



West Lothian Report on the

# Scottish Biodiversity Duty 2011 -14

## 1.0 Introduction

Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act (2004), all public bodies in Scotland are required to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act (2011) requires public bodies in Scotland to provide a publicly available report, every three years, on the actions which they have taken to meet this biodiversity duty. The first report is due to be published by 1 January 2015 covering the period 2011-2014.

The Scottish Government published [Scotland's Biodiversity: It's in Your Hands](#) in 2004 which aims to ***"conserve biodiversity for the health, enjoyment and well-being of the people of Scotland, now and in the future"***. This Scottish Biodiversity Strategy was updated in June 2013 with the [2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity](#). This update to the Strategy reflects international commitments and the European Union's Biodiversity Strategy for 2020. It focuses on the desired outcomes for 2020 to halt the loss of biodiversity in Scotland and to restore the essential services and benefits to society that a healthy natural environment provides.

The following is West Lothian Council's report on how, as an organisation, it has addressed its biodiversity duty over the period 2011-14. It follows a layout suggested by the Scottish Government.



## 2.0 Governance – leadership and management of biodiversity matters

### West Lothian Council: Environment Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel

West Lothian's main source of governance on biodiversity matters is the Environment Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (PDSP) that comprises elected members who develop new policies for the council, or review existing policies to see if changes are needed. While they do not have the power to make decisions, they can make recommendations to the Council Executive. The Environment PDSP has responsibility for consideration of a wide range of environmental reports, including biodiversity, as well as the emerging *Climate Change Strategy* and associated Action Plans, including the annual *Scottish Climate Change Declaration* report.

The Chair of the Environment PDSP, currently Cllr Tom Conn, is the executive member with portfolio responsibility for environmental matters.

West Lothian Council has entered into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with The Wildlife Information Centre (TWIC) since 2006 to provide support ecology and biodiversity support. There are three components to the SLA:

#### **a) Planning screening**

This system involves checking the boundaries of planning applications within West Lothian against a range of potential biodiversity constraints and providing reports to Development Management listing all constraints per application. The systematic checking of all planning applications for impacts on biodiversity contributes to the fulfilment of a local authority's biodiversity duty as required in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. The checking system involves cooperation between local authority and TWIC staff as follows. On a weekly basis:

- a) council's nominated officer will extract new applications for that period and e-mails the data (site boundaries and application details in GIS format) to TWIC;
- b) TWIC checks all applications for biodiversity constraints and e-mails a report listing constraints to the council's nominated officer.

The statistics for the previous three years are as follows:

<b>Year</b>	<b>TWIC screened planning applications</b>	<b>Potential biodiversity constraint identified</b>
2011/12	915	222
2012/13	610	87
2013/14	650	179
2014/15	539	211

During the second quarter of 2014-15, TWIC screened 281 planning applications, with 117 of these (41.6%) resulting in a potential biodiversity constraint being identified.

#### **b) Notable / protected species (Geographic Information System) GIS data**

This is a licensed product supplied by TWIC to the council as a GIS layer and associated database. The licence includes an up-to-date dataset at the beginning of financial year (first quarter), a minimum of one further update during the year (normally the third quarter) and the ability for West Lothian Council to request an update once during the year to ensure the most current data available at a specified point in time.

### c) Local Biodiversity Sites system management

TWIC co-ordinate and manage the Local Biodiversity Sites system in West Lothian on behalf of the council. Specifically, TWIC undertake, within the agreed time, the following work:

1. co-ordination of the LBS Steering Group to develop work programmes, site selection and review and to provide the secretariat for one meeting in the year.
2. management of LBS data – maintaining list of LBS sites, updating records as new information becomes available.
3. maintenance and provision of GIS layer of LBS sites.
4. assessing sites (target six sites) as required and notifying owners when required.
5. once sites are confirmed as LBS producing sites statements and notifying landowners.

The existing *West Lothian Local Plan* was adopted in 2009 with the commitment to review the 29 **Local Wildlife Sites** (now termed potential **Local Biodiversity Sites**) listed in the local plan. The pLBS Working Group is chaired by the council and administered by TWIC and consists of the council's Planning Services & Countryside Services, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Wildlife Trust and several local biodiversity experts.

