



## ***Environment and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel***

West Lothian Civic Centre  
Howden South Road  
LIVINGSTON  
EH54 6FF

20 March 2024

A hybrid meeting of the **Environment and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel** of West Lothian Council will be held within the **Council Chambers, West Lothian Civic Centre, Livingston** on **Tuesday 26 March 2024** at **11:00am**.

For Chief Executive

### **BUSINESS**

#### **Public Session**

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest - Members must declare any interests they have in the items of business for consideration at the meeting, identifying the relevant agenda items and the nature of their interests.
3. Order of Business, including notice of urgent business and declarations of interest in any urgent business
4. Confirm Draft Minutes of Meeting of Environment and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel held on Tuesday 30 January 2024 (herewith)
5. Ecology and Biodiversity Update - report by Head of Operational Services (herewith)
6. Recycle for West Lothian Pilot - Update - report by Head of Operational Services (herewith)
7. Bus Partnership Fund - Status Update - report by Head of Operational Services (herewith)
8. Workplan (herewith)

DATA LABEL: Public

-----

NOTE     **For further information please contact Val Johnston at email address [val.johnston@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:val.johnston@westlothian.gov.uk)**



## **CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (2021)**

**This form is a reminder and an aid. It is not a substitute for understanding the Code of Conduct and guidance.**

**Interests must be declared at the meeting, in public.**

**Look at every item of business and consider if there is a connection.**

**If you see a connection, decide if it amounts to an interest by applying the objective test.**

**The objective test is whether or not a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard your connection to a particular matter as being so significant that it would be considered as being likely to influence your discussion or decision-making.**

**If the connection does not amount to an interest then you have nothing to declare and no reason to withdraw.**

**If the connection amounts to an interest, declare it as soon as possible and leave the meeting when the agenda item comes up.**

**When you declare an interest, identify the agenda item and give enough information so that the public understands what it is and why you are declaring it.**

**Even if the connection does not amount to an interest you can make a statement about it for the purposes of transparency.**

**More detailed information is on the next page.**

Look at each item on the agenda, consider if there is a “connection”, take advice if necessary from appropriate officers in plenty of time. A connection is any link between the item of business and:-

- you
- a person you are associated with (e.g., employer, business partner, domestic partner, family member)
- a body or organisation you are associated with (e.g., outside body, community group, charity)

Anything in your Register of Interests is a connection unless one of the following exceptions applies.

A connection does not exist where:-

- you are a council tax payer, a rate payer, or a council house tenant, including at budget-setting meetings
- services delivered to the public are being considered, including at budget-setting meetings
- councillors’ remuneration, expenses, support services or pensions are being considered
- you are on an outside body through a council appointment or nomination unless it is for regulatory business or you have a personal conflict due to your connections, actions or legal obligations
- you hold a view in advance on a policy issue, have discussed that view, have expressed that view in public, or have asked for support for it

If you see a connection then you have to decide if it is an “interest” by applying the objective test. The objective test is whether or not a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard your connection to a particular matter as being so significant that it would be considered as being likely to influence your discussion or decision-making.

If the connection amounts to an interest then:-

- declare the interest in enough detail that members of the public will understand what it is
- leave the meeting room (physical or online) when that item is being considered
- do not contact colleagues participating in the item of business

Even if decide your connection is not an interest you can voluntarily make a statement about it for the record and for the purposes of transparency.

The relevant documents are:-

- [Councillors’ Code of Conduct, part 5](#)
- [Standards Commission Guidance, paragraphs 129-166](#)
- [Advice note for councillors on how to declare interests](#)

If you require assistance, contact:-

- James Millar, Interim Monitoring Officer and Governance Manager, 01506 281613, [james.millar@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:james.millar@westlothian.gov.uk)
- Carol Johnston, Chief Solicitor and Depute Monitoring Officer, 01506 281626, [carol.johnston@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:carol.johnston@westlothian.gov.uk)
- Committee Services Team, 01506 281604, 01506 281621  
[committee.services@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:committee.services@westlothian.gov.uk)

January 2022

MINUTE of MEETING of the ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, LIVINGSTON, on 30 JANUARY 2024.

Present – Councillors Tom Conn (Chair), Kirsteen Sullivan, Alison Adamson, Diane Calder, Craig Meek (substituting for Councillor Cathy Muldoon) and Veronica Smith

Apologies – Councillors Cathy Muldoon and Tony Pearson

In Attendance – Tom Carr-Pollock (Trade Union Representative), Pippa Plevin (Joint Forum of Community Councils Representative), Carole Racionzer (Voluntary Sector Representative) and Pat Tedford (Trade Union Representative)

Councillor Tony Pearson was absent due to leave authorised under the Leave Scheme for Elected Members.

1        DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2        MINUTES

The panel approved the minute of its meeting held on 14 November 2023. The Chair thereafter signed the minute.

3        NATIONAL HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY 2023

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Operational Services informing members of the National Highways and Transport Network Public Satisfaction Survey results for 2023.

It was recommended that the panel note the results of the survey, the positive outcomes as detailed within the report and areas of improvement already being actioned.

Decision

1. To note the terms of the report.
2. Officers undertook to advise members on steps the council could take to improve communications with the public.
3. Officers also noted suggestion to consider linking reduced car usage to the council's active travel scheme by potentially applying for funding through Transport Scotland.

#### 4 OPERATIONAL SERVICES – DRAINAGE IN WEST LOTHIAN

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Operational Services providing information regarding the motion raised at full council on 21 November 2023 in relation to the councils' preparation for weather events, flooding and drainage.

It was recommended that the panel note the contents of the report.

##### Decision

1. To note the terms of the report.
2. Officers undertook to advise whether the government's Infrastructure Investment Plan is open to external partners.
3. Officers would also provide information on other national funds that council could apply for to aid with flood risk management adaptations.
4. It was agreed that all communication methods the public can use to report relevant issues would be published in the Bulletin.

#### 5 ACCESSIBILITY SCHEMES 2023/24

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Operational Services advising of the proposed list of accessibility schemes for 2023/24 for consideration, which were identified within Appendix 1 of the report.

It was recommended that the panel:

1. Note the proposed accessibility schemes as outlined in Appendix 2 of the report; and
2. Note that officers propose to present the proposed accessibility schemes to Council Executive for consideration and approval.

##### Decision

1. To note the terms of the report.
2. To agree that the report be forwarded to a future meeting of Council Executive for approval.

#### 6 REVISION OF OPERATIONAL PRACTICES AT RECYCLING CENTRES

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Operational Services advising members that Council Executive on 25 April 2023 had resolved that officers bring a quarterly

performance report to this PDSP in relation to the Revision of Operational Practices at Recycling Centres.

It was recommended that the panel:

1. Note the performance information for the period 2 October to 31 December 2023; and
2. Note that across the five household recycling sites, 76,555 bookings had been made from 2 October 2023 to 31 December 2023 accounting for 78% of the available booking capacity in October, 85% in November and 90% in December 2023.

#### Decision

1. To note the terms of the report.
2. To continue to raise public awareness on ways of booking and cancelling slots.
3. To note comments regarding varying parametres of booking and preventing double-booking.
4. To ensure staff are adequately trained to deal with any aggression.

### 7 PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 3 2023/24

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Operational Services reporting the current levels of performance for all indicators which were the responsibility of the Environment & Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.

It was recommended that the panel note the performance information and determine if further action or enquiry was necessary for any of the indicators mentioned within the report.

#### Decision

5. To note the terms of the report.
6. To note that there was an error in the report under indicator *P:RTS093\_9b.2b Lighting Energy Consumption (kwh)*, which was showing as red when it should be green for Q3.

### 8 QUARTERLY CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration presenting the latest quarterly climate change update and providing an update on work undertaken to meet the actions in the Climate Change

Strategy.

It was recommended that the panel:

1. Note the content of the report, and;
2. Note the quarterly performance update on progress against Climate Change Strategy actions, which was attached to the report.

Decision

1. To note the terms of the report.
2. Officers would also confirm the timeline for delivery of the new active travel plan.

9      2023/24 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE – MONTH 6 MONITORING REPORT

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Property Services providing an update on the financial performance of the Environment & Sustainability portfolio for the General Fund Revenue budget and the General Services Capital Budget.

It was recommended that the panel:

3. Note the financial performance of the Environment & Sustainability portfolio as at month 6;
4. Note that the Environment & Sustainability portfolio position as at month 6 had been part of the overall council budget position reported to Council Executive on 7 November 2023; and
5. Note actions required to be taken by Heads of Service and budget holders to manage spend within available resources.

Decision

1. To note the terms of the report.
2. To note that there was a typographical error in section E: '£534,000 million' should read '£534,000'.

10      GARDEN WASTE CHARGING

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Operational Services appraising members of a proposal to introduce a charging scheme for the collection of Garden Waste in 2024/25 and noting the next steps that officers were seeking to implement the scheme.



It was recommended that the panel:

1. Note the currently estimated revenue budget gap of £38.2 million over the four years to 2027/28, demonstrating the hugely challenging financial position facing the council over the next four years;
2. Note Council Executive approval on 12 December 2023 for officers to identify potential additional recurring budget saving options to help contribute to balancing the current detailed budgets for 2024/25 and 2025/26 in advance of the budget setting meeting in early 2024;
3. Note the proposal to develop plans for a chargeable garden waste service which was estimated to generate additional net income of £1.15 million; and
4. Note the next steps that officers had outlined for implementing the scheme, as set out in the report.

#### Decision

1. To note the terms of the report.
2. Officers undertook to consider permit transfer options and incorporating the garden waste collection fee into council tenants' rent.

### 11 WORKPLAN

A workplan had been circulated for information.

#### Decision

To note the workplan.



DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



## **ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

### **ECOLOGY & BIODIVERSITY UPDATE**

#### **REPORT BY HEAD OF OPERATIONAL SERVICES**

##### **A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to update the panel on the workplan and the detailed work undertaken by the Ecology and Biodiversity Team.

##### **B. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the panel notes the content of the report and the detail included in the appendices.

##### **C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

<b>I</b>	<b>Council Values</b>	Caring and compassionate; open, honest and accountable; and collaborate, inclusive and adaptive
<b>II</b>	<b>Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b>	<p>Under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 public bodies have a duty to contribute to climate change mitigation and to climate change adaptation, and to act sustainably. ('Mitigation' meaning the implementation of policies and actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or enhance carbon storage.)</p> <p>The team is responsible for the renewal of the Local Biodiversity Plan which directly informs the Local Development Plan.</p> <p>New statutory requirements for nature restoration will be set out in the new Natural Environment Bill from 2024 onwards.</p>
<b>III</b>	<b>Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>	None
<b>IV</b>	<b>Impact on performance and performance Indicators</b>	None
<b>V</b>	<b>Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement</b>	Outcome 4 - We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities.

Outcome 8 - We have the most efficient and effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment.

**VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)**

The general services capital programme 2023/24 to 2032/33 approved £969,000 of investment in ecology and biodiversity for the next 10 years. The council also approved £800,000 of one off climate emergency funding and has received £734,000 of Nature Restoration Funding from the Scottish Government for 2022/23 and 2023/24 to improve biodiversity and nature networks.

**VII Consideration at PDSP**

A Year Two Ecology and Biodiversity update report was presented to the PDSP on 12 September 2023.

