

Bulletin



Spring 2021 | Issue 94

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Working for you

Meet some of the many individuals who have played a vital role in supporting West Lothian during the past year.

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Supporting West Lothian

West Lothian Council has a range of support available.

Visit: www.westlothian.gov.uk or read inside →

Paying your rent is secure & easier online

Paying rent online is the easiest option, find out how at:
www.westlothian.gov.uk/paying-rent

Our team are here to help.
If you are struggling to pay your council housing rent, for whatever reason, don't delay & contact us now.

Working for you

West Lothian Council staff have been at the forefront of making sure essential services can be delivered throughout the pandemic. Meet some of the many individuals who have played a vital role in supporting West Lothian during the past year.

Keeping **bin collections** going

Waste Operatives Albert Bradley and Declan Boyle have worked throughout the pandemic.



West Lothian Council was one of a few Scottish councils that managed to keep waste pickups running without having to suspend the service.

The changing circumstances have meant that due to restrictions staff have had to travel separately in cars and alter their approach to work at times.

Declan from Whitburn, who has one young child with another on the way, said: "It hasn't been easy, that's for sure. I think everyone is feeling it tough working hard during

the week and then having little to do with your time off due to the restrictions. I also have to balance childcare with work.

"Work has been incredibly busy, not made any easier with the winter weather. People are obviously at home more often which results in more household waste being created, which means that the bins are heavier.

"That certainly takes its toll on the body, but we've had a lot of positive feedback from residents which is very much appreciated."

Colleague Albert Bradley from

Armadale has worked for the council for 40 years. He has five children and is a former Whitburn Academy pupil.

Albert, who drives the waste lorry, said: "It is always busy, but especially so during the past year. More people are at home which means more cars are in the streets when we work.

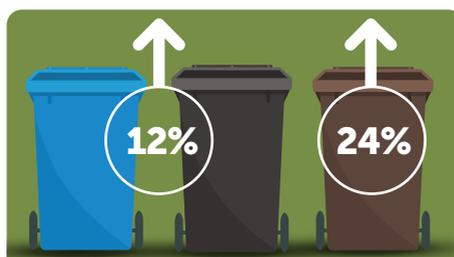
"People don't realise that often where there are missed bins it is a result of our lorries not being able to access streets where cars are parked where they shouldn't be. That's certainly been a challenge for us."



A waste vehicle will take 10 tonnes grey or brown waste and about eight tonnes of blue bin waste. Most routes cover approximately 1,100 properties per day.



An average waste operative will walk approximately 8 miles per day, 40 miles per week, collecting bins. That's slightly more than the distance from Bathgate to Edinburgh Castle and back every week.



Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, there has been an increase of around 12% in the tonnage of waste from blue and grey bins and an increase of 24% in brown bin waste. Due to more people staying at home, the council expect to spend an additional £1.731 million to cover the costs of increased waste disposal.

New role for Audrey

Audrey Johnston was redeployed from her role as Quality Development Officer in the council's Performance and Improvement Service to a Shielding Team Coordinator from March to August.



The small team was set up with staff from various backgrounds to support all persons in West Lothian who were identified by NHS Scotland as requiring to shield throughout the lockdown period.

The role was to ensure support was provided to customers who were seeking assistance obtaining food (food parcels), prescription deliveries, welfare issues, etc. The team played a key role in ensuring that they could safely self-isolate for the duration of lockdown.

Audrey, who stays in Livingston, has

worked for the council for 31 years having begun her career with Lothian Region Social Work.

Audrey said: "I'm proud of the role the team played and what was important was providing a personal touch to customers.

"Many of the people that we spoke to hadn't heard or spoken to someone for weeks or even months.

"We were able to talk with these people, help them access vital services and, in many occasions, put these people in touch with Befriending Services."

The Shielding Support team has:

- Made over 6,000 contacts for shielding support
- Addressed over 2,800 requests for assistance or advice from shielding and vulnerable people living in the community
- Helped resolve over 8,000 enquiries from people looking to register for national shielding support schemes, such as access to priority online shopping slots, food boxes and vitamin D supplies
- Worked with council services such as Economic Development, Facilities Management and the Anti-Poverty Service as well as third-sector organisations to help vulnerable people shield at home.

The collective shielding support fulfilled:

- 550+ requests for emergency food support
- 1,000+ requests for medication deliveries
- 400+ request for other support such as food and financial support



Welfare Rights Officer **Michelle McLeod** has worked for the council since 2006.

As part of the council's team at the Advice Shop, she supports people affected by longstanding mental health issues as part of the One2One Project.

Michelle helps them maximise their income or deal with debt, benefit or housing issues. She works closely with other sections within the council – Housing, Benefits, Social Work but also other agencies such as Foodbank, Mental Health Advocacy Project and Change, Grow, Live.

Michelle said: "The past year has been a steep learning curve for everyone involved at the Advice Shop. Trying to work from home and adapt to new technology as well as not being able to meet with customers has been a real challenge. This has definitely been the hardest part for the One2One Project and clients

have struggled not being able to pop by or meet for an appointment. Although we've adapted making more telephone calls and text messaging, the most important thing we have tried to maintain as a team is that we are still here if a person needs help and, so far, we've had 227 people referred for One2One support since the pandemic began."

“Like everyone, my colleagues and I have had to adapt to significant change since April 2020 and there have been challenges that have been easier than others both personally and professionally. Overall though we keep going, we keep trying our best to support each other and we keep trying to help anyone who reaches out for help from the Advice Shop.”

Whitburn Burgh Halls is being transformed into Whitburn Partnership Centre



Construction re-starts at Whitburn Partnership Centre

Work on the new £5 million partnership centre for Whitburn has resumed.

The former Burgh Halls site was closed from March to December 2020, firstly due to COVID restrictions and then the contractor carrying out the work went in to administration. Maxi Construction were appointed the new contractor following a tendering process, with construction work resuming onsite in December 2020.

Whitburn's new Partnership Centre will bring a number of local facilities and services under one roof in the heart of the town centre. The project is the latest in the council's partnership centre model that has proven successful in other parts of the area including Armadale,

Bathgate, East Calder, Broxburn, Fauldhouse and Linlithgow.

The original Burgh Halls façade is being kept and restored, with a new two-storey extension constructed onto the East Mains Street building. Services will continue to operate from their existing local facilities until the new facility is open, which is expected to be spring 2022.

Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services, AnnMarie Carr said: "This is a significant investment in the town and the new building better meets the needs of customers by hosting a wider variety of services under one roof as well as providing new spaces for the local community.

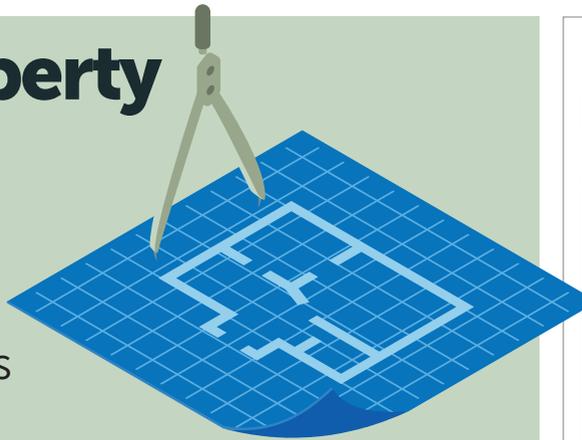
"Unfortunately, the project has been delayed but the important thing is that work is now getting back underway and a fantastic new venue will be created for the town.

