

# Cunnigar Park Placemaking Report



February / March 2020



# Summary

## ***How people rate the park***

The park has a low community-rated score overall. The park scores above-average for: Adaptability, Safety, Network (connectedness) and Accessibility. However, the park scores below-average for 6 categories: Community Involvement, Biodiversity, Regulating benefits, Sustainability, Quality of materials, Signage and Economic benefits. These low scores indicate where substantial improvements can be made.

## ***What people like about the park as it is***

The most popular element of the existing park is the open space and that it can be used by different people at the same time.

## ***What people don't like / issues raised***

The least favoured aspect of the park was the lack of drainage – especially on the paths. This was followed by a lack of variety, lighting issues, waste/litter and vegetation maintenance.

## ***Recommendations for action – based on both short-term and long-term suggestions***

Taking into account a condition survey of existing park features, alongside how the park was scored and suggestions for improvements, priorities should be:

- 1) Improve drainage in key areas
- 2) Upgrade existing paths
- 3) Add more plants, to improve biodiversity, colour, variety and assist with drainage
- 4) Upgrade seating and bins
- 5) Add signage
- 6) Review lighting
- 7) Consider use of artwork in the park
- 8) Increase community involvement
- 9) Consider play provision

## ***Potential Partners***

Local partners suggested included local businesses, Mid Calder Community Council and local schools.