**VIII Other consultations**

None

**D. TERMS OF REPORT**

**D.1 Background**

In 2019, the State of Nature<sup>1</sup> report revealed ongoing declines in species abundance and distribution and a general downward trend in net loss of nature within Scotland. On review of the report and for the council to achieve high level improvement targets set out in the report and within National Planning Framework 4 it was determined that the council required a dedicated resource to achieve the targets and to meet statutory requirements, such as the Councils Biodiversity Duty, The Ecology & Biodiversity team was introduced to help ensure statutory targets were being met by having effective oversight of the natural assets and action change to address biodiversity loss and nature recovery.

For context, the Local Authority has legal responsibilities placed on them from:

- The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 -in which a local authority has a duty to further the conservation of biodiversity and help tackle biodiversity loss.;
- The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 - in which public bodies must produce a publicly available document on the progress made in meeting its biodiversity duty.
- The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2004 in which the Local Authority has a duty to contribute to climate change mitigation and to climate change adaptation, and to act sustainably.
- The forthcoming Natural Environment Bill in which new statutory requirements for nature restoration will be set out.

By signing the Edinburgh Declaration in 2021, the council acknowledged the role of Local Authorities in delivering the Global Biodiversity Framework at a local level, and having declared a nature emergency in 2023 (Appendix 1) recognises the urgent need to act in favour of nature recovery and restoration to achieve both biodiversity and climate targets.

<sup>1</sup> State of Nature Reports- Available at: <https://nbn.org.uk/stateofnature2019/reports/>

## **D.2 The Role of Ecology & Biodiversity Officers**

The role Ecology and Biodiversity (EBD) Officers play is diverse and wide ranging but has a core focus on strategic planning and collaboration. As seen in Appendices 2 and 3, the roles cover three main areas that sit under the overarching Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) being compiled: 1) Projects, 2) Strategic and Policy and 3) Advisory and Advocacy. The EBD Officer's varied responsibilities have consequences reaching local, regional and national audiences:

- Local: EBD Officers work on projects increasing awareness of biodiversity through delivery of projects e.g. tree planting and habitat creation (Appendix 3, Items Project: 36; Strategy & Policy: 60; Advisory & Advocacy: 121).
- Regional: Often in collaboration with other stakeholders, EBD Officers work on strategies and plans that cover the county and neighbouring LA's. e.g. Appendix 3, Items Project: 29; Strategy & Policy: 72; Advisory & Advocacy: 144).
- National: The team's work directly contributes to national targets to reduce biodiversity loss and to mitigate effects of climate change. It helps ensure other services work aligns with current policy. Items Project: 31; Strategy & Policy: 65; Advisory & Advocacy: 103).

The breadth of the responsibilities is demonstrated in Appendix 3, showing the pivotal role that EBD Officers play in mainstreaming biodiversity within WLC, promoting awareness, knowledge and appreciation of biodiversity to the wider public through their work.

While the role of an EBD Officer is not unique in the Local Authority setting, WLC is now seen by other Local Authority officers and national organisations as an exemplar, with a team of three officers who split their time to deliver on the ground projects as well as being able to steer policy and advocate for biodiversity across the other services e.g. planning and development. Using their collective knowledge and experience, the EBD Officer team is able to be far reaching and drive change across the Local Authority. The team will be ever more important in the coming months and years as each Authority is required to have a Nature Network and are expected to help deliver a large number of actions (approximately 50) identified in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Delivery Plan. Through the Natural Environment Bill, the Scottish Government is also soon to introduce specific targets for Local Authorities to tackle the climate and biodiversity crises.

## **D.3 Contribution from Ecology and Biodiversity Officers**

While a full list of work items and a brief justification is provided in Appendix 3, some of the more impactful actions conducted over the past 2+ years are discussed in more detail below.

### **LBAP**

West Lothian hasn't reviewed and updated the LBAP since 2009. One of the main tasks/ priorities for the EBD Officer team is to update this document in line with current legislation and National and International targets. This is a critical piece of work which needs to be robust to span the next 10-year period and encompass the various new challenges and targets faced by the Local Authority, some of which are yet to be released by Scottish Government.

So far, officers have compiled a baseline of data which we can use to build future projects around and monitor change over time. A Geographic Information System (GIS) map has been produced of West Lothian's habitats with a condition assessment of the habitats and their strategic importance/ significance in the landscape. The production of the mapping and reports allowed the Ecosystem Services of the habitats within West Lothian to be examined providing information valuable to other services e.g. Flood Risk, Planning, Climate services. The reports to date can be viewed on the Council's Ecology & Biodiversity webpages.

Part of the LBAP process has involved seeking feedback on biodiversity projects and engaging various stakeholders to help create a useful overarching plan to address the issue of biodiversity loss and implement future change. Stakeholder questionnaires were developed seeking feedback from landowners and various organisations operating in West Lothian, with a further stakeholder event held in November 2023. All responses will be used to ensure the final LBAP is inclusive and reflective of stakeholders' ideas and needs. A draft of the LBAP will be sent out to key stakeholders for feedback, continuing the collaborative approach to updating this document.

### Strategy and Policy

EBD officers have been heavily involved in the national discussions and consultations occurring regarding land management, Planning Policy and changes to the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SBS). Officers responded to consultations on National Planning Framework 4, Developing with Nature, Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, SBS Delivery Plans and Natural Environment Bill. They have been part of the co-design process led by NatureScot on Nature Networks and 30x30 (the two delivery mechanisms of the SBS). Officers have been involved in these areas by necessity, highlighting from a Local Authority and ecological perspective how the new policies could be effective and deliverable at scale as well as highlighting potential challenges in delivery of proposed actions.

Additionally, EBD officers work with planning colleagues in support of the Local Development Plan 2 work. As national policies now have an increased focus on biodiversity, the EBD team has been working with planning colleagues in support of the evidence gathering process to ensure biodiversity and climate mitigation/ adaptation are covered fully.

### Projects

Aside from the LBAP, since October 2021, the EBD team have collectively worked on a further 147 work items/ actions including managing and overseeing the completion of 27 projects with 16 projects still ongoing. The EBD team have used Scottish Government and Capital funds on projects to tackle the Biodiversity and Climate crises totalling £1,534,000.00 (£734,000 NRF- and £800,000 Climate Emergency Fund) spread across the council wards. This has delivered a conservative estimate of 65ha of Council owned landholdings being improved as a result of the EBD team.

EBD Officers were tasked with delivery of an agreed £800,000 Climate Emergency Fund which had been agreed at Council Executive meeting 22/06/2021. Building on experience from previous roles within WLC, several of the capital projects have been taken across to the EBD Officer remit to ensure effective delivery e.g. Livingston North Blue Green Network, Greening the Shale Trail, Peatland Restoration work etc. Additionally, there were new projects such as the "wee forests", "Tree time" and "Free Trees" scheme which have been delivered through partnership work. Refer to Appendix 3 for more detail.

The Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund has allowed a number of actions to be delivered including restructuring works at Blackmoss, placement of a fish counter to measure the success of barrier easement in the River Almond, Invasive Species work, Local Biodiversity Site monitoring surveys, investigations into Beecraigs Loch restoration, purchase of equipment to manage and expand the council's 18 urban wildflower meadow sites, purchase of habitat/ homes for some of our threatened species, tree planting work etc. The projects have been managed and directed by the EBD team. Refer to Appendix 3 for more detail.

#### Advisory and Advocacy

Awareness raising and mainstreaming activities by the EBD team have engaged with a wide range of audiences, including: The general public, through events e.g. Bioblitz (400+participants) and planting events (350+ participants), bug life workshops, and through social media posts which had an average reach of 10,544 people and engagement by 42 people per post. Direct peer-to-peer training has been delivered to mainstream biodiversity with the provision of nature crisis / biodiversity duty awareness sessions with 8 services and working directly with a further 4 to help foster positive change across service areas.

Approximately a third of the EBD officer role is spent working in relation to planning and development. This is either through direct consultation or reviewing of incoming planning applications. The EBD team, as specialists, provide detailed responses to ensure the Local Authority is meeting its Biodiversity Duty and that any plans and proposals are meeting new requirements including National Planning Framework 4, in which biodiversity and climate change are given significant weight in decision making.

A new element of the planning system (exemptions apply) requires Local Authorities to ensure planning proposals not only compensate for any biodiversity loss but that they actually leave an area better than it would have been if development had not occurred. This requires assessment from EBD officers to ensure the measures proposed are appropriate. It is for the Planning Authority to decide whether the enhancement measures within the proposal are appropriate in the circumstances of a particular application, and proportionate to the scale of the development. EBD officers use their specialist knowledge of species ecology and habitats within West Lothian to best advise the Planning Authority on whether the measures are appropriate or not. The Scottish Government is expected to introduce a biodiversity "net gain" metric type system in the future; at present, the judgement on appropriateness is qualitative rather than quantitative and relies on professional knowledge.

EBD are now a consultee for most planning applications of Local scale or above. Additionally, we review the weekly planning lists and report back on any applications where there is potential for wildlife or habitats to be affected. Since January 2022 – Feb 2024, a total of 2235 applications have been examined by the team. The level of the response required on each of these vary from no comment where there is perceived to be no impact, to more complex and detailed responses where there is higher potential for impacts to be associated with the proposal and as such, a need for detailed mitigation and enhancement.

Each planning application is reviewed in detail and commented on by an officer. Depending on the nature and scale of the proposal, or information provided by the applicant, the time taken to provide a response is highly variable. In general terms, the more complex the proposal or sensitive the area is within proximity to, the longer time it takes and more detailed the required response is. In a large proportion of the planning cases, EBD make recommendations or request further information is supplied in support of the application. This means that while there

may be only one application, there are often several rounds of consultation/responses required before it is either approved or not. Even when approved, applications still require Officer input and feedback on items conditioned as part of the approval. Most commonly, feedback is requested on discharge of conditions around landscaping and any requested Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMP) or species-specific of habitat management or protection plans. This often involves multiple rounds of feedback and discussion with the developer and the Planning Authority over several months.

EBD Officer attendance to the monthly Planning and Development Management Committee meetings is now common practice. An Officer is present to address any questions relating to applications they've commented on.

When looking at Appendix 3 it is demonstrable that EBD Officers have integrated into several departments and have made excellent progress in addressing mainstreaming across the council.

#### **D.4 Future Plans**

It is anticipated that upon completion of the LBAP the team will be able to streamline future use of funding and allow for a more targeted actions specific to West Lothians most sensitive habitats and species.

##### LBAP

Next steps are to produce a draft LBAP, consult on it, then produce a final document for summer 2024. Anticipated actions include the creation of a pollinator plan, grass management plan and consultations, specific conservation projects on WLC ground, creation of Nature Networks across the area, and partnership projects with others where appropriate. Actions will also include specific ongoing stakeholder engagement opportunities.

##### Projects

From Appendix 3, it is evident that a number of project work items listed are ongoing and will see delivery this year e.g., the Forth Rivers Trust Invasive species mapping and treatment and Natural flood mitigation works on the Nell Burn and Murieston Water (Appendix 3, Item 29). Future action is to follow from the Beecraigs Loch studies. Similarly, further peatland restoration work is expected to occur at Easter Inch Moss in the later part of 2024 upon the results of investigations.

Future actions to support pine marten and water vole (two of our most threatened mammals) recovery and movement through West Lothian and surrounding areas are being explored. These projects are in their infancy however, species porosity studies are the next logical step since gathering habitat data for the LBAP. We will look to determine barriers currently faced to the species and seek to create partner projects with adjoining LA's to drive conservation at a landscape scale building into Nature Networks. It is hoped that this will involve an element of citizen science and long-term camera trapping studies and habitat management/creation where required.

