

Bulletin



Winter Ready 2023/24

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EXAMS SUCCESS FOR WEST LOTHIAN PUPILS

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David Pringle of DC Music, East Main Street in Whitburn, joined Councillor Kirsteen Sullivan and Nairn Pearson, the council's Business Improvement Districts Manager



You must book a slot to guarantee access to West Lothian's five community recycling centres (CRCs). Bookings can be made up to a week in advance, or on the day, as long as spaces are available.

Find out more on Page 6

Shop Local this Festive Season

West Lothian residents are being urged to back their local businesses this Christmas.

Small Business Saturday takes place on Saturday, 2 December, with local shoppers encouraged to support small and independent businesses, such as those that can be found in West Lothian's traditional town centres of Armadale, Bathgate,

Broxburn and Uphall, Linlithgow and Whitburn. The day itself takes place on the first Saturday in December each year, but the campaign aims to have a lasting impact on small businesses.

In partnership with Visit West Lothian, for your chance to win a £50 Shop Local Gift Card, to help support West Lothian businesses, turn to page 13.



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Pipe bands to be recognised



West Lothian Schools Pipe Band were also celebrating an impressive second place finish in the Novice Juvenile A grade at the championships. This is third time the band have finished second in this category following on from success in 2019 and 2022.

The incredible achievement by People's Ford Boghall & Bathgate Caledonia Pipe Band to become World Pipe Band champions is set to be honoured by West Lothian Council.

The band took first place in the top Grade 1 category at the World Pipe Championships against top pipe bands from Scotland and across the world.

The West Lothian-based band were formed in 1972, and this first time they have achieved the top accolade in the premier pipe band competition.

A meeting of the full West Lothian Council unanimously agreed to request Provost Cathy Muldoon host a civic reception for the band to mark this outstanding achievement.

People's Ford Boghall & Bathgate Caledonia Pipe Band won "The Worlds" for the very first time in their 50-year history in August this year, against the best pipe bands from across the globe.



"To be named the best pipe band in the world is an unbelievable achievement and it's a real privilege to be able to acknowledge it in this way. Congratulations also to our excellent West Lothian Schools

Pipe Band too, on another superb second place finish in their grade."

Provost Cathy Muldoon

Can **you** care for a West Lothian child?

Children and young people in your community are in need of foster carers to provide a safe and caring home to them.

If you are interested in finding out more information about becoming a foster carer please contact the Family Based Care Service.

☎ 01506 284296

✉ lovefostering@westlothian.gov.uk

🌐 westlothian.gov.uk/lovefostering



Scan me to find out more information about becoming a foster carer.
#lovefostering

West Lothian
Health & Social
Care Partnership



Play area improvements

West Lothian Council's Parks team have been working hard to improve and refurbish a number of Play Areas across West Lothian this year. Here's a short summary of some of our larger projects:

A new play area aimed at toddlers and young children will be built near the Kirkhill housing estate in Broxburn. Works should be complete by Summer 2024.

A new play area aimed at older children and teenagers will be built at Holmes Park in Broxburn. The works should be complete by Autumn 2024.

Ball court refurbishments at Mosswood, Knightsridge and at the Addiewell Primary School / Community Centre site. The works will include new surfacing and other minor repairs. The works should be complete by Summer 2024.

Resurfacing works at Threemiletown Play Area were completed in Spring 2023. New accessible and all

weather surfacing at the Wester Inch Circle Play Area in Bathgate was installed in Autumn 2023.

The Beecraigs Car Park Play Area works are due to be

completed by the end of 2023. This will include replacement of the existing large play tower with a new tower and natural play elements, ensuring access to adventurous play for many years to come.

Gowanbank Play Area refurbishment and landscaping repairs should be complete by Summer 2024.



Linlithgow's Oatlands Park Play Area refurbishment should be complete by Spring 2024. The play equipment choices were determined by a public vote

'Untenable' situation for local bus users

Scotland's First Minister has agreed to the Leader of West Lothian Council's request to look at a solution for local buses.

In October, McGill's Scotland East confirmed that they are ceasing all operations in West Lothian from 2 December.

Humza Yousaf, Scotland's First Minister, given the Leader of West Lothian Council assurances that the Transport Minister and Transport Scotland representatives will meet council representatives at the earliest opportunity to help find a solution.

Leader of West Lothian Council Lawrence Fitzpatrick said: "The council has no authority over the commercial market or operations so powers and legislation handed down by the Government is one thing, but they aren't realistic without the resources to go with them."

"The only solution is funding from the Scottish Government to support local bus services and that is a message that has come across loud and clear from the bus operators themselves.

"The council has maintained funding for a number of subsidised bus services, particularly where villages have no alternative bus service, despite a predicted £39 million budget gap over the next five years.

"What is clear to everyone is that councils don't have the resources to meet current levels of service delivery, so we cannot find funding to solve the bus crisis.

"It is our hope that the Scottish Government act now to help the bus crisis in West Lothian."*

*This information was last updated before Bulletin went to print. Please keep an eye on the next edition of Bulletin for the latest update, or check the council's social media channels.

FUNDING CHALLENGES REMAIN

The significant scale of the financial challenges facing West Lothian Council have been set out.

Insufficient levels of Scottish Government funding and increasing costs has meant that the council will have to deliver but savings of £39.4 million over the next five years to help contribute to the budget gap. A large number of budget savings measures have been agreed to enable the council to balance its budget – something the council is legally required to do. The savings estimated to be made in 2024/25 and 2025/26

are currently £9.7 million and £8.4 million. However, a report presented to Council Executive in October confirmed that the council has an overspend of nearly £3.5million for 2023/24. Urgent action has been agreed to manage the overspend including putting in place recruitment controls and stopping non-essential spending. Consideration will also be given to moving forward planned

budget reduction measures and identifying new ways to reduce spending. Leader of West Lothian Council Lawrence Fitzpatrick has said that unless more funding is given to local councils soon, the impact on local services will be disastrous. He said: "I think it is very important to be clear and upfront in terms of the position we and other councils are in. The figures are set out in front

of us and it is clear that we can no longer continue to deliver the services we currently deliver and remain solvent. The simple reality is that if we continue to deliver the existing level of services we deliver now, we will run out of money. If this were any other organisation, they would be facing insolvency and administration. In terms of what that means for council services – roads, schools, care homes, open spaces – this would be

disastrous. "We have all seen what has happened with Birmingham City Council recently who have essentially gone bust and they will now be forced to close many facilities and stop all but essential services. "I believe it's time to reflect on where we are going and what future we face unless a significant increase in funding is provided to councils."