Regionally Important Geological & Geomorphological sites (RIGS) now called **Geodiversity Sites** are reviewed separately with the help of British Geological Survey, Lothian & Borders Geo-conservation Group and Almond Valley Heritage Trust.

It is estimated there are approximately 130 potential Local Biodiversity Sites (pLBS) across West Lothian, but not all have had an ecological survey that would allow assessment under the LBS criteria. These pLBS will be shown in the forthcoming local development plan and discussed with landowners. Site Management Briefs will be prepared, potentially with the assistance of Scottish Natural Heritage, which will identify key management actions and potential sources of grant funding.



Blawhorn Moss

### 3.0 Action – actions the organisation has taken to protect and enhance biodiversity and contribute to the 2020 Challenge

#### Easter Inch Moss & Seafield Law Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

West Lothian's first LNR was designated in 2006. The local management group made up of interested locals, councils officials from Planning Services and Countryside Services and the Police continue to meet twice a year, albeit this is a reduction in the original quarterly meeting that have proved hard to resource.

Central Scotland Green Network Trust (CSGNT) in 2011 funded the revision of the original Management Plan. This involved a hydrological survey and a Phase 1 habitat survey.

The council was successful in obtaining an initial £35k grant from the SNH Green Stimulus: Peatland Restoration Fund in 2013 for phase 1 damming works on the Moss and a further £26k in 2014 from the same fund for further damming and scrub clearance works. Data loggers relating to water depth have been installed.

The Countryside Service Rangers Team organised a **Moss Fun Day** in September 2014 that attracted over 200 local people.



Black Moss, Armadale

### Black Moss, Armadale

Similar to Easter Inch, the council was successful in obtaining a £20k grant from SNH Green Stimulus: Peatland Restoration Fund for the council owned Black Moss. This will allow a hydrological survey and Management Plan to be prepared. In tandem, SNH will act as Agent and oversee the initial damming works on the Moss via a contractor.

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There have been discussions with the adjacent landowner about managing the part of the Moss in private ownership. Central Scotland Green Network Trust carried out a Phase 1 habitat survey on both private and public parts of the moss in September due to the need to carry out the survey at an appropriate time in the survey season.

The Draft Management Plan will be discussed with representatives of Armadale Community Council and have an associated Action Plan that will allow various interested parties to lead on biodiversity conservation works related to enhancing the bog over the next five years.

### Harperrig Reservoir Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

While the Local Nature Reserve has been through the committee designation process, it has not formally been implemented as the LNR Management Group have yet to agree the status of the car park at the west end of the Reservoir. A successful application to West Lothian Land Trust for car park improvements has been obtained and negotiations are proceeding.

A Management Plan (2009-14) was prepared after public consultation. This contained a number of biodiversity elements e.g.; the reinstatement of "**Gull Island**" after drainage works on the Reservoir that has been achieved. The management plan is under review.

The residents, land owners and land managers continue to meet on an annual basis.

## Geodiversity

An important strand of biodiversity is geodiversity. In December 2012, the council signed the Scottish Geodiversity Charter. The Charter encourages determined and collective action from all sectors – public bodies, commercial businesses, land owners and managers, academics, teachers, voluntary organisations and individuals – to fulfil the vision and so ensure that Scotland's geodiversity is adequately considered and conserved.

The Charter takes each of these sectors and suggests actions that these groups should undertake.

For **individuals and communities** it highlights a couple of case studies, one of which is the Witch Craig Wall Local Geodiversity Site. This was established in the Bathgate Hills near Beecraigs Country Park in the early 2000's with the agreement and help of a local landowner. A viewing point over the Firth of Forth and surrounding hills is made up from rocks from across Scotland. A leaflet to explain the view point and its rocks is available.

With **landowners and managers and non-governmental organisations**, a case study refers to Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) Geodiversity Policy (2002) where the Trust will promote the conservation of geodiversity through its work on its reserves and in its support for the Local Geodiversity Site system.

In West Lothian, SWT own the Petershill Wildlife Reserve in a former Reservoir on the outskirts of Bathgate that contains an interesting fossil section. SWT manage the site for local people who take access from the adjacent Bugthknowes Estate. A leaflet explaining the site and its geology has been updated and placed on the council's website.

