

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT & SCRUTINY PANEL

WEST LOTHIAN STATUTORY RETURN TO SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT ON PUBLIC BODY REPORTING ON BIODIVERSITY DUTY: 2018 - 2020

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to make the panel aware of the requirement for public body reporting to the Scottish Government on West Lothian Council's Biodiversity Duty for the three year period between 2018 – 2020.

B. RECOMMENDATION

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

1. notes the contents of the general review of West Lothian's commitment to biodiversity (as detailed in Appendix 1);
2. agrees to forward the report to the Scottish Government as evidence that the council, as a public body, has met its reporting duty on biodiversity over the 3 year period (2018 to 2020); and
3. agrees to publicise the report on the council's website as advised by the Scottish Government.

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)	<p>The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act (2004) requires all public bodies in Scotland to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities.</p> <p>The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act (2011) requires public bodies in Scotland to provide a publicly available report, every three years, on the actions which they have taken to meet this biodiversity duty.</p> <p>The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 - places a duty on all public bodies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to the effects</p>

of climate change by ensuring resilience to future climate conditions and act in a way considered most sustainable.

Policies ENV1 – ENV5 of the West Lothian Local Development Plan support biodiversity, nature conservation and enhancement.

Actions will be screened as they are progressed to determine the need for environment, equality, health or risk assessments. There are no 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	SOA: 4 We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities. SOA: 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 Wildlife Information Centre (TWIC) Service Level Agreement with Planning Services is met from within existing revenue budgets.
VII	Consideration at PDSP	The PDSP considered a second report on the WLC Biodiversity Duty for the previous 3 year period (2015 – 2017) on 7 February 2018.
VIII	Other consultations	NETs & Land Services, Countryside Services (Parks and Woodland), Flood Risk Management Unit.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D1 Introduction

Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act (2004), all public bodies in Scotland are required to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their duties. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act (2011) requires public bodies in Scotland to provide a publicly available report, every three years, on the actions which they have taken to meet this biodiversity duty.

While the first West Lothian report covered the period 2011 - 2014 and the second covered 2015 - 2017, this third report relates to 2018 - 2020. The initial Scottish Biodiversity Strategy from 2004 was updated in June 2013 with the '*2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity*'. It reflected international commitments and the European Union's '*Biodiversity Strategy for 2020*'.

Recently in December 2020, the Scottish Government has published the '*Scottish Biodiversity Strategy post-2020: statement of intent*' which sets the direction for a new biodiversity strategy which will respond to the increased urgency for action to tackle the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change and committing to increasing protected areas for nature to at least 30% of terrestrial Scotland by 2030. It also commits, via the forthcoming National Planning Framework 4, to develop proposals which will deliver positive effects for biodiversity through development.

The third West Lothian Biodiversity Duty Report (see Appendix 1) sets out actions taken by the council for the period 2018 - 2020. The Appendix demonstrates the great variety and range of biodiversity related work being carried out in West Lothian.

D2 New layout of Biodiversity Duty report to Scottish Government

The Scottish Government, advised by NatureScot (formerly Scottish Natural Heritage) have for this round of biodiversity reporting produced a new template to create some uniformity among the various returns. The council falls under Template 1 for public bodies and the sections cover:

- a) Actions to protect biodiversity and connect people with nature;
- b) 'Mainstreaming' – examples of how biodiversity has been incorporated into corporate policy, plans and projects;
- c) Nature-Based Solutions, Climate Change and Biodiversity;
- d) Public Engagement and Workforce Development; and
- e) Research and Monitoring.

The main West Lothian biodiversity activities under these headings are set out below.

D3 Section 2: Actions to protect biodiversity and connect people with nature

There are numerous biodiversity projects that have occurred in West Lothian over the last three years. Several examples include:

- Working in partnership with Buglife on West Lothian 'B-Lines' to increase the amount of wildflower meadow and over the 2-year project, creating 14 meadows, over 8 urban parks and 1 cemetery.
- Livingston Blue / Green Network (BGN) masterplan prepared and two related 'Woodlands in and Around Towns' (WIAT) management plans were drafted, costed and submitted to Scottish Forestry.
- The WLC Ranger Service have engaged with over 2,740 school pupils between 2018 and 2020 in outdoor environmental education activities and 1,760 volunteers.
- 6 meadows planted in country parks, 8 rural road verges surveyed and Operational Services cutting regime amended for pollinating wildflowers.