"We have high hopes for the new Centre in Whitburn which is really about creating a new, modern facility that delivers a range of services within the town centre."

John Aitchison, Maxi Construction's Managing Director, commented "We're delighted to continue our association with West Lothian Council in the provision of partnership centres, this time for the benefit of the local community in Whitburn."

School and property investments

Work has been ongoing to maintain and improve the council's key property assets throughout the pandemic.



Schools, partnership centres and other facilities are essential for the delivery of many vital services provided by the council. Steps were taken to re-organise the workload to minimise impact on delivery, despite the issues associated with contractor resource and materials availability.

This helped ensure that projects could be delivered, with over 80% of the council's 2020 summer programme of work being completed as planned, while other works were deferred to the 2021/22 programme.

Here are some of the highlights to work underway this year: **Linlithgow Academy upgrades:** £275,000 has been invested to upgrade the science labs ahead of the previous schedule, along with other accessibility works, classroom alterations and more general internal improvements **Investment in schools for pupils with additional support**

needs: The £2.1 million project to upgrade and extend Ogilvie School Campus in Livingston is progressing well and is due for completion in Spring 2021. Work is ongoing on the projects to deliver the £4.1m redevelopment of Pinewood School and the £7m replacement Cedarbank School, with work due to start later in the year. **Nursery extensions:** Six West Lothian Early Learning and Childcare centres (ELCs) are being extended at a combined cost of around £2.5 million. This is part of a £13 million wider programme budget of refurbished, extended and new ELCs to provide the capacity needed to provide all eligible pre-school pupils with 1,140 hours per year. Work on ELCs at Greenrigg and Stoneyburn primaries has been completed, with Parkhead Primary in West Calder due for completion soon. The next phase of the

programme will see ELCs extended at Howden St Andrews in Livingston, Kirkhill in Broxburn and Blackburn primaries for completion later this year. **Partnership centres:** Work is progressing for both Whitburn and Livingston North Partnership Centres. (Please see above for update on Whitburn.) With the £1.2 million construction works complete, the Livingston North Partnership Centre is now on track to open in spring 2021. **Pumpherston complex care development:** The £3 million project is currently at the site remediation and preparatory works stage, with construction work due to start on site later in 2021. **Young Persons' Supported Accommodation, Deans South in Livingston:** Construction work on this £4 million project is due on site mid 2021 subject to securing consents.



Improvements in your WL community

Despite the impact of the pandemic, West Lothian Council has worked hard to ensure that improvement projects across West Lothian have continued. Many of these projects include local companies who carry out the construction work on behalf of the council. Thank you to all those companies and individuals who have helped get us to this position, despite the obvious challenges that 2020 presented.

Open spaces

Open space projects are progressing very well, with 14 planned improvement projects and 11 play park projects either completed or scheduled for completion by April 2021.

Some of the highlights include, park refurbishments at:

- Cunnigar Park in Mid Calder,
- Howden, Heatherbank, Livingston Village and Peel Parks in Livingston
- Meadow Park in Bathgate and the completion of Eastfield Park in Fauldhouse

In terms of play parks, some of the highlights in this year's programme include a new park at Wester Inch, Bathgate and improvements and refurbishments at:

- Almondell Country Park Play Area, East Calder
- Balbardie Park Play Area, Bathgate
- Blackburn Road Play Area, Bathgate
- Heatherbank Play Area, Livingston
- Letham Park Play Area, Livingston
- Maryfield Play Area, Mid Calder
- Polkemmet Country Park Play Area, Whitburn

Work on a 3G pitch at East Calder is on target to begin before April 2021. The Multi-Use-Games-Area (MUGA) at Kirknewton Primary is also on target for completion and a new MUGA has been installed at Blackridge Primary, as part of the school extension project.

For an update on the new-build school and ELC construction projects at Winchburgh, East Calder, Bathgate and Blackridge, please turn to pages 4 and 5.

Fantastic new facilities for under fives

Construction work has been completed on two new state-of-the-art nurseries in Bathgate and Blackridge.

The modern, purpose-built early learning and childcare centres (ELCs) at St Mary's Primary School in Bathgate and Blackridge Primary have now been handed over to the council from development partner, Hub South East, and primary contractor, Morrison Construction.

The buildings will provide up to 64 spaces for early learning and childcare for eligible 2, 3 and 4 year olds when they open from April 2021.

Blackridge is also the first public, non-domestic Passivhaus ELC in Scotland, using advanced design

and construction techniques to provide users with enhanced thermal comfort with the use of virtually no energy for heating or cooling.

The £2.7 million investment is part of a £12 million investment programme in pre-school education, which also includes extensions at Greenrigg, Stoneyburn, Parkhead in West Calder, Howden St Andrews in Livingston, Kirkhill in Broxburn and Blackburn primaries.

Executive councillor for education David Dodds said: "I am delighted to welcome the

superb new nurseries at St Mary's in Bathgate and Blackridge into one of the best school estates in Scotland.

"We are making a huge investment in the future by building excellent facilities for our young people, to provide them with the best platform for learning and ensure we can provide for the growing demand.

"I'm especially excited to have Scotland's first public Passivhaus nursery in Blackridge. We will be looking at the potential benefits of the Passivhaus design as a pilot for future projects."



St Mary's Nursery in Bathgate

Sowing seeds of success at five-star Cedarbank

Cedarbank School has been awarded five-star status by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) for their fantastic garden project.



The Livingston-based school, which provides education and support for secondary-age pupils with a range of additional support needs, has been working for the last four years to earn the coveted top award.

This has included developing the school garden, purchasing new gardening equipment and embedding garden-related pupil activities into the S1-3 curriculum.

Depute head teacher Alison Lindsay, who has led the project, explained: "We were so pleased to be awarded five-star status by the RHS after years of hard work by our pupils and staff.

"We have been submitting evidence each year for the past four years, achieving additional stars each time, but to reach the top five-star award is something special for us all. While Covid restrictions have hampered many school activities, the appreciation of nature and the benefits of being outside have only increased in Cedarbank School.

"Pupils now grow vegetables and more fully understand the effects of

sustainable living. We have pupils in lead roles such as the apple tree supervisor who led an assembly on how a tree grows and the 'Frogateers' who supervise the wildlife area, show new pupils the frog population and promote their protection. In Outdoor Learning, pupils create structures and ponds, and plant seeds.

"It also provides a good outlet for many pupils who show an interest or aptitude for gardening or outside working, to experience working in this area in conjunction with our 'Developing the Young Workforce' agenda in school.