Currently being developed through collaboration with Education services is a project for *Access to Nature*, a plan to ensure there are areas in which outdoor learning can occur in a safe environment within the grounds of the school. Learning for Sustainability (LfS) is an education term which enables learners, educators and the wider community an approach to "build a socially-just, sustainable and equitable society; and is an effective whole-setting approach which weaves together global citizenship, sustainable development and outdoor learning to create coherent,



rewarding and transformative learning experiences.”<sup>2</sup>

Learning for sustainability (LfS) is an entitlement for all learners within the Curriculum for Excellence. We are proposing to develop small densely planted areas where teachers with the aid of the Learning for Sustainability guidance map will be able to meet the requirements for outdoor learning and engage children with nature-based studies and long-term monitoring. The principle is based on the NatureScot Pilot project of “wee forests” which in the past, WLC have delivered four sites through a delivery partner (ELGT). The hope is that by creating small areas of accessible woodland it removes barriers faced by teachers in being able to access sites easily and safely. It also would help with reducing the disparity currently present between schools where some are able to access woodland/ nature more easily than others. Hopefully the scheme will encourage the next generation of young scientists or environmental professionals. It will also have the added benefit of increasing tree cover and biodiversity within West Lothian’s landholdings and provide useful stepping stone habitat for pollinators and other species.

#### Strategic and Policy

Officers will be assisting in the evidence gathering and feeding into the LDP2 process assisting Development Planning colleagues. It’s expected that EBD will play an important role in the Forest & Woodland Strategy as this will need to align with wider outcomes of Nature Networks and the SBS Strategy.

With another round of NRF anticipated in 2024, officers will be seeking to develop projects around the Nature Network and beyond to tackle the main drivers of biodiversity loss. Further survey work with our partner The Wildlife Information Centre will also continue to ensure West Lothian Local Nature Conservations Sites are monitored and plans can be made where intervention is required.

Officers will be working across different services to ensure the Biodiversity Duty is being met by all and working towards ensuring the next Biodiversity Duty report includes actions delivered by services beyond that of the previous reports e.g. inclusion of actions taken by Education services.

With further information expected to come from the publication of the Natural Environment Bill, EBD Officers will prepare a briefing summary to update services on the implications of the Bill. New statutory targets and objectives will be included in the LBAP document.

#### Advisory and Advocacy

The majority of work items within the advocacy and Advocacy section are ongoing and require future effort to keep momentum and ensure the Biodiversity Duty is being met across all Services. Future Bioibltz and citizen science projects are planned for 2024 and beyond with an aspiration to encourage communities to record wildlife in their area and contribute to national data sets. Officers will continue to provide advice and support on planning applications and provide technical advice to other services to further the conservation of biodiversity within their respective services.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Without dedicated resources the council lagged behind in its statutory duty to further the conservation of biodiversity Since the introduction of the EBD team, the council as a whole has been made more aware of requirements and duties with regards to new biodiversity and climate policy requirements. The team has been

---

<sup>2</sup> Learning for sustainability: action plan 2023 to 2030. Scottish Government. 2023.

able to deliver £1,534,000 of biodiversity and climate-related projects, 65ha of habitat restoration, planting of over 10,000 trees and engaged with other organisations and the general public. Through the officers, the council has also had input into direct consultations with Government agencies in order to influence how future policy will affect Local Authorities'. With the team now in place, the council is in prime position to address upcoming targets set through the Natural Environment Bill and Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, as they arise.

## **F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

[The Environment Strategy for Scotland](#)

[Scottish Biodiversity strategy to 2045: tackling the nature emergency](#)

[Edinburgh Process](#)

Colns - [WLC Proposed signing of the "Edinburgh Process" Declaration of Biodiversity](#)

Colns - [West Lothian Climate Emergency Fund -Carbon Sequestration Projects](#)

Colns - [WLC Declaration of a Nature Emergency](#)

Colns - [WLC Nature Emergency and Nature Restoration Fund Report](#)

Colns - [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Consultation – WLC Response](#)

Colns - [Public reporting on the Scottish Biodiversity Duty 2021-2023](#)

[WLC Biodiversity Duty Report Jan 2021- Dec 2023.pdf \(westlothian.gov.uk\)](#)

### **Appendices/Attachments:**

Appendix 1: Notice of Motion- Nature Emergency Declaration;

Appendix 2: EBD Workplan;

Appendix 3: EBD Officer Achievements to date;

Contact Person: Callum McLaren, Ecology & Biodiversity Officer, NETs Land and Countryside, [callum.mclaren@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:callum.mclaren@westlothian.gov.uk)

Jim Jack

Head of Operational Services

26<sup>th</sup> March 2024

# WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL LABOUR GROUP

## Notice of Motion from Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick for Council on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2023

### Declaration of a Nature Emergency

Council agrees to declare a Nature Emergency. Recognising the current state of nature and our dependence on the natural world in providing crucial ecosystem services. It is proposed this declaration sit alongside the Council's Climate Emergency (2019) declaration. Given the interconnectedness of climate change as one of the main factors in biodiversity loss council agrees there is an urgent need to act in favour of nature recovery and restoration to help address the issue and meet key targets.

Council is asked to note that there is a large body of evidence highlighting an alarming degree of biodiversity loss throughout the world:

- State of Nature Report, Scotland 2019: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/state-nature-scotland-report-2019> "the abundance and distribution of Scotland's species has on average declined over recent decades and most measures indicate this decline has continued in the most recent decade."
- WWF Living Planet Report 2022: <https://livingplanet.panda.org/en-GB/> "global wildlife populations have plummeted by 69% on average since 1970"
- The PREDICTS (Projecting Responses of Ecological Diversity In Changing Terrestrial Systems) team at the Natural History Museum has calculated a global Biodiversity Intactness Index (BII) to assess each area's biodiversity. A BII of 90% or more means the area has enough biodiversity to be a resilient and functioning ecosystem. Under 90%, biodiversity loss means ecosystems may function less well and less reliably. If the BII is 30% or less, the area's biodiversity has been depleted and the ecosystem could be at risk of collapse. The UK has a BII of 53%, which is in the bottom 10 percent globally. <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/our-science/data/biodiversity-indicators.html>

Council agrees that nature has an intrinsic value to humans, and plays an integral role in our culture and society, our health, wellbeing, and economy, this being demonstrated through literature, music, art, placemaking, green prescribing, scientific research, food, energy, water regulation, air quality regulation, etc

Nature plays a key role in meeting climate targets, with respect to adaptation, resilience and mitigation.

The final decision text at COP 27 recognises the interlinked crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, and recognises the "vital importance of protecting, conserving, restoring and sustainably using nature and ecosystems for effective and sustainable climate action" [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2022\\_L21\\_revised\\_adv.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2022_L21_revised_adv.pdf)

Council notes that the revised national [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy](#) (draft) and upcoming Natural Environment Bill will provide statutory targets for public bodies, including local authorities, will require them to meet the challenges of the nature crisis.

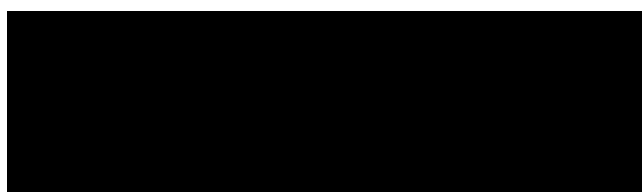
The [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework \(GBF\)](#) agreed at COP15 in December 2022, presents 23 global biodiversity targets with long term goals including maintaining, enhancing or restoring “the integrity, connectivity and resilience of all ecosystems, substantially increasing the area of natural ecosystems by 2050”; and “Biodiversity is sustainably used and managed and nature’s contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services, are valued, maintained and enhanced, with those currently in decline being restored, supporting the achievement of sustainable development, for the benefit of present and future generations by 2050”.

The key role of subnational governments and local communities in realising delivery of the GBF over the coming decade is acknowledged in the [Edinburgh Declaration](#), signed on behalf of West Lothian Council in Nov 2021 .

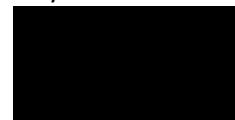
Council has already committed to addressing the nature crisis through signing the Edinburgh Declaration and having established a new Ecology and Biodiversity Team (in place since Oct 2021). This team is working with council colleagues and external partners to halt biodiversity loss (the national target is to halt loss by 2030), highlight and prevent wildlife crime, enforce the mitigation hierarchy in development, ensure space for nature through updated policies and spatial plans, and enrich biodiversity through the protection of species and habitats and through the creation of nature networks. A new 10-year Local Biodiversity Action Plan is underway, which we plan to publish at the end of 2023, helping us to attain the national target of restoring and improving biodiversity (in comparison with 1990 levels) by 2045.

Council further agrees that in declaring a Nature Emergency shows West Lothian Councils recognition of the current state of nature and its inherent value, as well as our continued commitment to aiding in the recovery and restoration of the natural environment to help realise our climate targets.

Council agrees to incorporate the ‘Declaration of Nature Emergency’ into the workings and reports to the Environment PDSP.

