

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 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 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 16 ground maintenance related enquiries were received and dealt with during this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Burns or Watercourses	1	0
Complaint Grounds Maintenance	1	1
Enforcement Officer Enquiries	1	0
Fencing Enquiries	2	8
Flower Bed or Bulb Displays	0	1
GalaDay Public Event Enquiries	2	0
Ground Ownership Enquiries	3	2
Grounds Property Vandalised	0	2
Hedge Cutting Enquiries	1	1
Public Park Enquiries	1	5
Shrub Bed Enquiries	1	0
Shrub Bed Overhanging Path	2	0
Shrub Beds Not Maintained	1	0
Sports Facility Enquiries	0	1
Total	16	21

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 13 garden maintenance enquiries received and dealt during this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Garden Maintenance Change Of Address	0	1
Garden Maintenance General Enquiries	13	6
Total	13	7

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

	2022	2021
Complaint Street Cleansing	0	1
Dead Animals	7	3
Dog Bin New Request for Bin	2	0
Dog Bin Overflowing	3	0
Dog Fouled Grass Open Space	3	1
Dog Fouling on Paths Roads	28	25
Dog No Fouling Sign Request	1	1
Fly Posting	1	4
Fly Tipping Dumping	38	46
Glass on Paths or Open Spaces	2	1
Graffiti Non-Offensive	0	1
Graffiti Racist or Offensive	0	3
Litter Bin Burnt Damaged	1	0
Litter Bin Overflowing	1	3
Litter General Enquiries	3	12
Litter Grass Open Space	0	1
Litter Paths Roads Verges	8	15
Needles/Syringes Abandoned	2	1
Street Sweeping Enquiries	7	5
Trolleys Abandoned/Dumped	2	1
Vehicles Abandoned	17	11
Total	126	135

Fly Tipping Enquiries (January-December)

	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Illegal Fly Tipping/Dumping	166	201	161	149	151

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 38 enquiries in relation to fly tipping for the period compared to 46 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 or kept on private land where they have the landowner's permission 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 Notices issued in Ward 8 for the period of 1 January 2022 – 31 March 2022. For the same period in 2021, there was no Fixed Penalty Notices 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 45% of their time. For 2021 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	77.64tonnes
Cost of disposal including costs for NETs team/vehicles	£51,162.43
Contractor removal of fly tipping	£0.00
Removal of asbestos	£0.00
TOTAL for all wards	£51,162.43

The number of enquiries received between 1 January 2022 – 31 March 2022 for the Ward was 38 out of 485 enquiries for the whole of West Lothian equating to 7.84% of fly tipping enquiries relating to Ward 8.

Percentage wise this would equate to an approximate cost for the Ward of £4,010.66 for disposal of fly tipping between 1 January 2022 – 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	169.97 tonnes
Cost of disposal including estimated costs for NETs team/vehicles	112,005.13
Contractor removal of fly tipping	£0.00
Removal of asbestos	£0.00
TOTAL	£112,005.13

The number of enquiries received between 1 January 2021 – 31 March 2021 or the Ward was 46 out of 727 enquiries for the whole of West Lothian equating to 6.33% of fly tipping enquiries relating to Ward 8.

Percentage wise this would equate to an approximate cost for the ward of £7,089.92 for disposal of fly tipping between 1 January 2021 – 31 March 2021 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 32 Tree and Woodland related enquiries were received during this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Tree Advice or Consultations	4	9
Tree Branches Overhanging	1	2
Tree Broken Damaged or Dead	3	3
Tree Dangerous or Unsafe	3	6
Tree Enquiries General	19	7
Tree Leaves Causing Problems	2	1
Total	32	28

	2022	2021
Access Rights Way Core Paths	2	1
Country Park General Enquiries	1	0
Ranger Service Beecraigs	0	1
Ranger Service General Enquiry	0	2
Total	3	4

Ranger Service Update

No. Rights of Way / Core Path / Patrols carried out (hours)	4.5
No. Volunteer hours	128

The Ranger Service have applied to NatureScot's Better Places Fund 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 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, ongoing projects, and volunteer sessions.