Cedarbank were also awarded a bronze plaque for the wildlife and food-growing sections of their gardens in the West Lothian School Garden award scheme in 2019.

Executive councillor for education David Dodds added: "Congratulations to all the staff and pupils at Cedarbank on their RHS five-star award.

"It's a fantastic achievement, and a fitting reward for the years of work put in by everyone at the school."

West Lothian school pupils are congratulated for their success in Cambridge competition



West Lothian Council has congratulated Broxburn Academy pupils Emma Bell and Ruby Ferguson for their success in reaching the finals of the Cambridge Union Schools Debating Competition.

A joint motion agreed at the Full Council meeting in February congratulated the two S4 pupils as the latest from Broxburn to reach the top in national school debating championships.

Emma and Ruby were one of three teams to qualify for the finals of Cambridge Schools and they finished joint top of

the table with 11/12 points. They've made the semi-finals of the Windsor Debating Competition hosted by Eton and won the Northern Juniors Debating Competition to be crowned best under 16s in the UK with Emma ranked as top speaker and Ruby as second.

Broxburn Academy Head Teacher Peter Reid said:

"As the youngest in the competition, and the only girls to take part, this is a fantastic achievement for Emma and Ruby and we would like to congratulate them.

We wish them the very best of luck in the finals which will probably be online this year in 2021."

New schools on track

Excellent progress is being made on delivering five brand new state-of-the-art schools in West Lothian.

Work is underway to deliver three new schools in Winchburgh and two in East Calder, as part of a massive £90 million investment programme. West Lothian already has one of the best school estates in the country, providing a fantastic platform for pupils to achieve their full potential. Attainment has been rising in West Lothian for eight consecutive years, as more and more local pupils go

on to positive destinations such as higher and further education or employment.

The new schools are being built to serve the growing populations of the core development areas of Winchburgh and East Calder, as more and more people choose West Lothian as the perfect place to raise their family.

Executive councillor for education

David Dodds said: "I'm delighted that construction work is progressing well on four new schools for West Lothian, with plans well underway for a replacement East Calder Primary too.

"Our young people deserve the best possible start in life, and providing these new state-of-the-art schools will help us provide the best quality education to help with this."



Calderwood Primary in East Calder



Left to right Winchburgh Academy, shared sports and community facility and Sinclair Academy

● Winchburgh Academy

The new Winchburgh Academy is expected to be open in 2023 and will offer non-denominational education for 660 young people.

The innovative design of the school means that it can be expanded to accommodate up to 1,210 pupils as the village increases in size.

Building work has been ongoing since August last year and is currently reported as being on programme, with foundations, steel frame and roof deck already complete and works progressing on concrete structural floors.

● Sinclair Academy, Winchburgh

Named after the venerable Margaret Sinclair for her work helping people, the Sinclair Academy will provide denominational education for secondary-age pupils from 2023.

Alongside Winchburgh Academy, works are progressing very well with foundations and structural steel frame completely in place, with roof and floor decks work ongoing.

● Holy Family Primary, Winchburgh

The new building is expected to be open in 2023, and will allow Holy Family Primary School to move from their current shared site with Winchburgh Primary.

This will increase both denominational and non-denominational primary education in Winchburgh, which is essential due to the ongoing development in the area.

As *Bulletin* went to press, the foundations were being dug and the steel frame expected to be erected in the coming weeks.

Calderwood Primary, East Calder

The new school will provide non-denominational primary education for up to 462 primary and 128 nursery pupils.

It is expected to open to pupils in 2022, after construction work was unable to start until June 2020 due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

Calderwood Primary incorporates elements of the award-winning West Calder High School, with sustainability and suitability as core objectives.

Work is currently progressing ahead of schedule, and the building is wind and watertight with works continuing on the external envelope.

Internal works, including partitions, joinery, and electrical and mechanical installation are also going well, despite strict physical distancing measures implemented as part of COVID 19 measures.

All four projects are delivered on behalf of the council by its development partner Hub South East, with Morrison Construction as the primary contractor, which is the same team who delivered the award-winning West Calder High School.

Coming soon – replacement East Calder Primary School

Plans are underway to build a fantastic new school to replace the current East Calder Primary.

The new school will provide a high-quality learning environment for the East Calder Primary community, replacing the current building, which is reaching the end of its working life.

The location for the school is still being confirmed along with other key details, and will be part of the consultation process.

Nursery hours extended to 1,140 per year

West Lothian Council will be increasing the number of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) hours per year to 1,140 from 19 April 2021. This means that parents/carers of all West Lothian three and four year olds, as well as eligible two year olds, will receive the increased hours for their child (pro rata) until the start of the new academic session in August 2021.

A range of attendance patterns across 50 weeks of the year are available.

For more details or to apply, please visit www.westlothian.gov.uk/apply-for-an-elc-place



Help on hand from the Advice Shop

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has left many West Lothian families struggling with their finances.

The council's Advice Shop offers a wide range of free, expert and impartial advice for anyone experiencing financial pressures.



This can include a financial health check, help with benefits, access to food, energy advice, grants to cover school-related costs, affordable credit and much more.

To see how the Advice Shop could help you, please visit www.westlothian.gov.uk/adviceshop, email advice.shop@westlothian.gov.uk or call **01506 283000**.

You can also complete an online referral form at www.westlothian.gov.uk/advice-shop-referral and we will contact you back.

In 2019/20, the Advice Shop supported over 13,000 West Lothian residents, helping them to access £30.9 million of additional funds



Self-help to manage your money

There are a number of useful, online self-help tools which can help you manage your money.

 Visit our online benefit calculator to make sure you are getting everything you are entitled to: westlothian.entitledto.co.uk/home/start

 Get a handle on your budget by using our budgeting tool budgetnew.entitledto.co.uk/westlothian

 If you do find yourself in a crisis, use our money worries link to help you access the local help and support that you need: www.westlothian.gov.uk/worrying-about-money

Energy advice

Our specialist energy advice team can help if you are struggling with gas/electricity bills.

If you have fallen behind with your gas or electricity payments, we can help:

look into options to deal with your debt; negotiate with your supplier to agree an affordable repayment plan; apply for available discretionary funds; and prevent your supply being disconnected or to get you reconnected.

Some energy suppliers will provide a one-off emergency payment to customers who are supplied by pre-payment meter. If you are worried about not being able to top up your gas or electricity meter, you should contact your supplier to discuss your options.



Short-term help for renters

Support is available for tenants who face real hardship as a result of not being able to meet their housing costs.

If you have a temporary shortfall between the amount of benefits you receive and the amount of rent due, you may be eligible for a Discretionary Housing Payment.

Any tenants can apply – council, registered social landlords and private sector – and you must be in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit with Housing Costs.



Please email energy.advice@westlothian.gov.uk for assistance.

For more details or to apply, please visit www.westlothian.gov.uk/discretionary-housing-payment

Help with **school costs**

Low-income families may be eligible for a range of grants to cover costs associated with school.

These include school clothing grants, free school meals and milk, and Education Maintenance Allowance.

