

# Letham Park, Pumpherston

January 2021





# Summary

## ***How people rate the park***

Surprisingly, the park's average community score is 12 points above that rated through the council's park audit process. For such a small park, it is very much appreciated for what it is. The park scores well above average for Biodiversity, Network (connectedness) and Regulating benefits. Only 4 categories are scored below average: Community involvement, Sustainability and Information/signage with Economic benefits scoring the lowest. These scores indicate themes that currently work well or could be improved in the park.

## ***What people like about the park as it is***

The most popular elements of the existing park are its naturalness and the open space. Other popular attributes include the peacefulness and that it's a good space for informal children's play.

## ***What people don't like / issues raised***

The main, overriding negative issue is litter and dog poo, closely followed by access issues.

## ***Recommendations for action – based on all information collected***

Given the naturalness of the park and its previous history of antisocial behaviour, improvements should complement what's there, whilst addressing key issues. Recommended actions for the park are:

- 1) Enhancing existing vegetation with more flowering and fruiting plants
- 2) Adding one or two seats
- 3) Adding park signage
- 4) Selective woodland thinning around park edges
- 5) Improving access for maintenance and add paths
- 6) Installing path drainage and a raingarden
- 7) Adding stepping stones / low mounding
- 8) Reviewing boundary fencing
- 9) Reviewing bins

## ***Potential Partners***

Suggested local partners include: Pumpherston Community Council, local businesses, local primary schools / colleges and wildlife groups



## Introduction

Letham Park in Pumpherston, is designated as a Local Park in the West Lothian Open Space Plan and is protected as open space in the West Lothian Local Plan (2018).

The park is a small, rectangular park of approximately 0.6ha, essentially consisting of one wet field and a small area of woodland in the north. It is situated between housing (in the west, north and east) and the Woodland Trust Scotland “East Woods” in the south. A tarmac path with lighting connects the park to Uphall Station Road in the east and Craigshill in the south-west. The park is bordered by trees on all sides, either as shelter-belt or woodland.

West Lothian Council has some money to make improvements to the park in 2021/22. Feedback from local stakeholders will inform the improvements next year and help to shape a longer-term vision for the park.



## Information gathering

Feedback from local stakeholders was gathered via an online survey. The survey period ran from 9<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

Emails with links to the survey were sent to all known stakeholders, including council officers, Pumpherston Community Council, Craigshill Community Council, Craigshill Greenspace, Woodland Trust Scotland and local Councillors. 40 fliers advertising the survey were put through neighbours' doors around the park, and 4 posters were displayed in and around the park. The survey was also advertised through the council's Media team. A total of 21 local people gave their feedback altogether.

Pumpherston Community Council also shared suggestions from their Facebook page.

## Feedback

### From WLC and WTS officers:

- There is no strategic requirement for play equipment in this park as there are playparks very close by at Harrysmuir Gardens and Heaney Avenue.
- Fly tipping is an issue in Letham Park.

### From Community Council:

- Suggestions for improvements from the Facebook page include: drainage, a fenced dog park, tennis court, adult exercise equipment, playpark.
- Community Council suggestions: incorporate the woods into the park using a woodland/wildlife trail (e.g. Gruffalo trail), climbing frames, picnic area, stepping stones, footpaths, wildlife signage and planters with wildflowers.