In relation to **developers, industry and the business sector** there is a case study covering Ravelrig Quarry, Kirknewton. Here, just outwith West Lothian, Tarmac's Quarry is a major source of aggregate for Central Scotland. Discussions have taken place with Lothian & Borders GeoConservation about restoration of the site when the quarry operation ceases, and the prospect of leaving an accessible rock exposure to show the contact of the dolerite sill with underlying sedimentary rocks.

For **local authorities, public agencies and government departments** the Charter advocates they *"ensure that due consideration, management, enhancement and promotion of geodiversity and Local Geodiversity Sites are an integral part of decision making, and support action by local communities to achieve this"*.



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In West Lothian, a grant was obtained from the Scottish Government in 2006 that allowed the British Geological Survey (BGS) to carry out a comprehensive field survey of over 200 potential sites representing a wide range of geological eras across the district. The various volumes just require some updating before publication. However, the accompanying Action Plan originally drawn up needs to be updated and refreshed in the light of reduced national and local budget resources.

In addition, a West Lothian Geodiversity Working Group has been formed. It consists of BGS, SNH, Almond Valley Heritage Trust and Lothian and Borders GeoConservation and has met to review and prioritise the potential geodiversity sites that will be shown in the forthcoming local development plan. The citations relating to these individual sites that covers their scientific economic and environmental characteristics will be provided as a background technical note and the basis of consultation with various landowners. Approximately half the sites are in public ownership.

Three interpretation leaflets relating to Kirkton Quarry, Petershill by Bathgate and Binny Craig in the Bathgate Hills have all been updated and placed on the council's website. The Working Group are considering another six new leaflets of publically accessible geodiversity sites. There could also be scope for permanent on site interpretation if external grants can be found.

## 4.0 Mainstreaming – examples of how biodiversity has been incorporated into corporate policy, plans and projects

### West Lothian Local Development Plan: *Main Issue Report (MIR)*

The council consulted on the *Main Issues Report (MIR)* for the *West Lothian Local Development Plan (LDP)* between August and October 2014, together with associated documents comprising the *Monitoring Statement* and interim *Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)*. An overall aim of West Lothian's LDP will be ensuring that new development is in the most sustainable locations

As part of the MIR process, a *Habitat Regulation Appraisal* was also undertaken where the implications from preferred options on nature conservation sites protected by European legislation were considered.

In addition, a *Strategic Environmental Assessment* was carried out. As the previous adopted *West Lothian Local Plan (2009)* had been exempt from the SEA process, a baseline SEA had to be created.

### Green Networks

Within the MIR, a background *Technical Paper* was produced relating to green networks. Among the various types on green networks, there are various networks identified that can contribute to improved biodiversity.

### Supplementary Planning Guidance: *Residential Development Guide (RDG)*

The *Residential Development Guide Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) 2013* addresses, among a wide array of development issues related to house building, biodiversity issues that need considered (see page 60).

Developers will be required to assess the biodiversity status of sites by undertaking an ecological survey, and the outcomes, which can sometimes have a profound effect on developability and the development programme, should be used to influence the design of the residential development in order to conserve, enhance and create further opportunities for biodiversity.

The RDG makes links to detailed biodiversity guidance that is also available from the council in a separate document entitled *Planning for biodiversity action in West Lothian*. The aim of this Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) is "to enhance and increase the mosaic of habitats and the key species of which they are composed to address their importance in the environmental, social and economic values of West Lothian". However, this detailed second LBAP for West Lothian from 2005-09 is now out of date, but the priority species and habitats it identified remain relevant.

Due to staff and budget resource issues, there are no plans to currently update this LBAP.

## Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance: *Planning for Nature – Development Management & Wildlife*

In autumn 2013, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) approached West Lothian Council about being the case study for the production of a best practice example of supplementary planning guidance (SPG) for developers relating to natural heritage issues and the planning process.

SNH wished to use this guidance to show other Scottish local authorities a simple, up-to-date template of how they could produce their own authority specific supplementary planning guidance.

Consultants Natural Capital, were appointed and managed by SNH to produce this draft SPG over winter 2013 / spring 2014 with detailed input from West Lothian Council Planning Services Development Planning and Development Management sections. The consultant assessed existing relevant information across the UK.

