

## **Post Screening SEA Determination - Statement of Reasons**

### **The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005**

Under Section 8(1) of the above Act, West Lothian Council has formally determined, in consultation with Historic Scotland, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage that the Refresh of West Lothian Council's Open Space Strategy is unlikely to have significant environmental effects and therefore an environmental assessment is not required.

No environmental report will be prepared alongside the Refreshed Open Space Strategy.

### **Statement of Reasons**

An SEA was prepared for the West Lothian Open Space Strategy in 2009, incorporating the original 2005 Open Space Audit and Strategy, along with an update to the Strategy text in 2009.

The SEA undertaken for the 2009 Strategy concluded that the strategy would have an overall positive effect in relation to population, human health and well-being, associated with the increased awareness of opportunities to engage in healthy outdoor activities on enhanced open spaces located close to communities. It was concluded that there were no likely significant adverse environmental impacts that arise from the implementation of the Strategy. Our view is that the refresh of the Strategy would not alter these conclusions and that mitigation identified remains effective.

There have been a number of projects implemented through the Strategy in accord with the mitigation identified in the SEA, which seek to improve the priority projects identified during the Audit. Sensitive enhancement of environmental quality across West Lothian's open space resource has lead to minor positive impacts to landscape and visual amenity, particularly through native species planting which integrate open spaces into their wider context.

The 2014 modifications to the plan are minor in nature in the sense that they build on the previous Strategy (Policy Updates, GIS Mapping, Re-Audits of Sites) rather than amending the main Strategy components. The standards, vision and themes set out in the 2005 Strategy will be reviewed, but it is not anticipated that there will be significant changes to the methodology or content.

The scope of works includes a review of the Strategy, GIS mapping updates, incorporation of information gathered during the life of the Strategy since 2005 (including the re-auditing of a number of sites that have been upgraded since 2005), site visits to cemeteries and Country Parks, updates to the action plan and exploration of how the green network can be strengthened and extended. The Strategy will also update the policy section of the report, in particular, linking the council policies (e.g. SOA, LDP, Asset Management Plan, Allotment Strategy etc.) that have been adopted since 2005.

The Strategy update will be informed by consultation with the Open Space Steering Group and Council Officers (eg. Access, Countryside, Greenspace Officers etc.) to ensure that the 2014 Strategy is current and relevant to the work plans of the various council departments. More references will be made to the current work of the council and partner organisations (e.g. DEEP, Dedridge Environment Ecology Project), demonstrating best practice, a changing approach to environmental management and encouraging similar open space initiatives to be undertaken.