Following successful partnership working with the Lyme Resource Centre, 'tick trails' have been installed by the Ranger Service at five locations across the three Country Parks. The trails are due to stay up until the end of May and have been advertised on social media by the Lyme Resource Centre, and on the Council's Facebook page.

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 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 in contact once there is the 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 two new access enquiries during this reporting period. Both enquiries were related to Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) ponds in Wester Inch, involving pond ownership and access rights for water sports.

Little Boghead Nature Park

A Ranger and an Ecology & Biodiversity Officer met with a member of the Little Boghead Friends group to walk the site, take a note of tasks that needed carried out and discuss how volunteers could help with these.

The Lothian Conservation Volunteers (LCV) spent a weekend carrying out pond work tasks at Little Boghead, clearing vegetation from one of the four ponds. This will help to provide vital open water habitat for dragonflies, damselflies and amphibians.

The Rangers also held two Volunteer Ranger Service (VRS) sessions to coincide with The Lothian Conservation Volunteers at Little Boghead. They carried out an aftercare of trees planted in 2016, cutting blackthorn and dogwood away from path edges, and scraping mud from paths. The Rangers were supported by the maintenance team, who gave the group their flatbed truck for cuttings, and took the green waste to Whitehill Service Centre.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Solomon Ede has joined the team to cover for Hannah Crow's maternity leave. The Ecology and Biodiversity Workplan is attached, as a reminder of the roles and responsibilities of the team.

Wee forest - The team are working with Open Space, Planning Services and Edinburgh and Lothian Greenspace Trust to identify a suitable site for a Wee Forest in Bathgate/Boghall. Wee Forests are the Scottish version of Miyawaki Forests – high density native tree and shrub planting in urban areas designed to provide maximum biodiversity benefit in small spaces. This wee forest will be the fourth in West Lothian.

Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) - The data-collection and analysis contract for the LBAP has been awarded to Natural Capital Solutions. They will be working in partnership with WSP to produce a baseline habitat map of West Lothian and a habitat condition assessment. Using this information, they will then calculate values for the multiple benefits provided by these natural assets (including carbon storage and sequestration, air quality regulation, and accessible nature). This work will be used to inform the revised WL Local Biodiversity Action Plan and the council's Carbon Management Plan.

D6 Open Space and Cemeteries

Wester Inch Circle Play Area, Bathgate. The toddler multi-unit will be replaced in Autumn 2022. The existing play area footpath will also be extended and upgraded.

Hope Park Gardens Play Area, Bathgate. Refurbishment is largely complete. Additional toddler play equipment has been installed, existing equipment has been refurbished, seat has been replaced, and vegetation has been cleared from perimeter. The bin will be replaced in Summer 2022, concluding works.

Kirkton Park Play Area, Bathgate. 'Birds Nest' climbing unit has been replaced.

Little Boghead Play Area, Bathgate. Swings have now been replaced.

Philip Avenue Play Area, Bathgate. Swings have now been replaced.

Bathgate Community Development Trust is considering the responsibilities of managing a new allotment with a focus on potentially developing part of the Council's Alexandra Drive Park in Boghall, following a site meeting in March.

Open Space Enquiries

There were four Open Space enquiries for this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Adopting Childrens Play Areas	0	1
Childrens Play Enquiries	4	5
Complaint Childrens Play Areas	0	1
Total	4	7

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 76 Cemeteries enquiries for this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Bench Donations	0	1
Cemeteries General Enquiries	9	15
Complaint Cemeteries & Burials	2	0
Lair Enquiries	9	4
Lair Sunken or Uneven	0	1
Memorial/ Headstone Works	22	34
New Interment Booking	23	48
Purchase of Interment Lair	10	37
War Memorial Enquiries	1	0
Total	76	140