More details at www.westlothian.gov.uk/helpwithcosts



Help in a crisis

If you are on a low income and facing a crisis, you might be eligible for a special grant.

Crisis grants can be awarded to meet expenses that have arisen as a result of an emergency or disaster in order to avoid an immediate threat to health or safety. Awards can be made to provide help with food and utility costs.

Normally individuals or families can only apply for 3 grants within a 12 month period with additional discretionary grants considered in exceptional circumstances. However, the 3 grant limit has been suspended if household finances have been adversely affected by Covid-19.

For more information and a form to apply are available at www.westlothian.gov.uk/scottish-welfare-fund

Access to **food**

Local organisations and projects are working in your community with the aim of providing good food.

Innovative community initiatives such as communal fridges and pantries, shared meals and community gardens are helping to provide an invaluable lifeline to people struggling to keep their head above water.

Use the map in the link below to find details of food projects in your local area: www.westlothian.gov.uk/access-to-food

West Lothian Foodbank support those in need with emergency food parcels, and arrangements are in place to support those who are self-isolating.



If you are in need of emergency food, please contact the Advice Shop on 01506 283000

Make sure your credit is **affordable**

Affordable credit providers and responsible lenders have a crucial role to play in supporting families through these difficult times.

The impact of COVID-19 has put additional financial pressure on families with low incomes, causing them to build up debt and no longer being able to afford all their essential monthly outgoings.

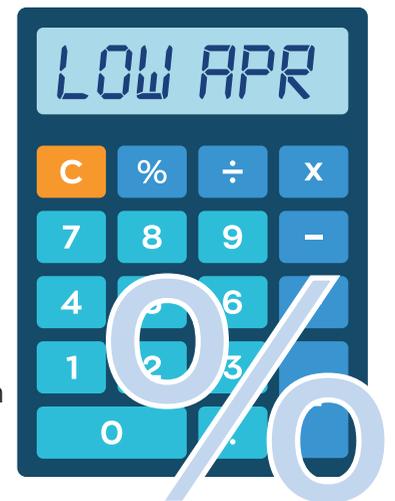
Anyone who needs to take out credit, such as to pay for

an unexpected bill, should make sure they go to a reputable lender to avoid the extra expense of high-cost credit.

Affordable credit providers and responsible lenders act in the best interests of the customer by:

- providing clear terms and conditions,
- making sure credit is affordable, and
- offering support to the borrower if they have difficulty with repayment.

If you need to take a loan or buy items on credit, there are different options for affordable credit available from not-for-profit lenders in West Lothian.



Credit Unions

A credit union is a not-for-profit organisation that provides affordable financial options for its members through savings accounts and low-cost loans.

There are two credit unions available for West Lothian residents and each provides a range of products and services for members.

Loans are available from £100-£15,000.

- **Blackburn Seafield and District Credit Union:**
www.bsdcreditunion.co.uk
01506 650198
- **West Lothian Credit Union**
www.westlothiancreditunion.co.uk
01506 436666

All credit unions are authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority.



Conduit Scotland

Conduit Scotland is a not-for-profit Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI) lending personal loans between £100-£1,000 to people who find it difficult to access other sources of credit.

They offer customers a lower cost, flexible and affordable alternative to high-cost, short-term loans such as 'payday loans' or doorstep lenders.

In addition, Conduit Scotland can also direct people towards local advice and support services to increase their incomes and reduce their outgoings.

Conduit Scotland is a wholly owned subsidiary of social enterprise Five Lamps, regulated and monitored by the Financial Conduct Authority.

For more details call 0300 111 0559 or visit www.conduitScotland.com

Have you been impacted financially by the COVID-19 pandemic?



RETRAIN OR UPSKILL WITH A FULL, OR PART-TIME COURSE AT WEST LOTHIAN COLLEGE

COURSES RANGE FROM ONE DAY SKILLS BOOSTS RIGHT THROUGH TO HND LEVEL



WHERE YOU CAN

Apply now: www.west-lothian.ac.uk

New travel info screens for Livingston bus terminal

Travellers using Livingston bus terminal will soon be able to enjoy real-time travel information. West Lothian Council has worked with partners to secure funding to upgrade the screens at Livingston Bus Terminal.

Funding of £50,000 made up of contributions of £40,000 from Paths for All and £10,000 from SEStran has been secured to cover the cost of supplying, installing and maintaining the real-time travel information (RTI) screens.

The work will also look to reduce the risk of vandalism by mounting screens up on existing concrete columns, and should be operational in the early part of 2021.

West Lothian Council Leader Lawrence Fitzpatrick said: "This news will undoubtedly be welcomed by businesses, bus operators and passengers alike.

"It has long been recognised that there is a need for accurate real-time information to be displayed at the bus terminal, which is a central transport hub serving many passengers coming into West Lothian to engage with local businesses and services."

Councillor Gordon Edgar, Chair of SEStran added: "It is great to see the Livingston Centre getting a much-needed update and SEStran is happy to be part of the solution."



West Lothian Council has pledged to tackle gender violence

The White Ribbon Campaign is the largest effort to end men's violence against women. It relies on volunteer support and financial contributions from individuals and organisations, with men and boys encouraged

to wear a white ribbon to show their support.

Councillor Fitzpatrick said: "This is an ongoing effort to protect women and girls from the small minority of men who commit violence against women. Such

behaviour is totally unacceptable. "I hope men and boys across West Lothian will join me in taking a firm stand against violence against women by signing up for the White Ribbon Scotland pledge too."

To sign up for the pledge, please visit www.whiteribbonscotland.org.uk
For more information on the help available for women experiencing gender-based violence, please visit www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/44932/Domestic-Abuse.

Help for men experiencing gender-based violence is also available from abusedmeninscotland.org

In an emergency, please call 999 for immediate help.

OUR CHILDREN NEED



Could you provide full-time or respite care for children/young person with disabilities within a safe and loving home?

We are looking for specialist carers to provide care for children/young people with disabilities aged between 0-18 years. Training will be offered.

Email C&FFamilyPlacementTeam@westlothian.gov.uk if you think you could make a difference.



West Lothian Health & Social Care Partnership
westlothianhsc.org.uk



Affordable housing investment of over **£80 million**

- West Lothian Council is **one of Scotland's best performing local authorities** in delivering new build council homes
- The Housing **Capital Investment Programme** was approved in February alongside the **Housing Revenue Account Budget**

West Lothian Council will spend over £80 million over the next two years **improving existing council housing** and **increasing the number** of council properties available.

The two-year capital programme (2021-22 and 2022-23) will see over £50 million invested to increase the social housing supply in West Lothian.



281 new homes by the year 2023 across a range of sites and areas (see page 11).

Investment will also be used to purchase former council houses through the Open Market Acquisitions Scheme, as the council continues to look at expanding the housing supply working alongside Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and other partners to achieve the aim of delivering 3,000 new houses during the period 2012-2022.

The new build project will continue to bring a number of benefits to the community such as **training and employment opportunities** for apprentices, local people and businesses and will continue to help tackle the high demand for affordable housing in West Lothian.