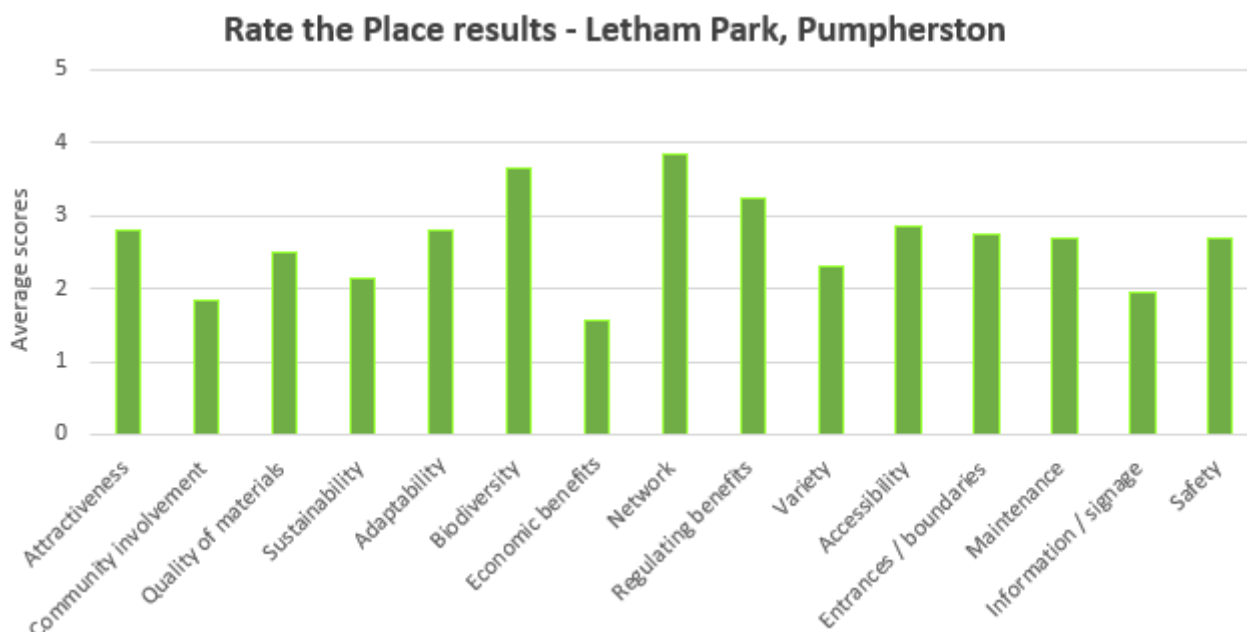
### From park survey:

#### Name of the park

All survey participants call the park Letham Park.

#### Rate the Place

Participants were asked to rate the park as it currently is, using the council's Park Audit questionnaire. The results are shown in the chart below. 20 people participated in the scoring.



With a possible top score of 5 points for each category, it can be seen that 3 park categories score well above average: Biodiversity, Network (connectedness) and Regulating benefits.

Roughly average scores are given for: Attractiveness, Quality of materials, Adaptability, Variety, Accessibility, Entrances / boundaries, Maintenance and Safety.

The only categories with below-average scores are: Community involvement, Sustainability, Information/signage, with Economic benefits scoring the lowest.

These scores give us a clear indication of which themes within the park work well and which themes could be significantly improved.

The park's total community-rated score is 40, which just rates as 'fit for purpose' (40 being the cut-off point). This is 12 points *above* the score rated through the council's park audit process (28).

*Please see Appendix 1 for a more detailed description of the characteristics that were scored.*



## What do people like best about the park?

When the feedback for this question is pasted into a 'word cloud generator', the resulting size of each word shows how often it is mentioned. The 'word cloud' for Letham Park is shown here, allowing us to see at a glance which elements of the park are currently most valued:



Respondents most like that the park is a natural space, with lots of wildlife. People appreciate the open space, that it's peaceful and a good space away from the road for children to play and connect with nature. Others like that it's a good space for walking dogs, that it links well to other places and that it has potential.





## What people don't like / issues people raised

The overriding issue is litter and dog poo, closely followed by access issues – for maintenance vehicles as well as pedestrians. Other issues raised are: past/current antisocial behaviour, drainage, safety/security of boundaries and maintenance.





## Suggestions for improvements

The most popular suggestion for 'low-cost things that could improve the park straight away' is to add more flowering plants. Play equipment was suggested here, but this isn't low-cost. Bins, wildlife features (e.g. bird/bat boxes/pond), seating, drainage, football goals, maintenance and access were also suggested.

The top two suggestions for longer-term improvements are planting (edible plants / wildlife support) and play equipment. These were followed closely by maintenance. Other suggestions include seating / community space, access improvements, drainage, bins, lighting, signage and tree thinning.