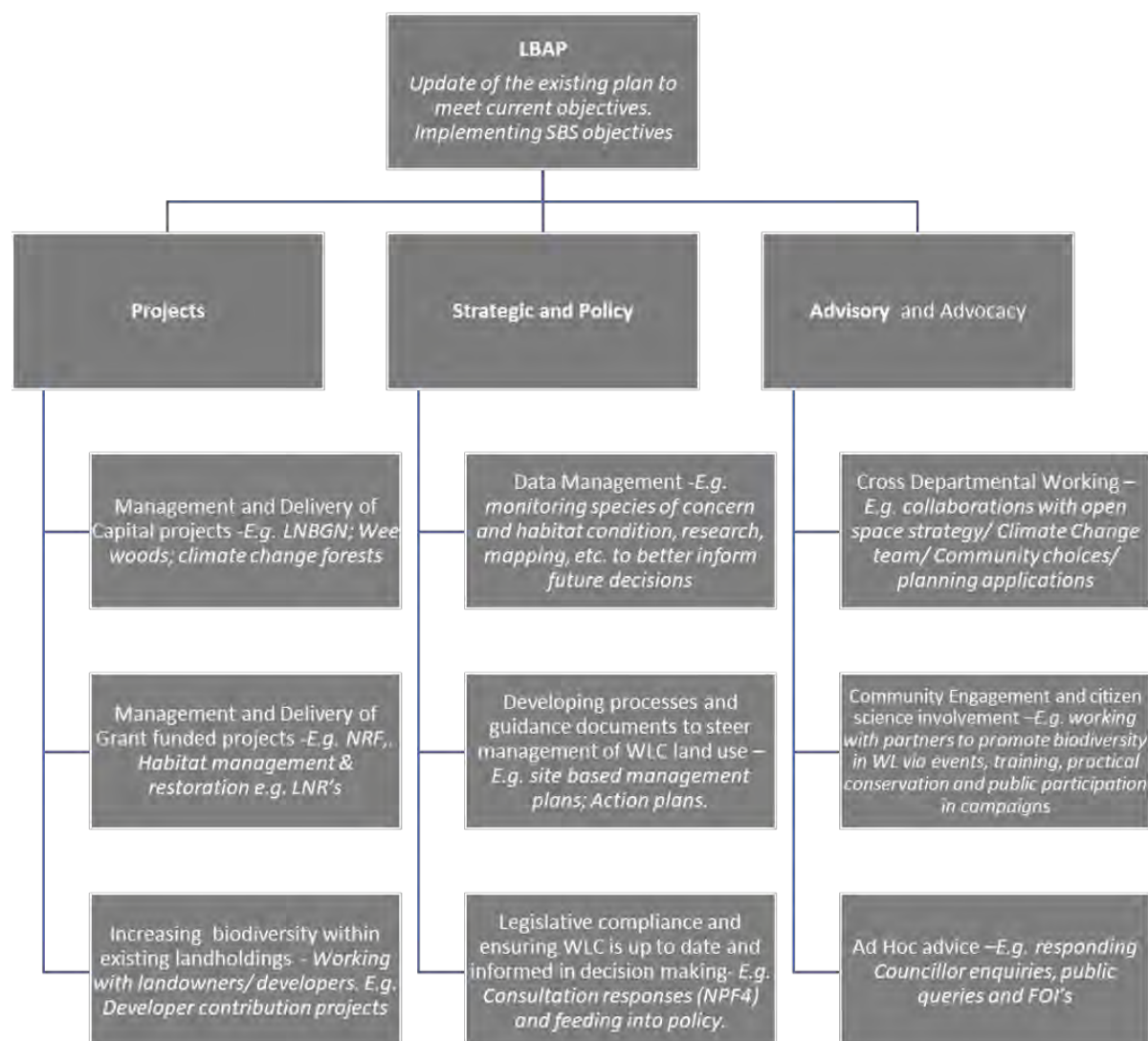


Received on 15 May 2023 at 11:57



**Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick**  
**Leader**  
**West Lothian Council Labour Group**

## Ecology and Biodiversity Team Workplan- Structure overview



## Ecology and Biodiversity Team – Achievements to date

Workplan themes	Work items	Justification and or impact
<b>Local Biodiversity Action Plan</b>	<b>Completed are in black text.</b> <b>Items in Blue are either ongoing or will see further work/ are long term projects</b>	<b>Completed are in black text.</b> <b>Items in Blue are either ongoing or will see further work/ are long term projects</b>
This involves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mapping</li> <li>- Reports</li> <li>- Setting up partnership</li> <li>- Authoring plan</li> <li>- Implementing and monitoring plan</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Habitat mapping for the whole of West Lothian</li> <li>2. Condition assessments of all habitats</li> <li>3. Building contacts with other land owners / managers and with natural history recording groups</li> <li>4. Natural Capital Assessment for all habitats</li> <li>5. Maps produced: strategic significance, habitat maps, ecosystem services heat-maps</li> <li>6. Initial consultation with landowners and other stakeholders completed</li> <li>7. LBAP stakeholder event held Nov 23 promoting work done and gathered feedback</li> <li>8. Information gained to date has been published on webpage: <a href="https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/75251/Local-Biodiversity-Action-Plan">https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/75251/Local-Biodiversity-Action-Plan</a></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Better understanding of sensitive / priority protected habitats and better informed to plan for future projects. Information being used to plan obligatory Nature Networks cross West Lothian.</li> <li>2. As above.</li> <li>3. Increasing general awareness and raising the profile of biodiversity and climate targets and ongoing projects</li> <li>4. To indicate the quantity of benefits provided. Can be used by other departments for decision making. Also informs mandatory climate change emissions / adaptation reporting.</li> <li>5. Visual illustrations used for raising awareness to the public and councillors</li> <li>6. Communication, awareness raising of biodiversity and participation in decision-making</li> <li>7. As above</li> <li>8. Keeping stakeholders and public informed; being open, honest and accountable</li> </ol>
<b>Projects</b>		
Capital projects – WLC Climate Change Emergency Fund £800k	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Livingston North Blue Green Network – path works and invasive vegetation removal completed; 25 trees planted</li> <li>10. 3500 trees planted in Howden Park - low survival rate, therefore additional planting occurred, with input from TCV, staff from St John's Hospital and Howden Walled Garden volunteers</li> <li>11. Climate Change Forest site investigation work at Addiewell Bing, Caputhall, Dechmont Law</li> <li>12. Queen's Green Canopy – extensive tree planting in Nelson Park</li> <li>13. Peatland Restoration investigations: Blackmoss, Easter Inch Moss, Pottishaw Moss</li> <li>14. <a href="#">Easter Inch Moss – further restoration programme</a></li> <li>15. Four <a href="#">“Wee Forests”</a> planted with schools (Addiewell, West Calder, Whitburn, Bathgate)</li> <li>16. Greening of the Shale Trail – extensive GCN survey carried out at Drumshoreland by ELGT</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Improved access to nature, Carbon sequestration and improved biodiversity potential</li> <li>10. Carbon sequestration, air quality regulation, biodiversity increased</li> <li>11. Resulted in decision making for appropriate use of spends /areas suitable to plant: Dechmont Law plans being made to increase the woodland cover; to be delivered as part of the long-term forest plan.</li> <li>12. 1770 trees planted. Carbon sequestration, air quality regulation, biodiversity increased, local engagement and increased awareness of the environment. Participation by over 100 pupils</li> <li>13. Resulted in projects being planned for Blackmoss and EIM on how best to restore bog habitat. Partnership work with the Coal Authority on their land and how to restore the bog. Contributes to Climate Change Strategy actions.</li> <li>14. <a href="#">Further restoration of the degraded bog. Plans will help reduce carbon emissions</a></li> <li>15. 2400 trees planted. Increased biodiversity (18 species), carbon sequestered, Increased awareness and participation of schools (x7) 221 school pupils and</li> </ol>

	<p>17. Greening of the Shale Trail –tree planting (x7 new trees &amp; 75m of native hedge planted) and woodland management at Stewartfield Park and Uphall woods</p> <p>18. Tree Time scheme launched with large specimen planted</p> <p>19. Free Trees scheme installed 160 standard trees</p>	<p>27 people from the local community were involved in the initial planting; increasing their awareness in climate and biodiversity science. Long term citizen science project. Post planting monitoring participants:22/23= 206; 23/24 =109</p> <p>16. Securing positive effects for European Protected Species, and habitat restoration / improving condition of Local Biodiversity Site.</p> <p>17. Carbon sequestration, air quality regulation and biodiversity increased</p> <p>18. Increased education/ public awareness on biodiversity and trees. Allows the public to be involved in supporting tree planting. Increase in carbon sequestration.</p> <p>19. Carbon sequestration, biodiversity increased, air quality regulation and indirect health and wellbeing.</p>
<p>Management and delivery of annual grant-funded projects – Nature Restoration Fund £172k from Scottish Government for 2021/22; £176k for 2022/23; £386k for 2023/24 (half to be spent on implementation of Nature Networks)</p>	<p>20. The wildlife information centre (TWIC)- Local Biodiversity Site Surveys. Management of contract to survey and assess LBS and potential LBS sites.</p> <p>21. Machinery bought to manage all existing wildflower meadows and to increase capacity for managing meadows and grassland across WLC landholdings</p> <p>22. Buglife employed to carry out condition assessments of B-Lines meadows and to run invertebrate workshops</p> <p>23. Wyndford Park (part-funded through Developer Contributions, competitive NRF bid £90,366 and Scotland Loves Local £20k) – new park created: raingarden, tree planting, extensive bulb planting, woodland management, new paths, drainage, small goals and benches. Also, signage and bins.</p> <p>24. Educational equipment purchased for shared use within Parks and Woodland including bat detectors, thermal scope and camera traps.</p> <p>25. Raingardens: Falcon Brae- Ladywell, refurbishment and signage. Additional planting within Rain Gardens as well as interpretive boards at Wyndford, Letham, Pumpherston Parks. New raingardens at Cunnigar, Wester Inch and Holmes Park.</p> <p>26. Nitrogen-fixing plant seeds bought for Beecraigs Animal Attraction to trial green manure</p> <p>27. Appointment of contractor to complete Beecraigs Loch feasibility study</p> <p>28. Blackmoss Nature Park – Felling non-native trees to improve the park and prevent further deterioration of the bog</p> <p>29. Partnership project with Forth Rivers Trust to survey for INNS on the Almond, Avon and tributaries and deliver a program of</p>	<p>20. Increased knowledge and understanding of habitats and species within West Lothian. Informing planning and development and protecting areas for inclusion in the Nature Network.</p> <p>21. Ability to increase number of meadow sites in the future, adding to the pollinator paths, increasing resources for insects and informal education opportunities</p> <p>22. Monitoring of WLC biodiversity assets; education and increased awareness for the public</p> <p>23. Increased biodiversity, air quality regulation, water regulation (raingarden), carbon sequestration and health/wellbeing</p> <p>24. Education and awareness raising</p> <p>25. Total of 138 square metres of new habitat created. Increased biodiversity, education, flood mitigation</p> <p>26. Increased biodiversity, potential for use as green hay.</p> <p>27. Ultimately to increase biodiversity by removing blue-green algae. Improve ecological function of the water body</p> <p>28. Reduce the degradation of the bog habitat and increase the biodiversity of the Nature Park.</p> <p>29. Increased education and participation by the public.10 volunteers will be trained to conduct INNS control on and near waterways. Increased biodiversity potential by removing INNS. Restoring ecological function, natural flood mitigation.</p> <p>30. Sensitively manage the site and increase the biodiversity and carbon sequestration potential while looking after important habitat types.</p> <p>31. To further the conservation of a protected species at a larger scale by sharing resources</p> <p>32. To further the conservation of a species whose range is limited by a number of factors</p>



	<p>treatment and natural flood mitigation measures (Nell Burn and Murieston Water)</p> <p>30. Working alongside the Woodland Officer and Ranger Service to create a site wide management plan for Witchcraig and newly acquired Wairdclaw Woods – including heathland management.</p> <p>31. Exploring Water Vole project in partnership with Falkirk Council</p> <p>32. Explore Pine Marten habitat enhancement project</p> <p>33. GCN enhancement programme pending eDNA survey results in early 2024</p> <p>34. GCN habitat enhancement planned throughout 2024 at Drumshoreland Local Biodiversity Site</p> <p>35. Working with Flood Risk Management and Envirocentre to improve drainage and SUDs in connection with GCN populations</p> <p>36. Fruiting edge at Avondale Park - standard 16 trees</p> <p>37. Planting programme 22/23 &amp; 23/24 with T&amp;W leading</p> <p>38. Greening of Whitburn town walk: Increasing tree (x1000) and bulb planting, raingarden/pond.</p>	<p>33. To further the conservation of a protected species whose range is limited by a number of factors.</p> <p>34. To further the conservation of a protected species.</p> <p>35. To further the conservation of a protected species.</p> <p>36. Increased biodiversity and food resource for wildlife and people. Carbon sequestration and air quality regulation.</p> <p>37. 158 standard trees planted. Increased biodiversity, carbon sequestration and air quality regulation.</p> <p>38. Carbon sequestration, air quality regulation, biodiversity increased, indirect health and wellbeing.</p>
Increasing biodiversity within existing landholdings. Also working with other landowners/ developers e.g. developer contributions	<p>39. Bat boxes purchased to provide roost features in areas where there is low roosting potential</p> <p>40. Bird boxes: 6 Kestrel, 2 Barn Owl boxes installed at Almondell CP, to encourage species movement into the area.</p> <p>41. Skolie Burn - work with the community group and NatureScot to improve condition of SSSI Grassland through adaptive management. Assisting the Ranger Service in fencing an additional section of the SSSI for conservation grazing</p> <p>42. Beecraigs Lochside Toilets- advice- bat roost features built in</p> <p>43. Beecraigs Balvormie Toilets- bat survey</p> <p>44. Balvormie toilet block breeding bird/ nesting bird surveys</p> <p>45. Polkemmet Toilet Block- Bat survey</p> <p>46. Almondell Country Park- toilet Bat Survey</p> <p>47. Badger surveys</p> <p>48. Botanical surveys- Balvormie meadow</p> <p>49. Exploring pollinator friendly bus stops and green infrastructure.</p> <p>50. Work with Forth Rivers Trust and use of NRF funding to install a fish counter for the River Almond to monitor performance</p> <p>51. Work with SSPCA – release of hedgehogs within WLC assets.</p>	<p>39. To further the conservation of a protected species.</p> <p>40. To further the conservation of a protected species.</p> <p>41. Increased biodiversity. Improving the condition of a protected site. Securing additional protection for future.</p> <p>42. To further the conservation of a protected species</p> <p>43. To avoid contravening the law and to further the conservation of a protected species.</p> <p>44. To avoid contravening the law to further the conservation of a protected species.</p> <p>45. To avoid contravening the law to further the conservation of a protected species.</p> <p>46. To avoid contravening the law and to further the conservation of a protected species.</p> <p>47. To avoid contravening the law and to further the conservation of a protected species.</p> <p>48. To monitor management changes and ensure good ecological function and provide benefits for biodiversity</p> <p>49. Increased habitat for pollinators by including living roofs to bus shelters. Plan to look at how these can be incorporated with existing contracts and where we replace old/damaged shelters. To be explored in Winchburgh CDA.</p> <p>50. To monitor habitat improvements for protected species (such as Atlantic Salmon)</p>