How our services are funded

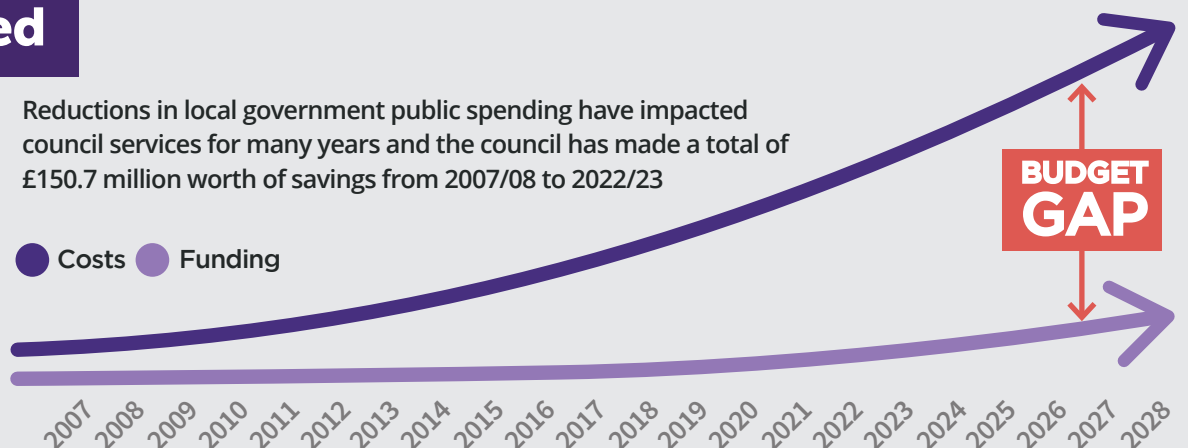
How is the council funded?

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



Reductions in local government public spending have impacted council services for many years and the council has made a total of £150.7 million worth of savings from 2007/08 to 2022/23

● Costs ● Funding



Exams success for West Lothian pupils

The hard work by pupils across West Lothian has been rewarded when the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) National Qualifications and Awards results were received (Tuesday 8 August).



Early indications show that the results from pupils across West Lothian's 11 secondary schools have improved across a number of key indicators on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

Initial analysis showed that the number of West Lothian pupils in S5 and S6 achieving one or more Level 6 qualification, which includes Highers, has increased across West Lothian.

Also, both the number of S5

pupils achieving Higher Maths and those achieving five or more Level 6 qualifications, such as Highers, saw rises this year.

Pupils across the local authority have the opportunity to undertake a wide range of courses either in their own schools or in conjunction with partners through the West Lothian Campus and at West Lothian College.

As well as National Qualifications, pupils have

achieved National Progression Awards, HNCs, Skills for Work courses and Foundation Apprenticeships among others. Executive councillor for education, Andrew McGuire was joined by pupils from secondary schools across West Lothian who achieved success in their SQA exams.

He said: "Congratulations to each and every pupil across West Lothian who has received their results this week.

"This is the 11th consecutive year of improvement in exam results in West Lothian, and everyone involved should be rightly proud of the hard work they have put in.

"Thanks must also go to our amazing teachers and school staff for the fantastic support they offer our pupils on a daily basis, as well as all the parents/carers for the vital backing they have given their young people."

Calderwood extension brought forward

A planned extension for Calderwood Primary in East Calder is being brought forward to provide additional learning spaces to meet the increasing demand in number of pupils.

Proposals to extend the school ahead of the previous schedule were agreed, after the numbers of school-aged children in the growing development rose significantly and above historical trends.

Calderwood Primary was specifically designed to allow an extension to be put in place when pupil numbers increased, which will increase the school capacity from 462 to 693.

The £8 million project will be fully met through developer contributions from house building in the area. Work is ongoing and is expected to be completed in time for the next academic year in August 2024.

Step forward towards long-term future for St Kentigern's

Plans to progress a long-term solution to deal with the reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) situation at St Kentigern's Academy in Blackburn have been approved.

West Lothian Council is overseeing the £35 million project for a replacement building for the area affected by RAAC.

The project design also provides space within the site area to accommodate a replacement swimming pool, subject to additional funding being provided by the Scottish Government at a later date.

The council has already allocated £20.2 million of its own resources to the project, and is seeking additional support from the Scottish Government to bridge the remaining gap.

Official opening for Scotland's newest school

A special ceremony has been held to mark the official opening of the Sinclair Academy in Winchburgh.



The school became West Lothian's 13th secondary school when it opened its doors to pupils in August, as the third and final school built as part of the Winchburgh Schools Campus project, the council's largest ever investment in education.

Over £60 million was invested to build Sinclair Academy, Winchburgh Academy, Holy Family Primary and shared

sports block to accommodate the demand for school places in the growing core development area of Winchburgh.

The school is named after The Venerable Margaret Sinclair, who is revered for her work helping people through both trade unions and as a Sister of the Order of St. Clare.

The Most Reverend Leo

Cushley, Archbishop of St Andrews & Edinburgh, was invited to officially open the school and led a special Holy Mass to celebrate the occasion.

Invited guests were also treated to a moving performance of *Dona Nobis Pacem* by the Sinclair Academy School Choir as part of the ceremony.

Sinclair Academy Headteacher Dr Gerry Burns said: "We were delighted to welcome Archbishop Cushley to officially open Sinclair Academy.

"Our fantastic new school building will help us build a real community of learning and faith, and we're delighted to share it with all our special guests today."

Sinclair Academy currently provides denominational education to 80 first year pupils, which will grow considerably each year until it provides a full S1 to S6 education by 2028/29.

Closing the event, Leader of West Lothian Council Lawrence Fitzpatrick said: "Sinclair Academy will allow us to meet the demand for denominational education from local residents in communities in the east of West Lothian, such as Winchburgh, Broxburn and Linlithgow."

New Beatlie school praised



The superb new Beatlie School Campus in Livingston is already making a positive difference for West Lothian young people.

Pupils were welcomed to the new state-of-the-art campus in Craigshill from Tuesday 15 August, which provides specialist education for those aged three to eighteen with severe and complex support and profound medical needs. The new £15.7 million school serves as a centre of excellence for children and young people, with purpose-built facilities including a sensory garden, hydrotherapy pool and NHS Child Development Centre. Executive councillor for education Andrew McGuire said "While council resources are limited and under more pressure than ever, we have

prioritised investment in education to ensure our young people have the best possible platform for learning.

"Along with a new Cedarbank School in Livingston and an extension to Pinewood School in Blackburn, we aim to ensure that West Lothian's schools for children with additional support needs are a top priority."

Acting Beatlie Headteacher Debbie Green added: "All our young people have settled in well to the new environment, which will allow us to better meet their needs during their years with us."

The project is part of a huge investment in schools for pupils with additional support needs, which also includes a new £7.5 million Cedarbank School in and a £5.8 million redevelopment of the Pinewood School in Blackburn which were completed last year.

The new Beatlie School campus was developed with council investment and funding from the Learning Estate Investment Programme, a joint initiative between Scottish and Local Government.

Excellence recognised at St Ninian's Primary School and Nursery

Pupils and staff at St Ninian's Primary School and Nursery in Livingston are in a celebratory mood after receiving an excellent report from Education Scotland Inspectors.

