in this location - bolted down.
			factories.loser.erase	On Dugald Stewart Monument Path beside bench looking north-west			Similar to above. This is 50 yards further along Hume Walk	Place a double sized bin (ref. C above) or medium sized bin (ref.B above) in this location - bolted down. A medium sized bin may be sufficient.