

Almond Park, Craigshill, Livingston



Survey Results



Summary

In July/August 2022, a community consultation was held in order to gain feedback on what the public thought of the park and what suggestions the community had that would enhance Almond Park, Craigshill. The survey was conducted on-line. Information was provided about the park and feedback then sought via a simple questionnaire. 76 participants took part in the survey, although not all respondents answered all of the questions.

How people rate the park

Users were asked to rate the Park using the Council's Park Audit criteria. Scores of 1-5 were allocated against 15 criteria. Overall, respondents scored the park just above average. The overall average score of 48.54 means that users think that the park is "fit for purpose". (A minimum quality score of 40 is necessary to be considered Fit for Purpose). The categories that scored below average were Sustainability, Economic Benefits and Maintenance. The categories that scored above average were Adaptability, Biodiversity, Network with wider area, Regulating benefits, Variety, Easy to walk to & access and Entrances/boundaries.

What people like about the park

People like the open/green space and woodlands, the natural/country feel of the park and the opportunity to experience wildlife. The length and variety of walking routes and exercising opportunities is enjoyed by park users, with and without dogs. The proximity of the park to people's homes is liked and the fact that the park offers the opportunity to socialise and meet people.

What people don't like about the park

The long grass was a common dislike about the park as well as overgrown path edges with grass or bushes. The numbers and types of bins and littering was not liked as well as the number of benches and picnic tables. Anti-social activities were also seen as a negative aspect of the park.

Recommendations for action

There was an overlap of suggestions between low-cost and long-term enhancements with the following items being most commonly mentioned:

- Cut the long grass
- Sow/plant wildflowers/flowers/shrubs/trees
- More/bigger bins
- More seating and tables
- Additional play equipment

Not all suggestions can be implemented within the available budget or would be actioned by the Council. The following proposals are recommended for action to enhance the park –

- Review the areas left as long grass
- Plant bulbs
- Replace "open" style bins with covered black bins
- Add additional seating and a picnic bench
- Repair the damaged banking by the river edge
- Repair the surface under a bench near the play area.

A plan showing the proposed works has been drawn up and is shown later in this report.

Next steps – Obtain quotes for the proposed works. If quotes are within the park budget then the works would be implemented, ideally before the end of 2022/23.

Introduction

Almond Park is located in the Craigshill area of Livingston. It is regarded as a District Park and designated as Land Safeguarded for Open Space in the Local Development Plan, 2018. It is over 19 hectares in size. The park comprises grassland, mature and more recently planted trees, shrubs, a formal and informal path network, a play area and adjacent outdoor gym area.

The site is bounded by the River Almond in the south, the residential area of Craigshill to the north, Almondvale Park to the west (under Livingston Road dual carriageway) and Livingston Rugby Football Club and Craigshill in the east. It has many entrances, making it easily accessible from Craigshill as well as from the west and east. Access from Mid Calder and the centre of Livingston is possible via 2 bridges from the south-east and south-west respectively. There are unique stone features marking some of the main entrance points.

A number of sealed and unsealed paths are available through, and around, the park. National Cycle Network Route 75 - part of the UK-wide network for walking, cycling and wheeling - runs west to east with lighting and signage. Part of The Shale Trail also runs through the park, again with directional signage and on-line accessible information. Other signs point you in the right direction for Almondell and Calderwood Country Park and nearby destinations.

You can navigate the park by an orienteering course or look out for wildlife with the help of The Nature Trail interpretation board and on-site marker posts. There is also an interpretation board by the river's edge about the Craigshill Bypass Channel providing information about the structure and how it now helps fish navigate the River Almond.

Wildlife is supported on-site with a network of insect pathways (B-lines) of un-mown or less intensively managed grassland providing shelter, pollen and nectar. Birds and mammals also benefit from the mix of mature woodland and shrubs and newer planted trees which provide a network of habitats. Park users can enjoy their shade, colour and structure too.

For the active there is a children's play area and outdoor gym equipment. A range of seating is found throughout the park for those wishing to rest and enjoy the views. Bins are located across the site.

Recent work has comprised the replacement of the wooden boardwalk in the middle of the park and upgrades to steps leading down to the edge of the River Almond.



Information gathering

An on-line survey was used to gather comments and feedback from local stakeholders. This was posted on the Council's website. Information about the survey was sent by email to the local ward members, Craigshill Community Council, West Lothian Youth Action Project, Almond Housing Association Officer, community members, Council officers and the Council's Media team.

12 posters were put up within, and around, the park which highlighted and gave the link to the survey along with a QR code connecting you directly to it. A copy of the poster was hand delivered to 60 properties which were adjacent to, or overlooked, the park. 36 copies were handed into Craigengar Park (flats) and 6 leaflets were given out to park users on 26 July 2022.

The official date for completion was 14 August 2022 to prompt responses but the survey was still available for completion until the end of August 2022. There were 76 surveys completed by then although not all questions were completed by all respondents.

Feedback

Full responses to the survey are available in **Appendix 1**. A summary of answers to each question is as follows:

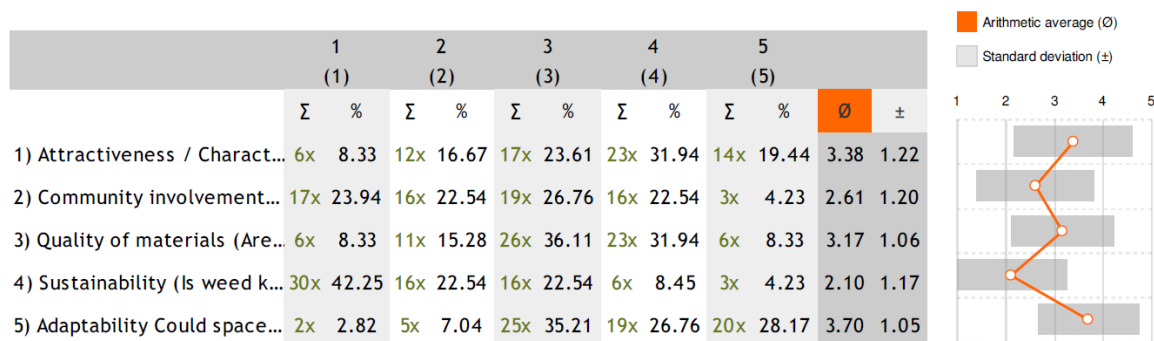
Name of the park

The majority of respondents call the site Almond Park. Some call it Craigshill Almond Park or Almond Park Craigshill. Reference to the river such as Doon the River or Down the Almond is used while others call it The dog park, The park, Almondvale or the NEDS Beer Garden.