During a visit earlier this year, inspectors assessed the school against four key quality indicators and awarded the highest rating of 'excellent' in two categories - leadership of change and ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion. Since 2017, less than 1% of primary school inspection evaluations have received an 'excellent' and the recognition of two 'excellent' evaluations reflects the sector leading practice within St Ninian's Primary School.

The school achieved the second highest rating of 'very good' for the remaining quality indicators for learning, teaching and assessment and raising attainment and achievement

The Nursery was ranked as 'very good' across all four quality indicators.

The inspection team picked out a number of strengths in the work of the school and nursery highlighting the outstanding leadership of the

headteacher and senior leaders who together, help promote leadership across the school, empowering staff and children alike.

Nursery staff were commended for their highly effective teamwork and strong focus on the continuous improvement of the nursery and helping all children achieve the best possible outcomes.

Pupils were noted as eager learners as a result of high-quality teaching and learning experiences and environments provided by staff who continually reflect and develop their practice.

St Ninians Primary School Headteacher, Lisamaria Purdie said: "The whole school community is absolutely delighted to have received such glowing feedback. Across both the school and nursery settings, our incredibly talented staff teams work tirelessly to provide a setting where our children are excited to learn and develop."



Twintastic



Twenty-four sets of twins began Primary one in West Lothian

A number of the twins came together for a pre-school start photograph in August - all of them looking very smart in their new uniforms. In total, 1,936 excited youngsters began their school journey in Primary 1 this year.

Your blue bin is for paper and card only.

Please make sure that all items in your blue bin are clean, empty and dry.

Putting the wrong items in your blue bin can contaminate the load and prevent it from being recycled.

This is damaging for the environment and costs the council additional money, that could otherwise be invested in essential services for local residents.



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

Make sure all your items are CLEAN ✓ EMPTY ✓ and DRY ✓ before you recycle them.

Please note: those who are not currently offered a green bin service should continue to use their blue bins for paper, plastics and cans, making sure all materials are clean, dry and empty.

**IT'S NOT HARD,
JUST PAPER
& CARD!**



Please only recycle these items in your blue bin...



Newspapers & magazines



Large & small cardboard boxes



Unwanted mail & envelopes



Corrugated cardboard boxes



Office & shredded paper



Kitchen & toilet roll tubes

**ABUSE
is not
tolerated**

If your bin is contaminated, it will not be collected. Please follow the instructions on the bin tag and remove the contaminated materials from your bin. Please remember, our Waste Operators are doing their job and we will not tolerate any abuse of our staff. Please show them the respect they deserve.

Book your recycling centre visit

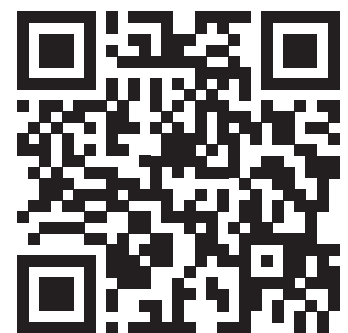
- You must book a visit to access to West Lothian's five community recycling centres (CRCs).
- Bookings can be made up to a fortnight in advance, or on the day, as long as spaces are available.
- Booking will give you a 30-minute time slot to arrive, residents are advised not to arrive early as they will not be allowed in until their allotted time.
- Revised opening times for the five CRCs are now in place, with busier centres at Oakbank, Whitburn and Blackburn, which account for 85%

of all visits, open more than quieter centres at Broxburn and Linlithgow.

The changes are necessary to keep all five CRCs open and help close our budget gap. West Lothian has more recycling centres per population size than most councils in Scotland, and similar systems already in place at most neighbouring local authorities to maintain access for local residents.



SCAN TO BOOK



For more details or to book, please scan the QR code or visit www.westlothian.gov.uk/crcbooking

Anyone unable to book online should call our customer services team on 01506 280000 between 10am and 4pm Monday to Friday, and select the option to book a CRC slot.



Looking to a long term future for Howden Park

Work to ensure that Howden Park Centre (HPC) remains open has been progressed.

West Lothian Council currently has a lease arrangement with Reconnect SCIO who will operate the arts venue until 31 March 2024. Since the agreement was put in place earlier this year, council officers have been working to explore options to ensure the facility remains open from 1 April onwards, and ensure there is a permanent base for Firefly Arts.

The council agreed that a competitive, open market process commenced this Autumn seeking bids from

parties interested in leasing and operating HPC on a commercial basis from 1 April onwards. Several key components of any future lease would include:

- That HPC should be financially self-sufficient and commercially viable going forward
- The period of the lease should run from 1 April 2024 to 17 February 2035

- General access to the public must be maintained during regular operating hours
 - The venue must, for the duration of the lease, be used as a theatre and arts venue
 - Firefly Arts would continue to have a permanent home at HPC for the duration of the lease
 - The property must not be renamed
- All future bids and supporting information will be considered by the council and recommendations will be brought back to Council Executive for a decision.

Any interested parties looking to lease & operate HPC should please contact Scott Hughes, Strategic Property Asset Manager on Scott.Hughes@westlothian.gov.uk. The closing date is 12 noon on Thursday 16 November 2023

West Lothian confirmed as FairTrade community



The good work taking place across West Lothian to promote FairTrade has been recognised.

The FairTrade Foundation has renewed their FairTrade Community Status award for the area for another five years.

FairTrade works with farmers and workers to ensure they get a fair share of the money generated by what they produce. This helps improve their living standards, invest in their communities and businesses, and protect our shared environment.

Executive councillor for the environment and sustainability Tom Conn, who chairs the West Lothian Fairtrade Group, said:

“Thanks to all the volunteers and council staff who have worked to promote FairTrade in West Lothian, which was especially challenging during the pandemic.”

For more information, please visit www.westlothian.gov.uk/fairtrade. If you are interested in becoming involved in Fairtrade across West Lothian please email Fairtrade@westlothian.gov.uk.

A spokesperson for the FairTrade Foundation said: “We are extremely thankful to all campaigners and local organisers that contribute towards the FairTrade Communities’ scheme.”

“Every action taken on a local level adds to raising awareness of the issues of unfair trade and furthers the progress of workers’ rights, safer working conditions and fairer pay for farmers and workers globally.”

RECONNECT THEATRES PRESENT...

Sleeping Beauty

By PETE SNEDDON & SAM FRASER

By PETE SNEDDON & SAM FRASER
DECEMBER 1ST - 28TH 2023

RECONNECT THEATRES howden park

01506 340 700
HowdenParkCentre.co.uk

Cinderella

Dec 1st-29th
2023

"A Pure Magic Panto"

RECONNECT THEATRES howden park

01506 639 000
ReconnectRegal.co.uk

REMEMBER, REMEMBER, KEEP YOURSELF SAFE ON 5TH NOVEMBER



The West Lothian Community Safety Partnership is working to ensure that everyone can enjoy a safe bonfire period this November.

