

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



EAST LIVINGSTON AND EAST CALDER 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 NET's Land & Countryside Services teams for the period 1 February 2021 to 30 April 2021.

B. RECOMMENDATION

The Local Area Committee is asked to:

1. Note the work carried out by the service within the local area.
2. Advise on 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	Relates to items 9 – We live our lives free from crime, disorder and danger & 12 – We value and enjoy our built environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations
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

The report covers the activity for the period 1 February 2021 to 30 April 2021.

D2 Grounds Maintenance Routine Works

Open space grass cutting in the ward started on Tuesday 6 April and is presently on the third cycle.

Due to the weather our routine spraying has been put back to mid-May - four weeks behind.

With the schools requesting sports and athletic marking for their school curriculum, along with the resumption of football matches, we are struggling to keep with demand for line marking.

Fly tipping and the lifting of refuse sack generated by West Lothian Litter pickers are also putting pressure on our NETs Teams.

Grounds Maintenance Enquiries

In total 41 grounds maintenance related enquiries were received and dealt with during this reporting period in 2021.

	2021	2020
Ball Game Enquiries	2	1
Bonfire Enquiries	1	0
Burns or Watercourses	0	2
Complaint Grounds Maintenance	4	0
Drainage Flooding Grass Areas	1	1
Enforcement Officer Enquiries	1	2
Fencing Enquiries	2	2
GalaDay Public Event Enquiries	0	1
Grass Area Damaged	0	1
Grass Cutting Enquiries	3	1
Grass Highway Verges	1	0
Ground Ownership Enquiries	3	0
Grounds Property Vandalised	6	2
Hedge Cutting Enquiries	2	2
Public Park Enquiries	8	1
Shrub Bed Enquiries	2	1
Shrub Bed Overhanging Path	5	3
Total	41	20

D3 Garden Maintenance Routine Works

The Garden Maintenance Scheme started on the 6 April, and is presently on the third cycle.

Garden Maintenance Enquiries

In total there were 16 garden maintenance related enquiries received and dealt with during this reporting period in 2021.

	2021	2020
Garden Maintenance General Enquiries	10	2
Garden Maintenance Grass Not Cut	3	0
Garden Maintenance Hedge Cutting	1	0
Garden Maintenance No Longer Required	1	0
Garden Maintenance Standard of Cut	1	0
Total	16	2

D4 Cleaner Communities Routine Works

The Street Cleansing Teams have been reduced in size to comply with social distancing guidelines over the period 1 February – 30 April.

During this period staff have continued to empty street litter and dog waste bins on a regular basis and carry out routine works in the area. Also, litter picking footpaths/ open spaces and road verges and dealing with enquiries as they arise. The street orderly has also continued with their duties over the period clearing litter and emptying litter bins in and around the town centre.

The compact mechanical street sweeper has continued to sweep footpaths and kerb edges and we have two HGV sweepers that are used to clean roads and channels during this time.

Resources have been redirected when required during this period to deal with leaf fall. We continue to have lots of volunteer's litter picking in the Ward and we have assisted with the uplift of bags and debris that have been collected.

Due to Covid-19 and Street Cleansing Staff assisting other Council Services during the pandemic, a tender has been awarded for a contractor to carry out road sweeping of A, B & C roads. This work was completed on 28 March 2021.

Cleaner Communities Enquiries

In total 385 cleaner communities related enquiries were received and dealt with during this reporting period in 2021.

	2021	2020
Complaint Street Cleansing	2	2
Dead Animals	7	3
Dog Bin Overflowing	1	5
Dog Bin New Request for Bin	5	1
Dog Fouled Grass Open Space	2	3
Dog Fouled Kids Play Area	1	0
Dog Fouling on Paths Roads	29	11
Dog No Fouling Sign Request	0	1
Fly Posting	2	0
Fly Tipping Dumping	229	105
Glass on Paths or Open Spaces	3	0
Graffiti Non-Offensive	1	0
Graffiti Racist or Offensive	3	1
Litter Bin Burnt Damaged	1	0
Litter Bin New Request for Bin	4	1
Litter Bin Overflowing	3	1
Litter General Enquiries	10	6
Litter in Grass Open Space	0	1
Litter Paths Roads Verges	40	21
Street Sweeping Enquiries	11	10
Trolleys Abandoned/Dumped	10	2
Trolleys Dumped in Livingston	1	0
Vehicle Abandoned	20	19
Total	385	193

Fly Tipping Enquiries (January-December)

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Illegal Fly Tipping/Dumping	448	364	352	254	234

Enforcement Community Action

The Education, Engagement and Enforcement team have continued to deal with enquiries as they are logged following COVID-19 guidance.

Officers continue to deal with enquiries relating to fly tipping, littering, dog fouling, abandoned vehicles and general enquiries. There have been 229 enquiries in relation to fly tipping for the period compared to 105 for the same period in 2020.