D4 Section 3: Mainstreaming

- The WLC Ranger Service run a 'Forest Schools' programme which not only helps connect pupils with their local environment, but also helps to mainstream environmental outdoor learning in West Lothian schools.
- Work with the former Central Scotland Green Network Trust (CSGNT) – now Green Action Trust (GAT) – on a range of related open space capital projects e.g.; at Balbardie Park, Bathgate and Sommers Park, Mid Calder.

- Adoption of the West Lothian Local Development Plan in September 2018 with numerous environmental planning policies and supporting Planning Guidance related to 'Development Management & Wildlife' and 'Soils on Development Sites'.
- Adoption of an 'Ecosystems approach to land management' by NETs, Land and Countryside Services.

D5 Section 4: Nature-Based Solutions, Climate Change and Biodiversity

- Multi-partner projects facilitating the passage of fish at physical barriers across the River Almond in the Kirkton, Craigshill and Howden areas of Livingston enhancing the biodiversity of the river and the species.
- Continuation of developing a multiple-benefits project to restore the Bathgate Water and Boghead Burns in Bathgate.
- Projects to maintain and enhance two peatland areas in West Lothian at Easter Inch Moss and Black Moss, Armadale and to continue with regular monitoring and volunteer sessions, including scrub and sapling removal and peat dam creation. This has included working with other organisations including NatureScot, Oatridge College, Lothian Conservation Volunteers, The Conservation Volunteers and Butterfly Conservation 'Bog Squad'.

D6 Section 5: Public Engagement and Workforce Development –

- The WLC Ranger Service run a number of environmental based events through the year and have engaged with over 3,590 people between 2018 - 20.
- Four annual environmental fairs, 'Wild Wednesdays', organised by the Ranger Service, ran across West Lothian during the summer holidays, bringing many organisations together to engage with local families in their local area. This involves partnership working with other organisations such as RSPB, Buglife, Forth Rivers Trust and The Dogs Trust.
- Parks & Woodland run a Volunteer Ranger Service programme giving the opportunity for college students and other interested individuals to get a more in-depth view of what it is like to be a Countryside Ranger, whilst gaining valuable practical experience.

D7 Section 6: Research and Monitoring -

- The council has continued to support work by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH) to sample water issuing into Linlithgow Loch from surrounding land, the results of which will lead to publication of a 'Nutrient Apportionment Study' in 2021. The Loch Habitat Management Plan was reviewed and updated in 2020.
- The Ranger Service carries out a number of annual surveys throughout the 3 country parks, as well as other public landholdings. These include grassland surveys, fen vegetation surveys at Calderwood; bat box occupancy checks, various badger sett surveys and other ad-hoc surveys such as peat depth, hornet and otter surveys.
- WLC continues to have a 3 year Service Level Agreement with The Wildlife Information Service (TWIC) who review the Development Management Weekly List of planning applications for protected species and related issues as well as input from NETs & Land Services and the Parks & Woodland Team and the Rangers Services on biodiversity issues.

E. CONCLUSION

The Biodiversity Duty report sets out in detail the actions, activities and outcomes with respect to the council's statutory duty to further the conservation of biodiversity. It sets out a range of positive interventions to both protect and enhance the varied biodiversity of West Lothian over the 2018 - 20 period that, despite challenges to council's capital and revenue budgets, as well as staff resources, are anticipated to be continued.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

West Lothian Local Development Plan (2018)

Scottish Government - Scottish Biodiversity Strategy post-2020: statement of intent:
<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2020/12/scottish-biodiversity-strategy-post-2020-statement-intent2/documents/scottish-biodiversity-strategy-post-2020-statement-intent/scottish-biodiversity-strategy-post-2020-statement-intent/govscot%3Adocument/scottish-biodiversity-strategy-post-2020-statement-intent.pdf>

Ecosystem Approach to land management, as adopted by NETs, Land and Countryside Services – January 2019
<https://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/viewDoc.asp?c=e%97%9Dg%96i%7E%8E>

Appendices/Attachments: One – Third West Lothian report on the Scottish Biodiversity Duty (2018-20)

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Appendix 1

West Lothian Council: Biodiversity Duty Report (2018 – 2020) - return to Scottish Government

(Level 1 template)