Investment in the Mortgage to Rent scheme, which is a Scottish Government subsidy scheme, will continue to allow owners in extreme financial difficulty to sell their properties to the council and become council tenants.



Investment in existing council homes

Around **£30million** will be invested to improve and maintain existing housing, ensuring council homes meet the Scottish Quality Housing Standard

A total of **£496,000** of major refurbishment works are planned, with estimated completion by March 2022

£6.3 million invested to support a broad range of activities, including decoration and internal upgrades, window and door refurbishments, painting and fencing programmes



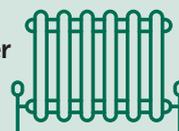
The introduction of Scotland's Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) regulations means that any house in Scotland under the management of social landlords should meet a minimum energy rating. EESH continues to be a major focus for project work

There will be continuing investment in external wall insulation to target work in council houses in areas of mixed tenure, to maximise economies of scale where homeowners receive support through the Home Energy Efficiency Programme Scotland (HEEPS).

£6.4 million is to be invested in eight individual major upgrade projects consisting of long-term maintenance work where structural elements such as roof and external walls are beyond economical repair by routine maintenance

£891,000 will be spent on environmental improvements and external upgrading, including tenant led street improvement projects. A portion of this budget will also go towards a Community Choices, Participatory Budgeting exercise which will see local communities decide how this resource will be used.

£14.5 million invested to deliver energy efficiency measures, central heating replacements, electrical testing and repair, external wall insulation upgrades and asbestos management projects



Housing & Garage rent



A continuation of the rent increase of 3% per annum for council homes and garages has also been approved by the council.

This will help ensure continued investment in council housing infrastructure, improving existing homes and creating new affordable homes over the two-year timeframe.

This decision follows engagement with tenants' groups including West Lothian Tenants Panel. The feedback indicated support for the continuation of the previously agreed 3% rent increase per annum. In 2020/21 housing rent in West Lothian was below the Scottish average.

Social housing plans unveiled

West Lothian Council is continuing to work alongside Registered Social Landlords and notable housing developers on ways to further increase the social housing stock across West Lothian.



West Lothian Strategic Housing Investment Plan

An update on the West Lothian Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) was recently published outlining opportunities for West Lothian Council, in conjunction with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), to ascertain the viability of current and future social housing investment opportunities.

The Scottish Government has requested that all Local Authorities submit a 5-year Strategic SHIP which will augment their current Local Housing Strategies with the updated SHIP for West Lothian running from 2021-2026.

The plan includes the development for 295 affordable homes by West Lothian Council as part of its own new build programme. 281 of these homes are planned to be completed by 2023 (continued from page 10). These sites include:

Standhill, Bathgate 22	Eagle Brae, Livingston 29	Mossend, West Calder 69
Dean South, Livingston 29	Eliburn, Livingston 20	Mid Street, Bathgate 5
Majorbanks Street, Bathgate 6	Wellhead Farm, Murieston 42	Wester Inch, Bathgate 59

From 2012 to September 2020 →

2,190

affordable homes were provided in West Lothian.

Over the 5-year period of the SHIP sites have been identified for over

2,500 HOMES

RSLs have identified new projects for 359 homes through the current SHIP that could complete in 2022/23, subject to funding and sites being available. Other sites included in the SHIP could accommodate up to 291 homes. These sites may be developed by RSLs or in some cases, West Lothian Council.

Executive councillor for services for the Community George Paul said: "West Lothian has one of the most ambitious targets and strategies to meet the strong demand for social housing. The Strategic Housing Investment Plan presents an opportunity to set out key investment priorities for affordable housing

and demonstrate how these will be delivered. Some fantastic work has already taken place over the past few years. The updated SHIP provides the council and RSL's with a clear and strategic approach to the ongoing development of sites in West Lothian.



Worried about paying your council housing rent?

Talk to us now if you are struggling to pay your rent. Our team can help you keep a roof over your head.

Call 01506 280000 today or visit westlothian.gov.uk/paying-rent

West Lothian's budget explained

The council has agreed a huge investment programme in local services.



What does this mean?

Agreeing a budget means that the council has - in financial terms - approved plans for service provision in the coming year. Whilst the most visible outcome of the budget process is the setting of the Council Tax, the budget clearly has a greater significance and meaning for the community.

How is the council funded?

- 20% Council Tax itself accounts for 20% of our total funding.
- 80% 80% of the council's funding comes from the Scottish Government.



The budget explained

The council spends its budget on a large number of local services. The total amount the council spends is broken down into several specific budgets.

Here's a quick summary of what has been agreed:

A revenue budget for 2021/22 to 2022/23.

The revenue budget covers the council's day-to-day expenditure and includes the costs of running services.

A two year housing budget.

The money used to run and improve the council's stock of affordable housing.



An updated Capital budget.

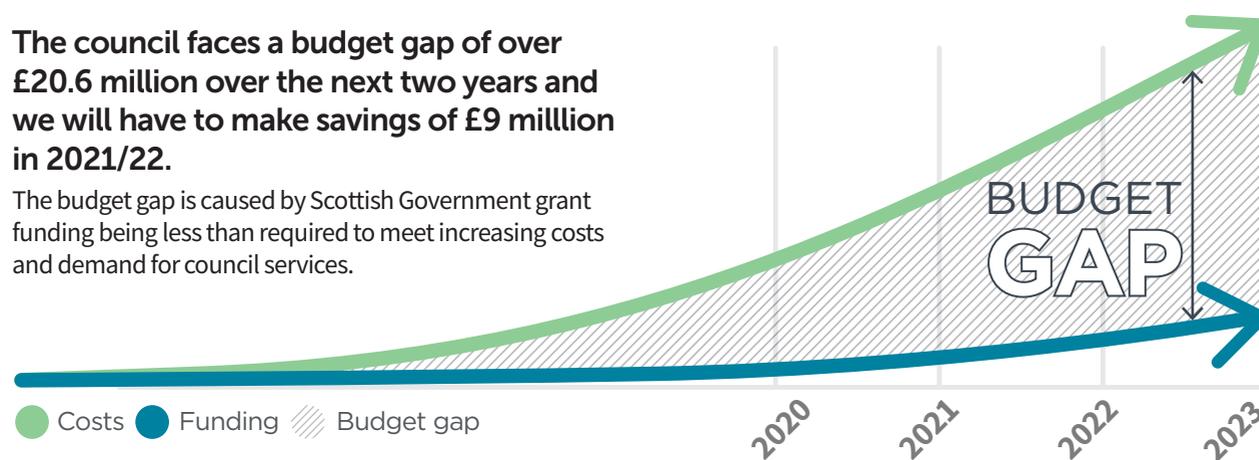
This budget is used to improve the council's assets. This includes refurbishing buildings, play areas and roads. It also includes areas of one-off investment such as new schools or extensions.