In dealing with abandoned vehicles, Officers have gained compliance from vehicle owners with said vehicles getting removed from the streets and where appropriate, requests have been sent to WLC contractors for removal.

Throughout West Lothian, Officers continue to engage with volunteering groups, attend regeneration group meetings and render the necessary assistance needed to encourage the exercise they currently perform.

There has been an increase in the amount of equipment supplied to facilitate litter picking volunteers, which has increased in line with activity.

There was one Fixed Penalty Notice issued in Ward 5 for the period of 1 February 2021 – 30 April 2021. For the same period in 2020 there was no Fixed Penalty Notice issued within the Ward.

Costs for fly tipping for the period 1 February 2021 – 30 April 2021

Fly tipping is covered by the NETs teams who also carry out other non-routine works for Grounds. We are unable to split costs over specific ward areas or from the other works they carry out, but can give the yearly cost for the NETs teams with an estimate of their time spent on fly tipping which we currently estimate as 80% of their time.

For 2020 the estimate was 70% of their time.

Weights for fly tipping brought into the transfer station are provided as a weekly total Monday – Sunday.

Fly tipping costs:

1 February 2021 – 30 April 2021	105.46 tonnes
Cost of disposal including costs for NETs team/vehicles	£69,494.95
Contractor removal of fly tipping	£0.00
Removal of asbestos	£0.00
TOTAL	£69,494.95

The number of enquiries received between 1 February 2021 – 30 April 2021 for the Ward was 229 out of 881 enquiries for the whole of West Lothian equating to 26.0% of fly tipping enquiries relating to Ward 5. This would equate to an approximate cost for the Ward of £18,064.00 for disposal of fly tipping between 1 February 2021 and 30 April 2021 including cost for Staff/vehicles. (This does not include the removal of asbestos by the Councils asbestos team).

Costs for fly tipping for the period 1 February 2020 – 30 April 2020

1 February 2020 – 30 April 2020	56.14 tonne
Cost of disposal including estimated costs for NETs team/vehicles	£36,994.56
Contractor removal of fly tipping	£0.00
Removal of asbestos	£0.00
TOTAL	£36,994.56

The number of enquiries received between 1 February 2020 – 30 April 2020 for the Ward was 105 out of 543 enquiries for the whole of West Lothian equating to 19.34% of fly tipping enquiries relating to Ward 5. This would equate to an approximate cost for the ward of £7,153.64 for disposal of fly tipping between 1 February 2020 and 30 April 2020 including cost for Staff/vehicles. (This does not include the removal of asbestos by the Councils asbestos team). The removal of fly tipping by contractor was not within Ward 5.

D5 Parks and Woodland

In total 50 Parks and Woodland related enquiries were received during this reporting period.

	2021	2020
Tree Advice or Consultations	6	0
Tree Blocking Light	2	0
Tree Branches Overhanging	7	2
Tree Broken Damaged or Dead	1	5
Tree Dangerous or Unsafe	7	4
Tree Enquiries General	26	11
Tree Leaves Causing Problems	1	0
Total	50	22

Trees and Woodlands

	2021	2020
Access Rights Way Core Paths	4	2
Complaint Country Parks/ Trees	1	0
Country Park Forestry or Woods	0	1
Country Park General Enquiries	9	1
Total	14	4

Almondell Woods In and Around Towns Project

This project is taking longer than planned due to poor weather over the winter and a large increase in visitors making working along the South Drive very difficult.

Conditions on the very steep bank above the River Almond became too slippery and felling had to be stopped. The contractors are due to return in May to complete this last section. The other felled and thinned areas are being restored after the machine work and, depending on weather conditions, some planting (using containerised plants) may be undertaken before the summer. Various members of the public have expressed an interest in being involved in the replanting.

The path work contractors were also held back by very wet ground conditions but work is now proceeding on ramped paths to make the paths up steep slopes accessible to more people, including those pushing buggies, than the steps. Maintenance of such ramped paths is also likely to be less expensive than steps. Handrails are still to be installed on the steeper ramps.

Ranger Service Update

No. Rights Of Way / Core Path / Patrols carried out (hours)	56.5
No. Access Enquiries	8
No. Volunteer hours	16

The West Lothian planning portal is being monitored weekly to identify applications that have an access or biodiversity impact. A number of planning applications have been commented on regarding access and biodiversity including windfarm applications, housing developments at East Calder, Clappertonhall and Pumpherston and development at Seafield.

The Parks & Woodland team had a meeting with Police Scotland's Rural Crime and Community Liaison Officers to look at closer working relationship and how we can work together to solve some of the anti-social and criminal issues affecting the country parks and wider countryside.

The Ranger Service is getting the first tentative enquiries from schools with regards to the resumption of outdoor education sessions. But given the current surge in access work/enquiries and the doubling of visitor numbers to Parks & Woodlands sites since Covid, (especially the country parks), we don't expect to be able to offer such visits this side of the summer holidays. The Ranger Service met with some school representatives from the Skills Centre and Connolly School to advise on how to better integrate outdoor education into their day-to-day learning.