Section 2: Actions to protect biodiversity and connect people with nature (by WLC Service)	West Lothian Council Examples
NETs, Land & Countryside Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'West Lothian B-Lines', a partnership project with Buglife secured £40,600 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for creating wildflower meadows throughout West Lothian from 2019 to 2021. £13k match funding was contributed by WLC. To date, this has enabled: the creation of 14 meadows over 8 urban parks and 1 cemetery; the production of a handout on meadow creation and management for WLC Grounds Maintenance and Cemeteries staff; 1 wildflower meadow interpretation board; 10 pollinator ID/education workshops; 4 information events; 6 meadow creation events and 10 flora / fauna meadow surveys. The project is due to end in May 2021. • The West Lothian Food Growing Strategy has been drafted and is due to be ratified by the Council in 2021. A key element of this strategy is to increase biodiversity on council land through community growing initiatives. • Livingston North Blue / Green Network (BGN) – a public consultation was undertaken in 2018 and the masterplan finalised. The masterplan is being used to schedule projects as funding becomes available for woodland management and water quality works, with planned links to NHS Lothian's "Greenspace and Health Strategic Framework" and Community Regeneration aims. • Dedridge Ecology and Environment Project (DEEP) in Livingston was wound-up after over 10-years of sustained community involvement improving the environment of the Dedridge Burn corridor in 2017, but their legacy continues.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Conservation Trust's (TCV) 'School Green Gym' has been working in several communities, enabling schools to get out and learn in greenspaces in West Lothian, including the production of activity cards to help teachers to use the outdoors for teaching in their own lesson time.
Parks & Woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the Livingston BGN project above, two 'Woodlands in and Around Towns' (WIAT) management plans were drafted and costed. These have been submitted to Scottish Forestry and once some amendments have been made, await final approval. Then further grant applications towards implementing woodland and access management works will be made (this is currently capped at £100k per landowner, rather than based on the benefits provided as used to be the case). • A start has been made on preparing a UK Forestry Standard compliant Long-term Forest Plan (LFP) for WLC's woods in Livingston in parallel with a similar plan for Woodland Trust Scotland's woods in and around the town. • Felling, thinning and replanting continue in line with the LFP for Beecraigs including the development of 'Continuous Cover Forestry' in some areas. Forest management has continued to be certificated under the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme. • A WIAT woodland and access management plan was approved for Almondell by Scottish Forestry and works are underway. • The Agri-environment scheme on the Beecraigs Animal Attraction has continued with hedge maintenance and seasonal grazing of the wildflower seeded field adjacent to the new Hillhouse car park. This has a path along one side and so the Highland cattle grazing this area can be viewed by the public. • Environmental education programmes and activities have been undertaken to engage people of all ages on topics such as: natural history, climate change, local wildlife & habitats and the environment around them. The WLC Ranger Service have engaged with over 2,740 pupils between 2018 and 2020 in outdoor environmental education activities. • A number of WLC Parks & Woodland sites are now being managed as wildflower meadows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Balvormie Meadow, Beecraigs which continues to be grazed; ○ along with areas on the Beecraigs Caravan Site;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Almondell Meadow and Butterfly Bank; ○ Polkemmet Meadow, ○ Little Boghead, Bathgate grassland and ○ Skolie Burn, Addiewell SSSI. <p>As a result, Parks & Woodland staff are already starting to see an increase in flowering species and decrease in less desirable rank species. Management is either through conservation grazing, or cut and lift methods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Successful grant applications have been made to the former Scottish Natural Heritage (now Nature Scot) Peatland Restoration Programme and works were carried out via contractors and volunteers on Easter Inch Moss by Blackburn (c£75k) and Black Moss (c£30k) on the west side of Armadale. ● The Ranger Service manage a number of conservation-based projects with the help of volunteers including Friends of Parks groups, corporate volunteers or other external groups such as Butterfly Conservation, Buglife, Forth River Trust, Lothian Conservation Volunteers (LCV) and The Conservation Volunteers (TCV). <p>Activities over the period between 2018-20 have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pond management at Almondell wildlife pond, Calderwood Great Crested Newt ponds, Little Boghead Nature Park, Bathgate and Polkemmet wildlife pond; ○ Fen management at Calderwood, including bracken whipping; ○ Invasive species control at Little Boghead and Polkemmet Country Park; ○ Grassland scything at Almondell & Calderwood; ○ Woodland management including maintenance of orchard areas and tree planting at Almondell, Little Boghead, Beecraigs, Polkemmet and Almond Park, Livingston; ○ Rhododendron control at Almondell and Polkemmet; ○ Scrub clearance at Easter Inch Moss, Blackburn; ○ Meadow creation at Beecraigs Country Park; ○ The Ranger Service have worked with over 1,760 volunteers during 2018-2020. These volunteers have committed over 5,500 work hours during this period; and ○ Grassland management at Skolie Burn SSSI, Addiewell.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ranger Service have also worked with other organisations to help with the protection and enhancement of wildlife within West Lothian, including actively being involved in the Mud Snails Project in 2018/19 and also the 'B lines' project with Buglife Scotland.
Planning Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moves to secure a specialist consultant to jointly review and update the out-of-date WL' Local Biodiversity Action Plan' (2009) and undertake a Natural Capital audit of all WLC landholdings and form a small internal steering group of various Services involved to advance the project. • Organised 8 rural verges, previously protected for wild flowers, survey in Autumn 2019 by Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) and WLC Operational Services amended their cutting regime to accord with revenue budget reductions. SWT been asked to 'signpost' these rural verges via volunteers. • Harperigg Reservoir Local Nature Reserve - Local Management Group meets bi-annually and chaired by WLC Planning Services and administered by City of Edinburgh Council Pentland Hills Regional Park staff and looks at various actions, including work on the adjacent wildlife refuge and biodiversity related work in and around the reservoir, among other work. • Continuing support for the Easter Inch Moss & Seafield Law Local Nature Reserve Management Group, albeit the group wound-up in November 2019 due to lack of local interest. Parks & Woodland continue with works in and around the Moss to accord with the related Habitat Management Plan (2011 – 2021) that has been revised.
Section 3: Mainstreaming (by WLC Service)	West Lothian Council Examples
NETs, Land & Countryside Team Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Lothian Open Space Strategy (2015) reviewed as the 'Open Space Plan' and adopted in December 2020. • The WLC Open Space Capital programme continues to improve access to greenspaces across West Lothian as well as improving biodiversity, such as planting trees in parks, shelterbelt thinning, meadow creation, relaxed grass cutting, bulb planting and rain garden creation. • An "Adopting an Ecosystems Approach to Land Management" report was prepared by NETs & Land Services and presented to the council's Environment Panel in January 2019 to raise awareness of

