



ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT & SCRUTINY PANEL

THE 'SHALE TRAIL' ACROSS WEST LOTHIAN

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to advise the panel of the new 16-mile walking and cycling 'Shale Trail' route that crosses West Lothian from West Calder to Winchburgh, via Livingston and Broxburn.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the panel notes and considers the following recommendation which is intended to be submitted to a future Council Executive for approval:

1. notes the details of the new 'Shale Trail' across West Lothian and offers any further comments on the initiative.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; making best use of our resources; and working in partnership.
II	Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	Policy ENV 8 in the adopted West Lothian Local Development Plan (2018) supports development of a green network in West Lothian, while Policy TRAN 3 supports Core Paths and Active Travel. There are no equality, health or risk assessment issues, or SEA issues.
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None.
IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None.
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Outcome 8 - 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)	None. The cost of establishing the Shale Trail has come from external grants.

VII	Consideration at PDSP	Not considered previously by the PDSP.
VIII	Other consultations	NETs & Land Services (Greenspace), Almond Valley Heritage Trust, West Calder & Harburn Community Development Trust (CDT), Winchburgh CDT and Broxburn CDT.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D1 Background

The Shale Trail is a proposed new 16-mile waymarked trail across West Lothian linking sites, features and communities relating to the area's rich oil shale heritage. The trail largely follows existing paths, stretching from West Calder in the south-west to Winchburgh in the north-east, via Livingston (Almond Valley Heritage Centre that hosts the Scottish Oil Shale Museum) & Broxburn (on the Union Canal).

As well as creating and improving opportunities for informal recreational access, the Shale Trail will inspire and enable people of all ages and abilities to explore and learn about how the development of the shale industry in West Lothian has shaped the local landscape, economy, wildlife and culture. The Shale Trail is scheduled to open in late Autumn 2020. (see Appendix 1 for map of the route).

D2 Implementation of the Shale Trail

Lothian & Fife Green Network Partnership (L&FGNP), of which West Lothian Council is a member, initially identified the concept for the Shale Trail and secured £310,000 (i.e. £100k from the Heritage Lottery Fund and £200k from LEADER along with £10k from WLC to act as leverage for grants) in spring 2019 to develop a walking and cycling route across West Lothian from West Calder to Winchburgh. LEADER is a European rural development fund, part of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and delivered in Scotland through the Scottish Rural Development Programme.

As L&FGNP went into abeyance shortly afterwards due to funding issues, Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust (E&LGT) which works on environmental projects across the Lothians stepped in and hosted a Shale Trail Project Manager for 18 months to deliver the scheme and specify and oversee a contract to undertake path improvements along the various rights of way and core paths that form the route.

A Steering Group was formed that included Almond Valley Heritage Trust and several community development trusts along the route involving West Calder & Harburn, Broxburn and Winchburgh alongside council officer input from Planning & NETs & Land Services.

D3 Heritage Interpretation

Heritage consultants were also appointed to develop an associated Shale Trail web site with a major focus on children, involving 150 school pupils from five West Lothian primary schools along the route over a seven-month period. The pupils produced relevant video material for the website and a related "Kids Shale Trail".

The web site is part of the interpretation of oil shale in West Lothian and will be linked to and maintained in the future by the Scottish Oil Shale Museum based at Almond Valley Heritage Centre, Livingston which is on the Shale Trail route.

A public meeting was held in October 2019 to explore themes and content for the web site, as well as the style and form of the Shale Trail logo that has been used in way-marking the trail.

D4 Greening the Shale Trail

Planning Services provided a brief for the related "*Greening the Shale Trail*" consultants study (undertaken by Mark Hamilton Landscape Studies), which was completed in March 2020. This identified and costed around 100 environmental actions straddling the route that could be carried out by either contractors, or volunteers from surrounding communities.

The budget for these works will be raised from external grant funding sources and the council's Countryside Services will organise the volunteer activity.

As part of the legacy required by the Heritage Lottery Fund and LEADER grant an annual forum meeting will be established to continue to allow parties to work together and explore other aspects of West Lothian oil shale heritage.

A potential second phase of the Shale Trail could involve a connection south westwards from West Calder to Tarbrax in South Lanarkshire with its well-preserved shale village and associated bing. This new section of the Trail could involve the Cobbinshaw to Woolfords route recently approved by the council using Section 75 funds from lowland crofting schemes and is to be implemented by the Central Scotland Green Network Trust.

E. CONCLUSION

West Lothian is unique in its shale mining heritage. Following a major grant to Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust in 2019, a 16-mile walking and cycling shale trail route across West Lothian from West Calder to Winchburgh, via the Almond Valley Heritage Centre in Livingston and Drumshoreland and Broxburn, has been developed. A Project Officer was appointed and physical works and signage have been carried out on the ground.

The Shale Trail Project has brought together various resources to create an active travel route across West Lothian that can be undertaken in one day, or as a series of shorter loops.

Alongside the waymarked and physically improved route, is a large interactive website with a vast array of further geodiversity subjects related to the unique story of oil shale in West Lothian which allows communities and visitors to explore this heritage issue in greater detail.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None

Appendices / Attachments: one - Appendix 1: Map of Shale Trail route.

Contact Person: Chris Alcorn, Principal Planner, Development Planning: 01506 - 282428.

Email: chris.alcorn@westlothian.gov.uk

Craig McCorriston
Head of Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration

15 September 2020