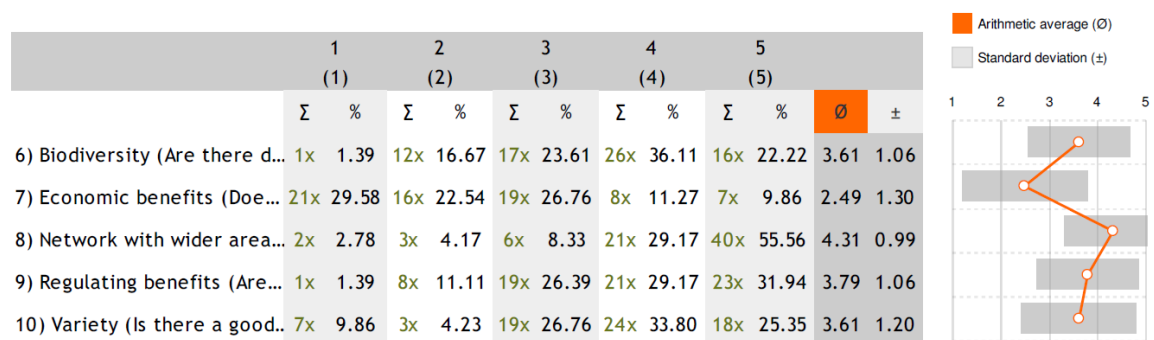
Rate the Park

Participants were asked to rate the park as it currently is, using the council's Park Audit questionnaire. An explanation of categories covered by the audit is shown in **Appendix 2**. Each category could be scored 1-5, with 1 being poor and 5 being good. The results are shown in the charts below.

Quality



Multi-functionality



Safe and welcoming

	1		2		3		4		5			
	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)			
	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	\bar{O}	\pm
11) Easy to walk to and acc...	1x	1.39	4x	5.56	13x	18.06	29x	40.28	25x	34.72	4.01	0.94
12) Entrances/boundaries ...	5x	6.94	8x	11.11	19x	26.39	21x	29.17	19x	26.39	3.57	1.20
13) Maintenance (Is the par...	18x	25.00	21x	29.17	12x	16.67	18x	25.00	3x	4.17	2.54	1.23
14) Clear information / sig...	16x	22.54	12x	16.90	25x	35.21	11x	15.49	7x	9.86	2.73	1.25
15) Does it feel safe? (Do c...	13x	18.06	17x	23.61	15x	20.83	17x	23.61	10x	13.89	2.92	1.33

The park's overall community-rated score is 48.5, which rates it as 'fit for purpose' against the Council's quality assessment. (The Council uses a standard survey methodology to determine the quality of a park. In summary, each site is given a score between 1 and 5 (low to high) for each of 15 quality criteria. These scores are then totalled, giving an overall score out of 75. A site with a score of 40 or above is considered as 'fit for purpose'). The park scored average overall for Quality, above average overall for Multi-functionality and average overall for Safe and Welcoming.

Individual categories that scored lowest were Sustainability, Economic benefits and Maintenance. Those with above average scores were Adaptability, Biodiversity, Network with wider area, Regulating benefits, Variety, Easy to walk to and Entrances/boundaries.

What 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 Almond Park is shown below, quickly indicating which elements of the park are currently most valued:



The large open/green space is valued by the community as a good space to enjoy the outdoors. The natural/country feel of the site with its trees, woodland and “wild” areas is particularly liked by park users. Views of, and accessibility to, the river are appreciated. The wildlife that is seen on site is really liked.

The variety of paths and areas for walking and exercise available to park users and the opportunity to walk dogs is liked. People like the proximity of the park to their homes and how easy it is to get to with its many entrances. The chance to socialise and meet people in the park was liked and that there is something for different ages.

What don't people like about the park -

If a “word cloud generator” is again used to capture the feedback from the survey for things people don’t like about the park the following is produced –

management (e.g. amenity grassland) are of lower ecological value and support far fewer species when compared to areas with a more diverse array of species and a mosaic of habitats.

This review is being developed outwith the current Almond Park consultation. The public consultation on that, if approved, will be advertised by the Council at a later date.

- **Plant bulbs** – Many people commented that they would like to see more wildflowers/meadows. This suggestion was, however, often made by someone who also commented that they would like to see the long grass being cut. The long grass/meadow area on the northern edge of the park is a mix of wildflowers and grasses, many of which do flower although some are insignificant from a distance.

I have interpreted the comments to be that many people wish to see more “colourful” flowers within the park. Wildflower areas are often very colourful for a few years with flowers such as poppy or cornflower adding splashes of red and blue. To keep these looking like this it is necessary to cut them annually, let the seed fall to the ground to germinate and then lift the thatch. Grounds Maintenance does not currently have the resources to do this.

It is suggested, therefore, that a perennial mix of bulbs is planted to add colour and interest for park users and provide a pollen and nectar source for bees, butterflies and other insects.

- **Replace “open” style bins with covered, dual purpose black bins**

There are different styles of bin located around the park. The silver styled ones have no tops or lids and are, therefore, prone to birds pulling items out of them and scattering litter.

The Council no longer puts up “dog bins”. The black styled bins can be used to place dog fouling in them and, as they have tops, they will reduce the likelihood of birds and animals scavenging their contents.

The existing 9 no. silver bins will be removed along with 2 no. dog bins which are closely situated to existing bins and replaced with 9 no. black, closed top bins.



- **Add additional seating and picnic benches in the central area of the park near the play area** – More seating in the central area of the park, near the play area, would provide useful resting spots for those using, or waiting on those using, the play area.

A picnic table would also offer the opportunity to eat in the park or do other activities.

- **Repair the damaged bank near the river edge in the south-east of the park** – a small section of banking, off the path adjacent to the river, has wooden supports to stabilise it close to the river edge. This section has deteriorated over time but also been damaged by fire so needs to be replaced to stop further erosion of the bank and future path erosion.



- **Repair damaged surfacing under bench near play area** – The “crazy” paving under the bench on the south-western edge of the play area needs to be repaired to fix the loose stones and mend the surface.



Not all of the ideas suggested by survey respondents are possible to implement within the existing budget. In addition, not all suggestions are the responsibility of Open Space or would be added/upgraded using future Open Space capital budgets. This includes the following:

- The Council does not have officers who could patrol the park such as wardens or attendants. Previous experience of using officers in parks and open spaces has had limited results as members of the public only change their behaviour when officers are present and it is impossible to provide officers in every park for extended periods of time. The focus for staff has to be on the education process aimed at changing offenders' behaviour.

If you see any anti-social behaviour such as fire starting, vandalism or you are threatened by other park users then you should report this to the Fire Service or Police.