	<p>members about the principles behind their new approach to land management. This recognises previously overlooked, multiple benefits of the natural environment. Adopting an 'ecosystems approach' in West Lothian, offers a flexible, sustainable way forward which enables the council to fulfil statutory duties of enhancing biodiversity, building resilience to climate change and involving communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Space Audits have been adapted to include categories on biodiversity and ecosystem services. The audits assess and score the quality of parks and open spaces, which subsequently inform capital investment.
Parks & Woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranger Service run 'Forest Schools' programmes which not only help connect pupils with their local environment, but also help to mainstream environmental outdoor learning in West Lothian schools by enabling and empowering staff to make environmental education a regular part of their pupils learning. • Work with the former Central Scotland Green Network Trust (CSGNT) – now Green Action Trust (GAT) – on a range of related open space improvement capital projects e.g.; at Balbardie Park Bathgate, Sommers Park, Mid Calder.
Planning Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of the West Lothian Local Development Plan in September 2018 with numerous environmental planning policies (see Section 5, below, for details). • Preparation, consultation and adoption of revised Planning Guidance on 'Planning for Nature - Development Management and Wildlife' (April 2020). • Interim review of West Lothian Geodiversity Action Plan 2017-22 at mid-point in September 2020. Information on all 51 West Lothian Geodiversity Sites were placed on the council's planning web site. • Preparation and consultation of Planning Guidance on 'Management of Soils on Development Sites' (2020) for consideration for adoption as planning policy in 2021. • Contribution to the review of the Pentland Hills Regional Park 10 year Strategic Management Plan (2019-29).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair the annual West Lothian Local Biodiversity Sites (LBS) Steering Group, administered via The Wildlife Information Centre (TWIC) under a Service Level Agreement with the council, that involves Scottish Wildlife Trust and local volunteer experts in a range of species along with representation from WLC Parks & Woodland, that fund the required ecological surveys, to allow consideration of potential LBS across West Lothian.
Section 4: Nature-Based Solutions, Climate Change & Biodiversity (by WLC Service)	West Lothian Council Examples
Roads & Transportation Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-partner projects facilitating the passage of fish at physical barriers across the River Almond in the Kirkton, Craigshill and Howden areas of Livingston enhancing the biodiversity of the river and the species that depend on it. Work is also in preparation for replacement of the Harwood Water falls in Polbeth with a fish passage as part of the wider River Almond scheme. Partnership work has continued to develop a multiple-benefits project to restore the Bathgate Water and Boghead Burns in Bathgate, enhance green space and connect people with nature in one of Scotland's most deprived communities. In a partnership with Scottish Water and SEPA, the Council has been working on the Surface Water Action Plan to help improve the quality of surface run-off from its premises at Whitehill Industrial Estate, Bathgate reducing the impact of pollution on the Bog Burn in Bathgate. Work has continued to provide advice to Planning Services (Development Management as well as Development Planning & Environment) on issues of flood risk, sustainable drainage, pollution prevention and the water environment to help ensure that development delivers benefits and that the risk it presents to the built and natural environment is mitigated.
NETs & Land Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open Space Officers assess relevant planning applications and advise Planning Services on Open Space related issues.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NETs have generally reviewed their operations to see if they can become more biodiversity friendly e.g.; in relation to use of herbicides (See also Section 3 above on NETs “Adopting an Ecosystems Approach to Land Management”). • A ‘West Lothian Open Spaces Asset Management Plan’ was prepared and considered by the Council’s Environment PDSP in January 2019 that sets out the council’s approach for the management of open space assets effectively and efficiently for a 10 year period to 2027/28.
Parks & Woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects to maintain and enhance two peatland areas in West Lothian, Easter Inch Moss between Blackburn and Seafield and Black Moss at Armadale, continue with regular monitoring and volunteer sessions, including scrub and sapling removal and peat dam creation. This has included working with other organisations including NatureScot, Oatridge College, Lothian Conservation Volunteers , The Conservation Volunteers and Butterfly Conservation ‘Bog Squad’. These sites are particularly important in terms of CO² sequestration. • A programme of management work is regularly carried out by staff and volunteers at Calderwood SSSI between Mid Calder and Livingston which is recognised for its woodland and fen areas and associated flora and fauna and Skolie Burn SSSI in Addiewell, which is recognised for its rich neutral grassland and geology. • The Ranger Service have carried out a number of projects with Forth River Trust, including a series of Willow Spilling sessions at Almondell & Calderwood Country Park and Polkemmet Country Park to help reduce river breaches and erosion on the banks of the River Almond which flows through both these Parks and has suffered damage due to flash flooding, historic bank modification and erosion from people and dogs accessing the river. • WLC Ranger Service scrutinises relevant planning applications from the Weekly List and submits consultation responses on biodiversity impacts / mitigation works to Planning Services.
Planning Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Lothian “<i>Adaptation Action Plan</i>” following internal workshops with 10 Service areas in 2017, was drafted in 2018 & updated 2019. • Linlithgow Loch Management Plan reviewed and reported to committee (in April 2018 and again in September 2019) and 18 months survey of loch water samples were carried over 2018/19 to allow