This resulting [draft guidance](#) sets out how the biodiversity (wildlife and habitats) and geodiversity (rocks, soils and fossils) of the West Lothian area will be taken into account when considering all development proposals.

It aims to help developers fully consider the wildlife and habitat implications of proposals which need planning permission. When adopted, the guidance will be a material consideration when local authority development management officers consider planning applications.

The finalised guidance will be incorporated into the forthcoming *West Lothian Local Development Plan*.



Breich Water

## Edinburgh and Lothians Forestry & Woodland Strategy

The purpose of the *Edinburgh and Lothians Forestry & Woodland Strategy 2012-17* (ELFWS) is to guide woodland expansion and management across the Lothians in a way that optimises its contribution to the region's people, economy and environment. Its aims include expansion of the region's woodland resource and securing resilience to climate change as well as addressing biodiversity in the range and types of woodland planted and managed.

The ELFWS was developed by the Lothians and Fife Green Network Partnership (in which West Lothian Council is a partner) and covers the four Lothian local authorities' areas. The council uses the Strategy and its associated spatial data in responding to consultations on woodland creation proposals and in assessing development proposals that could affect woodland (e.g. wind farms).

In relation to the council's management of parks, open space and cemeteries, NETs & Land Services have, over the last few years, implemented the following regimes that benefit biodiversity:

- reduced maintenance frequencies including spraying herbicide in channels, on roads / pavements and around shrubberies (frequency reduced from three to two sprays per annum);
- reduced hedge cutting (from two cuts to one cut per annum - unless there's a specific health and safety concern);
- reduced grass cutting (from 14 cuts to 12 cuts per annum); and
- in churchyards and cemeteries wood / bark mulch is recycled from the West Lothian Council arboriculture/ forestry team activities and is being used, instead of weed killer around headstones and other structures.

NETs & Land Services run an annual garden competition across the county. They have a **wildlife friendly** category which encourages the public to garden in a more environmentally friendly way.

Through NETs & Land Services updating and open space improvement programmes, the council are improving the quality, condition and accessibility of West Lothian parks and play areas, including raising awareness of these facilities and encouraging community engagement through 'Place-making.' Improved parks, new signage and community involvement will encourage people to make better use of their **local** (within 500m) and **neighbourhood** (within 1km) parks. In addition, having these parks so close to people's houses will encourage people to walk/cycle to their local facility, with the associated health and environmental benefits, rather than travelling by car to facilities further afield.

## 5.0 Partnership – working with other stakeholders

### Central Scotland Green Network Trust

The council was a signatory of a concordat with the Central Scotland Green Network Trust in December 2012. Green Networks promoted through the *Main Issues Report* and emerging *Local Development Plan* (LDP) will increase resilience to climate change of the natural and built environment, including the expansion of woodland planting which will also enhance biodiversity and create more attractive, healthier places to live.

The tables overleaf indicate the outline figures for West Lothian woodlands created and managed, as well as paths established, along with grants secured by CSFT / CSGNT in 2012/13 and 2013/14. This indicates that in 2012/13 for an investment of c£68k, approximately £340k was levered out from grants and other sources. Similarly, in 2013/14, for an investment of £59k, funds derived for West Lothian were in the order of £270k, involving 0.75ha of new woodland; 1,900m paths (new or upgraded); 1.5ha of greenspace; and, 3450m paths maintained.

Lothian & Fife Green Network Partnership & Central Scotland Green Network Trust have been involved with Planning Services in piloting use of SNH Integrated Habitat Network maps in an area north of Bangour General Hospital in the Bathgate Hills.

A mapping exercise of potential habitat connections was undertaken in summer / autumn 2013, while a pilot Phase 1 habitat survey was carried out in May 2014 to **ground truth** some of the assumptions identified by the earlier mapping exercise. Further work is underway to consider a catchment management study to instigate work on riparian corridors and establish woodland planting to help alleviate flood risk run-off for the Brox Burn, as well as other green network improvements such as hedge and shelter belt woodland planting.

This pilot scheme would help with the possible establishment of a Bathgate Hills Heritage Landscape Partnership that is currently under consideration, subject to staff resources and identifying match funding.