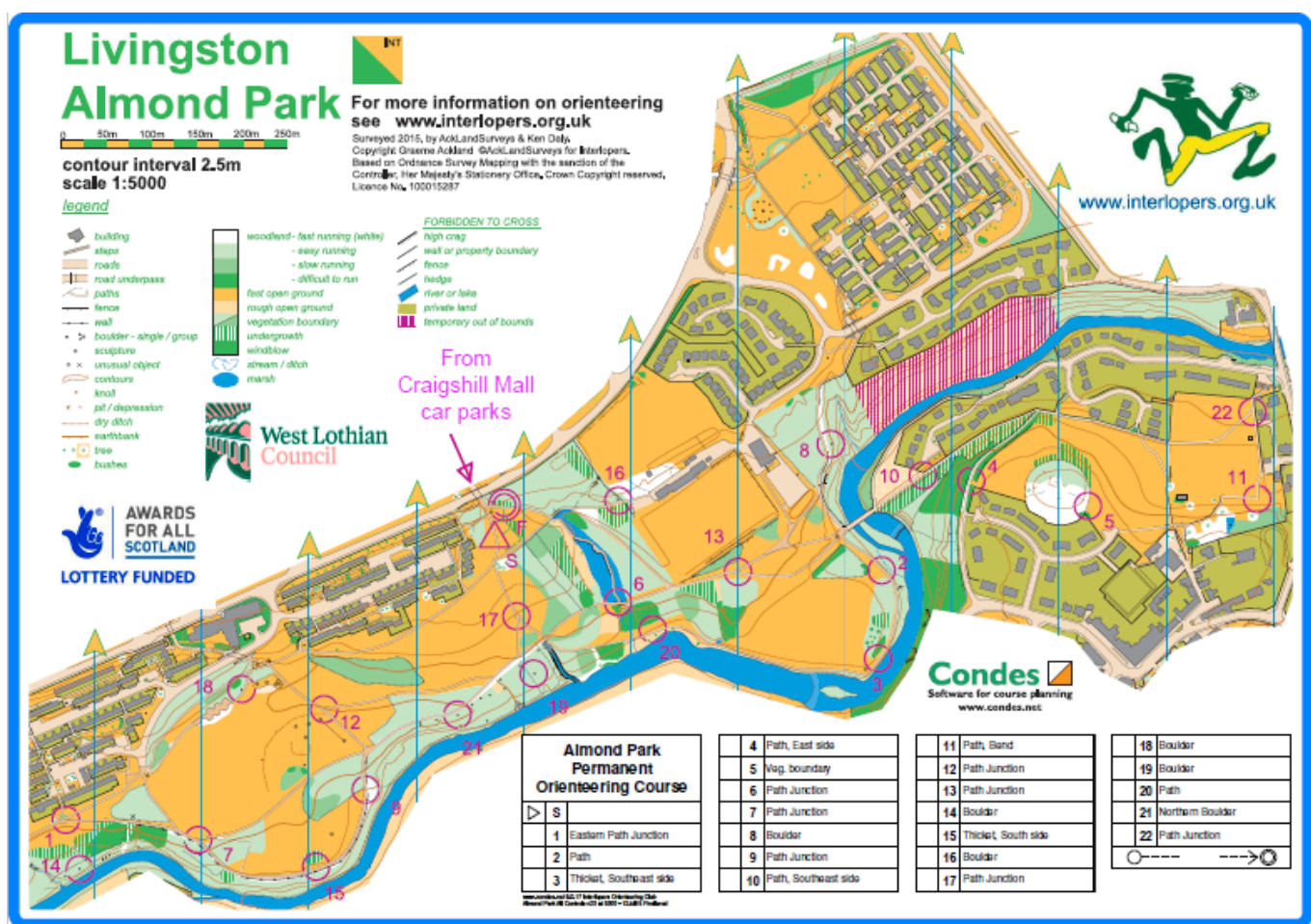




## Introduction

Cunnigar Park is protected as open space in the West Lothian Local Plan (2009) due to its inclusion in the 2005 West Lothian Open Space Strategy, and subsequent refreshes of this strategy. It is a medium-sized park of approximately 4.5ha, and designated as a Neighbourhood Park.

The main access points into the park are via School Lane, Combfoot Cottages and Wallace Mill Gardens, although there are also several other informal entrances. The southern boundary is considerably higher than the northern boundary, resulting in almost half the park lying on a north / north-east facing slope. The park includes Cunnigar Hill with a roundel of mature woodland, an 11-a-side football pitch with several benches and a few bins and four orienteering posts, which make up a section of the Almond Park orienteering course (see map below). A network of paths crosses the park and links it with the surroundings - some asphalt, some whindust/shale and some informal desire-lines. The asphalt path linking School Lane with Wallace Mill Gardens is also lit. The desire-line in the north-west of the park links it with Almond Park in Craigshill and National Cycle Route 75 runs to the north and east of the park. The park is bounded by houses and woodland.



Some areas of the park are very wet and there is a lot of water-erosion on the paths. The few benches are of differing styles, as are the bins.

West Lothian Council has some money to make improvements to the park in 2020/21. This feedback from local people will inform the improvements and help to shape a longer-term vision for the park.



## Information gathering

Feedback from the community was collected using an online survey. The survey period ran from 9<sup>th</sup> Dec 2019 to 26<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

Emails were sent to all known stakeholders, including Mid Calder Community Council, local football team, bowling club and Mid Calder Primary School. 85 fliers advertising the online survey were posted through neighbouring houses around the park and 6 posters were placed in the park. The survey was also advertised through the council's Media team. A total of 20 local residents gave their feedback.