	a Nutrient Apportionment Survey Report to be produced (due in Summer 2021) with recommendations for the long term treatment of the Loch to reduce the annual algal blooms.
Section 5: Public Engagement and Workforce Development (by WLC Service)	West Lothian Council Examples
NETs & Land Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerous community groups are supported across West Lothian by the WLC NETs & Countryside Section. Internal workforce training has taken place with Operational Services - NETs operatives in relation to wildflower meadow management and a 'Toolbox Talk' leaflet produced for staff that has been shared with NatureScot as they were impressed by the resource.
Parks & Woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of environmental based events organised by the Rangers ran throughout the year engaged with over 3,590 people between 2018 and 2020. Four annual environmental fairs '<i>Wild Wednesdays</i>' were held across West Lothian during the summer holidays, bringing many organisations together to engage with local families in their local area. This involves partnership working with other organisations such as RSPB, Buglife, Forth Rivers Trust and The Dogs Trust. The Parks & Woodland team and the Ranger Service offer regular placements to those wanting to find out more about working in the environmental sector and have worked alongside pupils for over 226 work hours. The Ranger Service run a Volunteer Ranger Service programme giving the opportunity for college students and other interested individuals to get a more in-depth view of what it is like to be a Countryside Ranger, whilst gaining valuable practical experience. Parks & Woodland volunteers and the Ranger Service attended 'Meadow workshops', wildlife monitoring training, invasive species workshop and Biosecurity Training to develop knowledge and understanding in both staff and our volunteers.

