

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



LINLITHGOW 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 2022 – 31 March 2022.

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 2022 – 31 March 2022.

D2 Grounds Maintenance Routine Works

Shrub bed maintenance started in mid-December and was completed for the end of March. Staff were involved with Winter Maintenance duties and covering at Waste Services over this period.

Summer works including grass cutting and weed control started on Monday 4 April 2022.

Enquiries are being dealt with on a daily basis.

Grounds Maintenance Enquiries

In total 20 grounds maintenance related enquiries were received and dealt with during this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Bench or Seat Enquiries	1	1
Burns or Watercourses	1	0
Drainage Flooding Grass Areas	0	1
Emergency Tree Out Of Hours	0	1
Grass Area Damaged	3	0
Grass Highway Verges	0	1
Ground Ownership Enquiries	1	0
Grounds Property Vandalised	3	2
Hedge Cutting Enquiries	1	0
Public Park Enquiries	2	1
Shrub Bed Overhanging Path	8	2
Sports Facility Enquiries	0	1
Total	20	10

D3 Garden Maintenance Routine Works

Recruitment for Garden Maintenance seasonal staff started in early March, in preparation for the Garden Maintenance Scheme starting in April.

Garden Maintenance Enquiries

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

	2022	2021
Garden Maintenance Change Of Address	0	1
Garden Maintenance General Enquiries	4	3
Total	4	4

D4 Cleaner Communities Routine Works

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/ sweeping of 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.

Officers continue to work with volunteer's litter picking within the Ward and have assisted with the uplift of bags and debris that they have collected by the NETs team.

The NETs team have also been dealing with fly tipping enquiries and removing fly tipping from Council ground.

Cleaner Communities Enquiries

In total 65 cleaner communities related enquiries were received and dealt with during this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Dead Animals	7	3
Dog Bin New Request For Bin	0	1
Dog Bin Overflowing	0	1
Dog Fouled Grass Open Space	0	1
Dog Fouling on Path Roads	1	7
Fly Tipping Dumping	27	35
Glass on Paths or Open Spaces	0	3
Graffiti Racist or Offensive	2	4
Litter Bin Burnt Damaged	0	1
Litter Bin Overflowing	0	1
Litter General Enquiries	3	4
Litter Grass Open Space	1	0
Litter Paths Roads Verges	5	9
Needles Syringes Abandoned	0	1
Street Sweeping Enquiries	13	5
Vehicle Abandoned	6	2
Total	65	78

Fly Tipping Enquiries (January - December)

	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Illegal Fly Tipping/Dumping	110	168	97	75	55

Environmental Community Action

The Education, Engagement and Enforcement Officers continue to deal with enquiries relating to fly tipping, littering, dog fouling, abandoned vehicles and general enquiries. There were 27 enquiries in relation to fly tipping for the period compared to 35 for the same period in 2021.

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.

Officers have also had to educate members of the public that their vehicles with a SORN marker needs to be off public roads and kept in a private drive or inside a garage. This is a scenario that has occurred quite frequently of late.

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 no Fixed Penalty Notices issued in Ward 1 for the period of 1 January 2022 – 31 March 2022. For the same period in 2021, there was no Fixed Penalty Notice issued within the Ward.

Costs for fly tipping for the period 1 January 2022 – 31 March 2022

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 40% of their time. For 2020 the estimate was 60% 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 2022 – 31 March 2022	66.72 tonnes
Cost of disposal including costs for NETs team/vehicles	£43,966.48
Contractor removal of fly tipping	£0.00
Removal of asbestos	£0.00
TOTAL cost for all 9 wards	£43,966.48

The number of enquiries received between 1 January 2022 – 31 March 2022 for the Ward was 27 out of 485 enquiries for the whole of West Lothian equating to 5.57% of fly tipping enquiries relating to Ward 1.

Percentage wise this would equate to an approximate cost for the Ward of £2,449.00 for disposal of fly tipping between 1 January 2022 and 31 March 2022 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 2021 – 31 March 2021

1 January 2021 – 31 March 2021	82.98 tonnes
Cost of disposal including estimated costs for NETs team/vehicles	£54,681.33
Contractor removal of fly tipping	£0.00
Removal of asbestos	£0.00
TOTAL cost for all 9 Wards	£54,681.33

The number of enquiries received between 1 January 2021 – 31 March 2021 for the Ward was 35 out of 727 enquiries for the whole of West Lothian equating to 4.81% of fly tipping enquiries relating to Ward 1.

Percentage wise this would equate to an approximate cost for the ward of £2,630.17 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).