If you encounter an unregistered bonfire that is already alight please contact the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) on 999.

Illegal or any other suspicious activity can be reported to Police Scotland by calling 101 or alternatively contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555111.

On finding bonfires under construction but not yet lit or combustibles suspected of being used for bonfire purposes, NETS/Land Services or Roads should be contacted through the West Lothian Council Contact Centre on 01506 280000.

**FOR MORE GUIDANCE ON SUBJECTS SUCH AS THE ILLEGAL SALE OF FIREWORKS AND MORE, PLEASE VISIT THE WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL WEBSITE:
WWW.WESTLOTHIAN.GOV.UK/BONFIRE**



16 DAYS OF ACTION

**25 NOVEMBER–
10 DECEMBER 2023**



Did you know that there were 2,662 incidents of Domestic Abuse recorded in West Lothian in 2022/23, and around 4 in 5 incidents involved a female victim?

16 days of action is an annual international campaign to challenge violence against women and children.

You are invited to join us in our local campaign to raise awareness about Gender Based Violence and work towards reducing and changing these statistics so that West Lothian is a safer place for everyone to live.

COME ALONG TO OUR ANNUAL COMMUNITY MARCH ON FRIDAY 24TH NOVEMBER AT 10.15 AND SHOW YOUR SUPPORT.

The march will leave from Howden Park Centre, Livingston and end at the Civic Centre, Livingston. Everyone is welcome!

There will be planned activities throughout 16 days and you can find out more on the West Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership website:
westlothianhscp.org.uk/16-days-of-action



#DON'T WASTE WESTLOTHIAN

Look after West Lothian's amazing natural environment by ensuring you dispose of all your waste responsibly.

Fly-tipping is illegal and dangerous
Anyone caught could be fined up to **£40,000** or face a **jail sentence**.

Report it:



westlothian.gov.uk/dontwaste

Winter Warm Campaign



The seasons are quickly changing and its time to start preparing for the winter months. West Lothian Council Advice Shop has launched its Winter Warm campaign with a focus on energy help available during the colder months.

Help with Energy Costs

Fuel Grant

The Advice Shop is relaunching the Fuel Grant for winter 2023/24 to support as many households as possible who are experiencing fuel poverty with a cash grant to help with energy bills.

If you are struggling with energy prices and paying more than 10% of your household income to cover your energy costs, the Advice Shop may be able to provide a one-off payment of £100 to help keep your house warm this winter.

Fuel Vouchers

The Advice Shop also works with the Fuel Bank Foundation to help households with prepayment meters who are struggling to afford to top up their meters.

So far this year, we have supported households in West Lothian to redeem 1166 Fuel Bank vouchers of either £49 or £30 to help keep their gas and electric on.

If you are struggling to top up your prepayment meter due to a change in circumstance or unexpected cost then please get in touch.

Warm Home Discount



The Warm Home Discount scheme is a payment of £150 made by energy suppliers to vulnerable customers and paid into energy accounts by March 2024.

People who receive the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit on the qualifying date will automatically be paid the discount and do not need to apply.

Each supplier opens their scheme at different times and may have different criteria for those who do not automatically get the payment.

Households on a low income and classed as the 'Broader Group' will need to ensure they complete their supplier's application form. There is no automatic payment of the Warm Home Discount in Scotland for those in the Broader group.

Further information about the scheme as it is announced will be updated on the Government's website at www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme

If you think you might be eligible and will not get the payment automatically, check the information on your suppliers' web page to find out when their Warm Home Discount scheme opens for applications.

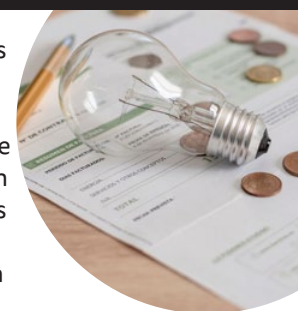


Energy Debt

Many suppliers have hardship funds to help those who have fallen behind in their payments and are now struggling with energy debt.

How to apply and what information may be needed can be found on each suppliers' website. If your energy supplier does not have its own hardship fund then there may be alternative options or help from other Grants.

The Advice Shop's Energy advisors and Money Advice team can offer guidance and support with debt issues for anyone who is struggling.



Warm Welcome Locations

As we go into winter, there continues to be locations throughout West Lothian that provide local people with a place to visit, socialise, access services and receive support. Some of these places are provided by West Lothian Council and others are provided by voluntary organisation.

To find out your local Warm Welcome location access the interactive map by scanning the QR code or visit at www.westlothian.gov.uk/warm-welcome which details what support is available and opening hours



Help with White goods

Cooker not working? Struggling with a fridge that is no longer fit for purpose? Some organisations and energy suppliers have additional resources to help replace white goods.

Scan the QR code or visit www.westlothian.gov.uk/adviceshop to see if your supplier or another organisation may be able to help.



If you need Housing, Debt, Benefit or Energy support contact Advice Shop on 01506 283 000 (option 5)

tenantsnews

Information for WLC tenants

Get Involved with our Tenant Participation Facebook Page!

Don't have time to attend Tenant Participation meetings? Why not join our Facebook page?

Our Facebook page is there to allow us to consult and chat with our tenants – but not only that, it is a place where tenants can help each other. We post items relating to housing consultations, helpful hints and tips, survey feedback, and much, much more. We even have a regular segment to appoint a TP Mascot of the month, where you can get your furry friends involved. The Housing, Customer & Building Services and tenant experts run the Facebook page.

Search West Lothian Council Tenant Participation on Facebook, click join and remember to provide us with your address to verify you are a tenant!



If you discover a water leak in your home, you can take steps to temporarily switch off the water supply, reduce any potential damage to your property, and allow for more time to investigate the issue.

Do you know where the stopcock is located in case of a water leak?

If the answer to the above question is no, then please scan the QR code to our helpful video to ensure you can locate it:



Fight condensation in the home

Condensation is the most common form of dampness and occurs when warm moist air comes into contact with cold surfaces such as walls and ceilings.

When condensation appears wipe it dry to avoid a build-up of black mould growing on walls, curtains and woodwork. It's important you take steps to limit the moisture in the air.

For more advice, including a self-help video, scan the QR code:



Don't give COLD a chance

Protect yourself and your home



Inside your home:

Frozen Pipes:

- turn off the water supply (make sure you know where this is)
- turn off the stopcock in your cold water tank, if you have one
- protect everything around the frozen pipe to avoid damage if it bursts, place buckets, basins and towels around the area.

Thawing Out:

- open the tap nearest to the part of the pipe you think is frozen, so the water can flow through when it has melted
- Thaw the ice in the pipe with a hot water bottle or hairdryer (taking care to keep it well away from any water). Start from the tap end and work back toward the cold water tank. NEVER use a heat gun or blowtorch – the pipe needs to be thawed out slowly and safely!

