

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



FAULDHOUSE AND THE BREICH VALLEY 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 July 2022 – 30 September 2022.

B. RECOMMENDATION

Members are requested to:

1. Note the work carried out to date and future planned work.
2. Advise of any areas that require further investigation or inclusion in future work plans.

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

Routine grass cutting and weed control tasks have been completed.

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

We are reviewing our weed spraying operations, and are currently developing a Weed Control Management Plan. This exercise will involve: -

- Looking at new technology
- Investigating alternative methods of weed control
- Working closely with our Open Space Officers and Ecologists

Grounds Maintenance Enquiries

In total 30 grounds maintenance related enquiries were received and dealt with during this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Allotment Enquiries	1	0
Bench or Seat Enquiries	1	2
Complaint Grounds Maintenance	0	1
Fencing Enquiries	0	1
Grass Cutting Enquiries	4	13
Grass Cutting Missed Not Cut	1	2
Grass Highway Verges	4	5
Grass Left On Paths or Roads	1	0
Ground Ownership Enquiries	1	2
Grounds Property Vandalised	1	1
Hedge Cutting Enquiries	2	2
Manholecover Damaged In Grass	0	1
Public Park Enquiries	2	3
Shrub Bed Enquiries	2	2
Shrub Bed Overhanging Path	5	9
Shrub Beds Not Maintained	0	2
Sports Facility Enquiries	0	1
Weeds General Enquiries	4	4
Weeds on Paths or Roads	1	5
Total	30	56

D3 Garden Maintenance Routine Works

The Garden Maintenance Scheme grass cutting is completed and we 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 39 garden maintenance related enquiries received and dealt with during this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Complaint Garden Maintenance	4	2
Garden Maintenance Accident Ins Claim	1	0
Garden Maintenance General Enquiries	17	14
Garden Maintenance Grass Not Cut	13	15
Garden Maintenance Hedge Cutting	2	3
Garden Maintenance No Longer Required	0	2
Garden Maintenance Standard Of Cut	2	4
Total	39	40

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 road sweeping of category A, B, C & U roads 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 65 cleaner communities related enquiries were received and dealt with during this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Dead Animals	5	2
Dog Bin New Request for Bin	1	0
Dog Fouled Grass Open Space	0	1
Dog Fouling on Paths Roads	6	5
Fly Tipping Dumping	32	38
Glass on Paths or Open Spaces	0	1
Graffiti Non Offensive	0	2
Graffiti Racist or Offensive	1	2
Litter Bin New Request For Bin	3	0
Litter Bin Overflowing	1	0
Litter General Enquiries	0	2
Litter Paths Roads Verges	2	2

Needles Syringes Abandoned	2	0
Street Sweeping Enquiries	3	3
Trolleys Abandoned/ Dumped	0	1
Vehicle Abandoned	9	10
Total	65	69

Fly Tipping Enquiries (January - December)

	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Illegal Fly Tipping/Dumping	202	164	155	122	127

Environmental Community Action

Officers continue to deal with enquiries relating to fly tipping, littering, dog fouling, abandoned vehicles and general enquiries. There have been 32 enquiries in relation to fly tipping for the period compared to 38 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 from rogue owners, 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 was no (0) Fixed Penalty Notice issued in Ward 6 for the period of 1 July 2022 – 30 September 2022 for fly tipping only. For the same period in 2021, there were no (0) Fixed Penalty Notices issued within the Ward for fly tipping only.

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

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	13	2.51	56.56	£935.38		
2	49	9.46	56.56	£3,525.67		
3	66	12.74	56.56	£4,748.86		
4	98	18.92	56.56	£7,051.34		
5	117	22.59	56.56	£8,418.43		
6	32	6.18	56.56	£2,302.48		
7	64	12.36	56.56	£4,604.95		

8	44	8.49	56.56	£3,165.91		
9	35	6.76	56.56	£2,518.33		
Total	518			£37,271.35		

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	£2,450.87		
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	7.72	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		63.38	£41,765.52		

D5 Parks and Woodland

In total 19 Parks and Woodland related enquiries were inspected during this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Tree Advice or Consultations	3	7
Tree Blocking Light	1	0
Tree Branches Overhanging	4	4
Tree Dangerous or Unsafe	1	0
Tree Enquiries General	9	6
Tree Woodland Enquiries	1	0
Total	19	17

	2022	2021
Access Rights Way Core Paths	1	6
Country Park Forestry or Woods	1	0
Total	2	6

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 open spaces 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)	10
No. Access Enquiries	1

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. They do this through patrols of 'hotspot' areas, running events, volunteering sessions and delivering school lessons. Their contracts end on 31 October 2022.

Since July, they have patrolled over 250 km, with 160+ hours spent on patrolling hotspot areas across West Lothian, and Country Parks.