SITE	Ownership	PHYSICAL OUTPUTS								FUNDING		
		new woodland planted (ha)	Woodland brought under management (ha)	New Paths / Paths up-graded (m)	Greenspace created (ha)	Greenspace upgraded (ha)	Woodland Maintained (ha)	Greenspace maintained (ha)	Path routes maintained (m)	WLC funding (£)	Other funding (£)	Total funding (£)
Knowes Colliery Woodland Management	WLC		17.5	1175	17.5					6000	136000	142000
Loganlea Bing Woodland Management	WLC		12.3	1120						13500	39198	52698
Torphichen Gorge Bridge	WLC			100						45000	0	45000
Polbeth & Parkhead Woodland Access Works	WLC						6	6	1750	0	33156	33156
Harperrig Access Works	WLC								2600	0	1960	1960
Chapelton Woodland Planting	WLC					0.66	0.66			0	549	549
Parkhead Community Woodland Planting	WLC						7.8	7.8		0	2700	2700
Greenrigg Community Greenspace	WLC							1.7	1.7	425	02379	2379
Burngrange Wetland and Access Improvements	WLC						0.14	0.14	450	2000	0	2000
Uphall Community Woodland	WLC						13	13	1250	0	2808	2808
Broxburn Community Woodland Phase 1 -4	WLC						30.1	30.1	6000	0	9396	9396
Heartlands (Fauldhouse to Longridge Road)	Private	7.3									53270	53270
Cemex (Linlithgow site)	Private	7.9									57000	57000
River Avon Heritage Trail	Private								3000	2000	2000	4000
Dalmahoy Farms	Private							5.64			5700	5700
Cairns Farm	Private						5.22				8670	8670
Harperrig Reservoir Woodland	Private						5.1				3200	3200
Easter Breich	CSFT							33.6		3250	1700	1700
Hardhill	CSFT							6.6	9.4	1500	1500	1500
Bathville	CSFT							6.6	8.5	1300	1300	1300
<b>Total</b>		<b>15.2</b>	<b>29.8</b>	<b>2395</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>0.66</b>	<b>122.16</b>	<b>76.64</b>	<b>2152</b>	<b>68500</b>	<b>362486</b>	<b>430986</b>

West Lothian sites - physical outputs and funding in 2012/13

SITE	Ownership	PHYSICAL OUTPUTS								FUNDING		
		new woodland planted (ha)	Woodland brought under management (ha)	New Paths / Paths up-graded (m)	Greenspace created (ha)	Greenspace upgraded (ha)	Woodland Maintained (ha)	Greenspace maintained (ha)	Path routes maintained (m)	WLC funding (£)	Other funding (£)	Total funding (£)
Breich Park		0.75		700	1.5					50000	49163	99163
Knowes Colliery Woodland Management	WLC						17.5	17.5	1175	0	37741	37741
Loganlea Bing Woodland Management	WLC						12.3		1120	0	1800	1800
Polbeth & Parkhead Woodland Access Works	WLC			200		0.1	6	6	1750	0	41419.75	41419.75
Chapelton Woodland Planting	WLC						0.66	0.66		0	520	520
Parkhead Community Woodland Planting	WLC						7.8	7.8		0	2300	2300
Greenrigg Community Greenspace	WLC						1.7	1.7	425	0	2000	2000
Burngrange Wetland and Access Improvements	WLC						0.14	0.14	450	1200	0	1200
Uphall Community Woodland	WLC						13	13	1250	0	1622	1622
Broxburn Community Woodland Phase 1 -4	WLC						30.1	30.1	6000	0	1392	1392
Heartlands (Fauldhouse to Longridge Road)	Private						7.3				4500	4500
Cemex (Linlithgow site)	Private						7.9				6410	6410
River Avon Heritage Trail	Private			1000					3000	8000	46000	54000
Dalmahoy Farms	Private						5.64				5560	5560
Cairns Farm	Private						5.22				1430	1430
Harperrig Reservoir Woodland	Private						5.1				3460	3460
Easter Breich	CSFT						33.6		3250		1700	1700
Hardhill	CSFT						6.6	9.4	1500		1500	1500
Bathville	CSFT						6.6	8.5	1300		1300	1300
<b>Total</b>		<b>0.75</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1900</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>167.16</b>	<b>94.8</b>	<b>21220</b>	<b>59200</b>	<b>209817.75</b>	<b>269017.75</b>

West Lothian sites - physical outputs and funding in 2013/14



Fishing on Linlithgow Loch

### **Linlithgow Loch – catchment management plan**

It is one of only two remaining natural lowland lochs in the Lothians and provides the setting for Linlithgow Palace and is part of the tourist destination experience and is well used by local residents for recreation. It supports water sports and a fishing club.