Try the following care tips:

If you're going on holiday and your home will be empty, contact your local housing office to make arrangements to drain down the water system

in very cold weather, if you're going out for the day, or perhaps away for a couple of days over the Christmas period, keep your heating on, or set it to come on a couple of times a day.

Following this advice should minimise the risk of having a frozen or burst pipe. However, if you are a council tenant and this happens, please report it immediately to our Customer Service Centre on 01506 280000.

Outside your home:

In very severe cold spells, care should be taken outside your property due to the formation of icicles, which can become dangerous when they grow large, especially if they have a long distance to fall.

What you shouldn't do

Don't try to knock large icicles off the gutters. Hitting icicles could cause more pressure on the guttering which in turn could cause them to collapse. Large icicles in particular are unpredictable when they fall and could cause injury or property damage.

The best thing to do

Leave them alone and monitor them. If necessary cordon off or block the area where the icicles are hanging to prevent and deter anyone from walking directly below them.

At this time of year, it is especially important to ensure you have home contents insurance.

Check that you are covered against damaged personal items due to burst pipes.

Don't risk it, get insured today! For more information either call 01506 282020 or scan the QR code.



Having money worries or struggling to heat your home? Please refer to the advise shop see page 9

Council homes delivered at Wellhead



West Lothian Council's new build housing development at Wellhead Murieston is now complete providing a range of high-quality new build properties for social rent.

The project was developed in partnership with Bellway Homes and provides an additional 70 affordable homes - 42 of these being council homes and the remaining 28 delivered for mid-market rent for a local Registered Social Landlord (RSL). The development features a mix of two- and three-bedroom terraced family homes and a small number of one-bedroom cottage flats with tenants

now settled in.

West Lothian Council is to invest more than £157 million in to council housing over the next five years. While most of the budget is set against of existing stock, there is also significant resources which will continue to be invested in the development of new build houses and the purchasing of houses through the Open Market Acquisition Scheme (OMAS).

Executive councillor for housing services George Paul said: "These new homes are an excellent addition

to the social housing stock in West Lothian. The council recognises the value of working alongside developers such as Bellway Homes and RSLs to further expand the amount of available social housing in the area."

The council plans to deliver new homes across four new sites in the coming years, with indicative sites listed below (subject to further development):

Site name	Number of units	Estimated completion date
Houston Road, Livingston	30	2025/26
Almondvale Crescent, Livingston	37	2025/26
Mossend K, West Calder	19	2025/26
Simpson Parkway, Livingston	32	2026/27

You're hired!

New apprentices have joined West Lothian Council's Building Services team.

The seven trainees are all from West Lothian and are completing four-year apprenticeships across several trades. They began their training earlier this year.

Painter Adrian Kubacki
Joiner Blair Stewart
Joiner Ewen Lacey
Joiner Arran Fowler
Plasterer Cameron McDougall
Electrician Paul Colquhoun
Electrician Christopher Neilson



New apprentices are also set to join the ranks later this year and will work across a range of services including Fleet Technicians, Gardeners and Tree and woodland operatives.

Meet our people

Laura's main role is to support the council's services that prevent & respond to homelessness.

Laura Harris

Service development officer



Homelessness is a significant issue in West Lothian, and is one of the most complex and challenging issues that West Lothian Council deals with. Around 1,500 people are currently classed as homeless in West Lothian. Her team aim to develop and support services to help prevent homelessness occurring in the first instance and, if it does occur, help those affected find the best solution. They are responsible for building the Youth Homeless Service, and other supporting projects designed to help those with mental health issues, addictions and other complex needs who struggle to maintain any kind of home.

So how did Laura become the Service Development Officer?

"I completed a YTS before working for a housing association over 20 years ago. From early on, I knew I wanted to pursue a career in homelessness.

"The reality of homelessness is, however, that the demand for affordable social homes far outstrips what the council can provide and homelessness is about much more than just a house. So whilst the job is hugely rewarding at times, it is also fraught with challenges and you are trying to help people who are in very tough situations.

"However it's equally as rewarding for me as it is challenging knowing that you

can help make a difference to people's lives not just by developing and designing services to help people find a home but also services that make a real difference to people's health and overall wellbeing. Particularly young people who are most disproportionately affected by homelessness."

"And I'm very lucky to have a brilliant team of like-minded colleagues who I get to support and inspire. A team that no matter how challenging the job can become, they never stop trying to develop and improve the services we deliver to make a positive impact on people's lives and at the end of the day that's what it's all about."

Laura is part of a team that work to help prevent Youth Homelessness. Their work was recently highlighted as an area of best practice in Scotland. The team were named winners of the: Achieving Better Outcomes For The Most Vulnerable in Partnership category at the recent COSLA's 2023 Excellence Awards – which celebrates the celebrating the very best of Scottish Local Government.

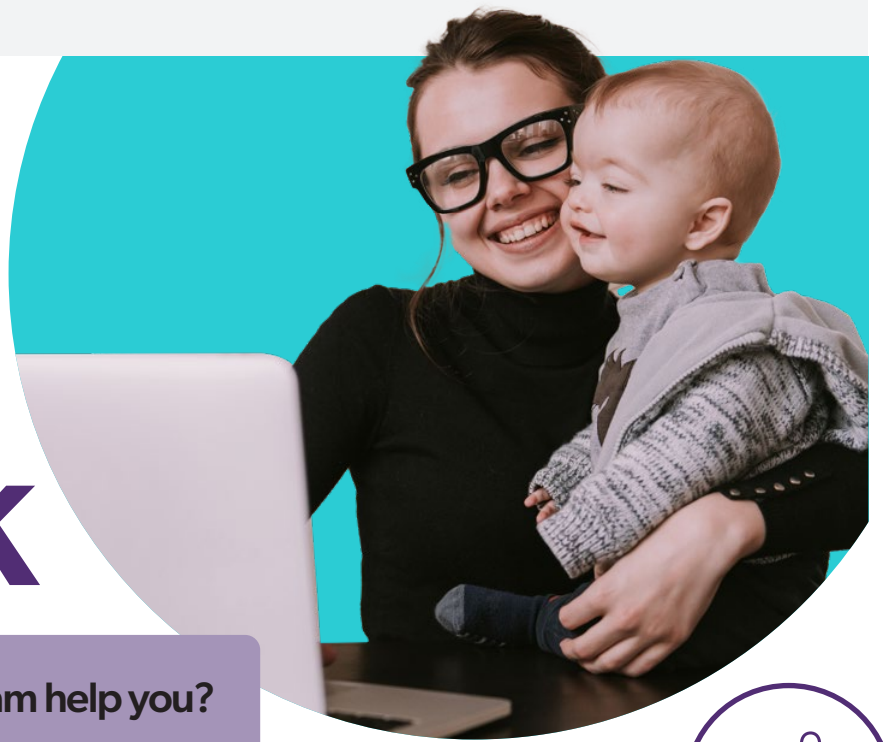
What should I do if I become homeless or think that I am likely to be made homeless?

You should either call the council on 01506 280000 or visit in person to any local office during office hours.

