

Grounds Maintenance – Service Delivery 2019/20

Background

The Environmental Protection Act 1990

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

The Act does not place any duties on local authorities or land owners on the standards of grounds maintenance that should be achieved. Therefore it is at the discretion of local authorities to establish service standards for the maintenance of its open spaces, parks and woodlands.

The Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse issued under section 89 of The Environmental Protection Act 1990 defines standards of cleanliness which are achievable in different locations and under differing circumstances. It is concerned with how clean land is, and not grounds maintenance activities other than the removal of weed growth..

The Code of Practice is based on the following two principles:

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

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

Grounds Maintenance Zones

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

Zone 1: town centre

Zone 2: high density residential

Zone 3: low density residential

Zone 4: sports fields and facilities

Zone 5: open spaces and parks

Zone 6: industrial areas

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

Zone 8: rural roads and verges

SERVICE STANDARDS

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

Zone / Category		Zone Summary / Remarks	Grass Cutting	Weed Spraying	Hedge Cutting
1	Town Centre	This would include areas of high footfall associated with educational establishment, particularly secondary and primary schools	12 x annually	2 x annually	1 x annually
2	Residential (high density)	Terraced, tenemental, flatted housing and educational establishments	12 x annually	2 x annually	1 x annually
3	Residential (low density)	Detached and semi-detached Housing and educational establishments	12 x annually	2 x annually	1 x annually
4	Sports fields and facilities	Football pitches, athletic fields etc. and all sports facilities managed by West Lothian Council	12 x annually	2 x annually	Ad Hoc
5	Open spaces and parks	Open spaces and parks not classified as common ground	12 x annually	2 x annually	Ad Hoc
6	Industrial areas	Areas of common ground within industrial estates	12 x annually	2 x annually	Ad Hoc
7	Classified roads and verges not included in zones 1 - 3	Classified Roads (A, B and C) linking towns and residential areas	1 x annually	Ad Hoc	Ad Hoc
8	Rural roads and verges including Livingston Greenways	These areas have specific health and safety requirements to ensure safe operation	1 x annually	Ad Hoc	Ad Hoc

The proposed changes to grass cutting service standards will impact on the following areas:

- Livingston Greenways
- Classified Road Verges
- Rural Road Verges
- Stankards Housing Estate, Uphall

The effects of these changes are described below.

Grass Cutting

Livingston Greenways

These areas are essentially classed as rural in all other West Lothian communities. They are currently maintained to the same standards as Zones 1 – 3 above, however will change to the same standard as Zones 7 and 8. A number of Greenway areas are maintained to the following standard.



The impact of these proposed changes will be as shown below.



Classified Roads Verges

Some verges alongside classified roads are currently maintained to the same standards as Zones 1 – 3 above, however will change to match all other similar verges classified as Zones 7 and 8. Examples of this would be the verges along the A71 near Oakbank Roundabout, and verges along the A89 at Broxburn. These are maintained to the standard show below.

The following picture provides an indication of the impact on these areas.



The impact of these proposed changes will be as shown below.



Rural Roads Verges

The verges on a number of rural roads are currently cut once per year, along their length. This will change to ensure sightlines are clear, with the remaining areas untouched. The following picture provides an indication of the impact this will have on these areas.



The impact of these proposed changes will be as shown below.



Grass areas in this estate currently have had the arisings collected for a number of years, where it was perceived that they had blocked drains and caused flooding. Since then there has been additional drainage installed in the estate and Flood Management colleagues have confirmed grass collection is no longer necessary. These areas will revert to the same service standards as those in Zones 2 and 3 above.

The following picture reflects the current service provision in this estate.



It is anticipated that this will change, in line with all other open spaces within housing estates, as shown below.



NEIGHBOURHOOD ENVIROMENTAL TEAMS

The above service standards provide an operational cycle that ensures the general coverage of the authority area required to maintain grounds maintenance standards. However the service retains the operational capacity to react to ad hoc events that require a more speedy response to improve the standard of grounds maintenance to meet safety requirements. The balance of routine and adhoc works is influenced by many factors and may result in the need to reprioritise routine works on a needs basis.

Neighbourhood Environmental Teams (NETs) will be re-established in 2019 to react to both grounds maintenance and street cleansing related issues such as those outlined below, and performance indicators will be developed and implemented to monitor performance of the teams and their response times to incidents and returning streets and areas to the required standards.

The NETs teams will react to issues such as:

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