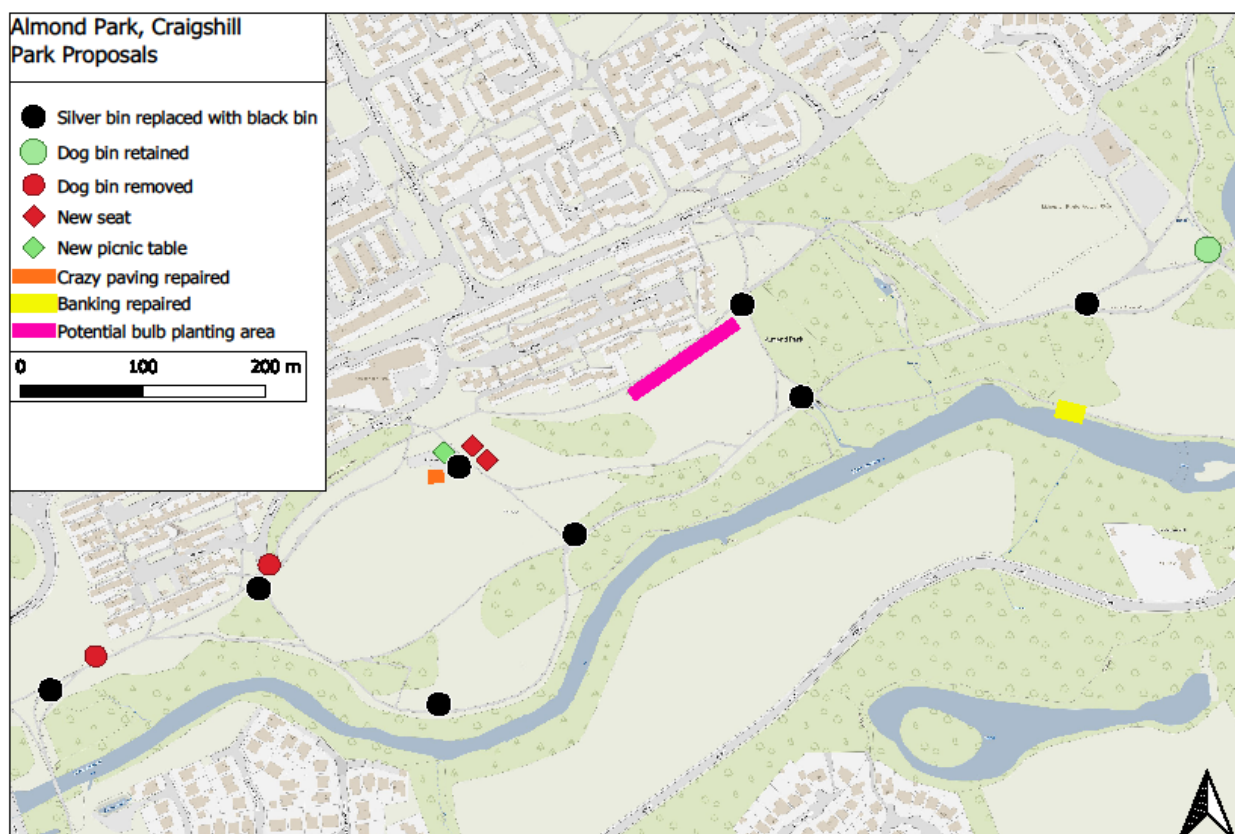
- If park users see dog fouling then there is a Council webpage that can be used to report it at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/32095/Report-a-Dog-Fouling-Issue>

- Dog exercise areas were previously considered by the Council and will not be introduced in parks in West Lothian.
- Bins are regularly emptied according to Service Standards. If you see excess litter or overflowing bins please use the Council's webpage to report these at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/32091/Report-Litter>
- Play equipment receives a separate budget to parks. The comments regarding the play park will be given to the relevant officer and if resources become available in the future then consideration will be given to community suggestions. There are no plans to invest in Almond Park Play Area within the next 5-year programme.
- Lighting is not generally fitted in parks although some, like Almond Park, have adopted paths or the National Cycle Route running through them and do have lighting installed. There are no plans to fit additional lighting in Almond Park.

Next Steps

Based on the feedback and recommendations in this report, a plan of proposals has been drawn up, as shown below.

Plan of proposed works



A tender package of the works will be prepared and quotes obtained for the proposed works.

It is hoped that all proposals can be implemented within the budget and, if so, they would then be delivered, ideally within 2022/23. If costs exceed the budget then a decision will be made by the Open Space Officer to which works are implemented to enhance the park and secure value for money.

The 50 people who opted to join the park email list will be kept updated about the park improvements. Anyone else who would like to join the list can request to do so by emailing Carol.Campbell@westlothian.gov.uk

This report will be posted on the parks' webpage at www.westlothian.gov.uk/parkinfo

Appendix 1 Park Survey Results

Almond Park, Craigshill - Views and Vision

1. What do you call the park?

Number of participants: 74

- Almond Park
- Almond Park
- Almond Park
- The park
- The almond
- Almond Park
- Craigshill park
- Almond Park
- Almond Park
- The almond
- almond park
- Almond Park
- The Almond
- Almond park
- Almond Park
- The Park
- Almond Park
- The country park
- The Almond
- Almond Park
- Almond Park
- The almond Park
- Almond Park
- The River
- Almond
- Almond park
- Almond Walk
- Almond Park
- Almond Park
- Almond Park
- The park in the parks
- Almond park
- Almond park
- River walk
- Almond Park
- Almond Park
- Almond Oark
- Almond park
- Almond Park
- Craigshill Almond Park
- Almond Park ("The Park")
- Almond park
- Almond Park
- Almond Park
- Almond Park
- The dog park

- Almond Park
- Doon the river
- The Almond
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- Almond park
- Almond Park Craigshill
- Craigshill almond park
- Almond Park
- Almond Park Craigshill
- Almond park
- Almond Park
- The park
- 'down the Almond'
- Almond park
- Almond park
- Almond Park
- Almondvale
- Almond Park or the NEDs Beer Garden
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- almond park

2. Date: (xx/xx/2022)

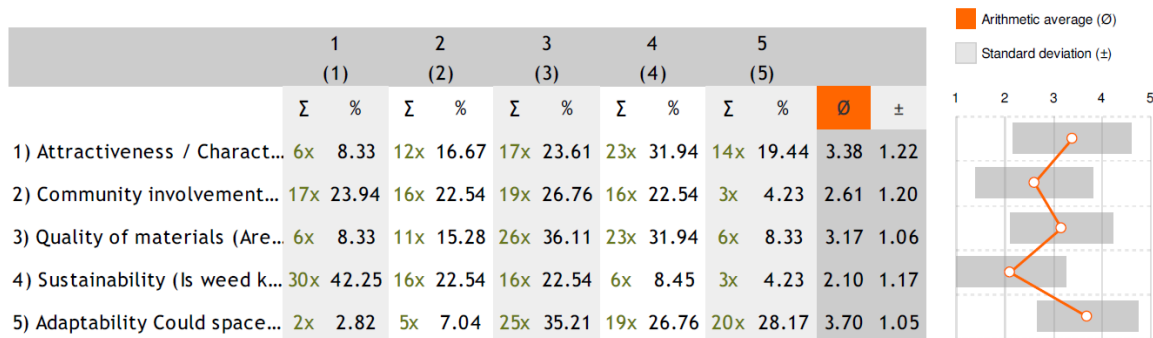
Number of participants: 72

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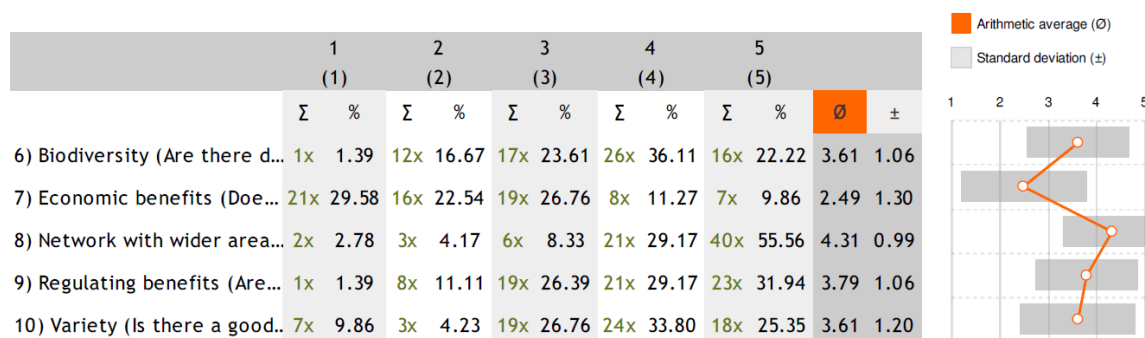
3. Quality