		51. Furthering the conservation of species.
Addressing identified issues on WLC landholdings through mitigation and enhancement strategies	52. Willow spiling at Balbardie Park to reduce erosion and improve banking along the burn	52. Ecosystem services- flood prevention measure whilst increasing biodiversity. Natural flood management.
<b>Strategic and Policy</b>		
Data management, inc monitoring species of concern / habitat condition	53. Building working relations with The Wildlife Information Centre (TWIC) and local wildlife Recorders 54. Using NRF funds to survey all Local Biodiversity Sites and potential new sites - completed by TWIC 55. work with higher education establishments to provide research opportunities for students (e.g .Napier Uni) MSc Student research to assess biodiversity of Buglife meadows Summer 2022 and summer 2023	53. Awareness raising and increasing the profile of important services Local record centres provide to aid in species protection 54. Increase the network of important biodiversity sites and help form nodes within the Nature Network 55. Increased understanding of assets and to encourage more green jobs/ routes into the environmental sector
Developing processes and guidance documents to steer management of WLC land use. Inc site-based management plans and action plans.	56. Creation of a calendar showing ecological sensitive periods for volunteer work to minimise potential negative effects. 57. Preparation of precautionary method statement for contractors working near ecological constraints to minimise potential negative effects 58. Creation of generic toolbox talk on ecological considerations for contractors 59. Updated Management Plan for Black Moss 60. Creation of Management plan for Witchcraig 61. Working with teams to develop better asset management – Treeplotter 62. Procedure note for P&W staff where dogs have entered a badger sett 63. Site management briefs for LBS on WLC land holdings	56. Education and to avoid contravening the law and help protect a protected species 57. To avoid contravening the law and to further the conservation of a protected species 58. Education and to avoid contravening the law and further the conservation of a protected species 59. Ensure long term success and viability of an important habitat – benefits to biodiversity and carbon sequestration 60. As above. 61. Improve efficiency in recording data and increase information back from other services on biodiversity/ species information. 62. Increased knowledge and avoids contravening the law 63. Ensure appropriate management to safeguard habitats, including local flora, fauna and other natural heritage features.
Legislative compliance and ensuring WLC is up to date and informed in decision-making. Incl participating in local and national	64. Responding to new policy/legislation as required e.g. Wildlife Management and Muirburn Bill 65. Participation in the development of 30x30 and NatureNetwork (Co-designed) with NatureScot 66. Responded to NPF4 consultation and fed back to WLC colleagues	64. Ensuring WLC is kept abreast of current legislation. Has helped shape how WLC will be participating in delivering National goals in a way that works for a local authority 65. As above 66. As above 67. As above 68. As above

discussion/decision making.	67. Responded to the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, SBS delivery plan, Nature Network, 30x30, and Natural Environment Bill consultation 68. Responding to the Managing Deer for climate and Nature consultation	
Contributing to wider council policies and strategies	69. Input into the new Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 70. Contributing to the Climate Change Strategy and Adaptation Plan 71. Input into the Learning for Sustainability plan 72. Input to the Local Development Plan 2 -Evidence gathering 73. Input to the Tree and Woodland Strategy 74. Producing West Lothians Nature Networks	69. Ensuring Biodiversity is included as part of plans 70. Meeting dual targets and ensuring efficient use of resources to mitigate climate and biodiversity loss 71. Education and awareness for young people. Ensuring biodiversity is accessible and included as part of the curriculum. 72. Ensuring Biodiversity is included as part of plans and areas are safeguarded. 73. Ensuring Biodiversity is included as part of plans and areas are safeguarded. 74. Shaping how WLC will be participating in delivering National goals and areas are safeguarded and prioritised for enhancement.
Reporting	75. ENV PDSP- Composite Motion- Trees and the Community (March 22) 76. ENV PDSP -Biodiversity team report (annual) 77. ENV PDSP -Consultation on the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy 78. Nature Emergency declaration 79. ENV PDSP -Nature Emergency and NRF 80. Biodiversity Duty report (every 3 years) 81. Mandatory Climate Change Report –(annual) 82. Climate Change Adaptation Plan (annual) 83. Quarterly Climate change updates 84. Quarterly LAC reports 85. NRF spend reporting (annual) 86. Preparation of reports for Environment and Economy board for COSLA reports for cllrs. 87. Scotland’s Pollinator Strategy 88. Responses to EIR/ FOI’s 89. SOBC- E&B outline 10-year budget plan	75. EBD fed into the report completing sections relevant to biodiversity. 76. Required- provides an annual update on activities led by EBD. Two reports have been completed 77. Paper to committee on responses made on the 40 questions of the consultation. 78. Following a request by the leader of the Council, EBD provided facts and figure that went towards a Motion to support declaration of Nature Emergency. 79. Paper to committee to update the panel on actions taken towards addressing the Nature Emergency Declaration and to report on NRF spend plan 80. Statutory requirement: Under the WANE Act (2011). Reporting back on actions taken and compliance with the duty. 81. Statutory requirement: Under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2000 (as amended) -Required- EBD team led projects that have impact on climate mitigation 82. As above 83. Required- biodiversity projects sit within this and the LBAP will too. 84. Council requirement - feedback to wards 85. Required by NatureScot (Scottish Government) 86. Ensuring biodiversity is fully considered. At least 3 reports have been fed back to cllrs. 87. Annual update reporting back to NatureScot on progress on increasing pollinator corridors / habitat.

		<p>88. Statutory requirement. At least 5 separate FOI/EIR responses: 101007309612; 101007327108; 101007239805; 10100715821 and 101000540165</p> <p>89. Required for wider council budget setting.</p>
<b>Advisory and Advocacy</b>		
Working Groups and partnerships- sharing knowledge and driving change -Attendance and participation	<p>90. Local Biodiversity Action Plan Officers group</p> <p>91. Lothian and Borders Natural Heritage group</p> <p>92. Lothian and borders GeoConservation Committee</p> <p>93. Blackburn Climate Action Town</p> <p>94. Bathgate Meadows</p> <p>95. PARC</p> <p>96. Veolia Group RAWQi-</p> <p>97. Winchburgh Street design</p> <p>98. Sustainable Procurement- contributing to e-learning</p> <p>99. Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) sites</p> <p>100. Woodland Trust Scotland (WTS) sites</p> <p>101. Coal Authority site- Pottishaw moss</p>	<p>90. National group sharing best practice and examples of work. Collaboration on Gov targets. Ongoing information and exchanges.</p> <p>91. Local group of officers of neighbouring LA's meeting typically a few times a year.</p> <p>92. Usually an annual meeting – reporting back on issues and on WLC Local Geodiversity Sites (LGS).</p> <p>93. Ad hoc advice and occasional attendance to meetings to highlight biodiversity/ inform decision making</p> <p>94. As above</p> <p>95. As above</p> <p>96. As above</p> <p>97. As above</p> <p>98. In development</p> <p>99. SWT own sites and manage some sites on behalf of WLC, requires oversight.</p> <p>100. WTS own sites and some adjoin WLC owned land. Requires oversight and occasional collaboration. Potential for future collaborative work making best use of resources to manage and deliver tree planting and management within WL above what we already do.</p> <p>101. CA own sites and potential for future disposals/acquisition of land no longer in use but of importance for biodiversity. Potential future LBS.</p>
Cross-departmental working - Planning	<p>102. Planning Services – input to planning applications to ensure that biodiversity is considered from the early stages.</p> <p>103. Working with Planning colleagues to respond to national planning policy and strategy consultations (NPF4).</p> <p>104. Site visits</p> <p>105. Delivery of ecological advice/ training to equip Planners with relevant ecological knowledge</p> <p>106. Creation of species technical advice notes as a resource</p> <p>107. Attendance to Planning and Development PDSP -providing advice</p>	<p>102. Ensuring that all applicants know about and adhere to the Mitigation Hierarchy. On average, over 100 planning applications require some ecology input over a 4-week period. Ensuring benefits for nature are included and protected species are fully considered.</p> <p>103. Ensuring Biodiversity is included as part of strategic plans</p> <p>104. Expert advice – presence to inform applications</p> <p>105. Education and awareness raising. Developing skills. Leading to better consideration when carrying out duties and statutory requirements for biodiversity.</p> <p>106. More awareness for protected species and better consideration for them</p> <p>107. Acting as expert witness for challenging cases, ensuring protected species or habitats are fully considered and reports are adequate for planning purposes.</p>

