

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



WHITBURN & BLACKBURN 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 NETs Land & Countryside Services' teams for the period 1 February 2022 – 30 April 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	We make the most efficient and effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment
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 2022 – 30 April 2022.

D2 Grounds Maintenance Routine Works

Shrub bed maintenance was started in mid-December and was completed for the end of March.

Staff were involved with Winter Maintenance duties until 31 March 2022. Grounds Maintenance staff also covered at Waste Services for a short period of time.

Open Space 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 there were nine grounds maintenance related enquiries received and dealt with during this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Adopt Open Spaces in Priv.Est	1	0
Ball Game Enquiries	1	2
Bench or Seat Enquiries	0	2
Complaint Grounds Maintenance	0	3
Drainage Flooding Grass Areas	0	1
Emergency Tree Out Of Hours	1	0
Enforcement Officer Enquiries	0	1
Fencing Enquiries	0	5
GalaDay Public Event Enquiries	1	1
Grass Area Damaged	0	2
Grass Cutting Enquiries	1	0
Grass Highway Verges	0	1
Ground Ownership Enquiries	0	2
Grounds Property Vandalised	1	7
Hedge Cutting Enquiries	0	1
Public Park Enquiries	0	6
Shrub Bed Enquiries	0	1
Shrub Bed Overhanging Path	2	2
Sports Facility Enquiries	1	0
Weeds on Paths or Roads	0	1
Total	9	38

D3 Garden Maintenance Routine Works

Recruitment for Garden Maintenance Scheme seasonal staff is still ongoing. Grass cutting for the scheme commenced on 11 April 2022.

Garden Maintenance Enquiries

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

	2022	2021
Complaint Garden Maintenance	0	2
Garden Maintenance Change Of Address	0	1
Garden Maintenance General Enquiries	8	7
Garden Maintenance Grass Not Cut	0	5
Garden Maintenance Standard Of Cut	0	1
Total	8	16

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.

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 91 cleaner communities related enquiries were received and dealt with during this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Complaint Street Cleansing	1	1
Dead Animals	1	3
Dog Bin New Request For Bin	0	1
Dog Fouled Grass Open Space	2	3
Dog Fouling on Paths Roads	9	15
Fly Posting	0	7
Fly Tipping Dumping	44	88
Glass on Paths or Open Spaces	1	3
Graffiti Non Offensive	0	5
Graffiti Racist or Offensive	0	14
Litter Bin Burnt Damaged	3	1
Litter Bin New Request for Bin	3	1
Litter Bin Overflowing	1	3
Litter General Enquiries	2	13
Litter Grass Open Space	0	1
Litter Paths Road Verges	4	23
Street Sweeping Enquiries	6	14
Trolleys Abandoned/Dumped	0	4
Vehicle Abandoned	14	22
Total	91	222

Fly Tipping Enquiries (Full Year)

	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Illegal Fly Tipping/Dumping	251	261	316	375	276

Enforcement Community Action

Officers continue to deal with enquiries relating to fly tipping, littering, dog fouling, abandoned vehicles and general enquiries. There have been 44 enquiries in relation to fly tipping for the period compared to 88 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 need 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 was one Fixed Penalty Notice issued in Ward 7 for the period of 1 February 2022 – 30 April 2022. For the same period in 2021, there was also one Fixed Penalty Notice issued within the Ward.

Costs for fly tipping for the period 1 February 2022 – 30 April 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 50% of their time. For 2021 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 2022 – 30 April 2022	73.88 tonnes
Cost of disposal including costs for NETs team/vehicles	£48,681.41
Contractor removal of fly tipping	£0.00
Removal of asbestos	£0.00
TOTAL for all 9 Wards	£48,681.41

The number of enquiries received between 1 February 2022 – 30 April 2022 for the Ward was 44 out of 337 enquiries for the whole of West Lothian equating to 13.05% of fly tipping enquiries relating to Ward 7.

Percentage wise this would equate to an approximate cost for the Ward of £6356.03 for disposal of fly tipping between 1 February 2022 and 30 April 2022 including cost for Staff/vehicles. (This does not include the removal of asbestos by the Councils asbestos team).

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 88 out of 881 enquiries for the whole of West Lothian equating to 10.0% of fly tipping enquiries relating to Ward 7.

Percentage wise this would equate to an approximate cost for the Ward of £6,941.51 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).