Please rate the park against the measures - with 1 being poor to 5 being good



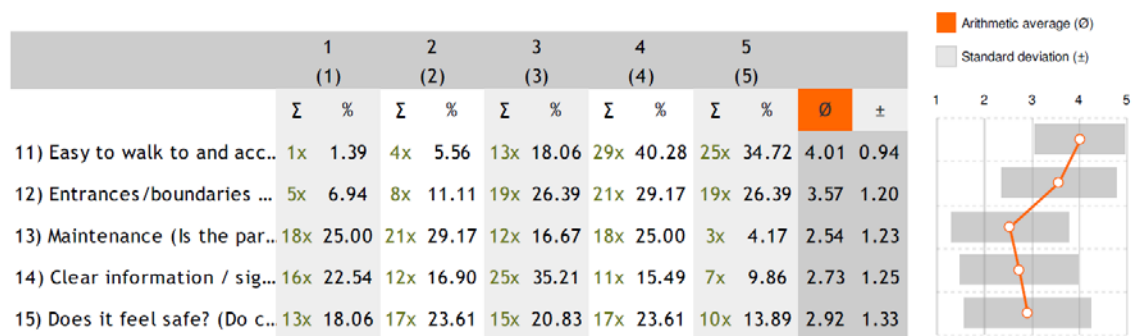
4. Multi-functionality

Please rate the park against the measures - with 1 being poor to 5 being good



5. Safe and welcoming

Please rate the park against the measures - with 1 being poor to 5 being good



6. Opportunities

1) What do you like best about this park?

Number of participants: 74

- The park is not over developed and it has retained a wild an unspoilt feel. It is a large, attractive open space.
- It has a variety of areas, good paths and seating
- It's a big open green space with good walks and a play park.
- The openness and parts with the long grass to encourage wildlife.
- It used to be beautiful used to walk around it a few times a day. But to dangerous now as grass is to high to see if anyone is lingering about. Grass to long to walk dogs as keep getting ticks.
- Location of the park, wildlife, playground
- The walks along the river

- The park offers a much needed green space for families living in flats in Craigshill. Until the recent cessation of grass cutting in certain areas, it was a very popular venue for families to visit to play games, picnic etc. For a period of 3 years no grass cutting took place in the area to the south of Pentland Park - the very area that was most popular for families to visit.
- Love the fact it is right on my doorstep more or less. Love that it runs adjacent to the River. Love the wildlife that frequent the area
- It is full of wildlife and well looked after and loved by locals
- Great Place for families to walk with children & dogs Wide variety of things too see & look at
- The peace and nature it provides. Lovely for walks in the most part.
- Community spirit and it's a great big park for running/walking and dog walking
- I love how relaxing it is listening to the birds & watching the wildlife
- I did like it when it was well maintained but, unfortunately, of late the low maintenance of some areas has limited my use of it.
- The closeness to my house and the size
- Great space for a walk, some parts can be a bit tricky
- Lovely shared facility available to all.
- I have three dogs and visit the park daily. It is very social as there are always other regular dog walkers around and the majority of people are friendly and welcoming to any new faces. The dog walking areas and paths are lovely and peaceful and residents in local area ensure they are kept clean and litter free.
- Nothing at the moment it's a neglected overgrown wasteland
- Can walk on the paths or the rural paths closer to the river. Areas within the trees to walk then larger open areas. Can view the river well at certain areas.
- I've grown up around the Almond Park it's well used and it's lovely to have it so close by for a nice relaxing walk or a day out with the kids or just to sit and enjoy the company and wildlife.
- It's a lovely place to walk round and it has the river as well which is a bonus, we walk our little dog everyday and we just stay across the road from the park which is great for us even in the winter.
- Large green space, great for walking and for the kids in Summer and in Winter
- The openness and freedom to wander in natural surroundings. Great place to take the children for exercise. Happy environment for people to walk, run, fish or just sit and watch the natural world go by.
- Nothing to dislike tbh
- The walks and the play park
- Good range of trees at different stages of maturity.
- I love the access to the river and watching all the wildlife that lives within the park, on both sides of the river. I also love the diversity within. The park.
- The well-tended mown areas. The dog walking availability.
- The grassy areas, swing park, wildlife.
- I like the increasing biodiversity since grass mowing was reduced, but I also appreciate the mowed pathways to encourage walking through those areas. I like the variety of habitats (meadow, woodland, riverside), the cycle path and Shale Trial route
- More bee friendly plants
- The walking area
- The open space and community spirit of the people who use it.
- I love the peaceful walks in the morning and lunch. So good for mental health
- The wildlife, and a good area to walk dogs.
- That it's on my doorstep
- Proximity from home for walking the dog.
- wide open spaces and lovely long walks.
- I like how close we are to it and that there are different routes depending on how much time you have.
I am in the park at least once a day (every day) for at least an hour. My wife likes to have an hour with the dogs in the park before and after work.
It's a great place for dogs(+ people) to socialise. Love seeing the wildlife, foxes, deer, squirrels etc I like the way the park looks in it's wild state.
- Lovely area for everyone, young and old. Lots of wildlife.
- Enjoy a all kind in the park with or without a dog
- It is a lovely green space close to my house. A good place to meet with other people when out walking dogs. Good park for dog walkers.
- Close to home yet feels far away