Cross-departmental working – Grounds Maintenance	<p>108.Working with Grounds maintenance staff to deliver a plan for involving communities and seeking improvements to biodiversity, though strategic relaxation of ground maintenance (grass cutting) to connect pollinator routes.</p> <p>109.Delivery of ecological advice/ training for staff</p>	<p>108.Draft grassland management plan for WL created. Currently operational and logistical challenges to deliverly. Increasing the potential for habitat and food resources for insects. Making efficient use of areas and increasing the overall diversity within it.</p> <p>109.Education and awareness raising. Developing skills. Leading to better consideration when carrying out duties and statutory requirements for biodiversity.</p>
Cross-departmental working – Open Space	<p>110.Carrying out planting projects in open spaces</p> <p>111.Working with the Open Space Officers to guide them on ecology/ biodiversity aspects of planned park improvements.</p>	<p>110.Increased biodiversity and carbon sequestered.</p> <p>111.Education and awareness raising. Developing skills. Leading to better consideration when carrying out duties and statutory requirements for biodiversity.</p>
Cross-departmental working – Climate Change	<p>112.Implementing and updating actions regarding the Climate Change Adaptation Plan and Climate Change Strategy</p> <p>113.Providing information for mandatory Climate Change reporting on behalf of NETS, Land and Countryside</p> <p>114.Ad- hoc advice</p>	<p>112.Education. Increased awareness of relationship between climate change and biodiversity. Providing better estimates on Co2 emissions in WL</p> <p>113.As above</p> <p>114.Education and awareness raising. Developing skills. Leading to better consideration when carrying out duties and statutory requirements for biodiversity.</p>
Cross-departmental working – Trees and Woodlands	<p>115.Collaboration on Ash dieback disease strategy- working with colleagues to ensure biodiversity and ecology are considered as part of the process for removal and appropriate replanting of areas.</p> <p>116.Conducting species specific surveys in connection with tree removal and replanting.</p> <p>117.Protected species licence and presence during works as licence holder</p> <p>118.Delivery of ecological advice/ training for staff</p>	<p>115.Minimising the impact of loss and ensuring full consideration of the ecology/ impacts.</p> <p>116.To inform work planning and avoid contravening the law and help protect a protected species</p> <p>117.As above and as specialists’ clerk of work type role.</p> <p>118.Education and awareness raising. Developing skills. Leading to better consideration when carrying out duties and statutory requirements for biodiversity.</p>
Cross-departmental working - Rangers	<p>119.Delivery of ecological advice/ training for staff and public awareness-raising</p> <p>120.Collaboration on project work and tasks for volunteers-Little boghead (x1000 trees), Blackmoss, Witchcraig; see also point 153.</p>	<p>119.Education and awareness raising. Developing skills. Leading to better consideration when carrying out duties and statutory requirements for biodiversity.</p> <p>120. Education and awareness for the public. Improved conditions of habitats and increase biodiversity potential of sites.</p>
Cross-departmental working – Roads and Transport	<p>121.Working in partnership with colleagues in Roads to install amphibian ladders in gully pots to ensure their safe escape/egress from drains in key areas</p> <p>122.Inputting into national Splatter project which identifies and maps animal road kills; identify hotspots to inform signage for Roads department to help reduce road kills and promote biodiversity richness.</p> <p>123.Ad hoc advice</p>	<p>121.Reducing the impact on amphibian road related mortalities.</p> <p>122.Awareness raising and education. Reducing the impact to species.</p> <p>123.Furthering interdepartmental relationships to secure biodiversity</p>

Cross-departmental working – Flood Risk Management	<p>124.Delivery of training on NPF4 / Biodiversity Duty / species protection for FRM team</p> <p>125.Working together on nature-based solutions for flood/waterway management (e.g. willow spiling to protect river banks)</p> <p>126.ECoW/ advisory role on projects – Bathgate Cemetery</p> <p>127.Drainage and Suds pond advice- Seafield Law</p> <p>128.Delivery of ecological advice/ species training for staff</p>	<p>124.Education and awareness raising. Developing skills. Leading to better consideration when carrying out duties.</p> <p>125.Increased carbon sequestration, increased biodiversity.</p> <p>126.To avoid contravening the law and help protect a protected species</p> <p>127.To help conserve a protected species.</p> <p>128.Education and awareness raising. Developing skills. Leading to better consideration when carrying out duties and statutory requirements for biodiversity.</p>
Cross-departmental working – Property Services	<p>129.Advising on new requirements of NPF4 and biodiversity with regard to new developments on WLC land and long-term biodiversity management</p> <p>130.Delivery of training on NPF4 / Biodiversity Duty / Natural Capital for the Property Services team.</p> <p>131.Expert advice and project steering regarding biodiversity and wildlife constraints for Almondvale Crescent development.</p> <p>132.Ad hoc advice / site visits on proposed sites for disposal</p>	<p>129.Education and awareness raising. Developing skills. Leading to better consideration when carrying out duties and statutory requirements for biodiversity.</p> <p>130.As above</p> <p>131.To avoid contravening the law and help protect a protected species</p> <p>132.To avoid contravening the law and help protect a protected species</p>
Cross-departmental working – Housing Services	<p>133.Giving advice on wildlife gardening to staff, with regard to tenants' gardens</p>	<p>133.Education and awareness raising. Developing skills. Leading to better consideration when carrying out duties and statutory requirements for biodiversity.</p>
Cross-departmental working – Education	<p>134.Delivery of ecological advice/ species training for staff</p> <p>135.Learning for Sustainability – collaboration of roadmap for educators</p> <p>136.Development of a Biodiversity project -Access to Nature</p>	<p>134.Education and awareness raising. Developing skills. Leading to better consideration when carrying out duties and statutory requirements for biodiversity.</p> <p>135.Meeting requirements for Sustainability targets and National Education objectives.</p> <p>136.Meeting requirements for LfS, Increased biodiversity and carbon sequestered.</p>
Cross departmental working- Councillors	<p>137. Delivery of Biodiversity CPD session to Councillors 06/11/23</p>	<p>137. Education and awareness raising. Developing skills. Leading to better consideration when carrying out duties and statutory requirements for biodiversity.</p>
Networking and information-sharing	<p>138.Meetings with officers from other Local Authorities on various issues including NPF4, Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, LBAPs, Biodiversity Net Gain and Climate Change</p> <p>139.Sharing examples of good practice in West Lothian– i.e. sharing information via NatureScot about the B-Lines initiative as our contribution to the Scottish Pollinator Strategy; sharing information about our raingarden creation projects through NatureScot and <a href="#">greenspace Scotland</a>; sharing information about our innovative new LBAP process with Officers from other LA's</p> <p>140.Template Local Biodiversity Site management plan written and shared with The Wildlife Information Centre to be used across Edinburgh and the Lothians</p>	<p>138.Education and awareness raised, strengthened relationships for future partnership projects.</p> <p>139.Shared knowledge and resources as well as influencing bigger picture discussions and action to strengthen nature recovery.</p> <p>140.As above</p> <p>141.As above</p> <p>142.As above</p> <p>143.As above – Addition of future Local Biodiversity sites to strengthen Nature Networks</p> <p>144. Working with others at Regional level to help secure Nature Networks and biodiversity enhancements at scale.</p>

	<p>141. Ministerial visit to Howden Park to launch the new NRF fund for 2022. Information-sharing with the minister for “Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity” and NatureScot about habitat creation and restoration work in West Lothian.</p> <p>142. Working with NatureScot staff to discuss approaches and delivery mechanisms for SBS and Species-specific actions</p> <p>143. Working with Forestry and Land Scotland to discuss approaches within their landholdings in WL and inclusion of potential LBS in the future.</p> <p>144. Partner in the Local Policy Innovation Partnership for water management in the Forth Water Basin, led by Stirling University.</p>	
PR and Communications	<p>145. Media release within Bulletin – at least once a year</p> <p>146. 5 new website pages created for Ecology and Biodiversity</p> <p>147. Media releases on QGC nelson Park, Wee forest, ministerial visit, Tree Time launch.</p> <p>148. Monthly social media releases to raise awareness or highlight topics in 2023 and 2024</p>	<p>145. Spring 2022; Spring 2023; Spring 2024 Bulletins - Education and awareness raising.</p> <p>146. Education and awareness raising.</p> <p>147. As above</p> <p>148. As above</p>
Community Engagement and citizen science involvement	<p>149. Buglife wildflower meadow and freshwater workshops, to identify and record invertebrates in 2022</p> <p>150. Purchase of specialist recording kit for future projects: Bat recorders, camera traps etc.</p> <p>151. Buglife contracted to lead workshops over the next 4 years (2024-2027) to help build a cohort of citizen-scientists in West Lothian</p> <p>152. Encouragement of community groups and public to use iRecord and iNaturalist apps to record nature observations, to contribute to WL-wide data-base</p> <p>153. Joint delivery of Wild Wednesday's Bioblitz annual events. Supported by a number of other organisations and WLC departments.</p>	<p>149. Education and awareness raising. Six workshops over summer 2022</p> <p>150. Education and awareness raising</p> <p>151. Education and awareness raising over next 4 years.</p> <p>152. Public participation in monitoring of wildlife; increased up-to-date database of species to enable monitoring</p> <p>153. Increased awareness and education of the public on biodiversity. Education on how to further engage in citizen science. Over 400 attended over the 2 days at Almond Park and Campbridge Pond. 500+ species records logged on iRecord/TWIC</p>
Ad Hoc advice – responding to enquiries etc	<p>154. House Martin crime awareness project</p> <p>155. Answering enquiries from Councillors and members of the public. E.g. actions taken for swifts/swallows, habitat destruction at East Calder; advice on Barn Owls; water pollution; illegal tree felling; advice on how areas are protected; and lymes disease</p>	<p>154. Leaflet delivery and work with wildlife crime officers to dissuade illegal removal of house martin nests.</p> <p>155. Approximately 50 queries of varying levels of complexity/ effort required from short email, short memo reports responding to news articles of items peaking the interest of councillors to full responses and investigations into illegal or potentially illegal activities. Responses result in better knowledge/ awareness for the enquirer and awareness raising of issues. Responses to Cllrs leads to better consideration when carrying out duties and statutory requirements for biodiversity.</p>

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



## **ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

### **RECYCLE FOR WEST LOTHIAN PILOT - UPDATE**

#### **REPORT BY HEAD OF OPERATIONAL SERVICES**

##### **A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To provide the PDSP with an update on the Recycle for West Lothian Campaign work that has been carried out in the Armadale and Linlithgow Bridge pilot areas.

##### **B. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the PDSP:

1. Notes the progress to date on the Recycle for West Lothian Campaign;
2. Notes the challenges outlined in the report and the mitigation measures required to address them; and,
3. Notes the next steps to move forward with a wider reaching Recycle for West Lothian Campaign.

##### **C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

<b>I</b>	<b>Council Values</b>	Caring and compassionate; open, honest and accountable; collaborate, inclusive and adaptive
<b>II</b>	<b>Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b>	Environmental Protection Act 1990 Proposed Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill
<b>III</b>	<b>Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>	None
<b>IV</b>	<b>Impact on performance and performance Indicators</b>	Potential improvements in performance to be achieved to indicator WM087_9b.1a Percentage of Household waste recycled or composted per annum
<b>V</b>	<b>Relevance to Local Outcome Improvement Plan</b>	We live longer, healthier lives and have reduced health inequalities. We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities.
<b>VI</b>	<b>Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b>	Continuing with the current rate of contamination will create budget pressures within Operational Services
<b>VII</b>	<b>Consultation at PDSP</b>	



**VIII Other consultations**Financial Management Unit, Corporate  
Transformation Team**D. TERMS OF REPORT****D.1 Background**

On 12 September 2023, the Environment and Sustainability PDSP noted the proposals to progress the “Recycle for West Lothian” campaign. This report outlines the progress made with the pilot work that was undertaken in Armadale and Linlithgow Bridge.

The Recycle for West Lothian Campaign has aimed to build upon the success of major change projects within Waste Services, and communicate and inform the public on how to recycle well.

It was agreed by PDSP in September 2023 that targeted recycling intervention work would be carried out in Armadale and Linlithgow Bridge. These areas were selected as the entire collection beat is concentrated in a small area, and does not cross between towns. This meant that the impact of the trials could be measured and reported and it was expected that the interventions would reduce contaminants towards the Zero Waste Scotland targets of 20% and 28% for the Blue and Green Bin respectively.

