



OBJECTIVES AND POLICES

In this section the seven DCPD objectives are described. Each one is supported by policies that will determine how the council delivers the adopted CPN.

5.1 **Objective 1: Define a CPN that meets the spirit of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and guidance provided by the Scottish Executive.**

5.1.2 Over the last 20 years, the council has sought to develop and improve paths in and around towns through planning gain and public land/open space development. In selecting paths to form the CPN each candidate Core Path was scored against the council's selection criteria to assess its suitability as described in Section 3.

5.1.3 The DCPD, as developed through the external and internal consultation process, provides a network sufficient for access across the district and is focussed principally on the main settlements of West Lothian. The candidate paths are on land owned by the council, Historic Scotland, Woodland Trust, British Waterways, Central Scotland Forest Trust and the private sector. All those affected have been involved through the various consultation stages. It is, however, possible that some have not been contacted because information on land ownership is difficult to find.

5.1.4 The council anticipates that other land managers will continue their past work in upgrading paths on their land. For the part of the CPN for which the council is responsible a steering group will be established. This will cross service areas to ensure that all the relevant service areas are represented and working together to devise and deliver a rolling capital programme of path works.

CPDD 1A The council will monitor progress on CPN upgrading work and for that part of the network under council control will do this through the establishment of a cross services steering group.

CPDD 1B The council will regularly report on progress in delivering the plan to the WLAF in order that it can advise and guide the council.

5.2 **Objective 2: The CPP will provide a basis for expansion of the CPN through future reviews.**

5.2.1 The first CPP will be the short-term driver for path development work supported by the council budgets, external grants and initially some of the Executive's revenue funding. This will involve some upgrading of the CPN itself and also the upgrading of paths that connect to it. This has already been seen with the improvement of links to the Union Canal towpath and the National Cyclepath 75 over recent years. Thus, the CPN will gradually grow and extend from the initial network. The plan objective is to sustain this ongoing development process over the next 25 years, as described in the plan, and in the Finalised West Lothian Local Plan (2005) and as advised by the WLAF.

5.2.2 The Core Path Diagram 2030 supports the DCPD. This captures and develops the public's comments from the two rounds of informal consultation and will be the principal driver for path development in the medium and longer term, through successive reviews.

5.2.3 The programmed growth of housing and commercial development foreseen in the Finalised West Lothian Local Plan (2005), particularly the CDAs, will also drive and deliver the development of new paths to meet the needs of the new and existing population centres. The CDAs are at Winchburgh, East Broxburn, Calder wood (East Calder), Gavieside (west of Livingston) and Armadale.

5.2.4 For each of these the developer is being required to prepare an access strategy as part of the master planning process. This will set out the hierarchy of paths and, once constructed or under construction, some of these paths may be selected as core paths and included in future reviews. The impact of these expanded settlements on the surrounding countryside will also influence future path planning needs. These will be identified in the individual strategies, associated with each CDA. This cannot be prejudged and the outcomes will be reflected in future reviews of the CPP.



5.2.5 In addition, over recent years, opportunities have been taken to develop access links associated with smaller developments through the planning system. This will continue into the future as an important means of extending the path network. The council's planning policy for lowland crofting is currently being reviewed. The provision of grass paths in the early schemes has already changed to one of providing a mix of surfaced paths and grass paths to provide a network more suited to the new access legislation. There is also a stronger focus on improving the connectivity of these schemes with other schemes and, most importantly, with nearby settlements. Their remoteness and general unsuitability for multi use access means that they can only make a very limited contribution to the CPN. The intention is that with improvements they will eventually become an important part of the network.

5.2.6 The recent introduction by the Scottish Government Rural Payments Inspectorate Department (SGRPID) to introduce path grants to land managers has so far resulted in 35 landowners undertaking minor upgrades to rural paths. Although these are outwith the influence of the council it is likely that these initiatives will eventually provide paths links from and between communities especially in the Bathgate Hills and the Pentlands. Future liaison with land managers will explore this.

5.2.7 Current guidance is that local plans should be reviewed on a three-yearly cycle. It is proposed that the CPP will be reviewed within the local plan review procedure. It is anticipated that the Finalised West Lothian Local Plan 2005 will be adopted in 2008.

CPPP 2A Developers will be required to work with the council to:

- a) develop CDA access strategies; and
- b) ensure that planning gain opportunities for access from other planning applications are identified.

CPPP 2B The council will monitor the contribution that both planning gain and Lowland Crofting makes to the CPN and monitor the uptake of Land Management Contract funding for establishing core path links.

