



WHITBURN & BLACKBURN LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

SERVICE UPDATE – NETS, LAND & COUNTRYSIDE

REPORT BY HEAD OF OPERATIONAL SERVICES

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise members of the recent activity of the NETs Land & Countryside Services' teams for the period 1 November 2019 – 31 January 2020.

B. RECOMMENDATION

The Local Area Committee is asked to:

1. Note the work carried out by the service within the local area.
2. Advise of any areas that require further information or investigation.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; making best use of our resources; working in partnership
II	Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	None
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	We make the most efficient and effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment
VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	In line with available revenue and capital budgets
VII	Consideration at PDSP	None
VIII	Other consultations	None

D1 TERMS OF REPORT

To report on activity for period 1 November 2019 – 31 January 2020.

D2 Grounds Maintenance Routine Works

Hedge cutting operations were completed during November and December. The annual maintenance visit to shrub beds in the ward started in Whitburn during the last week in January. The remaining areas in the ward will be completed by the end of February.

As part of the commitment to minimise the use of Glyphosate used, we are now recording the amount used in each ward. 199 litres were applied in the Whitburn & Blackburn ward during 2019. This includes shrub beds, grass edges, hard landscaped areas and road channels.

The most recent LAMs score for the West area was 50, which remains less than the target of 67. This is likely to be due to the shrub beds not having been cleaned out when the areas were inspected.

Grounds Maintenance Enquiries

In total there were 20 grounds maintenance related enquiries received and dealt with during this reporting period in 2019/20.

	2019/20	2018/19
Bench or Seat Enquiries	0	1
Bonfire Enquires	0	3
Drainage Flooding Grass Areas	2	1
Enforcement Officer Enquiries	0	1
Fencing Enquiries	1	1
Grass Area Damaged	2	1
Grass Cutting Enquiries	3	1
Grass Highway Verges	0	1
Ground Ownership Enquiries	0	1
Grounds Property Vandalised	1	1
Hedge Cutting Enquiries	1	1
Neighbourhood Env Teams	0	1
Public Park Enquiries	3	2
Shrub Bed Enquiries	0	2
Shrub Bed Overhanging Path	6	1
Weeds General Enquiries	0	1
Weeds on Paths or Roads	1	0
Total	20	20

D3 Garden Maintenance Routine Works

The Garden Maintenance Scheme will start on the 6th April this year.

Garden Maintenance Enquiries

In total there were three garden maintenance related enquiries received and dealt with during this reporting period in 2019/20.

	2019/20	2018/19
Garden Maintenance General Enquiries	2	1
Garden Maintenance Hedge Cutting	1	1
Total	3	2

D4 Cleaner Communities Routine Works

Staff are continuing to deal with enquiries and carry out routine works to empty litter/dog waste bins, lift litter on footpaths, roads and open spaces throughout the ward with the NETs team dealing with fly tipping enquiries.

Over the period of the report resources continue to be directed towards dealing with leaf fall throughout West Lothian.

Cleaner Communities Enquiries

In total 104 cleaner communities related enquiries were received and dealt with during this reporting period in 2019/20.

	2019/20	2018/19
Complaint Street Cleansing	0	1
Dead Animals	5	5
Dog Fouled Grass Open Space	1	5
Dog Fouling on Paths/Roads	7	17
Dog Waste Bin New Request	0	2
Glass on Paths or Open Spaces	2	3
Graffiti Non Offensive	1	1
Graffiti Racist or Offensive	1	1
Illegal Fly Posting	1	1
Illegal Fly Tipping/Dumping	43	18
Litter Bin Full Overflowing	0	1
Litter Bin New Request for Bin	0	1
Litter General Enquiries	6	2
Litter On Paths/Road Verges	16	6
Needles/Syringes Abandoned	2	1
Street Sweeping Enquiries	8	4
Trolleys Abandoned/Dumped	0	2
Vehicle Abandoned	11	16
Total	104	87

Fly Tipping Enquiries (January - December)

	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Illegal Fly Tipping/Dumping	166	112	138	183	144

Enforcement Community Action

The team consists of one Senior Enforcement Officer and three Education/Engagement Officers. The Senior Enforcement Officers post has been filled as of 6th January 2020 by Solomon Ede.

