

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 2022 – 30 September 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 July 2022 – 30 September 2022.

D2 Grounds Maintenance Routine Works

The grass cutting team for the ward are on cycle 11 and due to the time of the year and wet weather will not be able to start the 12th cut. This will be one short of the Service Level Agreement of 12 cuts.

All grass areas that required a one-off cut have been completed.

It has been a difficult year for our weed management squads and as stated in previous reports we are currently running behind due to weather conditions throughout the year and may not complete the second weed spray of our soft landscaping areas.

The winter works programme of open space hedge cutting and shrub bed maintenance will start in late October.

Enquiries are being dealt with on a daily basis.

Grounds Maintenance Enquiries

In total 59 ground maintenance related enquiries were received and dealt with during this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Bench or Seat Enquiries	0	1
Burns or Watercourses	3	0
Complaint Grounds Maintenance	0	3
Fencing Enquiries	1	0
Flower Bed or Bulb Displays	0	1
Grass Area Damaged	2	0
Grass Cutting Enquiries	10	13
Grass Cutting Missed Not Cut	3	4
Grass Highway Verges	1	1
Grounds Property Vandalised	4	1
Hedge Cutting Enquiries	2	4
Neighbourhood Env. Teams	1	1
Public Park Enquiries	2	2
Shrub Bed Enquiries	1	1
Shrub Bed Overhanging Path	15	17
Shrub Beds Not Maintained	0	1
Shrub/ Vegetation Sight Lines	2	0
Weeds General Enquiries	6	13
Weeds on Paths or Roads	6	4
Total	59	67

Garden Maintenance Routine Works

The Garden Maintenance Scheme grass cutting was completed and have met the Service Level Agreement of 11 grass cuts. Garden Maintenance hedge cutting will commence in early October and weather permitting will be completed by the end of October.

Garden Maintenance Enquiries

In total there were 35 garden maintenance enquiries received and dealt during this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Complaint Garden Maintenance	2	0
Garden Maintenance Accident Ins Claim	1	0
Garden Maintenance General Enquiries	14	9
Garden Maintenance Grass Not Cut	10	20
Garden Maintenance Hedge Cutting	2	0
Garden Maintenance No Longer Req	0	1
Garden Maintenance Standard Of Cut	6	2
Total	35	32

D4 Cleaner Communities Routine Works

Staff continue to carry out routine works of emptying street litter/ dog waste bins, litter picking and sweeping of footpaths and road channels while dealing with enquiries as they arise.

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

The NETs team continue to deal with fly tipping enquiries and removing fly tipping from Council ground.

The contract for carrying out a deep clean of Bathgate Town Centre that was approved through the Covid recovery funds within the Ward has been completed.

We have now received the nine replacement compact sweepers giving us one per Ward.

Cleaner Communities Enquiries

In total 120 cleaner communities enquiries were received and dealt with during this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Complaint Street Cleansing	0	2
Dead Animals	5	3
Dog Bin New Request for Bin	2	2
Dog Bin Overflowing	1	0
Dog Fouling on Paths Roads	16	6
Dog No Fouling Sign Request	0	1
Fly Posting	1	2
Fly Tipping Dumping	44	29
Glass on Paths or Open Spaces	4	3
Graffiti Racist or Offensive	4	3
Litter Bin Burnt Damaged	1	1
Litter Bin New Request For Bin	2	2
Litter Bin Overflowing	1	2
Litter General Enquiries	0	7
Litter Grass Open Space	0	1
Litter Paths Roads Verges	20	4

Needles/Syringes Abandoned	0	2
Street Sweeping Enquiries	3	3
Trolleys Abandoned/Dumped	1	2
Vehicles Abandoned	15	12
Total	120	87

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 44 enquiries in relation to fly tipping for the period compared to 29 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 No (0) Fixed Penalty Notices issued in Ward 8 for the period 1 July 2022 – 30 September 2022. For the same period in 2021, there was two (2) Fixed Penalty Notices issued within the Ward.

Officers carried out Dog Fouling Stencilling within Belvedere Road/Place Bathgate.

Costs for fly tipping for the period 1 July 2022 –30 September 2022:

Please note the table below for 2022 covers the period of strike action when any Fly tipping would have been taken direct to the contractor's site instead of the Councils transfer station, and is not included in the figures below.