CPPP 2C The council will pursue the integration of the CPP with the West Lothian Local Plan.

5.3 **Objective 3: Ensure that the CPP, where possible, assists in delivering the biodiversity, heritage, health and regeneration policies of the council and does not conflict with them.**

5.3.1 This first DCP is based on the most popular, well-used and well-established paths in the district. There will be minor upgrading works carried out to some paths; these will be designed to limit the impact on biodiversity and heritage. Path works may indeed enhance the protection of vulnerable sites by leading people away from sensitive areas. However, it is recognised that these core paths will be promoted routes and, therefore, levels of use can be anticipated to increase. Furthermore, the SOAC enables people to leave a path at any point if they consider that they are responsible in doing so.

5.3.2 Consultants have undertaken assessments of the biodiversity and heritage impacts of the CPN and these are being included in the SEA which will accompany the DCP on deposit. The focus on core paths in and around settlements, to serve the primary access needs of residents in built up areas, creates little if any environmental impact.

5.3.3 As regards impact on health and deprivation, because the CPN is heavily focused on the main urban areas within the district it will reinforce the council's strategic policies that promote walking for health, which is led by the council's Health Walks Officer. It will also assist with the promotion cycling to work, school and shops rather than relying on private transport. These will also make a positive contribution to the



protection of the wider environment by encouraging green travel, which will in turn help to reduce congestion and CO₂ emissions.

5.3.4 In summary this DCPD assists in delivering the biodiversity, heritage, health and regeneration policies of the council and these issues will be monitored over the period of this first plan.

CPPP 3A The council will introduce path monitoring mechanisms to safeguard the biodiversity and cultural heritage and respond to conflicts and manage as appropriate.

CPPP 3B The council will monitor the impact of this plan on council policies for biodiversity, heritage, health and regeneration and respond accordingly.

5.4 **Objective 4: Work with land managers to create a positive response to access to the outdoors and promote core paths as a means of managing access.**

5.4.1 It is clear that many land managers are concerned about the overall impact of the access legislation on their land management. There is also nervousness about the impact of having a core path crossing their land and its impact on their liability and biosecurity.

5.4.2 The council has recently established the post of Access Ranger. A key part of that post's job description is to work with land managers and to provide advice and reassurance for them about the impact of the access legislation on their land holding. One way will be to promote the establishment of core paths as a means of managing access pressure. In future, it is hoped that land managers will increasingly approach the council with their ideas for candidate core paths on their land. Another means of securing path development is to encourage land managers to draw up access strategies. These will identify paths across their land and with appropriate links to

neighbouring land it may be that some paths will merit designation as a core path. Two estates, Hopetoun and Oatridge College, have already begun the preparation of access strategies which may identify candidate core paths.

5.4.3 The WLAFF will be important to the council in achieving an effective working relationship with land managers and developing a good rapport with them. Clearly both the National Farmers Union in Scotland (NFUS) and the Scottish Rural Property and Business Association (SRPBA) have key roles to play in this.

5.4.4 In return the council will need to develop an *after sales service* to reassure land managers that they are not alone in dealing with irresponsible access and criminal activity as people cross their land. The Access Ranger, Neighbourhood Environment Teams (NETS) and Land Services, Neighbourhood Response Teams, Lothian and Borders Police and the Countryside Ranger Service will all have a role to play.

CPPP 4A The council will develop liaison arrangements through the WLAFF, the NFUS and SRPBA.

CPPP 4B The council will maintain liaison with key land managers and provide a response service to assist land managers across the district.

CPPP 4C The council will encourage and assist in the preparation of whole farm/estate access strategies.

CPPP 4D The council will develop a joined up response service with the Countryside Ranger Service, council staff and the Police.



5.5 **Objective 5: Address future management, maintenance and monitoring needs.**

5.5.1 The preparation of this first DCP has resulted in the council devising and introducing a scheme of regular path maintenance. In the past the condition of rights of way and other paths has brought many complaints from the public. These complaints cover issues such as poor surfacing, wet and muddy conditions, damaged or unsafe bridges and stiles as well as concerns over motor bikes, fly tipping and intimidating anti social behaviour.

A management, maintenance and monitoring process for the part of the CPN under the council's control has been agreed and involves the Access Officer, Access Ranger, Countryside Ranger Service, Transportation Service, the NETS and Land Services and the Neighbourhood Response Teams.