D5 Park and Woodland

Tree and Woodland Enquiries

In total 26 Parks and Woodland related enquiries were received during this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Tree Blocking Light	1	2
Tree Branches Overhanging	7	4
Tree Broken Damaged or Dead	3	1
Tree Dangerous or Unsafe	3	3
Tree Enquiries General	12	18
Tree Felling Work Unauthorised	0	1
Tree Leaves Causing Problems	0	1
Total	26	30

	2022	2021
Access Rights Way Core Paths	3	35
Barbecue Booking/ Hire	0	1
Complaint Country Parks/ Trees	1	2
Country Park Forestry or Woods	0	1
Country Park General Enquiries	1	5
Ranger Service Beecraigs	0	4
Ranger Service General Enquiry	0	3
Total	5	51

Ranger Service Update

No. Rights Of Way / Core Path / Patrols carried out (hours)	53.5
No. Access Enquiries	3
No. Volunteer hours	161

The first volunteer sessions of the new district-wide Volunteer Ranger Service were held in January. Rather than being concentrated in any one location or Country Park, the group are moving around the various Parks & Woodland holdings in West Lothian. The first sessions were held at Beecraigs in January, where volunteers carried out gorse removal on Hillhouse Meadow and whacked back rosebay willowherb compartments and path edges along the waymarked green route. The group is a mix of retirees, individuals interested in outdoor practical work, family groups, students and service users of the West Lothian Council Community Inclusion Team.

The Ranger Service installed geology interpretation outside Beecraigs Visitor Centre looking at how geology shaped West Lothian. The two interpretation panels have u-turn audio speakers allowing people to select and power 16 different audio files on geological landmarks.

Officers have continued to receive and process event applications for Beecraigs, mostly from Forth Valley Orienteers.

Storm Malik brought down some more trees at Beecraigs. Rangers patrolled all the paths in the park to assess for damage / danger.

After Beecraigs Festive Forest pulled off site at Beecraigs, the Ranger Service and other Parks & Woodland staff spent a couple of days walking the festive forest route, picking-up cable ties, nails, lighting, tape, wood, Christmas trees and other litter etc that had been left behind.

There was not much of a winter, but the Ranger Service spent the colder mornings gritting around the visitor centre and caravan site at Beecraigs.

Officers assisted the emergency services during a 999 call-out at Beecraigs Play Area.

Following a concern expressed by a member of the public about dogs running around and in the toilets at Balvormie, the maintenance team fixed handles outside so that dogs can be tied up.

Blue green algae were again observed at Beecraigs Loch. This was reported to West Lothian Council Environmental Health, and signage was put in place around the loch.

The Rangers had a training session with the Tree & Woodland Officer on tree planting so as to get volunteers in to help.

The Ranger Service met with the Justice Service to re-establish partnership working with the Criminal Justice team. Since February a team has been working in Beecraigs Country Park three days a week improving paths on the mountain bike trail and carrying out general maintenance and conservation tasks.

Officers attended the West Lothian Cycle Forum, and updated attendees on access issues/projects. The forum is thinking about holding an outdoor event to promote cycling this summer.

The Ranger Service have designed and produced an interpretative 'tick trail' in collaboration with the Lyme Resource Centre. Officers will be installing a trail at each of the Country Parks to raise awareness of ticks and Lyme Disease in West Lothian. It is hoped to have this in place by April.

Ben is leaving the Ranger Service at the end of April, which means the service will be down to three rangers again. NatureScot are however re-running their Better Places grant in 2022, so the service will be applying for extra seasonal rangers / maintenance operatives this summer.

Access

An access enquiry came in for an area near the Park Bistro in Linlithgow, concerning ploughed field margins and restricted access for horse riding. A site visit was carried out and officers have contacted the contract farmer about flattening the field margin to facilitate access.

Officers met with contractors to do the final assessment for the new Witchcraig Path. Work is scheduled to start in April.

The service processed and submitted Hopetoun Estate's application for a Section 11 exemption. This is for the horse carriage trials this summer.

Officers coordinated with Scottish Canals in regards to their towpath work in Linlithgow. This is so that ample notice was given in advance on local online community pages.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Ecology and Biodiversity officers have published a work plan outlining the core elements the role covers (see attached appendix 1).

Works are progressing in Beecraigs Country Park around the replacement toilet block at Lochside. The upgraded toilet block will feature specific “bat bricks” to offer a space for this protected species to roost in. We will be exploring options to boost biodiversity in the area in the coming months.

Buglife have been appointed to lead citizen science workshops in wildflower meadows over the summer months at one park in each of Linlithgow (to be confirmed), Broxburn and Livingston. They will also carry out flora and fauna surveys in all the meadows at Learmonth Gardens, Beechwood Park and Rosemount Park in Linlithgow.

D6 Open Space and Cemeteries

Open Space Routine Works

Linlithgow Loch District Park, Linlithgow. Upgrade of Lady Park footpath pending. Compulsory Purchase Order application is being progressed by Property Services in discussion with Legal Services and specialist external legal advisors. There is a high risk of legal challenges and a public inquiry. This will delay any subsequent construction beyond 2022.

