

'Ban the boards'

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By David Marsh TOUGH action is needed to stop skateboarders damaging one of the finest buildings in Leeds, claims a senior councillor.

The steps at the imposing Millennium Square entrance to Leeds Civic Hall have become a popular location for skateboarders to practise their stunts and tricks. Critics of the 12m square – a huge paved area in front of the Civic – warned the council it would become the biggest skateboard park in England.

The council introduced by-laws banning skateboarding and rollerblading in the square but they have had little effect.

Now Coun Gerry Harper (Lab, University), Labour's chief whip, is demanding action to tackle the problem.

He said: "The steps of this grade II listed building are being chipped and damaged by the skateboarders. I walked past there one Saturday recently and there must have been 15 of them skateboarding along the steps.

"I did ring Millgarth Police Station and officers on patrol did come along to move these people on. The skateboarders are not young children. Some of them look like they are aged in their early 20s and they should know better.

"Simply moving them on isn't really working. We have these laws and we should use them. If some of those breaching the by-laws were caught and fined it could prove a deterrent.

"It would show that we take this problem seriously and we mean business."

Coun Harper suggested the council could put some of the moveable trees in Millennium Square in front of the steps to restrict access to the skateboarders.

Coun Elizabeth Minkin, executive councillor for development, said: "We are doing all we can to get across the message that skateboarding is not permitted in Millennium Square. The stonework of the Civic Hall is being damaged and this is not acceptable."

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