You will be interviewed in private to discuss your situation. You can bring a friend or advisor with you to the interview if you want to. You can also request an interview with someone of the same sex.

- 1,252 new homeless applications were made in 2022/23
- 672 homeless households secured social housing in 2022/23
- 94% of homeless applicants sustained their new home for more than a year in 2022/23
- 11% reduction in homeless applications from under 18s in 2022/23
- 296 people were supported in 2022/23 to avoid the homeless route

Helping parents into work



What is the parental employment service?

West Lothian Council's Access2Employment team offers a parental employment service that supports local parents to find work or progress within their current employment.

The service offers individuals a dedicated adviser who will engage with the parent to create a personalised action plan considering all aspects of family life and detailing the steps and support required to achieve their goals. The team works in partnership with local organisations to ensure all client's needs and requirements are addressed.

One-to-one support is also provided for 52 weeks after employment commences to ensure individuals are in the best position to sustain and progress within their desired employment.

How can the team help you?

- Dedicated 1:1 adviser support for parents to identify career goals, aspirations, and routes into employment.
- Assistance with interview preparation, application forms, CV's, supporting statements, job searching, transferable skills and much more.

In addition to the 1:1 adviser support the service can help remove barriers to employment through funding towards:

- Driving lessons
- Training/qualifications for entering or progressing in employment
- Starting self-employment
- First month of childcare
- Travel assistance
- Parental welfare funds for parents moving from benefits into employment



CASE STUDY



Fiona Whiteman (Graduated from University of Edinburgh with a BA in Childhood Practice)

The parental employment service received a self-referral from Fiona who was unemployed and had seen a part time temporary role she had wanted to apply for but unfortunately, she was not within in the specified age bracket.

Fiona felt that there were a lot of barriers to her applying for work and that she lacked confidence in herself and her skills.

She felt she had performed poorly at previous interviews and had rushed previous job applications

Fiona said: "I felt that there was nothing to lose when I contacted the team for support and it's the best move I ever made".

"The team helped me review my CV and supported me through the entire process. That included identifying jobs, completing job adverts and interview skills. This support gave me so much more confidence."

Fiona began a new role with Women's Aid in March and works as a Children and Young People's Worker.

Fiona said: "I love my new role and the support from the service helped me massively. The team helped me realise that I didn't need to settle for just any job, I kept going until I got one that I wanted and it is giving me huge job satisfaction."

"I'd recommend the service to anyone looking for that additional support. The bespoke service was amazing and had I not have contacted them, I very much doubt I would be where I am now."

Fiona is still engaging with the service who have recently had two courses funded to help her develop within her role at Women's Aid. Her adviser has also created a positive relationship with her employer and will continue to support Fiona with any further career development.

Parental Employment Recruitment Incentive (ERI)

Are you a business that would like to recruit? The parental ERI provides 50% of eligible parents salary costs for 26 weeks based on the real living wage up to 40 hours per week.

This funding is available to businesses

- Based in West Lothian and employ 250 employees or less.
- Can offer family friendly working conditions
- Will agree to pay the Real Living wage or above

Eligibility

All West Lothian parents will be entitled to employment support however funding priority will be given to parents that identify under one of the six priority groups -

- Lone parent
- Parent with a disability or disabled child
- Parent of three+ children
- Parent of child under one
- Parent aged under 25
- Minority ethnic families

For more information or to apply scan the QR code.



How can you find out more or contact the service?

To find out more about the service scan the QR code, Call 0800 032 9768 or email pesf@westlothian.gov.uk





Continued from page one

Sharon Bryce of Florabunda, West Main Street in Whitburn, joined Councillor Kirsteen Sullivan and Nairn Pearson, the council's Business Improvement Districts Manager

Executive councillor for economy, community empowerment & wealth building, Kirsteen Sullivan, said "West Lothian is home to a number of truly unique and traditional towns and villages, many of which host a wide variety of small, high quality, specialist retailers, business services and stores.

"Small Business Saturday is the perfect opportunity for local residents to show their support for such firms, which play a vital role in their communities and ensure our town and village centres remain vibrant places to

visit, shop, work, live and be entertained in.

The nationwide event will also coincide with local festive celebrations taking place on Saturday 2 December, and over that weekend. For further and more up-to-date information on festive events around West Lothian, please visit: www.smallbusinesssaturdayuk.com.

Don't forget with over 140 local businesses already participating, the Scotland Loves Local West Lothian Gift Card could be that magical ingredient to treat yourself or your loved ones this festive year. In doing so you can help

us promote the power of shopping and supporting local.

If you have a West Lothian business and are interested in signing up for free to the West

Lothian Gift Card scheme, please scan the QR code above or email wlgiftcard@westlothian.gov.uk with any questions.

If you'd like to buy a card please scan the QR code.



To mark this Winter's Shop Local campaign, three £50 Shop Local gift cards are up for grabs that can be spent in a number of local shops and restaurants.

COMPETITION

This offer is being delivered in partnership with Visit West Lothian.

To enter, email wlgiftcard@westlothian.gov.uk and including name, address and contact email address. Please put 'Bulletin Competition' in the subject header.

Please enter before Monday 20 November. Provost Cathy Muldoon will draw three lucky winners who will each receive a £50 Shop Local gift card.

Only one entry per person is permitted.

**CELEBRATING
BLACK
HISTORY
MONTH**



West Lothian Council and the West Lothian Race Forum are taking part in an online campaign to raise awareness of and celebrate Black History Month. Black History Month is an opportunity to explore black history, heritage and achievements.

This year focuses on the invaluable role that Black women have played in shaping history, inspiring change and building communities.

The Race Forum aims to promote diversity and equality and enhance understanding and awareness of race and race equality in an increasingly culturally diverse West Lothian. Anyone is welcome to join the group, who meet on a regular basis and hold events to celebrate diversity, share experiences and promote inclusion.

For further information, please email communityraceforum@hotmail.co.uk

CARELINE CUSTOMERS ANALOGUE TO DIGITAL SWITCH OVER

Analogue telephone lines are being phased out and replaced by new digital telephone services, all UK lines will be replaced by 2025.

Your phone provider may have already contacted you and changed your telephone line to digital, it is vital you let West Lothian Council Careline know if you already have a digital line or when you switch to one.

Image copyright by Tunstall

It is essential to test your pendant once you have moved to a digital line. Any faults with your Telecare Alarm should be reported to West Lothian Council Careline: 0330 678 2396



More information can be found by scanning the QR code or by visiting www.westlothianhscp.org.uk/home-safety-service.



West Lothian
Health & Social
Care Partnership



West Lothian
Council

Addressing West Lothian's Links to the Transatlantic Slave Trade and Colonialism

A report is due to be published on West Lothian's links to the Transatlantic Slave Trade and Colonialism

A consultation was recently carried out which sought the views of local residents on how West Lothian should look to address its past links to the Transatlantic Slave trade and Colonialism

The findings from the upcoming consultation will inform the working group's recommendations and will feature in a report to be brought to Council Executive Committee in 2023. This will help the council decide which actions it will consider and what the priority areas of focus might be.