- I like the large grass fields for doing training and sports with my dog and his dog friends and the other dog walkers
- I love this park and use it when I can to walk the dog and exercise. In a very short time you can feel as if you are in the middle of the countryside and not a town. There's always someone to talk to if you want company too.
- Nice walk by the river
- I do not consider it a park more just a big field, I like that we have a green area in walking distance from anywhere in the Craigshill.
- The open space and woodland.
- Big walk area. Trees around park.
- Clear open space.
- East access, nice community of dog walkers
- Flying fox
- The trails.
- The trails good for running,
- Wildlife, trees, open spaces, viewing points on the river. Nice place for families to walk dogs & allow children to play at the parks.
- Being able to take my dog for long walks around lots of different areas and walkways and being plenty of grass space for playing ball games & having pick nicks
- Nature walk and kids play ground
- A good open space saw children flying a kite, involving with biodiversity officer great fun recognition plant, bugs & collecting yellow rattle seeds. Woodlands the variety of tree & the riverside walk kingfishers, dipper, mallard ducks, goosander, water hen, heron, otter. Woodpecker Buzzard, & bats, Young deer/ fawn squirrels wood mice, and this is on our doorstep it's important to look after our green space & the species that inhabit our area.
- The park is very enjoyable to walk the dog and is a lovely walk by the river the park the litter pickers do good job of picking up the litter
- The wildlife
- Some of the wall ways
- It is pretty and a good place to meet people
- It's close to my home. There are a few different walking routes to take to walk the dog. Plenty of bins to dispose of dog waste.
- Very good children's swings etc, very safe for children to play unsupervised
- Large open spaces and quieter peaceful areas.
There is wildlife but no flowers to attract bees as mentioned above. Some areas to sit at but they are in secluded areas.
- Varied. Access from multiple areas. Access to the river. Lots of trees, wild areas. Long grass
- Size, space for walking and meeting people, last of large useable green spaces in the area. Has a variety of walking routes and the river is an attractive feature.
- clean and safe
some wilder parts
cycle route
- The dog walking routes, as it's quiet and moderately protected from strong weather.
- Footpaths offering various routes
- The almond has such potential to be a lovely area
- Natural, Riverside, quiet, wildlife

7. 2) Is there anything you don't like?

Number of participants: 72

- The occasional vandalism that makes the picnic areas by the river look unsightly and dangerous (smashed glass bottles and burnt out tree trunks).
- Some of the grass areas have been left long but no wildflowers planted. A lot of the trees are now very tall/ bushy which do encroach on some paths and reduce light. Some burnt areas (searing areas) have been left. The river seems quite polluted in some parts and accumulation of debris in the river.
- Yes, scramblers ride in it at times, and the grass is not cut.
- Can be messy at times with the seagulls/birds looking for food
- Teenagers leaving the park messy after Fridays and Saturdays, lack of random police patrols during weekends
- It's not safe for deaf people on the paths during busy periods. Cannot hear cyclists. Designated lanes would be hugely beneficial.

- No car park
- Unkempt areas. The decisions on grass cutting need to be revisited to cater for the needs of the local community. While biodiversity is welcome it should not supersede the needs of the people who wish to partake of the benefits the park has to offer.
- Feel certain grass areas have been left uncut and the park looks a mess! There are areas the grass could be left uncut where not often used. The area beside the play park and keep fit equipment and flying fox should be cut back as this is the busiest area. There's a water logged area to the west of okay park that's useless due to it being muddy. let that area grow wild but plant lovely wild flowers. The long grass is plagued with ticks and litter!! Dogs are catching hives in the long grass. Some seating areas have overgrown grass around them blocking your view. The park isn't used if any events and that's a shame. It should be thriving with local events and it should be fitted with more litter bins or existing bins re positioned. I'm a regular volunteer litter park do know the area well.
- Some woodland not maintained
- Teenagers down drinking
 - Smashed glass & lots of litter (dog walkers are having to clean this on their own to prevent their dogs from being injured)
 - Grass is FAR too long causing numerous dogs who walk there to break out in allergies resulting in a vet bill for the owners.
- Many areas that were maintained have been left to be overgrown which wastes the look and also stops it being used to its fullest capacity.

Littering and vandalism can also sometimes be a concern, especially youths lighting up *camp fires* around the riverside.

- I hate the long grass it's not safe
- I don't like the fact that the park has been neglected over the past few years it used to be well kept & maintained but seriously went down hill. The fact the grass is so long makes me feel unsafe as there could be someone hiding in there & you couldn't see till it's too late. Also a lot of people not picking up their dog poo as the grass is too long it should be classed as a field
- The areas where the grass has been left uncut. As there are flats nearby where residents have no gardens this was used frequently for picnics and play but that has now been limited.
- Litter and overflowing bins
- People having parties and leaving there mess.
 - Some plants like hogweed can burn people and animals. Especially when they have been mowed.
- The opportunity for large groups to gather. This is intimidating for other park users.
 - Littering...unsightly and dangerous...deliberately broken bottles
 - Deliberate fire setting to dry grass and shrubs by youths.
 - The regular dangerous use of dirt bikes and motorbikes on pathways.
- I don't like all the overgrown areas and fields that the council have now stopped cutting back. They are not pretty wild flower areas, they are just covered in clumps of grass weeds and look messy. They are also full of dog poo as they are so overgrown that people are not trudging into them to pick up after their animals.
- Lack of maintenance, i.e tree thinning, overgrown footpaths, shrub beds overgrown, ugly areas of uncut grass interfacing with residential areas (claiming to be areas of biodiversity, but are really money saving measures by WLC) general neglect compared to more affluent areas of Livingston
- Off lead dogs way in front of owners, not close to them. A few busy body's who think they own the park, this has put a few people off using the space. The park does need maintained more but I like the unmanaged areas, boundaries for wildlife
- No
 - The cycle path is breaking up just down from the sheltered housing building and is quite dangerous for people in wheelchairs and people with underlying difficulties.
 - Grass not being cut
 - The occasions you see evidence of vandalism and fires been lit.
 - Not enough bins and kids vandalising
 - The long grass at certain parts, particularly the areas behind Selm Park and Pentland Park.
 - The main path gets flooded in wet weather (just opposite 70 /71 Pentland Park) when it freezes it's not uncommon to see people slip and fall there.
 - Currently the park is not being looked after by the council, with both maintenance and access. As someone that has disability aids the council's lack of maintenance on pathways and the dragging of cut grass across paths (when they do cut) means access becomes very difficult for me and a hazard. The speed bike go through the park and around blind bends means it's becoming more dangerous for pedestrians.
 - The wild grass, unkempt area outside my living window. It should be moved to another part of the park that is not or did not used to be used by many people.
- No
 - Large expanse of grass to the west. I feel there are too many unruly dogs in the park. At least one person (perhaps more) recklessly rides a motorbike round in the evenings.

- River should be cleaner
- No
- Vandals. Overflowing bins.
- Dog walkers not picking up poo
 - Teenagers setting fires
 - People not picking up litter
- They haven't cut the grass, only certain parts. Don't feel safe in the winter. Paths are not always accessible due to overgrown plants and trees. (Main path leading to The Centre)
- I wish the grass at pent park was still short, families use to picnic there and play ball games , it was beautiful to look at and pleasant to walk round , it just looks awful now.

Also the entrance to the park from Torridon walk/Beaully drive is neglected, overgrown weeds trees and shrubs left to get out of hand, not very appealing to new comers.
- Constant vandalism, remnants of fires and rubbish left particularly at weekends.

Irresponsible dog owners with uncontrollable off lead dogs.
- dog fouling,
- Huge gangs of young people drinking, taking drugs, setting fires, littering, vandalising features, being generally obnoxious and threatening. This has always been an annoyance issue in the Summer months but since Covid it has escalated beyond belief. Stopping the grass cutting has reduced the areas where dogs used to be able to run and play. and the consequent explosion of the tick population and increased risk of Lyme disease. i.e. in the 30 + years prior to the grass cutting being stopped my dogs picked up 2 ticks. Last Spring/Summer alone my dogs picked up 5 ticks and this year so far we've had 12??