The Assistant Rangers have started delivering Scottish Outdoor Access Code lessons to P5/6/7 classes and have visited Our Ladys R C, Woodmuir, Stoneyburn, and Longridge Primary Schools, delivering a total of five lessons. They returned to Stoneyburn Primary School in October.

A Wild Wednesday event was held in Addiewell, in partnership with Home Energy Scotland, Hopetoun Ranger Service, Woodlands Breathing and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. The event received good reception from visitors and partner organisations.

The Assistant Rangers attended the Fauldhouse & Breich Valley Community Development Trusts' Annual Fair Day with their pop-up stall, providing games and information on the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and local wildlife. They also attended the Addiewell Family Fun Day with their stall and held two invertebrate-themed 'Minibeast Monday' sessions in Addiewell, as part of the Summer of Play. They also held a community pop-up event in Stoneyburn in October.

The Ranger Service are due to attend a large volunteering event at Skolie Burn with Skolie Burn Community Meadow & Woodland Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) and student volunteers, to help improve the meadows. Tasks include scything bracken, fence removal, litter picking and orchard work.

The monthly Volunteer Ranger Service (VRS) sessions still run twice a month at different locations across West Lothian. More information can be found at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/ranger-service>

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 and orienteering events.

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 continue to give guidance to the Access Ranger on existing access issues and planning applications. Any access enquiries should continue to be reported through the 'Report it > Core Paths & Rights of Way' section on the Council's website.

The Rangers received one new access enquiry during this time, concerning access rights to Greenburn Golf Club for recreational use. The customer was contacted and provided with advice and information on access rights for golf courses and advised that under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, access rights apply for crossing a fairway to reach onward travel, but not for general recreational use.

There are two ongoing enquiries still being managed, concerning Core Path 19 in Foulshiels and signs obstructing access near Hens Nest Road in Bathgate. Both landowners have been contacted.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Government Consultations - Officers compiled and submitted a council response to the Scottish Government's Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SBS) consultation in September. The SBS will be a new 10-year national strategy for biodiversity, influencing statutory nature restoration targets set out 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.

Ecology and Biodiversity Officers are actively engaged in the co-design process for Nature Networks and 30 x 30 with NatureScot. These are two key mechanisms for meeting agreed international biodiversity targets. Following several rounds of workshops, NatureScot will deliver a draft framework to be consulted on next spring, and guidance published in June 2023. We plan to observe Nature Networks and 30x30 guidance in the forthcoming West Lothian LBAP (Local Biodiversity Action Plan).

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 (e.g. 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, the team received 264 planning applications for ecological comments of which 26 were specific to Fauldhouse and Breich Valley.

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 their condition. Following this, the benefits provided by the habitats will be calculated - specifically benefits provided by the council's natural assets. 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 bog gardens are created to enhance biodiversity and slow the flow of water from the park drainage into the wider drainage system.
- Bog restoration - Pottishaw Moss. Though not in WLC ownership, officers have continued to liaise with the land owners for some restoration works to be carried out. Easter Inch Moss - officers now have a scope of approach for the restoration project and are in the process of engaging contractors.
- Habitat monitoring – Buglife was employed to organise and lead urban wildflower meadow 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.

Open Space and Cemeteries

Open Space Works

Parkhead Recreational Grounds, West Calder - Phase One of the project has now been completed, delivering a formal, accessible path into the park, replacing the old dirt path and biodiversity enhancements. Phase Two has also been appointed, due to start on site early next year – this will deliver seating. The project has been split into two phases due to furniture lead times.

Langside Gardens Green - The Community choices exercise has now been completed for the project, giving the Open Space team a clear steer on preferred park improvements. The consultation report can be found here:

[Langside Gardens Green - Community Choices Survey Report August 2022 - updated.pdf \(westlothian.gov.uk\)](#) . The team is now producing a tender package and looking to appoint a contract by the end of the year.

D6 Open Space Enquiries

There were four open space related enquiries received and dealt with during this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Childrens Play Enquiries	1	2
Play Area Property Vandalised	1	0
Safety Issues In Play Areas	2	1
Total	4	3

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 62 cemeteries related enquiries received and dealt with during this reporting period.

	2022	2021
Cemeteries General Enquiries	7	10
Cemetery Property Vandalised	1	0
Complaint Cemeteries & Burials	1	0
Family History Searches	1	0
Lair Enquiries	8	8
Lair Sunken or Uneven	0	1
Memorial/ Headstone Works	11	18
New Interment Booking	24	37
Purchase of Interment Lair	9	11
Total	62	85

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

Contact Person: Pat McArdle, Whitehill Service Centre, Bathgate 01506 284616,

Pat.McArdle@westlothian.gov.uk

Jim Jack
Head of Operational Services
10 January 2023