*All suggestions can be viewed in Appendix 2 at the end of this report.*



## Recommendations

Given that the park scores so highly for Biodiversity and Regulating benefits, which often score low in other parks, any improvements should complement and enhance these qualities whilst addressing key issues. Given the history of antisocial-behaviour in the park, any additional features should start off low key, to see how the park fares. From analysing the park scores and bringing together feedback from all the stakeholders, recommended priorities for improving the park are:

- 1) Enhancing existing vegetation with more flowering and fruiting plants
- 2) Adding one or two seats
- 3) Adding park signage
- 4) Selective woodland thinning around park edges
- 5) Improving access for maintenance and add paths
- 6) Path drainage and raingarden
- 7) Potential stepping stones / low mounding
- 8) Reviewing boundary fencing
- 9) Reviewing bins

Depending on timing and the relaxing of Covid-19 restrictions, it is possible that planting could be carried out as a community activity, which would boost community involvement in the park.

Incorporating more edible plants in the general planting of the park would help to boost the park's economic benefits, further enhance biodiversity and increase the variety of things to do in the park.

Selective tree thinning will enhance biodiversity by allowing light to reach the ground, it will improve sightlines and can also enable access into the woodland – being mindful of the fact that the trees were added to buffer the surrounding houses from park activities.

A path into and around the park will improve access for everyone, including people with restricted mobility. It will also help with access for maintenance vehicles.

Drainage for paths will ensure that they can be used after rain and the water can be channelled into a raingarden. This is not a pond – it would be a shallow depression that temporarily fills with water after heavy rain and is full of plants that can tolerate marshy conditions. This will increase biodiversity, boost the regulating benefits of the park and provide some extra variety in the park.

Although formal play equipment won't be added to the park, features such as stepping stones, low mounding and woodland access would provide some informal and imaginative play opportunities. A nature trail could also be devised in partnership with a local community group.

The boundary fencing and provision of bins will be reviewed.

Lighting is provided along the tarred path between Pumpherston and Craigshill. Due to the nature of the park, lighting within it is not something that would be considered at this time.

To improve community involvement in the park, local residents could organise small events (e.g. Easter Egg hunts, etc) or practical projects such as planting days, litter picks, etc. Or a group could fundraise for some public art, for example. This can either be done through existing groups or a dedicated Friends of the Park group, which the council is happy to help support.



## Next Steps

This report will be posted on the parks webpage [www.westlothian.gov.uk/parkinfo](http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/parkinfo)

Based on the feedback and recommendations in this report, park plans will be drawn up and people will be given the opportunity to vote on the final plan.

The 17 people who opted to join the park email list will be kept informed of park improvements. Anyone else who would like to join the list can request to do so by emailing [becky.plunkett@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:becky.plunkett@westlothian.gov.uk)

## Potential partners

Suggestions for local partners, who may be able to help with the recommended improvements, include: Pumpherston Community Council, local businesses, local primary schools / colleges and wildlife groups.

*A full list of all suggested partners can be found in Appendix 2 at the end of this report.*



## Appendix 1 – Rate the Place characteristics explained

No.	Measure	Some things to consider 'yes' answers = higher score, unless stated
1	Attractiveness	Is the park generally attractive? Does it have a consistent or unique character?
2	Community	Does the community help to make decisions about the park? Are there frequent community events? Is there evidence of community involvement?
3	Quality	Are features and facilities robust and long-lasting?
4	Sustainability	Is weedkiller used in maintenance? (lower score) Is every bit of grass cut short? (lower) Recycling bins on site? Are there signs that materials / resources are reused on site? (e.g. grass clippings on shrub-beds)
5	Adaptability	Could spaces within the park be changed easily to suit different uses over time?
6	Biodiversity	Are there different shapes, sizes and types of plants within the park? Do you regularly see different insects / birds / other animals in the park?
7	Economic benefits	Does anyone charge for activities or events here? Does anyone sell things here? Do people collect wood or berries? Do people fish? Do people grow food here?
8	Network	Is the park connected to other green areas nearby, or rivers/burns? Is it connected to walking/cycle paths?
9	Regulating benefits	Are there trees / shrubs / plants at different heights? (to filter air/water, soak up rainfall and store carbon) Are there areas that visibly hold water when it rains? Are there flowers to support bees and other pollinators?
10	Variety	Is there a good variety of things to do in the park? e.g. sport/ walk/ sit/ learn/ play/ watch wildlife / picnic/ cycle/ eat/ run / climb / socialise / walk dog / good views
11	Accessibility	Is the park easy to walk to and get around? Is most of the park accessible to buggies / wheelchairs?
12	Entrances / boundaries	Do you know you're in a park? Are entrances and boundaries well defined? Are they attractive?
13	Maintenance	Is the park well-maintained? Is there much litter, vandalism or areas of neglect? (lower)
14	Signage	Is it clear who looks after the park and how to contact them? Is there any information on wildlife/ history, etc?
15	Safety	Do children and older people regularly use the park? Can you see across the park? Are there areas that feel unsafe? (lower)



