

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



BATHGATE 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 January 2021 – 31 March 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 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	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 January 2021 – 31 March 2021.

D2 Grounds Maintenance Routine Works

All winter routine works on shrub beds and hedges was completed in the ward.

NETS and Land Services were highly involved in the winter maintenance programme which lasted for about seven weeks from late December to early February.

Open space grass cutting started on Tuesday 6 April, and we have just finished the third cycle. We are on target to achieve the 12 cuts for the season.

Due to the weather our routine spraying has been put back to late May, roughly 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 up with demand for line marking.

Enquiries through the Confirm system are being prioritised and dealt with on a daily basis.

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

Grounds Maintenance Enquiries

In total 21 ground maintenance related enquiries were received and dealt with during this reporting period in 2021.

	2021	2020
Complaint Grounds Maintenance	1	0
Drainage Flooding Grass Areas	0	1
Emergency Tree Out of Hours	0	2
Fencing Enquiries	8	3
Flower Bed or Bulb Displays	1	0
Grass Area Damaged	0	1
Ground Ownership Enquiries	2	0
Grounds Property Vandalised	2	0
Hedge Cutting Enquiries	1	0
Neighbourhood Env. Teams	0	1
Public Park Enquiries	5	1
Shrub Bed Enquiries	0	1
Shrub Bed Overhanging Path	0	3
Shrub Beds Not Maintained	0	1
Sports Facility Enquiries	1	1
Weeds General Enquiries	0	1
Total	21	16

D3 Garden Maintenance Routine Works

The Garden Maintenance Scheme started on 6 April, and we are presently on the third cycle. We are on target to complete the 11-cycle programme.

Garden Maintenance Enquiries

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

	2021	2020
Garden Maintenance Change of Address	1	1
Garden Maintenance General Enquiries	6	2
Total	7	3

D4 Cleaner Communities Routine Works

The Street Cleansing Teams have been reduced in size to comply with social distancing guidelines over the period 1 January – 31 March.

There has also been a further reduction due to self-isolating procedures by some operatives.

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 had 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 135 cleaner communities enquiries were received and dealt with during this period in 2021.

	2021	2020
Complaint Street Cleansing	1	0
Dead Animals	3	6
Dog Bin New Request for Bin	0	2
Dog Fouled Grass Open Space	1	2
Dog Fouling on Paths Roads	25	30
Dog No Fouling Sign Request	1	0

Fly Posting	4	0
Fly Tipping Dumping	46	46
Glass on Paths or Open Spaces	1	7
Graffiti Non-Offensive	1	1
Graffiti Racist or Offensive	3	0
Litter Bin Overflowing	3	0
Litter General Enquiries	12	3
Litter Grass Open Space	1	2
Litter Paths Roads Verges	15	27
Needles/Syringes Abandoned	1	1
Street Sweeping Enquiries	5	14
Trolleys Abandoned/Dumped	1	4
Vehicles Abandoned	11	8
Total	135	153

Fly Tipping Enquiries (January-December)

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Illegal Fly Tipping/Dumping	201	161	149	151	154

Environmental Community Action

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

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 has been no Fixed Penalty Notices issued in Ward 8 for the period of 1 January 2021 – 31 March 2021. For the same period in 2020, there were three Fixed Penalty Notices issued within the Ward.

Costs for fly tipping for the period 1 January 2021 – 31 March 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 85% 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 January 2021 – 31 March 2021	91.2 tonnes
Cost of disposal including costs for NETs team/vehicles	£60,098.04
Contractor removal of fly tipping	£0.00
Removal of asbestos	£0.00
TOTAL	£60,098.04

The number of enquiries received between 1 January 2021 – 31 March 2021 for the Ward was 46 out of 730 enquiries for the whole of West Lothian equating to 6.3% of fly tipping enquiries relating to Ward 8.

Percentage wise this would equate to an approximate cost for the Ward of £3,787 for disposal of fly tipping between 1 January 2021 and 31 March 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 January 2020 – 31 March 2020

1 January 2020 – 31 March 2020	52.42 tonne
Cost of disposal including estimated costs for NETs team/vehicles	£34,543.20
Contractor removal of fly tipping	£0.00
Removal of asbestos	£0.00
TOTAL	£34,543.20

The number of enquiries received between 1 January 2020 – 31 March 2020 for the Ward was 46 out of 504 enquiries for the whole of West Lothian equating to 9.13% of fly tipping enquiries relating to Ward 8.

