

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 July 2021 – 30 September 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**

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

## **D1 Terms of Report**

The report covers the activity for the period 1 July 2021 – 30 September 2021.

## **D2 Grounds Maintenance Routine Works**

Grounds staff have completed 10 grass cycles up to 30 September 2021 and will complete one further cut in October before the end of the cutting season.

Weed Spraying will cease mid-October with two cycles having been successfully completed within the ward.

One off cuts and garden tidy ups for Housing Services are on course to be completed.

Enquiries and Councillors request are being dealt with on a daily basis.

We have recently recruited three new Apprentices Horticulturists/Gardeners on a three-year contract.

### **Grounds Maintenance Enquiries**

In total 67 ground maintenance related enquiries were received and dealt with during this reporting period in 2021.

	2021	2020
Bench or Seat Enquiries	1	2
Complaint Grounds Maintenance	3	1
Enforcement Officer Enquiries	0	3
Fencing Enquiries	0	2
Flower Bed or Bulb Displays	1	0
Grass Area Damaged	0	1
Grass Cutting Enquiries	13	12
Grass Cutting Missed Not Cut	4	3
Grass Highway Verges	1	0
Ground Ownership Enquiries	0	3
Grounds Property Vandalised	1	4
Hedge Cutting Enquiries	3	5
Neighbourhood Env. Teams	1	0
Public Park Enquiries	2	2
Shrub Bed Enquiries	1	6
Shrub Bed Overhanging Path	18	9
Shrub Beds Not Maintained	1	1
Weeds General Enquiries	13	3
Weeds on Paths or Roads	4	3
Total	67	60

### **Garden Maintenance Routine Works**

The Garden Maintenance Scheme will meet their target of eleven cuts.

## Garden Maintenance Enquiries

In total there were 33 garden maintenance enquiries received and dealt with during this period in 2021.

	2021	2020
Complaint Garden Maintenance	0	4
Garden Maintenance General Enquiries	9	7
Garden Maintenance Grass Not Cut	20	30
Garden Maintenance Hedge Cutting	1	3
Garden Maintenance No Longer Required	1	0
Garden Maintenance Standard Of Cut	2	7
Total	33	51

## D4 Cleaner Communities Routine Works

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 also been deployed to tackle excessive 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.

There has also been additional funding granted to recruit more personnel to assist the NETs team in bulky uplift collections, fly tipping removal and lifting bags of waste collected by volunteers.

## Cleaner Communities Enquiries

In total 87 cleaner communities enquiries were received and dealt with during this period in 2021.

	2021	2020
Complaint Street Cleansing	2	0
Dead Animals	3	5
Dog Bin New Request for Bin	2	1
Dog Bin Overflowing	0	4
Dog Fouled Grass Open Space	0	2
Dog Fouled Kids Play Area	0	1
Dog Fouling on Paths Roads	6	12
Dog No Fouling Sign Request	1	0
Fly Posting	2	0
Fly Tipping Dumping	29	45
Glass on Paths or Open Spaces	3	2
Graffiti Non-Offensive	0	1
Graffiti Racist or Offensive	3	1
Litter Bin Burnt Damaged	1	0
Litter Bin New Request For Bin	2	1
Litter Bin Overflowing	2	2
Litter General Enquiries	7	1

Litter Grass Open Space	1	0
Litter Paths Roads Verges	4	16
Needles/Syringes Abandoned	2	0
Street Sweeping Enquiries	3	8
Trolleys Abandoned/Dumped	2	1
Vehicles Abandoned	12	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>114</b>

### **Fly Tipping Enquiries (January-December)**

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

### **Environmental Community Action**

Officers continue to deal with enquiries relating to fly tipping, littering, dog fouling, abandoned vehicles and general enquiries. There have been 29 enquiries in relation to fly tipping for the period compared to 45 for the same period in 2020.

In dealing with abandoned vehicles, Officers have gained compliance from vehicle owners with said vehicles getting removed from public highways or getting taxed in most cases. Where appropriate, requests have been sent to WLC contractors for removal. However, there are instances where vehicle owners are not compliant and result to moving their vehicles between streets. When presented with such tactics, officers have resulted to contacting the DVLA and VOSA for support.

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 were two Fixed Penalty Notices issued in Ward 8 for the period of 1 July 2021 – 30 September 2021 for fly tipping only. For the same period in 2020, there were also two Fixed Penalty Notices issued within the Ward for fly tipping only.

### **Costs for fly tipping for the period 1 July 2021 – 30 September 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 60% of their time. For 2020 the estimate was 80% of their time.

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

### **Fly tipping costs:**

<b>1 July 2021 – 30 September 2021</b>	59.8 tonnes
Cost of disposal including costs for NETs team/vehicles	£39,406.41
Contractor removal of fly tipping	£0.00
Removal of asbestos	£0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£39,406.41</b>

The number of enquiries received between 1 July 2021 – 30 September 2021 for the Ward was 29 out of 525 enquiries for the whole of West Lothian equating to 5.5% of fly tipping enquiries relating to Ward 8.