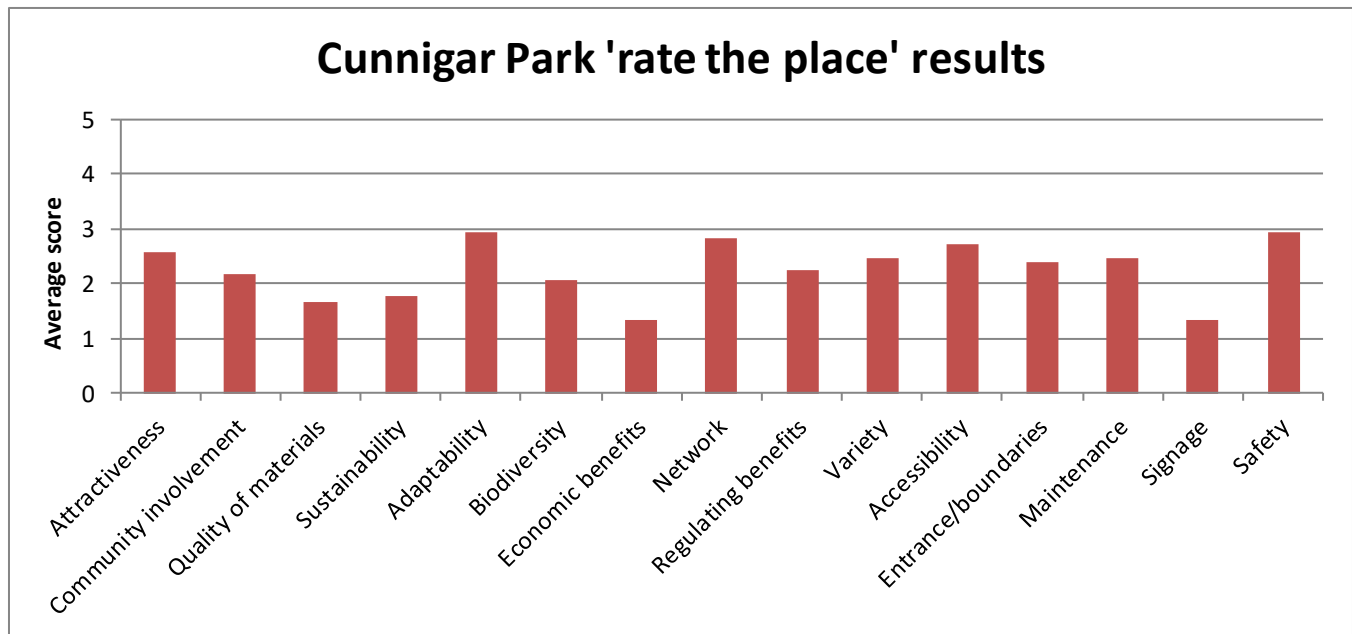
## Feedback

### Park name

The majority of respondents call the park Cunnigar Park and some also call it Gala Park.

### Rate the Place

Participants were asked to rate the park as it currently is, using the council's Park Audit questionnaire. The results are shown in the chart below. 18 people participated in this section.



Generally, the park scores very low. Out of a possible 5 points for each item, those scoring above average are Adaptability, Safety, Network (connectedness) and Accessibility. Roughly average scores have been given for Attractiveness, Variety, Maintenance and Entrances / Boundaries. The park scores below-average for 6 categories: Community Involvement, Biodiversity, Regulating benefits, Sustainability, Quality of materials, Signage and Economic benefits. These low scores indicate where substantial improvements can be made.

The park's total community-rated score is 34, which rates below the council's 'fit for purpose' score (a total of 40). The park's score as assessed through the council's park audit process in 2018 was 44. The large discrepancy may be due to park deterioration between scoring and also the time of year that the surveys were completed.

*Please see Appendix 1 for a more detailed explanation of the characteristics that were scored.*





## What do people like best about the park?

When all the feedback for this question is pasted into a 'word cloud generator', the resulting size of the words shows how often a word was mentioned. The 'word cloud' for Cunnigar Park is shown here, allowing us to see at a glance which elements of the park are currently most valued:



The majority of respondents appreciate the open space and that the park is large enough for different people to use it at the same time, mainly for football and walking dogs, with the Gala once a year. Several people value the wilder areas and the views. Some people associate the park with the heart of the village.



## What people don't like / issues people raised

The overriding issue in the park is poor drainage – especially relating to the paths. This is followed by a lack of variety. A lack of lighting on some paths presents a problem for some, although the timing of the existing lighting is also an issue. Litter is sometimes an issue, especially when the bins are full. Several people voiced concerns about the vegetation maintenance of the park – grass mowing in particular.