Wards	Number of Fly Tipping Enquiries	% of enquiries relating to Ward	Total Tonnage all wards	Cost of disposal including costs for NETs team/vehicles	Contractor removal of Fly Tipping	Removal of Asbestos
1	12	2.32	56.56	£865.10		
2	48	9.28	56.56	£3,460.40		
3	66	12.77	56.56	£4,758.04		

4	98	18.96	56.56	£6,675.25		
5	118	22.82	56.56	£8,506.81		
6	32	6.19	56.56	£2,306.93		
7	64	12.38	56.56	£4,613.86		
8	44	8.51	56.56	£3,172.03		
9	35	6.77	56.56	£2,523.21		
TOTAL	517			£34,574.70		

Costs for fly tipping for the period 1 July 2021 – 30 September 2021

Wards	Number of Fly Tipping Enquiries	% of enquiries relating to Ward	Total Tonnage all wards	Cost of disposal including costs for NETs team/vehicles	Contractor removal of Fly Tipping	Removal of Asbestos
1	32	6.08	63.38	£2,540.00		
2	42	7.98	63.38	£3,334.89		
3	68	12.93	63.38	£5,399.34		
4	93	17.68	63.38	£7,384.40		
5	144	27.38	63.38	£11,433.91		
6	38	7.22	63.38	£3,017.28		
7	62	11.79	63.38	£4,922.93		
8	29	5.51	63.38	£2,302.66		
9	18	3.42	63.38	£1,429.24		
TOTAL	526			£41,764.65		

D5 Parks and Woodland

Parks and Woodland Enquiries

In total there were 33 Tree and Woodland related enquiries were received during this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Tree Advice or Consultations	6	9
Tree Blocking Light	0	1
Tree Branches Overhanging	10	9
Tree Broken Damaged or Dead	0	1
Tree Dangerous or Unsafe	5	0
Tree Enquiries General	12	12
Tree Felling Work Unauthorised	0	1
Tree Leaves Causing Problems	0	1
Total	33	34

	2022	2021
Access Rights Way Core Paths	1	0
Country Park General Enquiries	2	0
Total	3	0

Tree and Woodland Management

Ash Dieback Disease

Observations have shown that the decline in ash trees due to this disease has not been as rapid as seen over the previous two much wetter years. However, a repeat survey of some of the areas of trees previously looked at showed the following: -

- 4% showed an improvement
- 71% had the same condition score
- 25% were worse

A condition survey of all the ash trees along the road network managed by WLC, started two years ago, has been completed and once the results have been compiled an update will be published on the Ash Dieback section of the website [Ash Dieback Disease - West Lothian Council](#).

One of the Tree Inspectors, Wayne Murphy, has been appointed to the new post of Ash Dieback Officer. It is proposed that he will be supported by a new Technical Officer in due course and that the Tree & Woodland Team will be strengthened with the appointment of two apprentices.

Preparations are being made to undertake further remedial work along roads and in well-used public openspace over Winter 2022-23. This will be followed by replanting in suitable locations.

Ranger Service Update

No. Rights of Way / Core Path / Patrols carried out (hours)	6
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The six new Assistant Rangers, funded by NatureScot's Better Places Fund 3, have been working with the Ranger team since the start of July. Their remit is to raise awareness of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC), providing information and advice to visitors across West Lothian.

Since July, they have patrolled over 250km, with 160+ hours spent on patrolling hotspot areas, including several patrols of Ravenraig, where many fire sites have been cleared and litter removed from site.

The Assistant Rangers have started delivering Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) lessons to P6/7 classes and have visited two schools in Bathgate so far, delivering a total of four lessons, which have received a high level of engagement from students.

The Wild Wednesday events for summer 2022 were a success, with the Assistant Rangers being joined by many different partner organisations, including the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, RSPB, Hopetoun Ranger Service, Home Energy Scotland, Police Scotland, the Scottish Governments Road Safety Campaign 'Ziggy's Big Day Out' and the West Lothian Council's Waste Strategy Team.

The wildfire fire risk for July was 'Very High' and a number of sites suffered from fire damage and ongoing smouldering fires. The Assistant Rangers attended four fires, along with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service - three of which were discovered by the Assistants during hotspot patrols.

The monthly Volunteer Ranger Service (VRS) sessions continue to be popular with regular and new volunteers, and the Ranger team have been able to offer extra sessions due to having the Assistant Rangers in post.