Key summary of what's been agreed:

- Over £453 million will be spent on maintaining and improving local council services.
- The council will prioritise investment in services that meet the needs of an increasing number of older people, children, vulnerable adults and families living in poverty.
- A further £86 million next year will be used to improve council assets including schools, roads and facilities.
- The council will spend over £80 million over the next two years to increase and improve its existing housing stock.

The council faces a budget gap of over £20.6 million over the next two years and we will have to make savings of £9 million in 2021/22.

The budget gap is caused by Scottish Government grant funding being less than required to meet increasing costs and demand for council services.



Council Tax

Council Tax will be frozen in 2021/22

For details, visit:
www.westlothian.gov.uk/council-tax



Leader of West Lothian Council, Lawrence Fitzpatrick

- Expanding early learning and childcare, providing more parents with flexibility and choice
- Helping to reduce poverty
- Supporting and providing social care for the elderly, the most vulnerable adults and children in West Lothian
- Protecting and improving our environment – reducing carbon output and enhancing roads, paths and open spaces
- Closing the gaps in attainment and achievement for our young people and improving education in West Lothian for every young person

“ We aim to protect and improve West Lothian's communities and we believe we have agreed the best possible budget within the resources available to us. Everyone will benefit from the council's investment in local services. ”

Closing the budget gap means it is inevitable that there will be some changes to the services that the council delivers.

The council will prioritise services to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people in the community, such as children, older people, vulnerable adults and families in poverty.

For details on the budget, including budget reduction measures agreed, visit: www.westlothian.gov.uk/budget

Key summary of investment

Over **£453 million** will be spent on maintaining and improving local council services.

Approximately £360 million of the council's budget (around 80%) is spent on three priority areas.

The council has agreed a raft of spending measures that will see significant investment in local services and support packages for those in most need.

- 1 **Education (£189 million)**
- 2 **Social Care (£113.2 million)** – care homes, social work, care at home, care for vulnerable people
- 3 **Operational Services (£57.7 million)** – roads, waste disposal, parks, maintenance of open spaces, flood prevention, fleet/community transport and subsidies for public transport

Support for local people

To meet an anticipated rise in requests for support, £1 million will be set aside to meet a demand for financial support via the Scottish Welfare Fund. Over £2 million will be spent to support the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, which is expected to see a rise in demand as unemployment rises due to the furlough scheme winding down in 2021.

There will be additional funding for school clothing grants and food support packages delivered in partnership between third sector groups and the council.

Operational Services

The council will invest over £57 million in roads, waste services, recycling, fleet/community transport, subsidies for public transport flood prevention and open spaces.

In addition, the council is creating a £1 million Winter Resilience fund to allow for an immediate response to winter weather.

Although West Lothian has one of the best road networks in Scotland, an additional £750,000 will be spent on repairing potholes following the recent extended period of adverse winter weather. This is in addition to the £4.5 million that will be invested in road and footways upgrades through the council's Capital programme between April 2021 and March 2022 (see Capital section below).

Education

Education will continue to see the largest amount of investment to meet an increase in demand for services.

We have growing numbers of young people and record breaking exam results over recent years. £189 million will be invested in Education

in West Lothian this year.

Nearly £1.7 million will be invested to enable the council to increase nursery hours to 1,140 hours a year. Funded early learning and childcare (ELC) is available to all three- and four-year olds and eligible two-year olds. In West Lothian, from April, the entitlement will increase to 1,140 hours a year.

The council will spend over £1.3 million to provide payments to those assessed as being eligible for Free School Meals during all school holidays from summer 2021 onwards. This will enable parents/children to purchase food during school holiday periods.

Reducing homelessness

Over £700,000 will be spent in 2021/22 to help reduce homelessness in West Lothian, including supporting delivery of the rapid rehousing transition plan.

COVID-19 support

Overall, nearly **£17.5 million** will be spent by the council next year offsetting financial pressures associated with COVID-19.

Extra investment of almost £3.7 million will aim to meet the challenges that remote learning for schools and families has had during lockdown and to help with the educational recovery.

The council will also invest nearly £350,000 in specific interventions within health and social care to help offset the impact of the pandemic for specific groups such as older people, children with disabilities, those experiencing abuse and adults with addictions.

Due to COVID-19, it is expected that a number of areas will see a significant loss in income and council investment is needed for one off funding packages to meet these financial shortfalls. This includes: £1.5 million to help West Lothian Leisure meet substantial and prolonged reduction in income, loss of income for services such as Linlithgow Burgh Halls, school catering, licensing, school lets and Instrumental Music.

Social Care

There will be an increase in the number of people over 75 by 2022/23.

The council will increase spending in social care and health to over **£113 million** to meet significant growth in the demand and costs for services for the growing elderly population

The **£113 million** is invested in areas such as care homes, social work, care at home and care for vulnerable people

Capital investment of **£290 million**

West Lothian Council is set to invest £290 million between April 2021 and 2027/28 on assets to support the delivery of essential services. The announcement comes after the council approved an updated Asset Management Strategy and General Services Capital Programme for 2021/22 to 2027/28.

Investment in local facilities

The **£197 million** property investment makes up the largest part of the programme, with West Lothian's school estate the main focus for investment.

School investment

West Lothian's school estate is in excellent condition and provides the best possible environment for learning. The programme has a range of projects, including new build state-of-the-art schools and nurseries, refurbishments and extensions underway or planned, sometimes funded in part by developer contributions.

Highlights include:

£62 million for three new schools, two secondary and one primary, in the core development area of Winchburgh.

£25 million for two new primary schools in East Calder.

£26.5 million in schools dedicated to supporting pupils with additional support needs,

with new build replacements for Beatlie and Cedarbank in Livingston while Pinewood in Blackburn will be refurbished, reconfigured and extended.

£6.25 million for new partnership centres at Livingston North and Whitburn

Improving existing properties

£33 million investment to our property estate between now and 2028.

Nearly **£16.5 million** to improve schools, including new roofs, new windows and electrical and mechanical upgrades

Nearly **£5.9 million** on other property assets such as care homes, community facilities, partnership centres and commercial property.

Roads, footways & bridges

Over **£53 million** will be spent on roads by 2028.

This includes over **£10 million** invested in roads with major upgrade projects in the next year alone, including: Blaeberryhill Road in Whitburn; Edinburgh Road in Bathgate; Linlithgow High Street; Mayfield Drive in Armadale and Station Road in Armadale.

£16 million will be spent on road lighting works, with **£7 million** invested in upgrading bridges

Potholes

An additional **£750,000** has been allocated from the council's Revenue Budget towards repairing potholes in the next year.



£12 million for Early Learning Centres or nurseries across West Lothian, to allow every eligible child to be offered 1,140 hours per year.

Open Spaces

Nearly **£14.5 million** has been earmarked for open spaces improvements over the next seven years.

Technology

Over **£25 million** will be spent on the council's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) with over £4 million invested next year.

For more information visit: westlothian.gov.uk/budget

A big-hearted West Lothian Council waste collection crew have been crowned top of the league for spreading Christmas cheer.

The crew of Rob, Stuart and Declan enjoy a great rapport with the residents on their beats, and often hand out gifts at Christmas to the children they see and wave to during the year.