## Suggestions for improvements

The most popular suggestion for improving the park in the short term is to increase informal planting, including bulbs, wildflowers and trees - to improve colour, interest and biodiversity. Regular maintenance and drainage were the next popular suggestions, followed by path repairs and new benches/bins. Murals/artwork were suggested by some - to brighten up the area, provide informal play and to help connect with the heritage of the area.

The most popular suggestions for longer-term improvements that would have the most impact were drainage and more planting. This was followed by play features, seating and a more formal 'garden' area. Other suggestions included lighting, path repairs, maintenance and some improved facilities for the football club.

*All suggestions can be viewed in Appendix 2 at the end of this report.*

## Recommendations

Although the park is appreciated by local residents, generally it scores low. There are key issues which can be addressed in the short and there are also aspirations which can be worked towards in the longer-term. By analysing the park scores and bringing these together with written feedback from survey participants, recommended priorities for improving the park should be:

- 1) Improve drainage in key areas
- 2) Upgrade existing paths
- 3) Add more plants, to improve biodiversity, colour, variety and to assist with drainage
- 4) Upgrade seating and bins
- 5) Add signage
- 6) Review lighting
- 7) Consider use of artwork in the park
- 8) Increase community involvement
- 9) Consider play provision

The Flood Risk Management team will be consulted on how best to address drainage issues in the park. Tree planting may help to alleviate these issues in some areas, and boost the 'regulating benefits' of the park. The creation of a raingarden may also help to hold water, whilst increasing biodiversity.

Further low maintenance planting could take the form of bulbs and standard trees. Incorporating edible plants into the general park planting would help to enhance the park's score for 'economic benefits', increase the variety of things to do in the park and boost wildlife.

Several people suggested a more formal / sensory garden area in the park. This will only be possible if it is funded, established and maintained by the community. If local residents would like to set up a dedicated community garden group, council officers can offer advice and support.

Less formally, community involvement can be increased through community-organised, small-scale practical activities and events in the park, for example tree planting, bulb planting, painting containers, litter-picks, Easter Egg rolling, etc. If local residents would like to set up an informal park group, council officers can offer advice and support.

Several people expressed a need for lighting in the park. The council's policy is to only provide lighting on asphalt paths. This may be possible when paths are upgraded. However, given that the existing lighting causes an issue for some, there may be a need for additional consultation with park neighbours.

A few people suggested play equipment in the park. Strategically, there is a case for play equipment in the park, however this is not currently a priority. This will be kept on record for when future funding becomes available.



## Potential Partners

The most popular suggestion for local groups who could aid in the park's improvement were local businesses, Mid Calder Community Council, local schools and individuals who put themselves forward as volunteers. Other suggestions included: The Kirk of Calder, Friends of Almondell, the Masonic Lodge and the Children's Gala.

## Next Steps

As far as possible, the recommendations listed above will be addressed using the available budget in 2020/21. Support can be given to set up a community garden or park group if local people are keen. For anything that can't be addressed within the 2020/21 budget, feedback will be used to inform future improvements.

The 16 people who requested to be kept informed of park improvements will be updated by email. If anyone should wish to join the park email list, they can request to do so by contacting [becky.plunkett@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:becky.plunkett@westlothian.gov.uk)