There appears to also be an increase in the rat population that coincides with the reduction in grass cutting. Rats used to be seen mostly around the river and piped drains flowing to the river. Now they are often seen closer to the housing especially in Pentland and Selm park.

I may well be alone in this but I still miss the rabbits, it's been years since the last warren of rabbits in the park were exterminated but they've never returned. It used to be nice watching them watching us, and their return might even reduce the foxes having to venture so far through Craigshill in search of a meal.

Reckless bike riders using park as a racetrack off road motorbikes
- The bins.
- Overgrown grass. Areas that were at one time flowerbeds or shrubs have been allowed to be overtaken by weeds. The edges of paths have not been cut and weeds have grown over the paths. The entrances (particularly the entrance at Beaully Drive) have very nice stone monuments to welcome people to the park but the area around it is full of weeds. Shrubs were butchered in the Spring by the landscaping maintenance team but you cannot even see them now as weeds have covered the area. If it wasn't for local litter pickers the park would be covered in litter. During wet weather the bin collectors drive the vans across the grass which leaves deep ruts and muddy/slippery paths.
- The fact it is neglected. The grass is not cut properly, yet Murieston park and the almond side of Livingston village is perfectly maintained!!!! We pay for same service so why do we get less grass cutting??? Some seats are unusable due to over grown grass. Require picnic tables, metal best due to vandalism and something needs done about the youths vandalism and drinking at night as they wreck the park
- When the rugby club use the field when it's clearly in use so we dog walkers are forced to go away even though they have TWO pitches to themselves
 - No fenced off places for dogs
 - Water isn't clean enough for dogs to safely swim
- Only when there's been vandalism that really annoys me.
- Two small streams running into the river from the North side access could be improved to navigate over them such as a small bridge
- Poor lighting at night, the bench areas are hard and not comfortable. Too much weed spraying.
- How overgrown & unkept the bushes/grass are. We have benches overlooking a lovely river view but you can't actually see that view because the grass has grown so high.

It looks horrible, unattractive & unkept - polar opposite of how it looked during the first lockdown.
- Unuseful gym no one use that waste money.
- No parking meaning visitors use surrounding street to park. Often see dog walking vehicles parked near by.
- Not well maintained, grass and pathways are overgrown
- Not really
- Boring for kids
- Not enough bins, could be some picnic benches, more tidy grass, broken wee bridge near wee river bit, more benches on the paths

- Youths go there to drink & congregate on Friday & Saturdays to drink in large groups. They leave broken glass & loads of rubbish.
- No
- Too much empty grass area that could be filled with things for kids to do, 5 side football, basketball.
- We need to keep it open some areas grass cut & trimmed around seats, access on paths for wheelchairs prams & safe walking. We don't want motor homes we have found people parking in the cul de sac at the entrance to the park. Blocking access for fire brigade vehicles / rescue services & council facilities bin emptying.
Know house building this is Green Belt.
- People who drop litter and teenagers who have tried to set fire to the bushes
- Needs more bins
- The mess and vandalism within the Park is disgusting
- When things get vandalised and when groups of teens congregate and smash bottles
- When I first started using the park all the grass was regularly cut and well maintained. Allowing lots of people to use all grassy areas throughout. Over the years there are numerous areas that no longer get cut or maintained. The grass is unruly and overgrown.
- I do not feel safe walking alone through nearby the Swlm park/play park area. There is a long "tunnel" of trees and bushes which are vastly overgrown and meet at the top forming a dark tunnel. Even in the daylight this part of the park is dark. I walk that path as it's behind houses and not secluded when I'm only on my own but I'm scared I'm in this part particularly after a young woman was attacked/confronted there last year.
- Not enough bins. Bins not covered so emptied by gulls. No recycling options.
- Maintenance of the park is poor and bordering on neglect.
Lack of grass cutting under the guise of Biodiversity is only cost cutting in disguise. The lack of maintenance or poorly executed maintenance, including tree maintenance, keeping pathways clear and more generally, furniture repairs is often noticeable and needs to be better.
- lots of cut grass - would prefer more meadow / wilder areas
- No designated recycling points, or dog waste specific bins on the more off beaten tracks.
- Some of the footpaths have overgrown bushes beside them making it feel unsafe in the dark.
- The almond has went downhill so much since covid, before I had no issue walking around the park on my own, I wouldn't do this now as I feel so unsafe, the place is a state, all over grown grass and weeds the place is an eye sore
- Littering, vandalism, unsafe feeling

8. **3) List three really low-cost things that could be done to improve this park straight away:**

Number of participants: 73

- 1
 - Sowing wildflower seeds over large areas of the park
 - Sow more wildflowers
 - Hand weeding rather than spraying
 - More and bigger bins
 - Weed killer
 - Removal of metal seating area near the river where teenagers cause mayhem
 - Not sure of context of low cost
 - Cut the grass thus making it a safer space for walkers.
 - Plant wild flowers
 - Remove a lot of overgrown shrubs from woodland weeds are taken over
 - Cut the Grass
 - Grass cutting in ALL areas
 - Cut grass
 - Cut the grass
 - Grass cutting
 - More bins
 - Regular park attendants
 - Regular police patrols to move groups along.
 - More areas mowed by council.
 - Cut the Grass adjacent to residential areas
 - Plant some native wildflowers around.
 - Litter picking
 - Repair said path as above.
 - More flowers
 - More bins
 - Cut grass

- Plant some flowering bushes
- Plant wild flowers
- Cut the grass in the middle of the park and keep it kempt.
- Cutting of the grass
- More mowed pathways through the long grass
- Colour
- Water bottle stations
- Warden
- More bins
- Make all main paths accessible
- Cut grass again
- More litter bins
- more wild plants
- sow wildflower seed & cut some winding paths through the long grass to keep wild look but give back useable space
- New bins with covers to keep the seagulls and crows out. They litter the park taking rubbish out looking for food.
- Planting at wooden walk way
- Tidy the park entrances
- Cut the grass and maintain!!!
- Create a fenced off area in one of the large fields for a dog park so people can have their dogs off leash without fear
- Tidy fallen trees
- Steps at the small stream just down from selm Park needs repaired
- More wild flowers
- Cut back grass
- More flowers
- Parking - selm park area
- Cut the grass
- Football goals
- Grass cutting
- More bins
- Strengthen paths
- Kids goals around different areas of the edge of the grass that are nettle nets so when you score you don't have to run for the ball each time
- 5 side football pitch
- Repair path level with the underpass at Craigengar
- Plant wild flowers
- Trail course
- Grass cutting
- Football goals
- bins cleaned more often
- Cut the grass
- Cut back bushes and trees on the main lightened footpath.
- More bins
- Cut Grass short in all areas
- plant trees
- Outdoor sporting spaces
- Cutback overgrown shrubs near paths
- Being maintained
- tree planting