Percentage wise this would equate to an approximate cost for the ward of £3,153 for disposal of fly tipping between 1 January 2020 and 31 March 2020 including cost for Staff/vehicles. (This does not include the removal of asbestos by the Councils asbestos team).

D5 Parks and Woodland

Parks and Woodland Enquiries

In total there were 28 Tree and Woodland related enquiries were received during this reporting period.

	2021	2020
Tree Advice or Consultations	9	3
Tree Branches Overhanging	2	2
Tree Broken Damaged or Dead	3	1
Tree Dangerous or Unsafe	6	3
Tree Enquiries General	7	6
Tree Leaves Causing Problems	1	2
Total	28	17

	2021	2020
Access Rights Way Core Paths	1	0
Ranger Service Beecraigs	1	0
Ranger Service General Enquiry	2	0
Total	4	0

Ranger Service Update

No. Rights of Way / Core Path / Patrols carried out (hours)	6.5
No. Access Enquiries	3

Ranger Service representatives attended a Zoom call hosted by the Bathgate Hills Project group, to explain our remit in West Lothian, and to outline the limitations and priorities in terms of access. We have also received a request from Bathgate Hills Project for information on existing paths in the hills. A map has been provided highlighting all Parks & Woodlands sites / WLC paths in the hills.

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.

The Parks & Woodland team had a meeting with Police Scotland's Rural Crime and Community Liaison Officers to look at closer working relationships 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 in regards to a 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 26th 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 & 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.

Access

We received a report of barbed wire strewn across paths and around trees at Ravensraig. This was found, cut away and removed by the Ranger Service. Flytipping at Ravensraig was also reported to Waste Services. An additional enquiry was received in regards to the poor state of Ravensraig entrance and paths due to dog waste/litter. A new bin is being trialled at Ravensraig which will be emptied periodically by Waste Services.

There are unofficial mountain bike trails at Ravensraig Woods. Confirm notice raised for tree safety inspection and reported to Parks and Woodland Manager. Awaiting refresher training on plant machinery for operatives before the trails can be demolished.

A patrol was carried out at Little Boghead. Although no major issues were reported, path conditions were scored and other smaller issues were added into the Ranger Services maintenance schedule for future action.

D6 Open Space and Cemeteries

Balbardie Park Play Area, Bathgate. Rotten timber retainer will be removed and a basket swing will be replaced (with two regular swings) in Summer 2021.

Balbardie Park. Funding applications pending.

Meadow Park, Bathgate. Small goal and basketball hoop have been replaced with a new dual-purpose goal (football/basketball).

Kirkton Park Play Area, Bathgate. Replacement of sand toddler/junior play area and other surface upgrades will be complete in Summer/Autumn 2021. Replacement toddler/junior play area will have increased inclusive value.

Wester Inch Pond Play Area, Bathgate. Additional seating overlooking play area and ponds will be installed in May 2021.

Open Space Enquiries

There were seven Open Space enquiries for this reporting period in 2021.

	2021	2020
Adopting Childrens Play Areas	1	0
Childrens Play Enquiries	5	6
Complaint Childrens Play Areas	1	0
Total	7	6

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 Enquires

There were 140 Cemeteries enquiries for this reporting period in 2021.

	2021	2020
Bench Donations	1	0
Cemeteries General Enquiries	15	10
Complaint Cemeteries & Burials	0	1
Lair Enquiries	4	7
Lair Sunken or Uneven	1	0
Memorial/ Headstone Works	34	9
New Interment Booking	48	13
Purchase of Interment Lair	37	17
Total	140	57

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

Open Space Strategy

Capital Programme

Appendices/Attachments: none

Contact Person:

Tony Fleming, Whitehill Service Centre, 01506 284611, tony.fleming@westlothian.gov.uk

Jim Jack

Head of Operational Services

14 June 2021