Prior to the pilot commencing, recycling rates for West Lothian for the period of April – June 2023 were as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Recycling Rates April – June 2023**

Waste Collection	April 2023 – June 2023*	
	% contamination	% recycled
Blue Bin. (Paper and Cardboard)	74.63%	25.37%
Green Bin. (Plastic bottles, tubs and trays, metal cans)	52.83%	47.17%

*\*Provisional figures, subject to verification by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)*

Ultimately, the campaign seeks to create a culture of recycling and improving the quality of recyclate material within West Lothian, leading to an increase in recycling rates. This will help ensure the council stays within its recycling and waste tonnage budget for this year and help mitigate, in part at least, tonnage inflationary pressures in future years.

**D.2 Approach**

As one of the key aims of the campaign was to educate the public, officers worked to review the contents of both blue and green recycling bins in areas of Linlithgow Bridge (1,464 properties on beat) and Armadale (1,557 properties on beat) each collection week.

A dedicated team went ahead of the waste collection crew and searched through each bin that had been presented. Any unexpected materials were brought to the top of the bin and a tag was attached to the bin detailing the items that should not have been present.



Customers were then sent letters detailing the rationale for non-collection of the bin, with detail of the contamination on the first and second occasions. Customers were advised to remove the items and to present the bin on the next scheduled collection day, as per the current waste service standards.

Following this, if customers presented wrong items again, then an Education and Engagement Officer would attend to explain how to recycle well and clarify any misunderstandings. If wrong items continue to be presented, then the collection service would be removed.

Community engagement exercises were also undertaken by officers with information stands at local supermarkets including Asda, Scotmid (both Armadale) and Sainsburys (Linlithgow Bridge).

### **D.3 Results and Benefits of the Pilot**

#### **D.3.1 Increased Recycling Levels**

The pilots in Armadale and Linlithgow Bridge operated from October 2023 to March 2024 with a break over the festive period and two routes cancelled due to poor weather conditions. The recycling results from the bins that were collected (i.e. not tagged) were very encouraging, and are better than Zero Waste Scotland targets.

Prior to the pilot project commencing, contamination levels for the whole of West Lothian averaged at 74.63% for blue bins and 52.83% for green bins.

At the end of the pilot work, the average contamination levels in the two pilot areas were 2.8% for the blue bins and 29.2% for the green bins showing significant improvement in comparison to West Lothian as a whole. A breakdown of contamination rates within each of the two pilot areas, alongside Zero Waste Scotland targets, is provided in Table 2.

**Table 2: Contamination Level by Bin and by Area**

	Blue Bin contamination	Green bin contamination
Armadale	4%	31.33%
Linlithgow Bridge	1.66%	27%
Zero Waste Scotland target	20%	28%

#### **D.3.2 Improved Awareness and Behaviour Change**

Records were kept of the number of tags used on each route. The 'number of tags given' is the number the engagement team left on the bins. The 'number of tags recorded' relates to how many tags remained on the bins once the engagement team had left the street/area. Any discrepancy indicates that tags were removed between the engagement team placing them on the bin and the collection team emptying the bin. Whether looking at either the number of tags given or tags recorded, both of these reduce on each cycle. This indicates a positive behaviour change in householders. Even after the festive period the number of bins tagged, of either colour, in either area, continued to reduce.

Complaints were minimal in comparison to the number of bins tagged, and have reduced as the pilot progressed.

Results from bin tagging, and associated numbers of complaints, are shown in Figures 1-4.

## Armadale

Figure 1

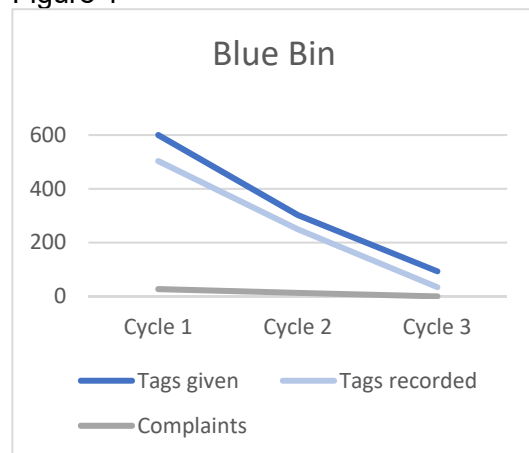
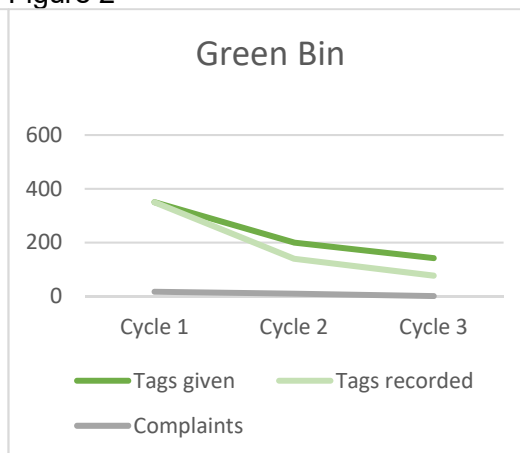


Figure 2



## Linlithgow Bridge

Figure 3

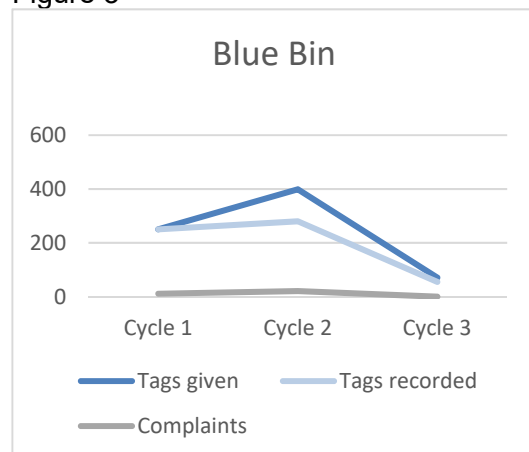
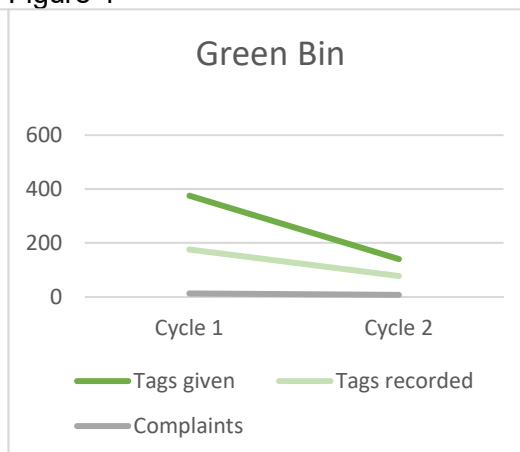


Figure 4



The engagement team observed that each week the quality of the material generally improved. Improvements included material in the green bins being rinsed out, fewer instances of black bags being buried at the bottom of the bin, and fewer pizza boxes with food left in them. Following learning from the campaign, social media posts have promoted highlighting the key items that the public commonly misplace in the green and blue bins.

There are still some messages which appear to be unclear to householders, including what constitutes recyclable plastic and metal. Further work needs to be done to educate the public that only the items listed on the bins, calendar or stickers are to be placed in the bins, and to emphasise that not all plastics and metals can be recycled.

### D.3.3 Reduced Costs

The clear improvements to the quality of material collected also have wider reaching impact beyond front-line collections. Material processors have commented on the improved quality received from the campaign areas, and this translates into significantly reduced disposal costs.

In 2023, Blue Bin waste disposal cost the council £235,045. If the results of the pilot were replicated across West Lothian at 2.8% contamination, then this waste would have generated income in the region of £185,000.

Similarly, Green Bin waste disposal cost the council £32,339. If pilot results were replicated, an income in the region of £78,000 would have been generated.

In total, this presents a swing in the region of £530,000 which could be achieved with improved recycling in line with the pilot across West Lothian. It should be noted that waste streams are subject to the global commodity market volatility and costs and income can change significantly from year to year.

The improvements seen through the campaign have garnered good feedback from material processors who would be keen to see this replicated across the entire area.

#### **D.4 Challenges and Mitigating Actions**

It is worth noting that although the community engagement work has been challenging, it is a small minority of householders providing challenge. By the end of the third cycle, based on the information provided in Figures 1-4, over 90% of households in each area were getting their recycling correct. This is compared to the end of the first cycle, where only around 60-75%, depending on colour of bin and route, were recycling correctly.

Additionally, only 118 complaints were received in total from 16,662 scheduled collections across the engagement period (less than 1% of all scheduled collections).

Key challenges faced by the team, and any mitigating actions that have been applied have been outlined:

- Some householders have removed bin tags before the collection crew reach them;
  - The engagement team record all tags placed on the bins in order to understand how many householders remove bin tags before the crew reach them – this ensures that letters are still sent to households, and progression through the process continues.
- Some householders are continuing to bury contamination at the bottom of the bin;
  - Any buried contamination is logged by the crew when it is noticed at the point of collection, again leading to progression through the stages of the process.
- Some householders present their bin after the team have passed.
  - Crews will empty these bins, and similarly to buried contamination, will log any contamination at the point of collection.
- Staff have been subject to incidents of abusive behaviour whilst following work instructions by members of the public;
  - Incidents have been recorded in Sphera as per Council Policy;
  - The engagement team now wear body-worn cameras when undertaking bin content reviews.

#### **D.5 Future Legislative Changes**

As well as the environmental reasons to tackle contamination at source at the kerbside, there are legislative impacts that mean tackling contamination will no longer be an option, as this will penalise West Lothian Council.

##### **D.5.1 Circular Economy Bill and Charter for Household Recycling**

The council has committed to the Charter for Household Recycling and the associated Code of Practice which aims to bring consistency to recycling across Scotland. The Circular Economy Bill also proposes to make this mandatory.

The proposed Bill, which is currently subject to consultation, also includes powers for Scottish ministers to impose targets on councils, such as Statutory Recycling Targets. This may see penalties imposed if targets are not achieved.

### **D.5.2 Extended Producer Responsibility**

Councils will be assessed against what is deemed an efficient and effective service. Efficiency metrics focus on the cost of delivery whilst effectiveness metrics measure performance of the service.

If we fail on the effectiveness due to contamination this may trigger an improvement plan agreed between the Council and the Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme Administrator. If a council is assessed as being ineffective, and not delivering against the objectives of an improvement plan, the Scheme Administrator can make deductions to that council's assessed efficient costs to incentivise service effectiveness.

If West Lothian is not recycling as much as other Local Authorities in a similar situation, for example due to contamination, and our material is not of sufficient quality to get an income or can reduce their costs when others councils do, then West Lothian could receive less funding.

### **D.6 Next Steps**

Despite the challenges outlined in section D.4, the Recycle for West Lothian campaign has clearly delivered the expected behaviour change within the Armadale and Linlithgow Bridge areas.

To build upon the success of the campaign to date, it is proposed that the campaign is continued.

The continuation of the campaign will be two-fold:

- Targeted engagement and reviews will take place on a rotational basis across West Lothian in order to drive an increase in recycling rates across the entire area.
- Front-line operatives will be encouraged to check and tag bins as appropriate, in line with current policy.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

This report outlines the progress to date to improve recycling in West Lothian and highlights the proposed next steps to ensure action is taken to continue to improve recycling.

## **F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

- Environment and Sustainability PDSP Report of 12 September 2023 – [Item 14](#)
- West Lothian Council Revenue Budget Report of 22 February 2024 - [Item 4](#)
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill

Appendices:       None

Contacts:           David Maule, Interim Recycling, Waste and Fleet Manager:  
David.Maule@westlothian.gov.uk

Jim Jack  
Head of Operational Services  
26 March 2024

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



## **ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

### **BUS PARTNERSHIP FUND – STATUS UPDATE**

#### **REPORT BY HEAD OF OPERATIONAL SERVICES**

##### **A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report provides Panel members with an update on the Bus Partnership Project and the status of the Transport Scotland Bus Partnership Fund.