Percentage wise this would equate to an approximate cost for the Ward of £2,167.35 for disposal of fly tipping between 1 July 2021 and 30 September 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 July 2020 – 30 September 2020**

<b>1 July 2020 – 30 September 2020</b>	83.88 tonne
Cost of disposal including estimated costs for NETs team/vehicles	£55,274.40
Contractor removal of fly tipping	£0.00
Removal of asbestos	£0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£55,274.40</b>

The number of enquiries received between 1 July 2020 – 30 September 2020 for the Ward was 45 out of 613 enquiries for the whole of West Lothian equating to 7.3% of fly tipping enquiries relating to Ward 8.

Percentage wise this would equate to an approximate cost for the ward of £4,035.03 for disposal of fly tipping between 1 July 2020 and 30 September 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 33 Tree and Woodland related enquiries were received during this reporting period.

	2021	2020
Tree Advice or Consultations	9	9
Tree Affecting Public Utility	0	1
Tree Blocking Light	1	1
Tree Branches Overhanging	9	6
Tree Broken Damaged or Dead	1	1
Tree Dangerous or Unsafe	0	1
Tree Enquiries General	11	13
Tree Felling Work Unauthorised	1	0
Tree Leaves Causing Problems	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>32</b>

	2021	2020
Access Rights Way Core Paths	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

### **Ranger Service Update**

No. Rights of Way / Core Path / Patrols carried out (hours)	16.5
No. Access Enquiries	2

Two Assistant Rangers and two Assistant Operatives have been employed from 28th June 2021, funded by NatureScot as part of their Better Places Green Recovery Fund. The Assistant Rangers have carried out patrols in hotspot areas, run pop-up events engaging the public on a range of access related issues, SOAC (Scottish Outdoor Access Code) and responsible dog walking behaviour. They have also been running activity sessions for schools across West Lothian.

The Ranger Service put a post out on the council's Facebook page about the fire risk, after a couple of abandoned campfires were found smouldering at Beecraigs and Witchcraig. The post was seen by 21,000 people, with active engagement from 1,300 people.

The Ranger Service had a virtual meeting with Yellow Book Ltd, at the recommendation of Economic Development team, to provide information from an access and capacity perspective for their report on the economic potential of the Bathgate Hills. Officers advised them to contact NFU Scotland (National Farmers Union) to canvass their opinion for their report.

The Ranger Service had a second meeting with the Lyme Resource Centre, to discuss how we can collaborate on a tick/Lyme Disease awareness-raising project in the new year, and to report back on progress so far. Officers put the new tick awareness posters in every notice board in the three country parks, and the Assistant Rangers have incorporated tick awareness into their public engagement 'pop up' events across West Lothian. More than 300 people have been directly spoken to about ticks so far at these events. Officers have also spoken to Media about supporting the collaboration when there is something to share.

Officers attended the quarterly West Lothian Cycle Forum, updating from an access perspective on district-wide issues.

Officers attended the Forth & Borders Ranger meet up (virtual) to discuss Rangering during Covid and our recovery plans, the challenges land managers and ranger services are facing, and different ways of tackling issues seen on sites across the wider countryside.

The Ranger Service have also been assisting Green Action Trust (GAT) by reviewing their map of potential 'missing link' habitat sites across the district and providing additional biodiversity / access information.

Hannah Crow left the Ranger Service at the end of September to work in one of the new Biodiversity and Ecology Officer posts within West Lothian Council. Her ranger position will be advertised in late October but until it is filled, the service will be reduced from four rangers to three, with Hannah's responsibilities and outstanding projects distributed around the remaining team.

## **Access**

An enquiry was received regarding maintenance of the path between Puir Wifes Brae and Marchmont Crescent. This land is owned by West Lothian Council, but the farmland is tenanted out to a local farmer. Property are contacting the tenant to see if maintenance can be carried out on this route. The Ranger Service will also rescore this path and schedule an upgrade of this whole path, including gates and signage in the next few years (external funding will need to be sought).

## Ecology and Biodiversity

A new team has been developed to address growing biodiversity and climate change issues across West Lothian. Becky Plunkett and Hannah Crow have recently been appointed as Ecology and Biodiversity Officers, with a third person to be recruited this autumn.

More information on the officers' roles and responsibilities will follow, and updates will be regularly provided in the local area committee reports.

## D6 Open Space and Cemeteries

Balbardie Park - Work on the pumptrack will start in early November. It should be complete by Christmas 2021.

The Open Space Officer is working with Bathgate Community Development Trust to identify potentially suitable land for a new allotment site.

### Open Space Enquiries

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

	2021	2020
Childrens Play Enquiries	6	17
Glass or Litter In Play Areas	0	2
Play Area Property Vandalised	0	1
Safety Issues In Play Areas	0	1
Total	6	21

### 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 120 Cemeteries enquiries for this reporting period in 2021.

	2021	2020
Cemeteries General Enquiries	10	8
Complaint Cemeteries & Burials	1	0
Lair Enquiries	5	9
Lair Sunken or Uneven	1	3
Memorial/ Headstone Works	41	48
New Interment Booking	42	43
Purchase of Interment Lair	20	18
Total	120	129

## E CONCLUSION

Officers continue to deal with enquiries relating to fly tipping, littering, dog fouling, abandoned vehicles and general enquiries.

A new team has been developed to address growing biodiversity and climate change issues across West Lothian.

## **F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

Open Space Strategy

Capital Programme

Appendices/Attachments: none

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**Jim Jack**

**Head of Operational Services**

**22 November 2021**