It is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) by Scottish Natural Heritage for its botanical interests that are characteristic of a naturally eutrophic loch and is owned and administered by Historic Scotland.

However, in recent years the appearance of a seasonal blue / green algal bloom on the surface of the Loch had led to concerns about potential public health issues and about the serious deterioration in water quality that has led to the formation of the blooms.

The Linlithgow Loch Catchment Management Group (LLCMG) of stakeholders was established c2002 to initially tackle the algal bloom issue and to provide a forum to allow environmental issues related to the Loch to be explored. The group was based on a similar organisation covering Loch Leven, which also experienced water quality issues, albeit on a larger scale.

The group meets bi-annually and consists of the following stakeholder organisations:

- West Lothian Council (Flood Risk, Planning, Environmental Health Services);
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency (Ecologist / Area Officer);
- Historic Scotland (Area Manager / Rangers);
- Scottish Natural Heritage;
- Scottish Water;
- Forth Area Federation of Anglers;
- The Natural Environment Research Council Centre (NERC) for Ecology & Hydrology; and
- Scottish Agricultural College.

While the group was previously chaired by SEPA, it is now chaired and administered by council officers.



Linlithgow Loch

## Two academic studies on Linlithgow Loch

The LLCMG commissioned two wide ranging studies to look at water quality and catchment management issues, as well as the wider catchment and potential for nutrients that cause the algal bloom, to enter the water body. They both reported in March 2011.

**An assessment of water quality and management requirements at Linlithgow Loch** was undertaken by the NERC Centre for Ecology & Hydrology.

The aim of this study was to:

- 1) compile and review available data and reports on the loch;
- 2) summarise or propose water quality targets for the loch;
- 3) assess long term water quality data against targets;
- 4) investigate nutrient (especially Phosphorous that encourages algal bloom) transformation processes within the loch; and
- 5) suggest future management solutions.

While the scientific report goes into detail on the complex chemistry of the loch, the main findings were:

- a) the status of the macrophyte community has improved;
- b) nitrogen availability limits algal bloom biomass in the summer;
- c) chlorophyll concentrations are increasing;
- d) internal phosphorous release is significant in the summer months; and
- e) routine monitoring of the loch's wider catchment loading is required.

An associated study on **Linlithgow Loch external nutrient loading** was undertaken by Scottish Agricultural College (SAC). As it had been assumed that phosphorous pollution is the main cause of elevated algal biomass in the loch, alongside nitrogen and that these nutrients enter the loch from a variety of sources in the surrounding catchment, SAC was commissioned to assess the potential recent external nutrient loading and compile a risk analysis against the sources identified.

The study also assessed the:

- available data from Scottish Water and WLC on nitrogen and phosphorous loadings entering the loch, including assessing the town drainage plan;
- effects of agricultural practices - through interviews with farmers;
- potential for soil erosion depending on soil type, cropping and cultivation techniques;
- effects of the amenity sector from run-off from non-agricultural sources;
- effects of light industry in the catchment; and
- impacts of various other factors on the Loch such as the canal, motorway and railway drainage.

The report demonstrates the variety of sources of nutrients in what is a very complex catchment. A list of actions were identified that could be undertaken to reduce the risks of nutrients entering Linlithgow Loch.

The importance of awareness-raising amongst farmers, householders and the general public is considered a main priority. Reduction of external nutrient loading will only be achievable if all the community acts together.

### **Yellow Fish Campaign**

Alongside the on-going research work, Historic Scotland's Ranger Service has led on an environmental awareness-raising campaign with local school children called **Yellow Fish**. Springfield Primary were the pilot school and among the various tasks the Rangers undertook with the school children was painting **yellow fish** identification logos beside drains in the Springfield Estate to warn against inappropriate disposals down road drains and to highlight the correlation between what goes down the drain and the impact on the loch.