## Appendix 1 – Rate the Place characteristics explained

No.	Measure	Some things to consider 'yes' answers = higher score, unless stated
1	Attractiveness	Is the park generally attractive? Does it have a consistent or unique character?
2	Community	Does the community help to make decisions about the park? Are there frequent community events? Is there evidence of community involvement?
3	Quality	Are features and facilities robust and long-lasting?
4	Sustainability	Is weedkiller used in maintenance? (lower score) Is every bit of grass cut short? (lower) Recycling bins on site? Are there signs that materials / resources are reused on site? (e.g. grass clippings on shrub-beds)
5	Adaptability	Could spaces within the park be changed easily to suit different uses over time?
6	Biodiversity	Are there different shapes, sizes and types of plants within the park? Do you regularly see different insects / birds / other animals in the park?
7	Economic benefits	Does anyone charge for activities or events here? Does anyone sell things here? Do people collect wood or berries? Do people fish? Do people grow food here?
8	Network	Is the park connected to other green areas nearby, or rivers/burns? Is it connected to walking/cycle paths?
9	Regulating benefits	Are there trees / shrubs / plants at different heights? (to filter air/water, soak up rainfall and store carbon) Are there areas that visibly hold water when it rains? Are there flowers to support bees and other pollinators?
10	Variety	Is there a good variety of things to do in the park? e.g. sport/ walk/ sit/ learn/ play/ watch wildlife / picnic/ cycle/ eat/ run / climb / socialise / walk dog / good views
11	Accessibility	Is the park easy to walk to and get around? Is most of the park accessible to buggies / wheelchairs?
12	Entrances / boundaries	Do you know you're in a park? Are entrances and boundaries well defined? Are they attractive?
13	Maintenance	Is the park well-maintained? Is there much litter, vandalism or areas of neglect? (lower)
14	Signage	Is it clear who looks after the park and how to contact them? Is there any information on wildlife/ history, etc?
15	Safety	Do children and older people regularly use the park? Can you see across the park? Are there areas that feel unsafe? (lower)



## Appendix 2 – All survey answers

### 1) *What do you like best about this park?*

#### Open space / plenty of space

- The open space and the fact you can use it all.
- It's open aspect
- The space offered, room for kids football, and May days stuff.
- The open spaces too.
- the open space
- open spaces
- open spaces for various activities including football and other none team sports.
- Then on the other hand that there is an area specifically for football so the park is being used well and there are still plenty space in other areas when football games are on.

#### Activities

- The park is used for football and the Gala use it on Gala week
- glad it's used regularly by local clubs.
- The park is a great space for walking dogs and local teams use it for football.
- I like to walk my dog and witches hill
- It is a very useable area well used by walkers and dog walkers alike great location for the annual gala day
- Great for dog walking.
- It is a green space that has more potential than it is given credit for.

#### Trees/wildlife

- The natural trees
- The wild bit on the hill.
- Natural wooded areas
- Variety of wildlife

#### Views

- good views
- Nice views.
- views

#### Central green space

- It feels as if it is in the heart of the village.
- Great space between the built up bits.

#### Other

- good walking paths.
- Easy access and parking. good range of play equipment
- Sledging in the winter
- The grass is kept cut and generally the park looks tidy.
- It is just an open space nothing there to rate how attractive it is.
- It used for the Mid Calder gala and that about it.
- Footpaths require a lot of maintenance and or re-laying., Drainage is a problem which has only been tinkered with in the past., Possibly have the bottom part of the park laid r marked out for other activities such as tennis.

## 2) *Is there anything you don't like?*

### Path drainage

- Drainage could be improved in the area adjacent to the football pitch. This is often flooded and ice is problematic for the more elderly people using the paths.
- There are 2 large areas where there is dirty water flowing into the path. I'm not sure if this is down to a burst pipe under the ground as it is only within the last few years it has happened. You cannot walk on the path as it is flooded, you cannot walk on the mud around it as it is too boggy. As well as that, in colder months these areas freeze over. I myself have fallen and have seen others falling including older people. This should urgently be addressed as it's horrible and dangerous. , It completely takes away from the park's good points.
- There is an area of pathway which collects water and it's messy to walk round as the path is muddy and the surrounding grass is soggy. In winter it often gets icy and is dangerous.
- Drainage has to be sorted out, as path keeps getting washed away. More flood water is appearing where the back gardens of the houses meet, along Almond Side (EH53 0AZ).
- I don't like the drainage
- The area at the bottom is very boggy.
- Also access from School Lane is unsuitable for wheelchair access or Prams
- Paths
- The conditions of the footpaths. The lack of lighting. Drainage issue.
- The path. Or what there is of it! Shocking disrepair.
- From the south west and west entrance the path is basically mud.