Planning Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of “<i>West Lothian Local Development Plan</i>” in September 2018 that contains various planning policies related to biodiversity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy ENV 4: Loss of prime agricultural land; - Policy ENV 5: Soil Sustainability Plans; - Policy ENV 6: Peatlands and carbon rich soils; - Policy ENV 8: Green network; - Policy ENV 9: Woodland Forestry and hedgerows; - Policy ENV10: Protection of urban woodland; - Policy ENV11: Protection of the water environment / coastline and riparian corridors; - Policy ENV14: Pentland Hills regional park – further protections; - Policy ENV15: Community Growing and allotments; - Policy ENV16: Temporary greening of Development sites; - Policy ENV17: Protection of international nature conservation sites; - Policy ENV18: Protection of National Nature conservation sites; - Policy ENV19: Protection of Local Biodiversity and Local geodiversity sites; - Policy ENV20: Species protection and enhancement; and - Policy ENV21: Protection of formal and informal open space. • Planning Guidance on “<i>Planning for Nature - Development Management and Wildlife</i>” was reviewed, updated, underwent public consultation and approved in Spring 2020. • Planning Guidance Note on “<i>Management of Soils on Development Sites</i>” was produced in Autumn 2020 with input from NatureScot Soil Scientist and underwent consultation. It is the intention to adopt the guidance in Spring 2021 and to issue it with all relevant greenfield planning permissions to developers and site agents on how they undertake site soil stripping and form and treat their soil dumps. It is suitable for adaptation by other Scottish local planning authorities. • Planning Guidance on “Green Networks” (including Local Biodiversity Sites & Geodiversity sites) under review in 2020/21 as part of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan update and Natural Capital audit of WLC landholdings.
Section 6: Research and Monitoring (by WLC Service)	West Lothian Council Examples

Roads & Transportation Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">WLC have continued to support work by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH) to sample water issuing into Linlithgow Loch from surrounding land the results of which will lead to publication of a ‘Nutrient Apportionment Study’ in 2021. The purpose of the study is to prioritise investment to reduce the impact of nutrient on water quality in the loch.																
Parks & Woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Ranger Service carries out a number of annual surveys including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">NVC and grassland surveys at Balvormie Meadow (Beecraigs), Polkemmet Meadow, Little Boghead Meadow (Bathgate) and as of 2020, Skolie Burn SSSI, Addiewell;Greater Butterfly Orchid Survey on the Beecraigs meadow;Fen vegetation surveys at Calderwood and waterway surveys at Almondell;Bat box occupancy checks at all three Country Parks;Hibernacula surveys at Beecraigs with the Lothians Bat Group;Badger sett surveys at Beecraigs, Almondell, Calderwood, Ravenscraig, Almond Park, Witchcraig and Seafeld Law; andAd-hoc surveys such as peat depth survey, hornet survey and otter surveys have also been carried out in recent years.Data collected shared via i-record which feeds into various National and local record data including those maintained by UKCEH, TWIC and BNB organisations.																
Planning Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">WLC continue to have a 3 year Service Level Agreement with The Wildlife Information Service (TWIC) who review the Development Management Weekly List of planning applications for protected species and related issues:<table><tr><th>Year</th><th>TWIC screened planning applications</th><th>Potential biodiversity constraint identified</th><th>Potential biodiversity constraint identified</th></tr><tr><td>2017/18</td><td>610</td><td>232</td><td>38.0%</td></tr><tr><td>2018/19</td><td>909</td><td>333</td><td>36.6%</td></tr><tr><td>2019/20</td><td>1163</td><td>482</td><td>41.4%</td></tr></table>	Year	TWIC screened planning applications	Potential biodiversity constraint identified	Potential biodiversity constraint identified	2017/18	610	232	38.0%	2018/19	909	333	36.6%	2019/20	1163	482	41.4%
Year	TWIC screened planning applications	Potential biodiversity constraint identified	Potential biodiversity constraint identified														
2017/18	610	232	38.0%														
2018/19	909	333	36.6%														
2019/20	1163	482	41.4%														

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TWIC administer and provide review data on potential Local Biodiversity Sites (pLBS) across West Lothian as part of the Local Development Plan (LDP) process. The group of volunteer local natural heritage and species experts, including Scottish Wildlife Trust and WLC Parks & Woodland (who fund the surveys), meet annually. Candidate LBS, that pass the assessment, are for inclusion in future LDP 2 due 2023 / 24 within the next 3 year biodiversity reporting round.
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