The Cleaner Communities Environmental team have dealt with various environmental enquiries relating to enforcement, education and engagement during the period.

Abandoned/Nuisance vehicle enquiries have been received and where required vehicles have been removed from streets by gaining compliance following negotiation, verbal warnings, warning letters, official notices served, or WLC contractor removal.

Officers dealt with an increase in fly tipping reports received across the ward with 43 reports dealt with in this reporting period which is an increase on the comparable period last year. This increase in reporting has been attributed to the fly tipping media campaign officers initiated over the summer encouraging people to report fly tipping they come across.

The total number of fly tipping enquiries for the year for the ward has shown an increase from 2018 but there was a reduction in numbers for 2017 & 2018 compared to 2016. The wider picture does show a steady increase over the last five years for fly tipping throughout West Lothian.

The Education Officers supported Community Clean Up event with Seafield residents group by supplying equipment and removal of waste. We are already receiving bookings for 2020 from various groups and schools.

Officers continue to attend local meetings and follow up and report back on any issues raised.

D5 Parks and Woodland Enquiries

In total 16 Parks and Woodland related enquiries were received during this reporting period.

	2019/20	2018/19
Tree Branches Overhanging	3	3
Tree Broken/Damaged or Dead	0	1
Tree Dangerous or Unsafe	3	1
Tree Enquiries General	3	4
Tree Felling Work Unauthorised	1	0
Tree Leaves Causing Problems	5	2
Tree Roots Causing Problems	1	0
Total	16	11

Ranger Service Update

No. School groups attending Outdoor Education / Forest School Sessions	1
No. Pupils attending Outdoor Education / Forest School Sessions	15
No. Rights Of Way / Core Path / Patrols carried out (hours)	8
No. Access Enquiries	2
No. Conservation Surveys / Tasks	2
No. Volunteer hours	382

Scrub is being removed from some of the raised baulk areas on Easter Inch Moss in order to allow contractor (Drumclog) on site from the 27th January to install peat dams to the southern areas of the moss to increase wetting of the habitat. Groups from The Conversation Volunteers (TCV), Lothians Conservation Volunteers (LCV), volunteer Ranger Service as well as a group supported by Lowport staff to complete their John Muir Award have been helping to remove the scrub throughout October-December.

Polkemmet Nursery School had their last forest school session with the Ranger Service on 7th November. The group have had a great time learning about a range of topics, we have seen to the group grow in confidence over the week and have also noticeable improvements to their motor skills as well as other capabilities throughout the sessions. They have been using a small area of woodland next to the school and hope to continue to use the area for outdoor learning.

The Ranger Service have been supporting a Riverlife Project in partnership with Friends of Polkemmet and Whitburn & Community Development Trust to carry out willow spilling along sections of the River Almond at Polkemmet where erosion is causing issues to the banking and adjacent footpaths.

Volunteers assisted Luke from Riverlife over three days at the end of November in freezing conditions to complete the work. The willow will now be left to settle until the new year when the spilling will be backfilled with earth and stone (on the footpath sections). This completed the volunteer sessions with the Friends Group for 2019. The Friends of Polkemmet had their first meeting of 2020 to discuss projects and events in mid-January. Dates have been set and will be advertised shortly. The first practical session will be Sunday 23rd February.

Parkrun had a great turn out over the Christmas period and had a very successful Burns Day themed Parkrun. Although running (or walking) every Saturday morning their next 'event' run will be 29th Feb celebrating the Leap Year!

The Ranger Service and Parks and Woodlands Operatives attended the Mountain Bike trail maintenance and volunteer co-ordinator training in November with Clive Forth.