The Ranger Service continue to assist different organisations wishing to run events across West Lothian and within the Country Parks, including running clubs, filming crews, RSPB and Home Energy Scotland.

Little Boghead Nature Park

The Ranger Service have met with the Friends of Little Boghead group and the Ecology & Biology team to plan tasks for next year. The Lothian Conservation Volunteers (LCV) have been booked in for two pond work sessions to clear out vegetation, ahead of two Community/Volunteer Ranger Service sessions at the end of October.

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 in the process of talking through existing access issues and the format for submitting planning comments with the Access Ranger, to move enquiries forward and process new ones.

Any access enquiries should continue to be reported through the 'Report it > Core Paths & Rights of Way' section on the Council's website.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Ecology and Biodiversity Officers are actively engaged in the co-design process for Nature networks and 30 x 30 with NatureScot by participating in workshops. Nature networks and 30 x 30 are two key mechanisms being put forward to meet Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. The next round of workshops has been scheduled for late October to mid-November. The overall intention is for NatureScot to deliver a draft framework development which will be consulted on next spring with the intention on publishing guidance in June 2023. It's hoped this will be used in connection with our forthcoming Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP).

Government Consultations - Officers compiled a council response to the Scottish Government's Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SBS) consultation. The SBS will be a new 10-year national strategy for biodiversity, which will influence statutory nature restoration targets set in the new Natural Environment Bill. The council response included a detailed analysis of the draft document, identified shortcomings and proposed amendments for the final strategy. The response was agreed at the WLC Environment and Sustainability PDSP and Council Executive.

Planning – Officers continue to provide input to planning applications, to ensure that legislation for the protection of wildlife, and policies and processes to safeguard the environment are followed. This ranges from written responses, to meetings with Planning officers and developers to discuss particular concerns (for example with regard to protected species). This type of proactive working with developers and the Planning team should encourage better results for local environments and wildlife in future applications. For the reporting period, Ecology and Biodiversity team received 264 planning applications for Ecological comments of which 36 were specific to Bathgate.

Community Choices - Officers have been working on a grassland management plan for grounds maintenance. The plan seeks to improve the diversity of habitats in settlements and to enhance nature networks across the area, through changed land management including relaxed grass cutting, in appropriate areas voted on by communities.

WLC Climate Emergency Fund projects

- Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) – a new LBAP is being created by officers. Currently, consultants are compiling a map of habitats across the whole of West Lothian and assessing the condition of the habitats. Once this is done, they will also calculate the benefits provided by the habitats, and specifically the benefits provided by the natural assets owned by West Lothian Council. This information will guide how habitats should be managed and enhanced through the LBAP, in order to ensure viable nature networks across the area. An LBAP partnership will be set up with other land owners/managers in West Lothian to work together on this joint plan.

Nature Restoration Fund projects

- Raingardens – these are areas in parks and open spaces that naturally collect water, where we are creating bog gardens to enhance biodiversity and also slow the flow of water from the park drainage into the wider drainage system (Chapel Well Garden).
- Habitat monitoring – Buglife was employed to organise and lead urban wildflower meadow (Balbardie Park) and freshwater workshops for the public over the summer of 2022. They also assessed the condition of all the B-Lines wildflower meadows created in the last 2-3 years and compiled a report to aid in the management of these meadows as they develop.

D6 Open Space and Cemeteries

Wester Inch Circle Play Area, Bathgate. Works to replace the toddler multi-unit, and upgrade footpaths have been completed.

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 is due to be replaced, concluding works.

Windyknowe Park - The survey results report on the initial community consultation is available on the website at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/parkinfo> under feedback. A number of enhancements were suggested by the community and three proposals were drawn up for the community to vote on. Quotes for the most popular will be obtained and implemented, if within budget.

Open Space Enquiries

There were seven Open Space enquiries for this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Childrens Play Enquiries	7	6
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 98 Cemeteries enquiries for this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Cemeteries General Enquiries	7	10
Complaint Cemeteries & Burials	0	1
Family History Searches	1	0
Lair Enquiries	11	5
Lair Sunken or Uneven	1	1
Memorial/ Headstone Works	25	41
New Interment Booking	38	42
Purchase of Interment Lair	13	20
War Memorial Enquiries	2	0
Total	98	120

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: None

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14 November 2022