There is scope to roll out the campaign to other primary schools in Linlithgow and involve the Academy in future years when the Historic Scotland Rangers based at the Peel are back to full strength.



Eagle Owl

## 6.0 Communication – raising awareness, building capacity and working with communities

The Rangers within the council's Countryside Services have been active over the last three years with a wide range of projects that raise the awareness of biodiversity. Among the examples are:

- environmental education with pre-school, school age and tertiary education; and
- badgers, bats, orchids and butterflies species monitoring and recording in Beecraigs Country Park.

The council's [Ranger Events programme](#) encourages participation, responsible access and better use of the local area.

*Wild Day Out* in 2014 was a joint working partnership project which encouraged approximately 7,000 people to visit Howden Park, Livingston and get involved in a wide range of environment related activities. The event had various sessions within Howden Park Centre including drop in Art and Recycle Sessions, The Scottish Owl Centre and Glasgow Science Centre giving all the opportunity to take part in activities like screen printing, turn old newspapers into hats, meet and learn about owls make rockets and learn about how the body works.

An open day at Easter Inch Moss, Blackburn attracted 200 people following an award of funding through the SNH Peatland Restoration Fund, and many got involved in volunteering opportunities on conservation projects.

The *Wild Wednesday's* partnership venture with West Lothian **Rural Connect** over 2012-14 has involved council rangers attending events across the county encouraging local communities to take part in activities in their local area and parks.

The 2014 Countryside Rangers Events programmes included Activity Weeks in each Park which were all fully booked.



Beecraigs



Howden Park Centre

In addition, Countryside Services have progressed a Meadow Management project at Balvormie Meadow, Beecraigs Country Park, funded through West Lothian Land Trust to encourage floral biodiversity, including the introduction of low intensity cattle grazing with their Highland Cattle.

Similarly, forestry management for Beecraigs has involved the development of a 20 year Long Term Forest Plan which will ensure planned sustainable felling and replanting and using continuous cover forestry techniques where applicable on the 234ha of forest, with riparian plantings that will improve biodiversity.

While no specific or set targets are in place, there are a number of projects being progressed including access improvements as well as pond habitat work with the local community at Little Boghead Nature Park, Bathgate, which is a haven for urban wildlife.



## 7.0 Future works

### WL Open Spaces Strategy review

The original *West Lothian Open Space Strategy* ran from 2005-2015. This has been reviewed in 2014 and relates to the capital programme for further improvements over the next three years. Numerous local and districts parks have been identified as requiring enhancement. Within the place-making exercises carried out by NETs & Land Services, improvements to the biodiversity of open spaces are key.

One such scheme involves wildflower meadow creation in 2016/17 as there is a budget of £15k. Several sites have been identified and are being assessed. Research is underway by NETs & Land Services to identify opportunities for wildflower planting which would increase biodiversity and reduce maintenance requirements.

Further projects under consideration by Countryside Services include:

- progression of improvements to the Fen area at Calderwood Country Park will be reviewed;
- ongoing meadow management in all three West Lothian Country Parks;
- ongoing wildlife and habitat recording in Beecraigs Country Park;
- with the Heritage Lottery Fund, there is a major **Parks for People** bid at Polkemmet Country Park under preparation, as well as a potential extensive Heritage Landscape Partnership covering the Bathgate Hills; and
- more pond creation at Easter Inch Moss LNR to help habitat diversification.





## 8.0 Conclusion

Biodiversity continues to be an important part of West Lothian planning process.

It provides us with the essentials of life - food, clothing, health and shelter. Yet no plant or animal survives in isolation - each contributes to the balance of nature and humans are part of this complex system. Thus, a high quality natural environment not only supports habitats for wildlife, but contributes to our wellbeing and quality of life.

Biodiversity is about nature conservation but not just for its own sake. It is about how it contributes to the social and economic values of West Lothian. It is the quality and distinctiveness of its landscape, the setting for industry, tourism, the education of our children and of ourselves, the enjoyment of our surroundings and our heritage. It is part of the West Lothian culture; it provides relaxation and significantly contributes to the quality of our lives. However, it must be regarded against a background of rapid urban growth and development. This makes it increasingly important to sustain and enhance the biodiversity of the council area.