## Appendix 2 – All survey answers

### 1) *What do you like best about this park?*

#### Nature

- There is mixed woodland and wild flowers including brambles, mushrooms, toadstools, dandelions and daisies which attracts insects birds squirrels, hedgehogs, fox and deer.
- It's natural habitat. It's a haven for local wildlife from the adjacent woods with a wide range of species including various songbirds, hedgehogs, frogs, and a pine marten spotted a year ago.
- Beautiful and natural green area between woods, lots of birds and nature
- Great Greenland which joins onto the woodland, nice to see nature
- THE MIXED WOODLAND
- LARGE GRASS WITH PLANTS DAISY CLOVER, BUTTERCUPS DANDELIONS AND LOTS OF INSECTS
- BIRDS, DEER AND OT HER MAMMALS

#### Good space for children

- Great area for kids, away from main roads, but not very good access.
- It's a nice green space and my children used it when they were young as did I.
- I like that it is a space where children can play football, and explore
- There is enough space for children to play ball games.

#### Walking dogs

- It is used by dog owners to exercise their dogs. I normally walk around it daily and play fetch with my dog.
- It is an open space for dogwalkers.
- Sole use is dog exercising.
- IT IS A GREAT PLACE TO EXERCISE A DOG AND TO HAVE BALL GAMES.

#### Potential

- the potential for future uses.
- The park has so much space for newer things to be put in it for younger kids and adults

#### Open space

- Open grass areas.
- I love the way it is now
- Its a nice clear open space and should be left alone. Any type of play park etc for kids will not be accessible and too close to the woods leading to Craigshill
- Open field surrounded by trees
- The large green space

#### Peaceful / no Anti-Social Behaviour

- It is untouched and rarely used as a park. Quiet and out of the way.
- It was improved when the play equipment was removed as there was less vandalism and disturbance.
- It is unlit so no major disturbances after dusk (except for fireworks. occasionally)
- There is no seating for youths to loiter (some evidence of misuse alcohol and non-prescribed medication in the surrounding woodland)

#### Links to other places

- Most children are accompanied by a parent carer as this park because the footpath is used as a public route to Craigshill, Houston Industrial Estate, and Craigswood and shops, school and transport links in Pumpherston and Uphall Station.
- I like that it is well shielded from the road and connected to the East Woods path.

#### Other

- AREA FOR CATS TO EXPLORE AND HUNT
- Location is very good for our house
- Nothing to like. it's just a big open field

## 2) *Is there anything you don't like?*

### Litter / dog waste

- Currently used as a dog toilet basically
- There is a litter and dog fouling problem in this area and volunteer litter pickers clear it frequently.
- There is often smashed glass bottles and alcoholic beverage cans especially in the adjoining land owned by the Woodland Trust and on the footpath.
- My back garden looks out onto this park and I would say the people who use it most is dog walkers. And if I am honest people are terrible at leaving their dog litter lying around. I have caught many people doing this. I think people don't see the area as a park, they just see it as a bit of a wasted space, that is good for dogs.
- Lack of dog waste bins/litter bins
- and the bins can often get quite full of dog litter.
- Dog poo

### Anti-Social Behaviour

- The park had swings and other play equipment but was attracting teenagers causing a disturbance. The footpath from Letham Avenue was blocked off and play equipment removed including football goal posts which had been vandalised
- There were numerous complaints from nearby residents about noise / disturbance. There was tree and shrub planting for privacy and security bordering Letham Avenue..
- The park can be a source of antisocial behaviour with children/young people on motorcycles coming through the woods from the houses on Letham Avenue,
- Some of the residents have off road bikes and access the park from their garden gates churning up the grass.