### Lack of variety

- There is nothing there but a grass pitch marked with lines to play football.
- It is a bit one dimensional. It is just grass, cut short usually. If it was not for the old trees on Witches Hill it would be very boring indeed.
- Nice park but very bland.
- there is no wildlife
- Not much for young people to do.
- Given the size of the area the lack of family/children's equipment.

### Lighting

- Lack of lighting on the southwestern aspect is a problem in the winter months. Near total darkness when travelling from Pumpherston Road to Combfoot Cottages or School Lane.,
- The park is poorly lit and could benefit from additional lighting around the pathway.
- MORE LIGHTING along the path would help.
- lighting
- And switch off the path lights from south to north as they are on permanently in daytime only needed dusk till dawn.

### Waste / litter

- The bin can be overflowing with waste and used dog bags.
- I don't like when there is a football match that there is so much litter left behind, including broken glass sometimes.
- Dog waste not cleared up by the owners. General untidiness.
- Occasionally there is a litter problem.
- Could be better maintained and used. The bin at the top is unsightly and often full or overflowing. Often broken glass on path at top of park.

### Vegetation maintenance

- The length of the grass on the field and grass cuttings are left behind.
- Grass cutting has been reduced and cutting left in large clumps. Tractor grass cutter is responsible for some turf damage that has affected the drainage.
- The entrances are very untidy. From the south via school lane the area around the path is a mess of leaves and overgrown. Ok from the north east and east just bland. When the grass is cut through the summer the cuttings are left in large piles all over the park.
- Not keeping clean and tidy such as not cutting the grass as previous year, as this does not improve wildlife or wild flowers, just creates a mulch, killing the grass and creating too rich soil for wild flowers. If you wish to create meadow areas do it properly in appropriate areas.

### Other

- Rusty handrail that is unusable!
- The shipping container used to store the football gear is an eyesore. Perhaps this could be relocated to a corner of the park and the club forced to repay not it regularly.
- Can be a bit intimidating walking through at night or when young men hang around drinking.



### **3) List three low-cost things that you would do to improve this park, that could be done straight away**

#### Planting

- More plants
- Plant some more trees
- Introduce wild flower and a grass management regime. Perhaps some trees or an orchard.
- Trees
- Different flowers planted in the summer
- some bulbs planted around the West Edge
- Put back the large circle of daffodils that used to grow at the top of the hill by the road end
- Put in a wild flower area
- Flower beds/plant wild flowers
- Introduce wildflower bed(s) on the sloped area near Cunnigar hill to improve biodiversity
- Replant the native trees at the top of the hill as the encumbant trees are slowly thinning out.
- Planting colourful plants or shrubs to brighten the area - if future budget available to maintain.!

#### Maintenance

- Let some grass grow longer
- Keep the grass cut
- Regular maintenance of grass areas.
- Maintain what we have keeping the park clean and tidy.
- Cut grass regularly thus keeping usable areas open for all to enjoy
- Empty the bins more
- More frequent grass cutting with smaller vehicle

#### Drainage

- Fix the drainage at the problem area
- Improve hill as water sits on it
- Culvert or shrub planting to aid drainage adjacent to football pitch
- Drain
- Flooded areas looked at for any solution
- Drainage

#### Paths

- Path repair
- Gravel path running through lower area paved
- FIX PATHS
- Better path around the sides
- Tidy up pathway edges.

#### Benches/bins

- Picnic benches
- New park furniture
- Recycling bins – glass
- More seating or picnic benches.
- More rubbish and some new recycling bins (plastic & cans) around the football pitch.

#### Painting / artwork

- Playground markings i.e. hopscotch
- Relocate the shipping container used by the football club & repaint it
- A mural on the wall at the top of park
- maybe some art work and installations.