Beecraigs Car Park Play Area (main Country Park play area), Linlithgow. The play area will be refurbished in Spring/Summer 2022. Existing toddler play equipment and swings will be replaced.

Open Space Enquiries

There were two Open Space enquiries for this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Childrens Play Enquiries	2	4
Total	2	4

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

There were 63 Cemeteries enquiries for this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Cemeteries General Enquiries	8	8
Lair Enquiries	5	3
Lair Sunken or Uneven	1	0
Memorial/ Headstone Works	18	6
New Interment Booking	18	12
Purchase of Interment Lair	13	14
Total	63	43

E CONCLUSION

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

The Open Space Capital Programme is progressing as scheduled.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

Open Space Strategy

Capital Programme

Appendices/Attachments: one

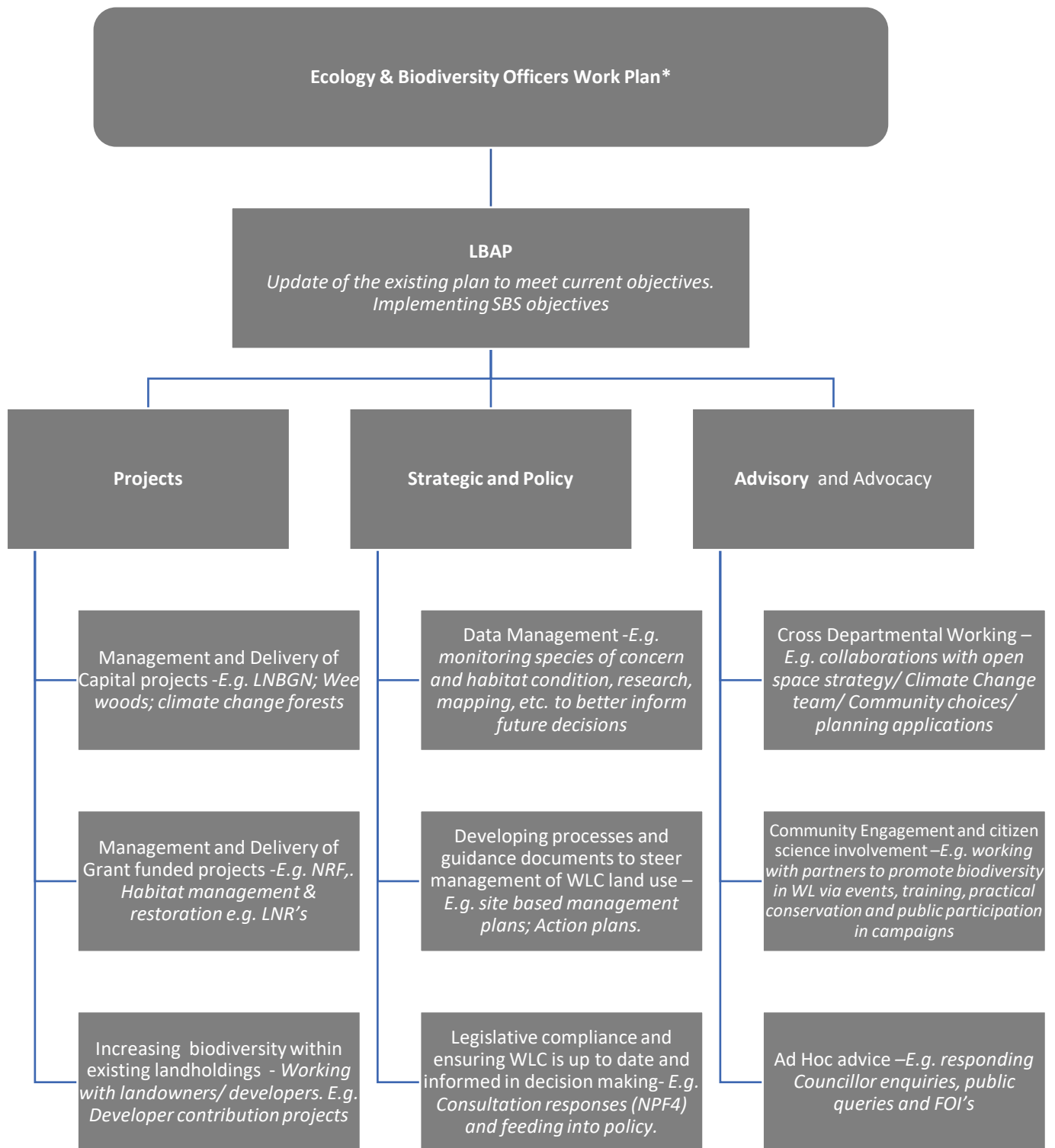
Appendix 1 - Ecology & Biodiversity Officers Work Plan

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Jim Jack

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09 June 2022



**The workplan provides an overview of current demands in relation to the role but is not exhaustive list. This has potential to change to meet Council and Government objectives.*