They also enjoy regular football banter with massive Hibs fan Bill from East Calder. When Bill told the crew that he has no family and was going to be spending Christmas alone, they knew they had to do something to brighten his day.

So the crew bought Bill a Hibs football top, and arranged for it to be signed by the Hibs team through club captain David Gray, who lives in West Lothian.

Waste operative Rob Callander said: "Bill's a great guy and always comes out for a quick chat and some football banter with us when we are emptying his bins.

"When he said he was spending



Waste team of Rob, Stuart and Declan hand over the football top to Bill from East Calder.

Christmas alone, we wanted to do something special for him. He's Hibs daft, so we all chipped in to get him the football top.

"Huge thanks for Hayley and David Gray for arranging to get the top signed by the Hibs team, Bill seemed really delighted to get it and hopefully it's helped make sure he has the great Christmas he deserves."

Executive councillor for the environment Tom Conn said: "It's fantastic to see Rob and his crew go

above and beyond to bring some festive cheer to a local resident like Bill this year.

"We have received a lot of positive messages regarding our dedicated waste crews over the festive season, as they worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to ensure collections were not disrupted.

"The thanks they have received from local residents shows just how much their efforts have been appreciated during a very challenging year."



Communities in West Lothian are being given the chance to influence how budgets in their area are allocated through a process called Community Choices.

Community Choices is allowing local communities and service users to have their say on how funds are used on a variety of projects and services using the digital voting platform CONSUL.

The process has already started in a number of areas with local initiatives aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of the local community in Blackburn set to be voted on by the local community and an early consultation process looking at how funds can be spent on the maintenance and improvement of a selection of parks and open spaces across West Lothian has begun.

There will be many more opportunities to participate in Community Choices in the months ahead.

To find out more about Community Choices and how you can get involved visit: www.westlothian.gov.uk/communitychoices

NEWS IN BRIEF

For more West Lothian news visit: news.westlothian.gov.uk

● New fire and smoke alarm rules delayed

The implementation of the new Fire and Smoke Alarm Standard has been put back to February 2022.

The Scottish Parliament have agreed to postpone the new rules requiring all homes to have interlinked smoke and heat alarms due to the impact of COVID-19.

The new standard was due to be implemented in February 2021 in response to the Grenfell tragedy, and puts the responsibility on the home owner to ensure the standard is met.

For tenants, the duty is on the owner of the property, so landlords are advised to check the legislation and make sure their properties meet the new standard by February 2022.

The council is currently in the process of ensuring that all our homes meet the new standard. Council tenants will be contacted to agree a convenient date to access their home and complete the work.

Installation of alarms is classed as essential work, so is permitted under the lockdown rules in force as *Bulletin* went to print.

For more details of the new standard, please visit

www.gov.scot/publications/fire-and-smoke-alarms-in-scottish-homes/

● Huge drop in emissions for Climate Change Declaration.

West Lothian Council has reduced its

greenhouse gas emissions by 40% in the last seven years.

This is double the 20% target approved in 2015 as the council continues to take major steps to reduce our environmental impact.

This represents a reduction in CO2 emissions from 61,061 tonnes in 2013/14 to 36,635 for 2019/20, a drop of 24,426 tonnes.

Executive councillor for the environment Tom Conn said: "There's still a good deal of work to do, but I'm pleased that we are playing our part to reduce emissions while continuing to deliver all the essential services that local residents rely on."

● Raising awareness of endometriosis in West Lothian

West Lothian Council is supporting the work of Endo Warriors West Lothian in raising awareness of the condition Endometriosis and the debilitating effect it can have on those with the condition.

Endo Warriors West Lothian is a local independent support group set up to raise awareness of endometriosis. Endometriosis is a painful condition that affects around 1 in 10 women and for which there is currently no cure.

It takes an average of eight years for a woman to be diagnosed, despite endometriosis being the second most common gynaecological condition in the UK.

Executive councillor for Education David Dodds said: "We are pleased to continue to support the efforts of the Endo Warriors

West Lothian group in their vital work in raising awareness of endometriosis. It is a condition that has gone undiagnosed for many women and girls for far too long."

● Be the Light in the Darkness

West Lothian marked Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January 2021.

It has been held in the UK since 2001 and is a time to reflect and remember the millions of people who have lost their lives in the Nazi Persecution, Holocaust, and subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

West Lothian Council is one of thousands of organisations across the UK that is marking the event this year, which has the theme of 'Be the Light in the Darkness'.

As it was not possible to hold an event this year, a special video has been produced and can be watched at www.youtube.com/watch?v=NneiP8QhJts

● Historic wall restoration project ongoing

Work is ongoing to restore a historic C-listed wall dating back to the 1800s within scenic Almondell & Calderwood Country Park.

The stone and lime mortar wall, which borders the original walled garden of the old Almondell Estate, was in danger of being lost due to its deteriorating condition.

The £200k restoration work project is being funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (previously Heritage Lottery

Scotland) and West Lothian Council with support from Sustrans Artroots Project and Scotmid.

Executive councillor for the environment Tom Conn said: "It's fantastic to see work underway to ensure the historic wall next to the visitor centre in Almondell & Calderwood Country Park is preserved for future generations."

● Online blast from the past for West Lothian pupils

An innovative project aims to help West Lothian school pupils connect with the past in a COVID-19 secure way.

The council's Museums Service have been awarded a COVID-19 Museum Development Fund grant of £7,562 from Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS) to help deliver online school outreach sessions following a successful pilot scheme.

Called Re-engaging Our Schools, the funds will enable the service to develop and fit out nine new covid-safe museum loan boxes featuring historical items for use by schools and purchase microphones for use in virtual school sessions.

A series of films to complement the loan boxes will also be produced, which will be accessible via GLOW for both in-school and home learning.

Executive councillor for culture and leisure Dave King said: "The Re-engaging Our Schools project will build upon our school pilot project, and ensure that we are able to offer West Lothian's schools a high-quality museum service throughout the pandemic and into the future."



Recruitment drive for crossing patrol guides

Lowport Primary pupils with patrol guide Paul Meenan.

School Crossing Patrol Guides play an invaluable role in local communities across West Lothian, as a regular and friendly face helping pupils and their families to safely navigate their route to and from school on a daily basis.

Although a non-statutory service, the council has provided School Crossing Patrol Guides for many years. Currently, there are 82 approved sites that have guides but there is a growing need for roles to be filled across the county.

The positions average 10 hours per week, 1-hour morning and 1-hour afternoon for 38 weeks per year.

Heather Pike and Paul Meenan are crossing patrol guides in Linlithgow mainly serving the walking routes into Lowport Primary School. They have both spoken about what the role means to them and offered an insight into the benefits that come with the job both personally and professionally.

Heather has been a patrol guide for over 13 years and the tradition has

run through the family.

She said: "My mum was the first lollipop lady in Linlithgow and my dad was a lollipop man at Lowport Primary School for 22 years, so when my daughter left school I decided to apply and have been doing it now for 13 years.