### Safety/security

- Too secluded and doesn't feel safe due to the amount of trees at the rear of Letham Avenue. These were planted in the 1990s to deter antisocial behaviour but they should have been planted at the top end of the park and access via Letham Avenue kept.
- And secure fencing would have to be put up to prevent shortcuts being made from the park to Pumphreyston.
- No boundary fencing
- The wooden fencing Harrysmuir Gardens boundary is often damaged and the wire fencing cut at Letham Park boundary so people can cross over the field / park as a short cut from Harrysmuir Gardens to Uphall Station Road via private road at Letham Park.

### Maintenance

- Bit neglected and area not maximised
- It's only a grass field no play equipment for children no benches bins area is water logged
- Not very well maintained
- Most of the mature trees were felled to allow light into gardens at Harrysmuir Gardens and large pieces of trunk were left and this area is was not replanted with new trees shrubs. I think some of the trees had a disease and were felled.

### None

- None. Is a lovely place to walk
- None

### Access

- There is poor vehicular access as the roads are both Private Roads at Letham Park (leading from Uphall Station Road) .
- Park Maintenance is via a footpath either from Holly Grove Craigshill or Uphall Station Road .
- The council sold the access to the park from Letham Avenue. The only access now is by going through the woodland.
- The access roads are both privately owned by the residents of Letham Park. These would have to be adopted by the West Lothian Council before vehicles could access the park.
- poor access.
- I didn't even know it was a park! Just seems like a path of grass. It is a bit non-descript. Nothing really stands out...the main entrance is off a main road...the original entrance now is someone's garden...its called Letham Park but no entrance from Letham

### Drainage

- bad drainage.
- There is a drainage problem and an area gets very wet and muddy after heavy rain. It is being investigated to ensure it was not a burst sewage pipe following a complaint.
- The ground can also get somewhat saturated after rainfall and this results in taking over a week to dry out enough for children to play.
- Does not drain rain water well.

### Other

- Re allocate the funds to improve Peggy's Garden near Frazer Park or improve the area of land where Pumphreyston Institute Hall was situated which is securely fenced and grassed.
- LOCAL CHILDREN SHOULD BE FILING OUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND BE CONSULTED AT SPECIAL GROUP MEETING . I notice that there is not enough for teenage girls in most of the parks in West Lothian . I think they would like more roofed walled climbing frames balance bars Fireman's pole designed for them with platform to sit . chat. do arts. many of the parks have kick pitches , skateboard and bike tracks, basket ball nets but if you go you will see this is mainly used by males. Girls have to pay club membership and fees for many of their hobbies ballet / dance , gymnastics. horse riding and often have to buy expensive sports wear, uniforms or equipment . I appreciate that boys have indoor activities too but there seems to be more outdoor activities for mainly for men and boys ie fishing, golf football etc. Perhaps more encouragement is required for girls /women to take part in competitive and non competitive sports leading from amateur to professional status. .
- I personally think a small concrete skatepark would be a great option as there are a lot of kids and adults that love action sports like bmx , skateboarding and rollerblading , most children from the surrounding area aren't allowed to travel to the nearest skate park , flood lights and rubbish bins to be added as the trees around the park make it really hard to see on the darker nights , also rubbish bins for litter



### **3) List three low-cost things that you would do to improve this park, that could be done straight away**

#### **Plants**

- Plant wild flower seeds around the edge
- Plant more flowers
- Landscaping
- Planting / landscaping for biodiversity
- Flowering shrubs.
- Planting
- More plants
- More natural plant life
- some flowers and shrubs
- More trees and wild flowers but keeping as much short grass and weeds as possible
- Plant areas of wild flowers around the borders of the playing field

#### **Bins**

- Bins
- An additional bin
- More poo bins
- Bins
- Dog waste bins
- Dog waste bins

#### **Pond / wildlife**

- Dipping pond suitable for all ages perhaps with a bridge and some seating.
- Make a pond where the area gets wet and muddy for children to pond dip
- Encourage wildlife eg bug hotels
- Bird boxes