D5 Parks and Woodland

Tree & Woodland Enquiries

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

	2022	2021
Tree Advice or Consultations	2	3
Tree Affecting Public Utility	0	1
Tree Blocking Light	0	1
Tree Branches Overhanging	5	5
Tree Broken/Damaged or Dead	4	0
Tree Dangerous or Unsafe	4	0
Tree Enquiries General	11	13
Total	26	23

	2022	2021
Access Rights Way Core Paths	1	7
Complaint Country Parks/ Trees	0	2
Country Park General Enquiries	2	1
Ranger Service Polkemmet	0	2
Total	3	12

Ranger Service Update

No. Rights Of Way / Core Path / Patrols carried out (hours)	12
No. Access Enquiries	4
No. Volunteer hours	40

The Ranger Service have applied to NatureScot's Better Places Fund – Round 3 for seasonal Assistant Rangers and Assistant Operatives. If the funding is secured, successful applicants will start in early June and will help both the Ranger team and the Operative team over the busy summer months. The job listings for these have gone live, in anticipation of a successful funding application.

After many years of working for the West Lothian Council Ranger Service, Ben Dolphin has departed the Ranger team. The team wish him all the best and have since had meetings about redistribution of work – including access issues, projects and volunteer sessions.

The Ranger Service received permission from West Lothian Crematorium to use their car park for volunteer sessions in Cousland Woods, which will make access easier. The crematorium has been collecting and storing tree tubes, which have since been collected by the Rangers to be recycled.

The monthly Volunteer Ranger Service (VRS) sessions continue to be popular with regular volunteers, and the Ranger team are still receiving new volunteer enquiries each week.

The Ranger team have seen a recent increase in enquiries for the Ranger Service and their activities from many different community groups, schools, and businesses. At the moment, the service has not been able to resume the activities programme, and so the responses reflect this. However, officers are advising customers that they will be contacted once there is capacity to offer activities, which hopefully will happen once the Assistant Rangers are in post.

Access

The Rangers continue to review all West Lothian planning applications for access implications, and submit comments to Planning Services.

The Access Ranger post has been filled, and the Ranger team are due to give a presentation to the Access Ranger on ongoing access issues in West Lothian. Any access enquiries should continue to be reported through the 'Report it > Core Paths & Rights of Way' section on the Council's website.

The Ranger Service received three new access enquiries during this reporting period, with a fourth ongoing enquiry that was moved forward within this time. Issues include concrete barriers blocking a path and drainage and maintenance issues of a Seafield ditch and a path network in a lowland croft area.

The Ranger Service were asked to further investigate a muddy path on the edge of Easter Inch Moss, linking to Seafield, which is on the edge of West Lothian Council land. With help of Property and Planning, officers have since identified the landowner and are awaiting their response before culvert works are carried out.

An access obstruction at Rigghouse Road in the Heartlands development was reported, with two concrete barriers across the track. A Ranger conducted a site visit and asked the developer to move the barriers. They did, but someone has moved them back. The team are currently unsure as to who is moving these.

The Ranger Service have resumed the Shale Trail signage audit and compiled a document of existing, damaged, and missing signage, and have emailed Borders Signs for costings for replacement signage blades.

The team are investigating an access enquiry about the ownership and ongoing maintenance of a path network running through a lowland crofting scheme area.

Polkemmet Country Park

The Friends of Polkemmet sessions continue to be held on one Sunday per month. Recent tasks have included Rhododendron clearance and litter picking, and the upcoming task is willow spiling, which will help to reinforce eroded banks. The Rangers are working with The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) to deliver this task.

The monthly Volunteer Ranger Service sessions have recently been scheduled to coincide with the Friends of Polkemmet sessions, to ensure that the Sunday Volunteer Ranger Service (VRS) sessions can still go-ahead following Ben's departure.

A Ranger has been attending a 'market place' event every month at Polkemmet Primary School, in partnership with other organisations including the Whitburn and District Community Development Trust and Cyrenians OPAL. The event runs from 8.25am - 9:15am and aims to provide resources to parents and children, including free food, clothing and advice. The Rangers provide information on the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, Polkemmet Country Park, volunteering opportunities and provide 'iDial' identification sheets for local wildlife.

Ecology and Biodiversity

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

Edinburgh Lothian Greenspace Trust have installed a "wee forest" site in the grounds between Polkemmet Primary School and St. Josephs RC Primary School. This "tennis court sized" area was planted in connection with the local schools and is one of three sites in West Lothian.

D6 Open Space and Cemeteries

Open Space Capital Programme

Dixon Road Play Area, Whitburn. Swings have been replaced.