"Knowing that you're helping the children in learning how to cross the road safely, every day is different and I find it very rewarding."

And she offered the following advice for others who are interested in following in her footsteps.

"Be friendly, have patience, be able to stay calm in any situation and always have a smile for everyone."

Paul Meenan is newer to the role and summed up his experience to date saying:

"I had worked as a Prison Officer for over 30 years which meant I had to work shifts and weekends. I didn't want to do this anymore so when the job came up, the hours and holidays suited me. It's like any other job you really don't know what it's like till you start and I love my job."

"The best part of my job is working in Linlithgow the town I have always stayed in, where I work is also the route of the Riding of the Marches. I don't just cross the children, I also help adults cross the road, it is also within walking distance from my home. I find the job rewarding and the parents and all the school staff are very helpful and the children are amazing."

APPLY

The full job advert is available via the myjobscotland website where you can also complete an application.

Visit <https://www.myjobscotland.gov.uk/councils/west-lothian-council/jobs>

Alternatively contact Katherine.Whalen@westlothian.gov.uk for further information on the role.

NEW HOUSEHOLD BIN CALENDARS AVAILABLE

The new household recycling calendars are now available to download. www.westlothian.gov.uk/bins

Customers can also check the bin collection schedule and subscribe to our bin collection reminder service, which will send an email the day before your collection days, even when collection days change over festive period or bank holidays.



Calendars are not being mailed to customers.

There are not any changes to the service, or collection day, so these should carry on from existing calendars. Collections remain:

- An alternate weekly collection of blue & grey bins;
 - A 2-weekly uplift of brown bins.
- The length of the calendar is 18 months – 1 March 2021 to 31 August 2022

Remember, for information on:

- Recycling centre opening times
- Household collection dates
- What can and can't be recycled in your household bin
- Daily information on all disruption to bin collections

Visit: westlothian.gov.uk/recycling-and-waste

Support for businesses and employment

A full range of support is available for local businesses.

- Advice on financial support grants available
- General business advice
- Employment support



www.westlothian.gov.uk/supportforbusiness

"We appreciate that many are experiencing very challenging and uncertain times as a result of Coronavirus and the support being offered to West Lothian Businesses is available on our website." Information is also available regarding employability support for individuals who are worried about their job, who have just been made redundant or are uncertain about their future employment due to Coronavirus (COVID 19). West Lothian Council have a range of services that can provide you with support and information on what you are entitled to."

Executive councillor for development and transport, Cathy Muldoon



Got 5?

Register online to vote

The Scottish Parliament election on May 6 give you an opportunity to have a say on issues that matter to you

But to vote, you must be registered by 19 April! Go to gov.uk/register-to-vote today – it only takes 5 minutes

#YourVoteMatters. Don't lose it. #GetReadyToVote

YOUR VOTE MATTERS
DON'T LOSE IT



The Electoral Commission



At Home with Xcite Online!

Taking care of our health is so important, now more than ever.

Taking time out of your day to exercise can really help keep you healthy, fit and improve your mental wellbeing. The more time we spend at home there's a risk of becoming less active and missing out on daily social interactions.

West Lothian Leisure has launched **Xcite Online** to help us stay active, bring us together and just feel better! Invite your local, friendly, Xcite Fitness Instructors into your living room with LIVE online fitness classes, available every day!

From Line Dancing, Gentle Exercise, Paracise to Yoga, Body Balance, the full Les Mills range and many more to try, there is a fantastic selection to suit everyone! Xcite's experienced instructors will give exercise variations throughout the class to suit your ability, as well as a boost and some chit chat too!

“ The current online classes are great and it's lovely to have so many of our instructors talking to us live. ”
Margaret - Xcite Linlithgow Member

“ My Xcite membership really means a lot to me and, whilst very disappointed that classes had to cease at the end of September, I was delighted that they were able to set up online classes which, frankly, have been a lifeline for me through all of the ongoing restrictions. The best thing I did on reaching 60 was becoming an Xcite member. ”
Dawn - Xcite Broxburn Member

If you can't make a live class time, don't worry Xcite Online has an on-demand library, where you have instant access to a selection of recorded classes, at any time of the day.



Xcite Online is easy to sign up to, and at only £9.99 per month, it is great value! You'll have unlimited access to live and on demand classes, easily accessible on any internet device, like your phone, tablet, laptop, or smart TV. You and your friends could be doing the same workout at the same time in your own homes! If you do have any issues signing up, the Xcite Team are on hand to help you.

To find out more and how to sign up visit www.westlothianleisure.com

Best Assessed in Scotland!

West Lothian Leisure is delighted to announce it has received Silver at the 2020 TRP Members Experience Awards!

As well as the Silver award, it is the best assessed operator in Scotland and 6th in the whole of the UK! Xcite Broxburn Pool also won 'Best Swimming Pool Member Experience'. This is a fantastic achievement during a very challenging 2020.

The Members Experience Awards recognise operators in the commercial, public, and not-for-profit sectors across the UK. The results are measured from customer feedback completed after visiting their venue and services.

Tim Dent CEO said

“ This is a great achievement and a welcome boost for the staff for all their efforts during a very difficult year. It's fantastic to be best assessed in Scotland, but most rewarding to know customers value our commitment and we're getting things right! We'd like to thank all our customers for their support, it's down to your feedback that helps us improve and adapt. ”

Mark Lewis at TRP said

“ 2020 was, for obvious reasons, an exceptionally challenging year so it is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the WLL team that they were still able to delight their members with their service delivery during this challenging period and take home the title of Scottish operator of the year. A particularly big congratulations goes to the Broxburn Swimming Pool team for reclaiming their 'Best Swimming Pool Member Experience' crown first won in 2018. ”



Member Experience Awards
2020 silver award



Member Experience Awards
2020 best swimming pool member experience

Howden Connects

Howden Park Centre, like most arts and cultural venues, has been temporarily closed since March 2020 due to COVID-19. After a successful application to the Scottish Government's Performing Arts Venue Relief Fund, the centre is excited to launch a new online cultural programme, Howden Connects, for the local community to enjoy!

The venture brings new and exciting cultural content to West Lothian and offers employment opportunities to local freelance artists, performers and creative practitioners who have been hit hard by the pandemic. These collaborations build creative projects from workshops and online exhibitions to live streamed performances.

Upcoming projects for **Howden Connects** include:

- **Playshed**, which is an arts and creative play project delivered by Firefly Arts, specifically for families. Playshed will also support a group of young filmmakers, working with a professional to digitally record the programme and the final piece will be screened at a celebratory Spring Fling event.
- **Artist**, Lisa Flemming will be collaborating with Chris Young, a graffiti artist; Graham Tate, a photographer, and local youth groups from the skateboarding community to explore aspects of the skating culture. There will be a final exhibition installed at Howden Park Centre's Gallery which illustrates the evolution of the skatepark through time and new art works celebrating skate culture.



From more information about Howden Connects projects and Howden Park Centre please visit www.howdenparkcentre.com or visit their Facebook @Howdenparkcentre.