- 2
- Mounting nesting boxes for birds
 - Cut back some trees/bushes
 - Cut the grass
 - More seating areas
 - Grass cutting
 - Some sort of fun days for families and kids
 - Plant an abundance of wild flowers to improve the aesthetic appearance of the park.
 - Cut grass in popular areas
 - More seating and tables
 - Clean Up of Litter and Glass
 - Additional bins along river paths
 - Keep grass short
 - More Pooh bins
 - Picnic benches
 - More benches
 - More bins
 - Access limited to walkers and cyclists
 - Flower seed put on some of the 'wild' areas to improve the look of them.
 - Thin out areas of neglected woodland
 - Signage to explain the b lines
 - 2 or 3 more bins that seagulls and crows can't get into.
 - Better maintenance

- More wild flowers
- Recycling bins
- Plant some fruit trees/bushes
- Cut all grass verges & maintain paths
- General tidy up.
- N/A
- Signage to encourage better control of dogs
- Vandal free seating
- Shelter for dog walkers
- Patrol
- Cut the grass
- Weed control
- Dog poo bins
- better signs at the entrances
- make the area less hospitable for the yob element,
- More wild flowers in the long grass areas eg poppies etc for bees and other insects.
- Repair fences etc quickly
- Cut back the weeds on the path edges
- More seats and tables
- Getting rid of the dangerous giant hogweed weeds safely WITHOUT using chemicals that can harm dogs
- Repair path by riverside
- More litter bins with closed lids
- Football goals
- Cut back weeds
- Dogs loose area (for bigger dogs)
- Drainage, lots of water-logged areas in winter
- Maintain paths at all entrances
- Get rid of graffiti
- More bins
- Place for picnic
- More litter collections
- Family running track 60 metres & 100 metres lanes for family fun races on the grass
- Basketball posts
- Improve rough areas on some of the paths already highlighted
- Plant flower beds
- More METAL rubbish bins
- Get rid of graffiti
- grass swept up faster
- Plant more flowers
- Some more grass cutting near the "drives" area of grassland
- Area for all sports.
- Maintain tree lines to stop overgrowing into paths
- start small areas for vegetables/herbs like in the Meadows in Edinburgh
- A way to cross the river mid- way
- Empty bins more regularly
- More things to do for the kids
- signage

- 3
- Advertise space for outdoor boot camps/ yoga or pilates classes/
 - Clean up the river
 - Plant wildflower seeds
 - Some flower beds
 - Remove weeds from areas close to park benches which in some instances totally obliterate views.
 - More litter bins
 - More Bins
 - Kids & adults football goals near play park
 - CCTV
 - Someone checking on it
 - Toilet facilities.
 - Signs for walks
 - Better paths
 - Council presence to reduce antisocial behaviour
 - Bins emptied regularly in summer months as these are quite often overflowing.
 - Maintain areas of shrubbery especially to the rear of 37/36 Pentland park and restore a 1m minimum access to our boundaries so we can maintain our fences
 - More wildlife friendly planting areas mixed in with the larger open spaces.
 - More litter picking on the park
 - More trees
 - Put a speed limit on bikes cutting through the park
 - Plant some colourful flowers.
 - N/A

- Basic toilet facilities
- Grass cut
- Building the excellent community spirit shown by all who already use the park
- More poop bins located throughout the park
- More benches/tables
- warning about vandals and they will be fined
- perhaps (volunteer) park warden(s)?
- Signs up banning motor bikes from racing around the park.
- Tidy and clean the seating areas (benches are very dirty)
- Get community involved and have events for fun or fundraising
- Talking to the rugby club to use their own area
- Sew wildflower seeds
- More info signs regarding the wildlife
- Better lighting
- Emptying bins frequently
- Kids sandpit
- More seating in this area.
- River clean
- Net swing
- Picnic Benches
- More colourful flowers
- Metle benches for people to sit on for people fishing
- Community driven activities during weekend (community garden)
- Remove debris from pathes
- General upkeep
- Basketball hoop
- teenagers moved on
- Encourage wild swimming
- Wild flower seeds dispersed among the borders
- Clean up rivier almond. Deal with sewage overflow up river.
- Pathway maintenance
- leave more areas uncut- meadows
- Small piers to sit out on
- More flowers planted
- litter picking

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

10. Number of participants: 60

- The creation of an outdoor learning space / outdoor classroom for the local primary school children. This would be an ideal platform to teach little ones the importance of nature, wildlife and the environment.
- Clean the river/ remove debris and litter. Improve information and look at adding more activities. Perhaps improve or extend the ay area or make another natural play area at other end of the park. Introduce an enclosed freedom field for dogs. Make an be area specifically for ball games.
- Cut the grass and stop weed spraying.
- More for the bigger kids. Make the swingpark bigger or add another swingpark as the one just one is great but more geared for young kids.i.e basketball nets, better bbq/picnic areas.
- Replace the rose garden again have wild flowers patches. Water feature.
- Designated lanes for cyclists and walkers.
- More grass cutting in certain areas, though long grasses are beneficial for insects, birds and wildlife, increased risk of ticks.
- Already mentioned at 3) above.
- Regular litter picking.
- Regular grass cutting
- Plant wild flower
- Organise localevents
- Plant more wild flowers
- Extent the park for the children adding more things to do eg- roundabout , football goals and mini pitch.
- Dog drinking facility for warm weather
- more table and seating around the park area
- add some lighten down the dark areas for winter walks eg people who need to walk their dogs.
- Better use of large grassed areas for things like football to give families and groups of youths activities to occupy them. Maybe even a bmxtrack?

- Keep the grass short cctv would be ideal to feel safe
- Cutting the grass & having someone check it would help as the teenagers would be so keen to set fires throw their rubbish about & smash bottles this happens every weekend
- That the Council consult more with a) the users of the park and specifically b) with local residents.
- Update the play park and neaten it up
- A Regular visiting park attendant to stop anti social behaviour.
Somewhere for drinks and snacks may entice more visitors.

The Grass cut to be cut short at the Middle Field.