The Legacy of Chattel Slavery Working Group was set up in West Lothian in early 2021. The group's aim is to explore West Lothian's historical links to the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism and consider the most effective ways to address past injustice. This includes tackling instances of modern-day discrimination.

The working group has had input from a range of representative organisations including the Church of Scotland, Fair Justice System for Scotland (FJSS) Group, Linlithgow Heritage Trust, Scotland Zimbabwe Association, West Lothian Council, the West Lothian Race Forum and individuals from the West Lothian community.

If you would like to get in touch with The West Lothian Chattel Slavery Working Group please email: legacyofslaveryworkinggroup@westlothian.gov.uk

Winter Ready 2023/24

Please plan ahead and be WinterReady

This special *Bulletin* supplement provides you with an overview of how West Lothian Council has prepared for winter.

West Lothian Council plans to have 30,000 tonnes of salt available for the winter period. This represents three times the amount that is needed for a 'normal' winter.

It is not possible for support to be provided everywhere at the same time. Please note our priority system routes, which can be found at www.westlothian.gov.uk/winter



Winter Resource

In response to the severe weather experienced in January and February 2021, West Lothian Council put in place a £1 million Winter Resilience Fund which will help to provide extra resources over the winter period up to and including winter 2023/24.

The fund will provide:

Self-Help Salt Pick-Up Points

The self-help salt pick-up points will continue for winters 2023/24:

- **Linlithgow** – Xcite Centre, McGinley Way
- **Broxburn** – Xcite Centre, Church Street
- **Deans** – Livingston North Train Station (South Car Park)
- **Murieston** – Livingston South Train Station Car Park
- **Craigshill** – Adelaide Street
- **West Calder** – Business Centre, Dickson Street
- **Blackburn** – Partnership Centre, Ash Grove
- **Whitburn** – Xcite Centre, Jubilee Road
- **Bathgate** – Xcite Centre, Torphichen Road
- **Armadale** – Xcite Centre, North Street
- **Blackridge** – Craig Inn Community Centre, Main Street
- **East Calder** – Xcite Centre, Langton Road
- **Fauldhouse** – Eastfield Road car park near the bottle banks
- **Torphichen** – Community Centre, Bowlyett
- **Winchburgh** – Community Centre, Craighton Place
- **Bridgend** – Auldhill Cottages / Community Centre
- **Newton** – Rear of Community Education Centre
- **Threemiletown** – B9080 Opposite Rosebank
- **Westfield** – North End of Strathlogie
- **Ecclesmachan** – Oatridge College Access Road
- **Wilkieston** – Linburn Park
- **Livingston Village** – Livingston Inn Car Park
- **Wester Inch, Bathgate** – Car Park adjacent to Play Park
- **Kirknewton** – Sports Pavilion, Main Street
- **Greenrigg** – Polkemmet Drive Garage Site

Gritting

In the winter months, West Lothian Council has to treat over 1,000 km of roads and around 1,300 km of footways to combat the effects of bad weather.

We cannot treat every road or footpath, we just don't have the resources, so we must prioritise certain routes.

The Council's Winter Service Policy has classified specific roads and footpaths within West Lothian as either a Primary or Secondary gritting route.

You can view these routes on the council's website: www.westlothian.gov.uk/winter - then look under Gritting & Winter Maintenance.

Road & footpaths in 'extreme' weather

An extreme weather event will be considered to be an event where continuous snow is forecast and likely to give significant accumulations in excess of 10cm covering the whole of the north or south expanse within the council area.

The snow will also be expected to remain in untreated areas for a prolonged period due to low temperatures before a natural thaw disperses it.

During periods of extreme weather, treatment may be limited to primary carriageway routes and primary footpath routes or 'snow routes'.

Gritters and footpath resources will be deployed on these specified 'snow routes' continuously until satisfactory snow clearance has been achieved before resources are deployed to any secondary routes, to maintain access to key facilities and other transport needs.

Let's talk potholes

Repairing potholes is one of the most talked about council services.

On average West Lothian Council normally carries out 210 pothole repairs each month. In addition, owners of private roads and car parks are responsible for carrying out their own repairs.

Why the weather is bad for roads

According to the RAC, the combination of heavy rain and freezing temperatures create a perfect recipe for potholes on the UK's roads.

Potholes form due to freeze/thaw action, hence there are always more potholes over the winter months.

Water will find its way into any cracks in the road surface. If this freeze, the ice formed will put pressure on the road surface, forcing the cracks open. When

the ice thaws, the gap left is a weak spot, which can become a pothole as traffic runs over the area.

Focus on repairs

Jim Jack, the council's Head of Operational Services said: "Our safety inspection programme is ongoing and we also respond to all reports of road defects. We would encourage people to use the web form on the council's website to report any potholes or other road defects.

"We fully appreciate that potholes are frustrating but they certainly aren't limited to West Lothian. The process of reporting potholes online has enabled residents to report potholes using a map within seconds and this has increased the number of enquires and reports. That way, the repairs get carried out more quickly.

"Despite the extremely challenging financial position that the council faces, our road network overall is in good

condition in West Lothian, and we continue to work to maintain that."

How do we repair potholes?

Jim added: "Our primary concern with potholes is to ensure that the road network is safe and every defect is inspected and a risk assessment is carried out to determine the response time required for a repair. Once a pothole is reported to the council, the roads team normally attend within 24 hours to assess the extent of the works.

"For high risk defect this means that we will infill potholes within 24 hours of the defect being recorded and we will return at a later date to undertake permanent repairs if required. "This ensures that the roads are safe and reduces the damage done to vehicles.

Continued on next page...

“Generally speaking potholes assessed as lower risk can be infilled within five working days although some may take longer due to the circumstances of the repair.”

“More often than not, our team will put in place a temporary patch. This ensures that the roads are safe in the short term and reduces the damage

done to vehicles. Our team will return soon afterwards to undertake a full and permanent repair if that is required. This can involve traffic management or even temporary closures so a patch is very helpful to both ourselves and motorists as it prevents having to close roads completely whilst we schedule in permanent repairs.”

Potholes and road defects can be reported by scanning the QR code or by visiting: www.westlothian.gov.uk/report



Staff Dedicated to Grit Bins

The council has in the region of 2,500 public grit bins across the authority area which is understood to be the highest ratio in mainland Scotland factoring in the length of our road network.

Salt conservation

In periods of extreme weather, it may be necessary to restrict the use of salt to ‘snow routes’ only. West Lothian Council reaches a minimum stock level when there is only enough salt for six continuous days.

Please note: Salt is less effective at minus six degrees and has minimal impact on ice and snow below minus 10 degrees. Heavy rain following a treatment of salt can wash the salt from the road meaning we often need to return to the beginning of the priority cycle before many secondary routes are reached. Unfortunately this familiar pattern can prevent any significant progress through the various priority levels.