##### **B. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Panel note the progress of the Bus Partnership Project and the paused status of the Bus Partnership Fund.

##### **C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

<b>I</b>	<b>Council Values</b>	Caring and compassionate; open, honest and accountable; collaborate, inclusive and adaptive.
<b>II</b>	<b>Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b>	The council has a policy of supporting public transport services where resources permit. The Transport (Scotland) Act 1985 states that it is the duty of the council, in exercising their power, to conduct themselves as not to inhibit competition in the commercial market.
<b>III</b>	<b>Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>	None
<b>IV</b>	<b>Impact on performance and performance Indicators</b>	The council has a target PI for Public Transport of having 90% of residents with access to an hourly or better daytime service Monday to Saturday.
<b>V</b>	<b>Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement</b>	The local bus network contributes to a number of outcomes by connecting communities with services and employment.
<b>VI</b>	<b>Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b>	The West Lothian Bus Alliance was awarded £225,750 from Transport Scotland's Bus Partnership Fund to complete a Strategic Business Case appraisal.
<b>VII</b>	<b>Consideration at PDSP</b>	None.

**VIII Other consultations** None.

## **D. TERMS OF REPORT**

### **D.1 Background**

The BPF, managed by Transport Scotland, is a fund which seeks to complement the powers in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, enabling local authorities to work in partnership with bus operators, to develop and deliver ambitious schemes that incorporate bus priority measures.

The key outcomes of BPF are:

- To improve bus journey times and provide greater reliability, by prioritising bus over other types of traffic.
- To provide high-quality bus services which contribute to the four priorities of the National Transport Strategy 2 vision-to reduce inequality, take climate action, help deliver inclusive growth and improve health and well-being.
- To reduce congestion, through improved bus services.
- To fit with the partnership strength and commitment, including through 'match in kind' action and investment to further improve bus services, and working towards a Bus Service Improvement Partnership model.
- For the lead local authority and its partners to deliver the proposed developments effectively, with local political buy-in.

### **D.2 West Lothian Bus Alliance – Bus Partnership Project**

The council set up a West Lothian Bus Alliance group to provide local operators with a forum to work in partnership with the council to identify interventions to improve local bus travel and to prepare bids to the Bus Partnership Fund. 20 interventions were agreed and Council Executive ratified a bid for £761,250 to the Bus partnership Fund on the 21st October 2021.

The West Lothian Bus Alliance was awarded £225,725 by Transport Scotland to progress a Strategic Business Case using the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) for 15 interventions. Regular reports have been provided to the Panel and Council Executive as the West Lothian Bus alliance have progressed the actions required to complete the various stages of the projects.

### **D.3 Pausing of The Bus Partnership Fund**

Transport Scotland wrote to the council on 16 January 2024 providing an update to the status of the fund following the recent Scottish Government budget announcement. The letter states that "given budgetary constraints faced, the BPF will be paused for 2024-25. This pausing presents an opportunity to recast bus priority projects within the wider work to be undertaken to deliver on our vision for the Future of Public Transport. This builds on the Fair Fares Review work that is planned to be published in early 2024."

#### **D.4 Implications for the West Lothian Bus Alliance Projects**

A Strategic Business Case Appraisal was developed and contained in a report to Council Executive on 23 May 2023 and was submitted to Transport Scotland. This commenced a BPF Gateway Review. Following Review, the next steps for proposed interventions was to progress to a feasibility study and detailed design stage. The work required would extend into 2024/25. Remaining funding approval would require completion within financial year 2023/24 therefore no further design and feasibility studies have not progressed in West Lothian.

The Case for Change stage proposed 6 locations taken through the Preliminary and Detailed Appraisal as follows:

1. Alderstone Road
2. Almondvale Avenue
3. Bathgate Town Centre
4. Armadale Cross
5. Whitburn Cross
6. Broxburn and Uphall

The Gateway Review which commenced following the submission of the Strategic Business Case began to progress on design options and develop timescales for short term interventions and longer term considerations. Some design refinement and development of match in kind interventions were also progressed. The timescales for these projects was expected to continue into financial year 2024/25 and therefore could not be progressed any further under the conditions of the pausing of the fund.

The studies to date and intervention proposals remain available when changes to the status of the Bus Partnership Fund are announced. Further consideration may be required to the relevance of those interventions depending on the timing of changes to the fund status.

#### **E. CONCLUSION**

The Strategic Business Case Appraisal by the West Lothian Bus Alliance was submitted to Transport Scotland for consideration. This commenced a Gateway Review Process for consideration of future grant funding to progress to Outline Business Case and project implementation stages.

Transport Scotland wrote to West Lothian Bus Alliance to advise of the pausing of the Bus Partnership Fund due to budgetary constraints following the Scottish Government budget announcement in December 2023.

No further work is anticipated in 2024/25 due to the pausing of the fund.

#### **F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

Bus Partnership Fund – Report by Head of Operational Services to Council Executive on 8 June 2021

Bus Partnership Fund Update – Report by Head of Operational Services to Council Executive on 26 October 2021

Bus Partnership Fund Update – Report by Head of Operational Services to Council Executive on 19 April 2022

Bus Partnership Fund Update – Report by Head of Operational Services to Council Executive on 20 December 2022

Bus Partnership Fund Update – Report by Head of Operational Services to Environment and Sustainability PDSP on 20 March 2023

Bus Partnership Fund Strategic Business Case Appraisal Submission – Report by Head of Operational Services to Council Executive on 23 May 2023

Contact Person: Keith Muirhead, Interim Passenger Transport Manager, Tel: 01506 282316  
Email: Keith.Muirhead@westlothian.gov.uk

**Jim Jack**  
**Head of Operational Services**  
**26 MAR 2024**



## Environment & Sustainability Policy, Development and Scrutiny Panel

### Workplan 2023/2024

	Issue	Purpose	Lead Officer	Date	Referral to Council Executive
1.	National Highways and Transport Customer Satisfaction Survey 2023	The purpose of this report is to inform the Panel of the National Highways and Transport Network Public Satisfaction Survey results for 2023.  Report to be submitted to the PDSP on 30 January 2024	Gordon Brown	30 January 2024	No
2.	Drainage in West Lothian	The purpose of this report is to provide the Panel with information regarding the motion raised at full council on the 21 November 2023 in relation to the councils' preparation for weather events, flooding and drainage.  Report to be submitted to the PDSP on 30 January 2024	Gordon Brown	30 January 2024	No
3.	Accessibility Schemes 2023/24	The purpose of this report is to provide the Panel with the proposed list of accessibility schemes for 2023/24 for consideration which are identified within Appendix 1.  Report to be submitted to the PDSP on 30 January 2024	Gordon Brown	30 January 2024	Yes
4.	Revision of Operational Practices at Recycling Centres	Council Executive on 25 April 2023 resolved that officers bring a quarterly performance report to this PDSP in relation to the Revision of Operational Practices at Recycling Centres.  Report to be submitted to the PDSP on 30 January 2024	David Maule/Gillian Wilson	30 January 2024	No
5.	Environment & Sustainability PDSP Performance Report – Quarter 3	To report the current levels of performance for all indicators which are the responsibility of the Environment & Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.  Report to be submitted to the PDSP on 30 January 2024	Jim Jack	30 January 2024	No

6.	Quarterly Climate Change Update	<p>The purpose of this report is to present to the Panel the latest quarterly climate change update and to provide an update on work undertaken to meet the actions in the Climate Change Strategy.</p> <p>Report to be submitted to the PDSP on 30 January 2024</p>	Peter Rogers	30 January 2024	Agenda Item 8 No
7.	2023/24 Financial Performance – Month 6 Monitoring Report	<p>To provide the Panel with an update on the financial performance of the Environment &amp; Sustainability portfolio for the General Fund Revenue budget and the General Services Capital Budget.</p> <p>Report to be submitted to the PDSP on 30 January 2024</p>	Robert Young	30 January 2024	Yes
8.	Garden Waste Charging	<p>To appraise the PDSP of a proposal to introduce a charging scheme for the collection of Garden Waste in 2024/25 and to note the next steps that officers are seeking to implement the scheme.</p> <p>Report to be submitted to the PDSP on 30 January 2024</p>	David Maule	30 January 2024	No
9.	Ecology and Biodiversity Update	<p>The purpose of this report is to update the panel on the workplan and the detailed work undertaken by the Ecology and Biodiversity Team.</p> <p>Report to be submitted to the PDSP on 26 March 2024</p>	Callum McLaren	26 March 2024	No
10.	Recycle for West Lothian pilot scheme	<p>Report to be submitted to the PDSP on 26 March 2024</p>	David Maule	26 March 2024	
11.	Bus Partnership Fund – Status Update	<p>It is recommended that the Panel note the progress of the Bus Partnership Project and the paused status of the Bus Partnership Fund.</p>	Keith Muirhead	26 March 2024	No

12.	Litter Prevention Action Plan – LPAP	The purpose of the report is for the panel to note the contents of West Lothian Council’s Litter Prevention Action Plan – LPAP covering 2023 to 2028, updates to the Litter Bin Plan and the overall Cleaner Communities – Litter Policy 2023/2024.  Report to be submitted to the PDSP on 26 March 2024	Paul Mallis/Andy Johnston	4 June 2024	Agenda Item 8 Yes
13.	Update on The West Lothian Council Parking Strategy and The New National Pavement Parking Ban Introduction	The purpose of this report is to update the Panel on the work done on the implementation of the West Lothian Council Parking Strategy and to provide information on recent changes in legislation regarding the introduction of a new pavement parking ban nationally in Scotland.  Report to be submitted to the PDSP on March or June 2024	Gordon Brown	4 June 2024	No
14.	Fleet Asset Management Plan		Jim Jack	To be confirmed	
15.	Public Transport and Public Transport Workstream 2.		Jim Jack/Keith Muirhead	To be confirmed	
16.	Flooding Roles and Responsibilities/Sand Bag Policy		Gordon Brown	To be confirmed	
17.	Street Naming and Numbering Review and Charging Implementation		Gordon Brown	To be confirmed	
18.	Community Choices – Bridgend Allotment		Eirwen Hopwood/Andy Johnston	To be confirmed	
19.	Springfield Trees		Eirwen Hopwood/Andy Johnston	To be confirmed	
20.	Incorporating Community Choice to Grassland Management	To update the Panel on grounds maintenance changes in relation to the participatory budgeting- community choices and biodiversity.	Callum McLaren	To be confirmed	No

21.	Pentland Hills Regional Park – funding 2021/22 & updated Minute of Agreement	Report to the panel to advise on the requested from City of Edinburgh Council as management organisation for PHRP and the revision and proposed update of the Minute of Agreement between CEC and Midlothian Council to operate the Regional Park.	To be confirmed	To be confirmed	Yes
22.	Contaminated Land Supplementary Guidance, including the Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy	The purpose of this report is to advise the panel of preparation of Supplementary Guidance (SG) on contaminated land in support of the West Lothian Local Development Plan (LDP) and a contaminated land inspection strategy.	Fiona McBrierty	To be confirmed	Yes

**Jim Jack**  
**Head of Operational Services**  
26 March 2024