- Employ park rangers with the powers to deal with antisocial behaviour and promote safety and greater use by those people who would like to enjoy it without intimidation or observing constant vandalism and littering.
- Give the b lines help with more wildflowers to dampen down the grass. Try & highlight the b lines (Howden Park have wooden batons around the b lines) to help people understand it is a wild area but for a purpose. A lot of people think the b lines are being used as a disguise to just not manage the area for cost reasons. More picnic benches in the larger areas & not just at the sides of park.
- Nothing much tbh
- I stopped using the bit behind Selm Park as I no longer feel safe there. The long grass has made the area much less open and it feels a lot more secluded.
The bit at the back of Pentland Park was often used by families for games and picnics and it can no longer be used, which is a shame as the grassy bit beside the play park is often too waterlogged and boggy to play on.
Cutting the grass (at certain parts of the park, I understand the reasoning for keeping other bits long) would make the park feel safer and families would be able to enjoy it more.
- Clean up the river.
- Bikes having to reduce their speeds and clear signage/instructions for them. Hedges being cut so you can see and be seen clearly by bikes.
- Return it to the state it was in 15 years ago when it looked tidy and pretty and had more people visiting.
- Nothing
- would like to see more varied planting, a community garden and/or allotments in the large grass area to the west. Further increase in biodiversity. Edible plants, such as a community orchard/ berry bushes. I think fire pit areas should be built to discourage fires in the woodland areas. (Young) People want to sit round fires. It would be better if there were safer ways to do that. Better access to the river e.g. for kayaking or swimming, in the calmer stretch of river between the two weirs
- Clean the river to help the wildlife
- Wildflower meadows.
- I would have patrols for the teenagers
Maybe workshops on local foliage etc
- Cut the grass, make the main paths accessible to all. Improve lighting to allow us to feel safe.
- There use to be dog shows for the community , this could also be used for yard sales and other events , Craigshill have taken it upon themselves to brighten up their streets with plants and flowers, some people don't have access to a garden the park has now been taken from them , some benches are now not even accessible due to the weeds.
- More shrubs/ colourful plants. An enclosed planted area with benches.
- more paths to be tarred
- Drive out gangs of young people under the influence, there is going to be a fatality at some point. It would also reduce litter/damage/vandalism.
Much as I like the park "wild" "wild" needs maintenance too, especially so close to housing. It might be easier to just cut the grass and make it less wild??
Help officials understand there is a difference between a wild area and a waste ground.
- All three suggestions above.
- Cut all grass areas and plant some more shrubs/roses in the original flower beds. The path adjacent to the rugby club has a thick canopy of trees which during the autumn makes the path slippery and dangerous. This path was at one time swept regularly but hasn't been done for quite sometime. I would like to see the cleaning reinstated.
- Maintenance and grass cutting and seating....
- As I said a fenced off dog park in one of the two large fields means better safety for dogs and for the public.
Dogs are a huge part of the park and there's a huge community that's been made within all the dog walkers who use the park three times a day
- Planting of rhododendron bushes and wildflowers.
- Some kind of building with toilets and a small cafe/shop to sell sweets and ice cream
- Keeping on top of the grass/weeds growth. More bins around the park. Emptying bins more often. Making more of a path along the river edge.

- Kids play area bigger and more attractions. Kids cycling training area
Kids sand pit where kids can play a toys
- Garden area for older people.
- Instead of cutting the large areas constantly, let them skip a cut to allow other areas to be cut.
- A lot of the kids at the park like to use the trees as football goals but it ruins the grass, so i was wondering if you would be able to make some sort of metal football goals for them to use
- More stuff for kids and grass cut regularly have areas like howden park where wildlife and flowers can grow
- Benches, maybe dog play area, and better or refreshed playground
- There's plenty of open field areas which are lovely & could be used more effectively. I'd like to suggest it to be used as a enclosed dog park, like they have in a America. WL has none of these & it would be unique for the people of WL to have an enclosed safe area for dogs & dog walkers to meet to allow dogs to socialise mix with appropriate breeds.
- Improvements on the kids park, adding equipment, also specially including for toddlers, there's a big hill near the rugby that could be an amazing place to place big slides and climbing structures.
Clean river, it would be great to be able to take the kids and do some water sports.
- Manage main paths to make safe on a regular basis. Remove the trolleys etc from the river.
- Plant more flowers
- More dog friendly, less bikes
- Regular seasonal grass cutting
- I have been working on the concrete sculpture restoration project around Livingston and I think it would be wonderful to get a replica of one or several of these placed in the park and they could become part of a trail to see them. The 'mouse and cheese' in Deans or the Frog sculptures would be great. In fact there is a Mouse needing relocated I think from Loganlea.
- More varied child swings
- More litter bins
More anti vandal metal or stone seating
Safer less overgrown path at the top end of the park near the houses and play park. (There are overgrown and secluded areas if you want them but no safe secure path for people who are afraid of areas like this) Flowers/flowering trees
More use of natural materials like rocks and wooden paths to make it more of a countryside feel.
- Increase lighting
More colour through planting Tree
maintenance
Social events
A park cafe / pop up area
Upgrade the "Beach" at the river to something more attractive. Install fishing stands
Make the large grass area closest to Selm Park more usable being resolving the drainage issue Set up goals for kids not necessarily a pitch though.
Make it a space that people can walk and relax, all is see at the moment is neglect, a failed "Bee Line", ugly patches of long grass that make sight lines poor under the guise of it being a Meadow.
- Larger biodiversity, and community gardening program.
- Secure dog area to allow dogs off-lead. Outdoor gym equipment. Stop off road scramble bikes using park. Improve safety factor especially during winter/dark nights & mornings.
- 100 % Keeping the park maintained would attract the park to be used a lot more than now, people would be much more inclined to come and spend the day at almond park
- Play park at East end, marked routes and map

11. 5) Are there any local groups who could help put your ideas into action?

(Please name them e.g. 'Hillside Primary Parent Council')

Number of participants: 34

- I don't know of any local groups.
- Local schools/ Sparks
- Not sure.
- Riverside Primary school
- Council are saying they have spare funds use that.
- Not related to above but our DHL workplace has got a group of volunteers ready to help whenever and wherever needed
- No idea
- Local groups are already engaged but are thwarted in what they can accomplish by decisions arrived at by WLC officers with little or no knowledge of the requirements of the people of Craigshill or the ways in which the park can best be utilised.
- Craigshill Community Council
- Spark
- N/A
- Don't know.
- Not sure tbh
- SPARKS and localschools
- Almond Park Facebook page keeps park users upto date on things within the park. Lots of information given via Greenspace group & Craigshill Community Council. WEST Lothian Litter pickets, SSepa and River SImomd action Group
- Hobart street garden could have an area to grow veg and flowers to offer residents in need.
- Beatlie school campus, litter pick
- Craigshill Community Council
- No
- West Lothian council, Craigshill groups etc
- Almond park page
- Not sure
- Not sure of any.
- Litter picking groups to remove trolleys from river and bushes.
- I dont know
- Not that I know of
- Youth Action group at Craigshill
- Don't know
- Green space group
- Sorry ...No idea
- The arts Howden Park Centre.
- Sorry I've no idea maybe almond park Facebook group.
- Unknown
- K/N

Appendix 2

Explanation of *Rate the Place* categories

Quality
1) Attractiveness / Character (Is the park generally attractive? Does it have a consistent or unique character)?
2) Community involvement (Does the community help to make decisions about the park? Are there frequent community events? Is there evidence of community involvement)?
3) Quality of materials (Are features and facilities robust and long-lasting)?
4) Sustainability (Is weed killer used in maintenance? Is every bit of grass cut short? 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)?
Multi-functionality
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 with wider area (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)?
Safe and welcoming
11) Easy to walk to and accessible for all (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)?
14) Clear information / signage (Is it clear who looks after the park and how to contact them? Is there any information on wildlife/ history, etc)?
15) Does it feel safe? (Do children and older people regularly use the park? Can you see across the park? Are there areas that feel unsafe)?