The Country Parks have been very busy, with car parks filling up by mid-morning on the nicer weekends. Rangers had to log a call to Police Scotland in regards to irresponsible parking at Balvormie (Beecraigs)

Covid restrictions eased on 26 April, and visitor centres and other facilities at the country parks all reopened. Rangers have been inspecting facilities prior to reopening at the three parks, and assisting with duties at Beecraigs reception and caravan and camping site.

The Ranger Service put out two 'Responsible Access' posts on the Council Facebook page in advance of the good weather weekends, and both were well received, with a massive online reach of around 60,000 users per post. Educational posters encouraging responsible access in West Lothian to help avoid conflict with land management operations have been completed in partnership with local landowners/residents.

Rangers have applied to Nature Scots 'Better Places Green Recovery Fund 2' for four assistant rangers and two assistant operatives to help deal with the increased visitor numbers expected over the next few months at the country parks and other hotspots around the county.

Almondell and Calderwood Country Park

Almondell & Caldewood again very busy footfall with Covid19 restrictions. Improvements ongoing with re-starting of works on Historic Wall Project after Easter now progressing quickly with improvement in weather. The collapsed section is being re-instated, coping stones placed and lime mortar pointing underway. Lots of positive comments from customers.

Woodland Management works continue with arboriculture works and harvesting underway and in order to improve access for all abilities, both sets of steps at the canal feeder aqueduct and Larchwood have been replaced and are being greatly appreciated by visitors.

Friends of Almondell volunteers are now working in pairs on essential projects in accordance with Covid19 guidelines. Projects include cutting back paths to allow for social distancing and clearing vegetation from ponds for child safety – importance for mental health recognised and efforts much appreciated. Garden Toilets are now available for the public to use.

Confirm enquiries have been raised regarding issues on the canal feeder path, mud at the south entrance and dogs running loose in the play area. All have been actioned.

Access

A Ranger attended site at Linhouse / Linn Jaw to meet the landowner and progress matters in regards to a closed bridge / privacy / possible solution. Additional WLC signage was put up advising of hazard, and advising that ROW LW41 to Morton is obstructed. We are currently

speaking to NatureScot to see whether Better Places external funding could be spent on a new bridge. Subsequent query received from public in regards to signage, asking if it was legitimate. The site was then checked on 27 April to make sure WLC advisory signage about unsafe bridge/right of way interruption was still up. None were, so replacement signage was put up.

We patrolled Hogshill/Calderhall, along Linhouse Water. Paths were assessed and scored. Minor littering throughout and evidence of one or two campfires, but no significant issues identified.

Enquiry received regarding the poor state of a connecting path between the layby under the A71 at Murieston Water and the 'fishing pond' below the culvert. A site visit was undertaken to assess condition, and a meeting has been arranged with the Flooding Team to discuss what bank reinforcement work would be required prior to any path upgrade.

A number of enquiries have been received regarding the steps at Lins Mill. This section of core path WL18 is on City of Edinburgh Council land so enquiries have been passed to the relevant officers at City of Edinburgh Council. We also dealt with an enquiry regarding a blockage on a path at Letham Park.

D6 Open Space and Cemeteries

Open Space Capital Programme

Kirknewton Park Play Area. A new basket swing will be installed in Spring/Summer 2021 (Town Centre Fund Project).

East Calder Park – the 3G pitch construction contract has been awarded.

Langton Park, East Calder. Community Choices report can be viewed at www.westlothian.gov.uk/parkinfo . Voting to be announced.

Letham Park, Pumpherston. Community Choices report can be viewed at www.westlothian.gov.uk/parkinfo . Voting to be announced.

Cunnigar Park, Mid Calder. Works are complete apart from snagging (to be carried out within the next month) and tree planting (to be carried out in Autumn 2021).

Open Space Enquiries

In total there were two open space related enquiries received and dealt with during this reporting period in 2021.

	2021	2020
Children Play Enquiries	1	7
Complaint Childrens Play Areas	0	1
Safety Issues in Play Areas	1	1
Total	2	9

Cemeteries Routine Works

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

Cemeteries Enquiries

In total there were 38 cemeteries related enquiries received and dealt with during this reporting period in 2021.

	2021	2020
Cemeteries General Enquiries	2	2
Complaint Cemeteries & Burials	1	0
Lair Enquiries	5	0
Memorial/ Headstone Works	9	2
New Interment Booking	12	4
Purchase of Interment Lair	8	1
War Memorial Enquiries	1	0
Total	38	9

E. CONCLUSION

The Education, Engagement and Enforcement team have continued to deal with enquiries as they are logged following COVID-19 guidance. The Open Space Capital Programme is progressing as scheduled.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None

Appendices/Attachments: None

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