Open Space Enquiries

There were one Open Space enquiries for this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Childrens Play Enquiries	0	3
Skateboarding Enquiries	1	0
Total	1	3

Cemeteries Routine Works

Whitburn Cemeteries

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 62 Cemeteries enquiries for this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Bench Donations	1	0
Cemeteries General Enquiries	6	8
Cemetery Property Vandalised	0	1
Complaint Cemeteries & Burials	0	1
Lair Enquiries	8	2
Memorial/ Headstone Works	25	32
New Interment Booking	14	37
Purchase of Interment Lair	8	21
Total	62	102

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

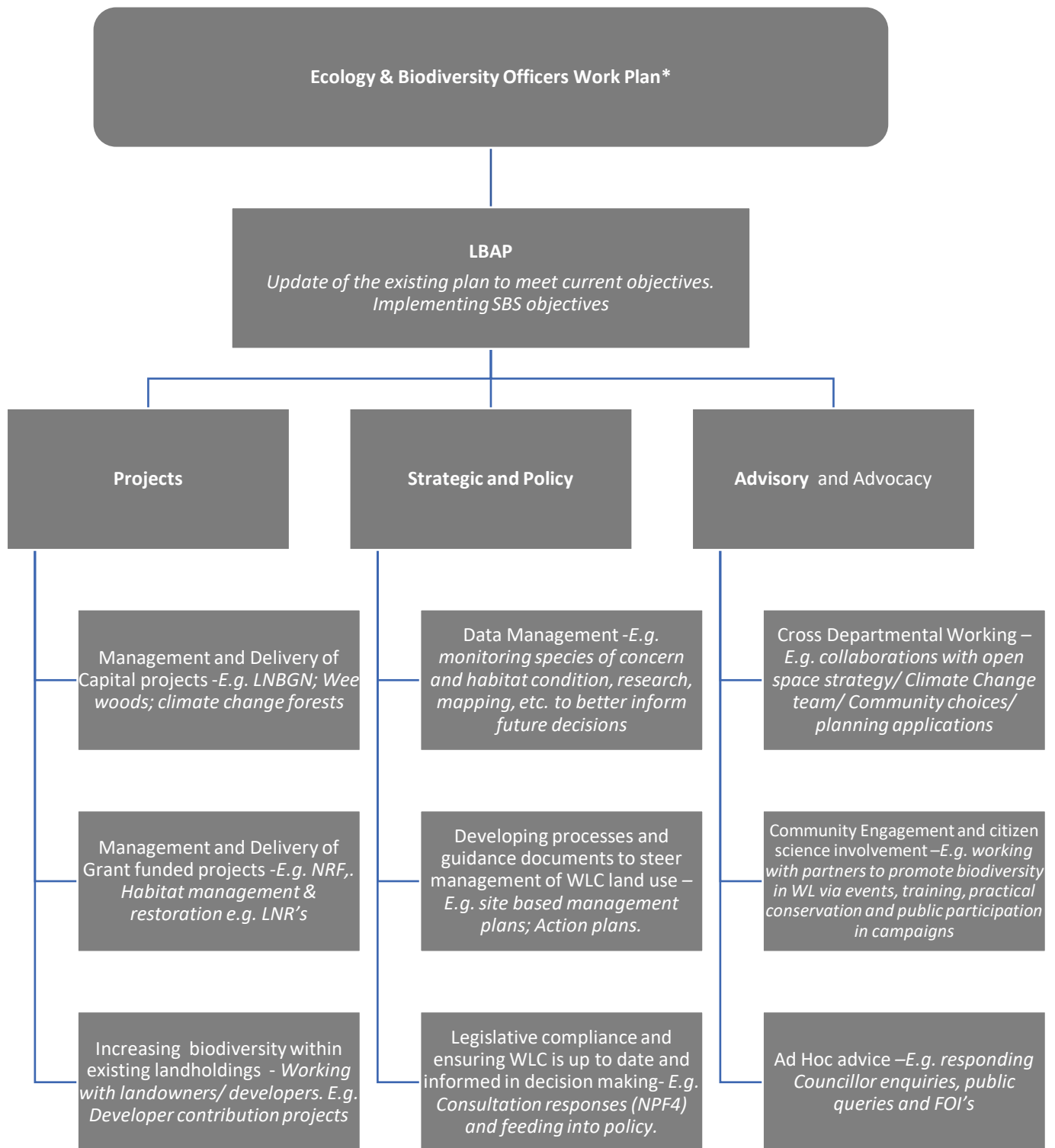
Appendices/Attachments: One

Appendix 1 - Ecology & Biodiversity Officers Work Plan

Contact Persons: Eirwen Hopwood, Parks and Woodland Manager, 01506 284500

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Jim Jack
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06 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.*