5.5.2 A management regime will be devised for each core path according to its nature and level of use. This will determine the frequency of inspection and normal regular maintenance work. It is anticipated that a referral from a voluntary community path warden, rather than a complaint from a member of the public, will increasingly prompt the response to one-off events, such as storm damage or an abandoned vehicle. This approach to path maintenance will require a high level of inter service co-operation. As the management regime is introduced there will be the opportunity for land managers and users to comment on the service and suggest ways in which it could be improved. This could be a means of encouraging community volunteers and paying land managers to undertake maintenance work.

CPPP 5A The council will develop a path monitoring and reporting system involving the council's Countryside Ranger Service and NETS.

CPPP 5B The council will devise and agree an inter service response mechanism which will respond to reports of obstructions of core paths and deliver an annual maintenance programme.

CPPP 5C The council will liaise with landowners on path management.

5.6 **Objective 6: Promote the CPP and develop community and volunteer involvement in the CPN.**

5.6.1 The council has a duty to promote the CPP. Once adopted by the council, copies of the plan will be held at its main offices, CIS and libraries across the district as well as being accessible on the council's website.

5.6.2 As a means of encouraging people to be more active and to explore their local environment, the council will promote the CPN as part of the wider path network. However, it is intended to develop a community based pack of leaflets designed to encourage local access. The core paths will be featured in those leaflets and the links that they provide to neighbouring communities and areas of interest will be highlighted. These leaflets would also be distributed to schools, 50+ walking groups, mothers and toddlers groups and so on to ensure that all strands of a community are aware of what outdoor access is available in and around their town or village. Again these will be available at the main council offices, CIS and libraries across the district as well as on the council's website in due course.

5.6.3 The council has already produced a health atlas that promotes a variety of short walks in and around West Lothian settlements. This, combined with the work of its Health Walks Development Officer in recruiting voluntary health walk leaders, demonstrates the council's commitment to the encouragement of walking locally using the local path network. Again the CPN will play an increasing role in helping to publicise this message as well as providing good quality all weather paths which will be particularly suitable for this use throughout the year.

5.6.4 A key part of the Access Ranger's post is to work with community and user groups on core paths and local paths. The two rounds of informal public consultation were the most significant consultation ever undertaken about access in West Lothian. It was clear from these that people's awareness of the SOAC and how they could explore their local environment was quite limited.



5.6.5 It is the role of the council's Countryside Ranger Service to raise the general public's awareness of the SOAC locally and, working alongside the Access Ranger, to get people more involved in access. This could range from practical work maintaining and improving paths through to surveying and mapping to bring forward a community's ideas for future core paths and local paths. Once established, these local paths groups will be supported by the council not only by advice and guidance from access staff but also the NETS and Land Services, Transportation and the Countryside Service. Partnerships with Oatridge College, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) and Paths for All are also needed to explore the provision of training for community volunteers.

5.6.6 Initially, the distribution of such groups will be patchy but over time it is anticipated that the network will grow with some support from the council and partners.

CPPP 6A On adoption of the CPP, the council will publicise and promote the CPN.

CPPP 6B The council will encourage the establishment of local path groups.

CPPP 6C The council will support local path groups through developing an appropriate training programme with Oatridge College and working with BTCV to set up volunteer path maintenance schemes.

5.7 Objective 7: Identify consultation and communication needs in order to assist future reviews.

5.7.1 It is intended that future reviews of the CPP will form part of the review of the West Lothian Local Plan. It will be important, however, to ensure that the CPP is not submerged or delayed by this much more complex process. The council will need to ensure that all groups and individuals who contributed to the CPP preparation, and those who become involved in path development after the first plan has been adopted, are aware that the review and subsequent reviews are part of the local plan

review process.

5.7.2 Through the promotion of the plan and the development of a working relationship with communities, land managers and users it is anticipated that the response to plan reviews will become increasingly sophisticated and well informed. This will greatly assist the council in determining where the funding priorities are across the district both for where finance is to be spent and raised to upgrade existing paths and to create new ones.

5.7.3 The local paths groups, which will hopefully draw in members from the local land managers, will be increasingly important in communicating with key stakeholders in the lead up to a plan review. An informed and involved constituency will be very influential in the evolution of the plan through the review process.

5.7.4 Finally, the council will maintain regular contact with its five neighbouring councils on the maintenance and management of existing cross boundary core paths. As the reviews follow on there may also be new cross boundary paths to be considered for inclusion, which will require good liaison. As a result of the distribution of settlements there will need to be a high level of contact with access staff in Edinburgh and Falkirk Councils.

CPPP 7A The council will regularly review the CPP in accordance with Scottish Government's guidance and legislation.

CPPP 7B The council will establish liaison arrangements with key stakeholders through the WLAF.