A recce was undertaken along Almond and Breich Water / Killandean for one of several district-wide ranger-led public walks that are being planned for this summer, in order to engage people with the outdoors and celebrate the Year of Coasts & Waters 2020.

Polkemmet's two waymarked routes were patrolled: all paths were litterpicked, including Dumback entrance and boating pond. Fly tipped carpets were reported and removed; drainage trenches were dug in order to deal with two waterlogged stretches of path; encroaching dogwood was cut back from paths; five drains were cleared of leaf litter and sediment to prevent path erosion; other maintenance issues reported internally to Parks & Woodland.

The Ranger Service has been managing two Town Centre Capital Fund (TCF) projects on behalf of Greenrigg Community Council, meeting with contractors, West Lothian Council Open Spaces and liaising with the local school. The first is the installation of a new wiremesh fence at Greenrigg Primary School to create a safe nature study area for the pupils. The second is the upgrading of the western pedestrian entrance to Polkemmet Country Park, with new welcome signage and branding to rename it the 'Greenrigg Entrance'. Projects are expected to be completed in February.

LW77 - a right of way linking Fauldhouse with Heartlands was walked and surveyed, with particular attention given to how the opencast mine restoration has affected the route north of the B7010. Having walked this recently, the Ranger Service regard the route as viable in its current form, as it would offer a precious traffic-free link between the two settlements for walkers and cyclists. We would strongly recommend that LW77 be incorporated into any development on this site (a golf course currently has approval) and we have consulted with the Planning Department to that end.

The Ranger Service also patrolled LW86 and LW87, both of which flagged issues with permanent diversions that have been made to these routes.

Access enquiries came in about a vehicular accident which resulted in the removal of fence along the cycleway at the Greenrigg entrance to Polkemmet – this will be fixed as part of the TCF project.

A query about the extension of a distillery at Cousland was received in relation to Route 75, this was directed to Planning in the first instance.

D6 Open Space and Cemeteries

Polkemmet Road Play Area, Greenrigg (Greenrigg Primary School). Works to extend the play area to include additional swings (x4) are now complete. These works were funded by the Town Centre Fund.

Redhouse Place Green Play Area, Blackburn. The community have been successful in an application to the Town Centre Fund. The play area will be extended to include an inclusive swing in Spring/Summer 2020.

Redmill Park Play Area, East Whitburn. The community have been successful in an application to the Town Centre Fund. The play area will be extended to include additional inclusive play equipment. These works will include resurfacing the main access road from Main Street/A705. Access works have been programmed for February 2020; additional inclusive play equipment will be installed in spring/summer 2020.

Seafield Green Play Area, Seafield. The community have been successful in an application to the Town Centre Fund. The play area will be extended to include additional play equipment in 2020.

Open Space Enquiries

There were three Open Space enquiries for this reporting period in 2019/20.

	2019/20	2018/19
Childrens Play Enquiries	2	0
Safety Issues In Play Areas	1	0
Total	3	0

Cemeteries Routine Works

Whitburn Cemeteries

Routine grass cutting and weed control tasks have been completed. Winter maintenance works and lair reinstatement and burial duties are ongoing across the cemetery estates.

Cemeteries Enquiries

There were 13 Cemeteries enquiries for this reporting period in 2019/20.

	2019/20	2018/19
Bench Donations	1	0
Cemeteries General Enquiries	6	8
Lair Enquiries	4	2
Lair Sunken or Uneven	2	0
Total	13	10

E. CONCLUSION

The Garden Maintenance Scheme will start on the 6th April this year

The Cleaner Communities Environmental team have dealt with various environmental enquiries relating to enforcement, education and engagement during the period.

The Open Space Capital Programme is progressing as scheduled.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

Open Space Strategy

Capital Programme

Appendices/Attachments:

Contact Persons: Eirwen Hopwood, Parks and Woodland Manager, 01506 284500

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2 March 2020