#### Other

- Some more signage, and a bit about the history of witches hill
- Low wattage lighting/solar lighting
- Appoint local person(s) who would co-ordinate with local residents direct with appropriate area of council.
- And remove the dead sapling at the bottom of the path next to the football pitch
- Put in a dog agility / play area
- Clean up the north entrance from school lane

#### **4) What three changes would you make in the long term that would have the biggest impact?**

##### Drainage

- Put a drain at the bottom of the hill
- Drainage to be done fully without short cuts ( it costs more in the long term)
- Drainage improvements
- Drainage
- IMPROVE DRAINAGE
- Drainage is an issue. There are some very wet parts that simply become very muddy and also wash across the paths, sometimes washing them away or freezing.
- Improve drainage as the park is very boggy in certain spots.

##### Planting

- Trees
- Continue to increase biodiversity with wildflower, new native tree planting. This would create new space in the park.
- Diverse native planting of trees and shrubs to de bland the park
- Shrub planting
- Plant additional native trees between the football pitch and the houses in Almondside
- Lots of random spring bulb planting, daffs, chrocus etc
- Wildflower meadow/bee hives etc

##### Play equipment/features

- Playground equipment for all ages
- a secure Play park
- Children's play park
- Basketball nets/football nets
- A childrens mud kitchen

##### Seating

- picnic benches
- Picnic tables
- Some more permanent seating around the park not just one side of the football pitch
- Picnic areas around it

##### 'Garden' area

- Landscaped garden with sheltered seating and easy access
- Biodiversity garden with info signs (good for nursery visits)
- Think about creating some smaller themed gardens, that relate to biodiversity, while also increasing the variety of spaces for people to enjoy.
- A sensory area for those with no or limited sight

##### Lighting

- IMPROVED LIGHTING
- Just keep safe for all to use such as lighting
- Lights
- Lighting

##### Paths

- Improve the rough path that runs diagonally through the park down the side of the football pitch to Almondside
- Paths
- Tarmac path

##### Maintenance

- Tractor for cutting grass
- increased grass cutting

##### Football-related

- Lining machine for park
- Access to 'changing' facilities.
- Improved storage for sports area as replacement for graffitied ISO container
- Better quality football goals

##### Other

- New handrail
- Re-purpose the derelict garaging area at the entrance to Almondside into additional parking for the park
- Better connection between West Lothian Council and residents - continuity - too much buck passing between departments.



**5) Which local groups could help to put your ideas above into action? (Please name them e.g. 'Hillside Primary Parent Council')**

Local businesses

- Involve local businesses for example - sponsorship of flower garden by local businesses.
- Handrail - Ross Contractors
- how about a fund from the local shops, pubs or hairdressers. With plaques put up in thanks nice free adverts for them.

Community Council

- Community Council,
- Possibly Mid Calder Community Council.

Council

- The council are the ones who should make these corrections,
- I pay my rates to keep the park maintained so I cannot understand why the Council is unable to undertake any changes. I am not asking for changes - simply that it be maintained as it was and not left to grow 'wild' as in other parks in West Lothian.

Schools

- School,
- Primary schools, not just Mid Calder primary, perhaps get some of the other schoolers to help out, allowing interaction between local communities.

Individuals

- Myself as local councillor  
Sorry I didn't know but happy to volunteer time

Other

- The Kirk of Calder.
- Friends of Almondell
- Masonic Lodge
- The only other Community Group that uses the park is Mid Calder Childrens Gala who use it for one week doing all different activities
- I'm not sure if there are flower planting groups who can help on point 2.

**6) Other info – from direct correspondence**

- My suggestions are:  
Look at drainage  
Make footpaths safer  
Plant lots of small trees and bushes with blossom, berries, fruit and nuts  
Empty dog poo bins on a more regular basis  
PS the handrail on the right-hand side going down from School Lane has rusted and is wobbly. Some motorcyclists are using the grassy areas. A noticeboard telling them not to?
- Most people I have spoken to want work done on drainage. The enclosed article was in the Sunday Times. Planting suitable trees, shrubs and plants in the boggiest areas would help to a certain extent.