

Grounds Maintenance – Service Delivery 2025-3035

Background:

Following approval of the Sustainable Amenity Grassland Strategy at full council in May 2025, changes were implemented on the service standard for amenity grassland within West Lothian. Changes on the service standard were required in part to address outcomes from the Community Choice consultation on grounds maintenance service delivery and to address the ongoing Nature/Climate emergency. The strategy Sustainable Amenity Grassland Management - https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/67247/Sustainable-Amenity-Grassland-Strategy-Appendix-A/pdf/Sustainable_Amenity_Grassland_Strategy_-_Appendix_A.pdf sets out a plan for a 10-year period commencing from 2025, addressing the results from community choice consultation and delivering a more sustainable approach to amenity grassland management which takes into consideration other priorities for West Lothian Council.

The Nature Conservation Act 2004

The Nature Conservation act (2004) places a statutory duty on all public bodies in Scotland to further the conservation of biodiversity. Section 1 of the Act states:

“It is the duty of every public body and office holder, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions”.

The act does not outline specific actions public bodies must do to meet the biodiversity duty but means they must consider actions that can benefit biodiversity or help protect the natural environment, or deliver the wider Scottish biodiversity Strategy goals, halting the loss of biodiversity by 2030 and restore it by 2045.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 (The Act) imposes a duty on local authorities and certain other landowners and occupiers (the duty bodies) to keep specified land clear of litter and refuse so far is practicable. The Act also places a duty on local authorities or Scottish Ministers to keep public roads clean so far is practicable, including keeping roads and footpaths clean of detritus and from weed growth.

The Act does not place any duties on local authorities or land owners on the standards of grounds maintenance that should be achieved. Therefore, it is at the discretion of local authorities to establish service standards for the maintenance of its open spaces, parks and woodlands. The Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse issued under section 89 of The Environmental Protection Act 1990 defines standards of cleanliness which are achievable in different locations and under differing circumstances. It is concerned with how clean land is, and not grounds maintenance activities other than the removal of weed growth. The Code of Practice is based on the following two principles:

- Areas which are habitually more heavily trafficked should have accumulations of litter, detritus and weed growth cleared away more quickly than less heavily trafficked areas; and
- local authorities and other land owners should develop zones to create an environmental hierarchy to enable services to be delivered on a priority basis.

Therefore, the service has developed grounds maintenance zones for service delivery which is consistent with the approach taken for cleansing activities.

GROUPS MAINTENANCE ZONES

Zoning is based on location and land use with land types being divided into broad categories or zones according to land use and volume of traffic. Within the broad range of zones, it will be the local authority or other duty body to allocate geographical areas to a particular zone. Zones within West Lothian are as follows:

Zone 1: Town centre

Zone 2: High density residential

Zone 3: Low density residential

Zone 4: Sports fields and facilities

Zone 5: Open spaces and parks

Zone 6: Industrial areas

Zone 7: Classified road and verges not included in zones 1 - 3

Zone 8: Rural roads and verges

Zone 9: Central reservations

Zone 10: Areas managed for biodiversity/wildlife verges/ Wildflower meadows etc.

SERVICE STANDARDS

As previously indicated, the Environmental Protection Act 1990 does not stipulate the standard of grounds maintenance that Local Authorities are required to provide, and is more concerned with the cleanliness standard of the environment. However, in order to provide a degree of operational planning, service standards for grounds maintenance activities have been designed around resource availability, zoning methodology and the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse that defines standards for cleanliness and weed growth. The grounds maintenance standards that are maintained and are as follows:

Zone / Category		Zone Summary / Remarks	Mowing	Weed Spraying	Hedge Cutting
1	Town Centre	This would include areas of high footfall associated with educational establishment, particularly secondary and primary schools	12 x annually	Shrub beds, tree bases (only where required), fence lines/channels & obstructions 2 x annually Highway kerbs, path edges, slabbed & whin paths 1 x annually	1 x annually
2	Residential (high density)	Terraced, tenement, flatted housing and educational establishments	12 x annually	Shrub beds, tree bases (only where required), fence lines/channels & obstructions 2 x annually Highway kerbs, path edges, slabbed & whin paths 1 x annually	1 x annually
3	Residential (low density)	Detached and semi-detached Housing and educational establishments	12 x annually	Shrub beds, tree bases (only where required), fence lines/channels & obstructions 2 x annually	1 x annually

				Highway kerbs, path edges, slabbed & whin paths 1 x annually	
4	Sports fields and facilities	Football pitches, athletic fields etc. and all sports facilities managed by West Lothian Council	16 x annually	Shrub beds, tree bases (only where required), fence lines/channels & obstructions 2 x annually Highway kerbs, path edges, slabbed & whin paths 1 x annually	Ad Hoc
5	Open spaces, parks and cemeteries	Open spaces and parks not classified as common ground. Cemeteries will receive the same standard of cutting as parks.	12 x annually	Shrub beds, tree bases (only where required), fence lines/channels & obstructions 2 x annually Highway kerbs, path edges, slabbed & whin paths 1 x annually	Ad Hoc
6	Industrial areas	Areas of common ground within industrial estates	12 x annually	Shrub beds, tree bases (only where required), fence lines/channels & obstructions 2 x annually Highway kerbs, path edges, slabbed & whin paths 1 x annually	Ad Hoc
7	Classified roads and verges and roundabout (up to first 2m) not included in zones 1 - 3	Classified Roads (A, B and C) linking towns and residential areas	2 x annually	Ad Hoc	Ad Hoc
8	Rural roads and verges (Up to 1m) including Livingston Greenways (not including public parks)	These areas have specific health and safety requirements to ensure safe operation	2 x annually	Ad Hoc	Ad Hoc
9	Central reservations	Potential for a second visit if required/ appropriate	X1 annually	Ad Hoc	Ad Hoc
10	Areas managed for biodiversity/wildlife verges/ Wildflower meadows etc.	A number of sites are being managed where they've been identified to be of significance for biodiversity.	X1 (and lift/ or grazed) annually	Ad Hoc (only where required e.g. INNS)	Ad Hoc

- Shrub pruning is carried out to all Council beds once a year between November and March
- Garden Maintenance scheme (for Council tenants only) – Grass cutting x 11 visits a year with every 3rd cycle including strimming edges. Hedges cut x 1 visit a year

NEIGHBOURHOOD ENVIRONMENTAL TEAMS

The above service standards provide an operational cycle that ensures the general coverage of the authority area required to maintain grounds maintenance standards. However, the service retains

the operational capacity to react to ad hoc events that require a speedier response to improve the standard of grounds maintenance to meet safety requirements. The balance of routine and adhoc works is influenced by many factors and may result in the need to reprioritise routine works on a needs basis. Neighbourhood Environmental Teams (NETs) will react to both grounds maintenance and street cleansing related issues such as those outlined below, and performance indicators will be developed and implemented to monitor performance of the teams and their response times to incidents and returning streets and areas to the required standards.

The NETs teams will react to issues such as:

- Sharps and needle removal
- Removal of bodily fluids
- Dead animals
- Flytipping
- Dog fouling
- Broken glass
- Overgrown shrubs or bushes blocking footpaths and/or roads
- Overhanging branches blocking footpaths and/or roads
- Overgrown grass obstructing road sightlines
- Graffiti