CPPP 7C The council will review the plan through community liaison, local paths groups, user groups, neighbouring access authorities and the WLAF path and use the outcome of path surveys to assist future core path development.



NEXT STEPS

At the end of the formal consultation West Lothian Council will collate and review all the comments and objections received. It will seek to resolve objections where possible and will consider amending the plan to respond to those objections and comments that it deems are reasonable and valid.

The time that this phase takes will naturally be governed by the number and complexity of the submissions made. It is hoped to complete this within 12 weeks from the end of the consultation.

The stages leading up to the adoption of the Core Paths Plan by West Lothian Council is set out below. The timetable cannot be fixed as, for example, we do not know whether a Public Inquiry will be necessary.

April - July 2008	Analyse the comments and objections.
April - September 2008	Resolve objections where possible and revise the plan accordingly. Prepare a report showing the comments and objections made and the council's response.
September 2008	Submit the Finalised Core Paths Plan to the Minister plus the report showing the comments and objections made and the council's response.
2008/09	Minister's response and possible Public Inquiry.
2009	Minister approves the Core Paths Plan for adoption.
2009	West Lothian Council adopts the Core Paths Plan.

GLOSSARY

CDA	Core Development Area
CIS	Customer Information Service
CPP	Core Paths Plan
CPN	Core Path Network
DCPP	Draft Core Paths Plan
LRA	Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003
SGRPID	Scottish Government Rural Payments Inspectorate Department
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SOAC	Scottish Outdoor Access Code
NETS	Neighbourhood Environment Teams
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
WLAF	West Lothian Access Forum



DESCRIPTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Cover	Linlithgow Loch and Palace	Page 22	The rear of Hopetoun House can be seen from WL34 WL34 dropping down to Nethermill from the deer park
Page 1	Home from school on the Loan Path, Livingston National Cyclepath 75 at Almondell Country Park	Page 24	WL3 along the south shore of the loch The southern terminus of WL7
Page 2	The Union Canal near Winchburgh	Page 26	Heading down WL4 towards Linlithgow Horse riding in Beecraigs Views to the south from the southern terminus of WL5
Page 3	Entering West Lothian in the A89 cyclepath	Page 28	WL6 at "The Desert" View of the River Avon from WL6 near Avon Gorge Carriber Bridge carrying WL6 across to the Falkirk side
Page 4	Blaeberry Circular A Health Walks Group on the move	Page 30	WL11 looking west towards Winchburgh Looking north along WL12 near Philpstoun South Bing Bridge carrying WL12 across the Union Canal
Page 5	Construction of the Bathgate to Newbridge Cyclepath near Boghall	Page 32	Recently constructed section of WL22 WL22 near its junction with National Cyclepath 75 near Bathville
Page 7	Signs galore on Harrysmuir Path in Livingston	Page 34	WL34 to the north of Balbardie Park Upgrading WL26 in 2005
Page 8	The Harrysmuir "flyover" across the A899 The Brox Burn Path approaching the Union Canal	Page 36	The eastern end of WL23 WL23 passing through Whitburn
Page 9	The Union Canal at Broxburn	Page 38	The steep climb up from Stoneyburn on WL39 Signboard for WL25
Page 10	The Whitrigg Circular		
Page 11	Stage 1 consultation at Blackburn Shopping Centre		
Page 14	The new bridge across the River Almond at Seafield		
Page 18	WL1 near the Bathgate Tesco store		
Page 20	WL 2a&b near the Linlithgow Basin WL 2a&b near Linlithgow		
Page 22	WL34 in the deer park in Hopetoun Estate		



- Page 40 Looking east along WL24 to the south of Fauldhouse
Heading east through the former Hermand Estate grounds
- Page 42 Mature trees are an attractive feature along WL37
- Page 44 Keeping you on the right track
- Page 45 Heading north on WL15 to Calderwood
- Page 50 Going in circles on WL13
Signing the circle
Heading west toward Skivo on WL14
- Page 52 WL32 passes through wide open spaces in the midst of Kirkton Campus
- Page 54 Taking the bike for a walk on WL30
- Page 56 View from Dechmont Law
- Page 57 No canoes using WL27 today
- Page 58 Heading west towards Uphall Station on WL9
- Page 59 Multi use in action
- Page 60 The Fives Sisters are a prominent landscape feature
The River Avon Heritage Trail near Strath Mill
- Page 61 Cycling along the Union Canal towpath
A walk in the woods on the Nell Burn Path
- Page 62 Taking the next step
- Path 63 The view across Greenburn Golf Course from the Fauldhouse Rail Path
- Path 64 View to Seafield from the River Almond to Breich Water Path