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

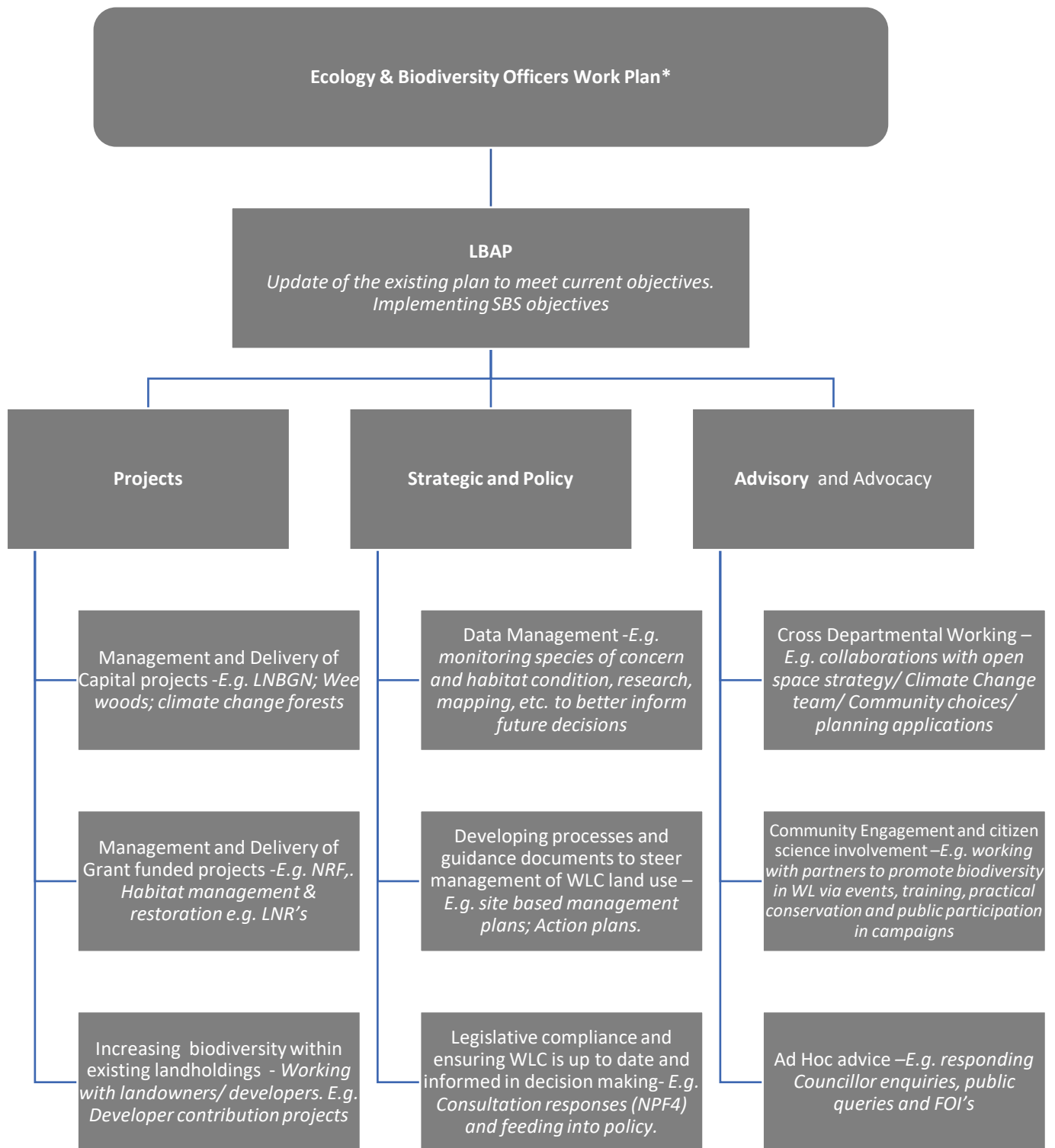
Capital Programme

Appendices/Attachments: One

Appendix 1 - Ecology & Biodiversity Officers Work Plan

Contact Person: Pat McArdle, Whitehill Service Centre, Bathgate 01506 284616,
Pat.McArdle@westlothian.gov.uk

Jim Jack
Head of Operational Services
13 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.*