Schools

Safety is a top priority for West Lothian Council and the decision to close a school or nursery to pupils is one which is not made lightly.

The Headteacher has responsibility for undertaking a risk assessment in the event of severe weather or building difficulties. There are several factors which may impact on this decision, which is made in consultation with an education manager.

West Lothian Council will provide as much notice as possible of any school closure so that you can make alternative

arrangements for your children. We will contact you via Group Call, provide information to local radio stations, and update the council’s website and social media channels. Many schools can also contact parents/carers by email.

Travelling to school

In extreme weather conditions, parents/carers should assess whether they consider it safe for their child to travel or walk to school, and alert the school of their decision at the earliest possible opportunity.

Please check that your child knows how to access the online education community GLOW, where pupils can access educational material online.

Waste collections

During the winter, please continue to present your bin as usual. Please ensure snow has been removed from the lid. The council will only suspend the household waste collection service in extreme situations, for example, where there is widespread heavy snow which makes it impossible for the bin lorries to enter residential areas.

If the service is suspended, updates will be provided via local press and the council’s website and social media channels.

Meet our people

Jamie Poterala works with Operational Services as a Squad Leader within the Roads Operations Team.

This means he has a key role to play in making sure West Lothian’s roads, footways, drainage, signing and lighting are maintained, co-ordinating and allocating jobs to his team of roads operatives.

During winter, Jamie also drives a gritter as part of the council’s winter service delivery. This can see him working nights and weekends to treat and clear West Lothian’s road network, which is over 1,000km in length.

The Bathgate resident joined the council in 2010 as an apprentice, before becoming a Roads Operative after this was completed.

Jamie said:

“It can be a tough job in winter especially, but my team do our best every day to keep people moving.

“Most of the Roads team live and work in West Lothian, so both our families and us are using the exact same roads

as the public in snow and icy conditions. We want the roads and paths to be in the best possible condition for everyone to use.

“It takes over four hours to treat the primary carriageway routes in West Lothian, and when snow continues to fall it means we have to keep treating them and retreating them until they are clear. “I get a real sense of achievement ploughing and gritting the roads during snow conditions. I see the transformation first-hand and it’s satisfying to know that my work keeps traffic moving freely and helps keep people safe on our roads.”

Jamie appreciates that some members of the public can get frustrated during severe weather, and would appeal for their patience and understanding.

Jamie said: “I know my team and can tell you that they are all hard workers who just

want to get out there and get the job done. It’s really tough going at times, but we’re a close team who all support each other.

“When we get bad snow, we are the ones who are up first thing to dig out our own cars too and make our way to work, so we can get the roads clear for everyone else.

“You might not necessarily see our gritters as there’s a lot of miles of roads in West Lothian, but we are always out there in bad weather, gritting and ploughing when we need to be.

“I also hope people understand why we treat the primary roads first, and can only move onto secondary roads then housing schemes when they are clear.

“We could never have enough resources to allow us to clear everywhere at once, so clearing main roads is the best way to help most people get to where they need to go.”

Self help – what can you do?

There is no law preventing members of the public from clearing snow and ice from public roads and footways outside their properties and businesses. However, people should exercise care and caution when attempting to undertake any snow clearing so that they do not create any further hazards through careless or inconsiderate actions.

Being a good neighbour during severe winter weather is usually welcomed. Detailed below is some advice provided by the Government on clearing roads and footways yourself:

- Do not use hot water as this could freeze, increasing the risk of injury to persons.
- If shovelling snow consider where you are going to put it to avoid shifting the problem elsewhere, for example, avoid blocking other footways and drainage features such as gullies.
- It is easier to remove fresh snow before pedestrians have compressed the snow into compacted ice.
- Clear a line down the middle of the area to be cleared first to create a safer surface to work from.
- Spread some salt on the area cleared to prevent the formation of ice.
- If there is no salt available then a little sand or grit is a reasonable substitute. It will not have the same de-icing properties as salt but will improve grip underfoot.
- Salt applied to the road or footway could be washed away by rain or snow and subsequently freeze – in this case a further application of salt should be used soon after the rain has ceased and before temperatures approach freezing.

Park sensibly:

Abandoned cars hamper access for snowploughs and diggers, emergency vehicles, bin lorries and other road users.

Have your own stock of salt

Please purchase salt for use in your own garden and paths. Remember, grit bins aren’t in place to provide all residents with a means of treating their own gardens and paths each day during periods of winter weather. They are for use on the public highway and public paths in an emergency. Salt is cheap to buy and can be purchased from a wide variety of retail outlets, so please keep your own stock for use in your own property.



Aquatrack sessions @ Xcite Bathgate!

XCITE

Come along and experience the thrill of running, jumping, and climbing across our exciting Aquatrack @ Xcite Bathgate.

Suitable for adults and children aged 8+, the Aquatrack sessions last 45 minutes and take place every Saturday afternoon. £8.00 per session - BOOK NOW online or via the Xcite WLL App!



Kids Coaching @ Xcite



We have added more Xcite kids coaching courses to our timetable.

We currently have spaces available for football, gymnastics, golf, and our award-winning Learn to Swim programme! Scan the QR code to check out our latest availability and to register your interest.



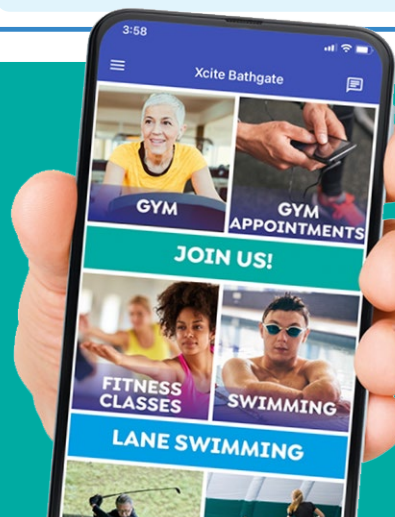
Trackman Golf Simulator

Don't let the weather stop your swing! Experience the latest in golf simulation technology, at the new Trackman Golf Simulator located in Xcite Bathgate.

Our brand-new simulator features:

- Optically enhanced radar tracking
- Pinpoint accuracy, displaying the entire trajectory of every shot
- Play world-famous courses like St Andrews and Pebble Beach, plus 240+ more!
- Analyse your swing with shot analysis tools
- Fun for adults and kids with tournaments and family games like bullseye!

Sessions start at £20 for an hour, suitable for a maximum of 4 players. Book now via the WLL Xcite App, or scan the QR code for details.



Get the latest information right at your fingertips! View activities, make bookings and stay up to date with the latest news on the WLL Xcite App now. Download today from the App Store or Google Play.

Xcite Kids Colour Run

The Xcite kids Colour Run returned on August 13th, with over 300 participants joining us for a colourful end of summer celebration!

Thanks to everyone who joined us - we're looking forward to the next one already!