#### **Drainage**

- Drainage
- Good drainage.
- Add drainage so area not water logged

#### **No change**

- None
- Nothing
- Leaving it as is

#### **Play equipment**

- Children's play area
- swings for under 5 years old
- Small play park for children in the letham area as there is none
- Climbing frame suitable for older children with covered platforms and sheltered area
- Swings
- Play spaces areas for children
- Add some play equipment
- Small trampoline
- More for 3 year old

#### **Seating**

- Add seating, maybe logs rather than benches
- Picnic benches, seats
- Add benches picnic table
- Picnic area for community use

#### **Football/goals**

- small 5 aside football pitch
- Football area for kids
- Patch of Astro with goals

#### **Maintenance**

- Clear dead felled trees to prevent disease
- Trim back long grass and weeds
- Clear the public path of the wet leaves and the drainage ditches

#### **Access**

- Better access via letham park/harrysmuir gardens
- Signposted access

#### **Other**

- Unsure
- Lights
- Footpath through it
- Fix the fence
- Donate the land to the Woodland Trust for tree planting and for them to upkeep.
- Pétanque

#### 4) What three changes would you make in the long term that would have the biggest impact?

##### Wildlife/planting

- Leaving the site to nature
- Biodiverse planting and infrastructure
- Landscaping to attract insects
- Encourage bio diversity
- Bird boxes
- Plant more trees
- Shrubs
- fruit trees and berries

##### Play equipment

- Children's play area
- 2 storey climbing frame
- play park
- Play areas
- Swings
- Swings
- Roundabout
- Small trampoline

##### Drainage

- Drainage
- Drainage
- improved drainage

##### Bins

- Dog poo bins
- Dog waste bins
- Bins

##### Signage

- put up signs to pick up and bin dog waste
- Visitor information on species of plants and animals on site

##### Tree management

- Some tree management to allow more light from the south side.
- Trees cut down at houses at back of letham avenue it would feel safer

##### Maintenance

- To maintain green space for future generations
- More frequent picking up litter , emptying of the litter/ dog waste bins Seasonal Leaf clearing Snow Clearing and Gritting of the public footpath.
- Grass cut more frequently
- Annual clearing of the drainage ditches close to the public path to prevent flooding
- Continuing current grass cutting routine
- Trim back long grass and weeds

##### Seating / communal space

- Seats
- a community planting area with raised beds and some seating
- Community spaces for sports/socialising

##### Access

- put original entrance back from letham
- Better access to the locals
- Improve access

##### Nothing

- None
- Nothing. It's beautiful.

##### Lighting

- Flood lights
- Lighting

##### Other

- Rename it as playing field or nature park
- Stairs to shute
- Skatepark
- Pétanque
- small football pitch

#### 5) Which local groups could help to put your ideas above into action? (Please name them e.g. 'Hillside Primary Parent Council')

- Pumpherston community council.
- Pumpherston Community Council
- Pumpherston Community Council.
- Pumpherston Community council?
- pumpherston community council,
- Pumpherston Community Council
- Community council
- Could approach Bay leaf restaurant and Pumpherston Dental Surgery for a small amount of funding.
- Pumpherston shops and businesses
- Wider business community
- Pumpherston primary school,
- Letham Primary School
- Oatridge College
- WL College
- Unknown
- Unsure
- West Lothian Council
- There is a lot of wild life so any groups intrested in ornothology (owls wood peckers finches robins birds of prey or protection sparrows balckbirds etc of wildlife (roe deer badgers, foxes, moles, voles, field mice frogs toads newts etc)
- Youth action project
- PUPS
- Green Space
- Livingston FC
- Sports Scotland.
- BBC Wildlife
- RSPB
- Countryside Commision
- <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/protected-species/protected-species-zguide/>
- protected-species-amphibians-and-reptiles
- Other agencies providing grants or support
- Using this box for something else; please don't turn this into a kids play park. It is a small space so if it becomes a play park it stops all other users for being able to enjoy the space.
- I think a park area being built would attract anti social behaviour as a resident who looks out onto the area I would ask that the area is left alone but waste bins added for litter. Harrysmuir Gardens has a park already in the street. Please don't build anything there.