



Lothian Talk

Scottish Wildlife Trust : Lothians Group Newsletter

Spring 2025

Dates of Spring events.

Thursday 20th March at 7.30pm.

The Cornerstone Centre*

Riverwoods – an update with Rosie McGuigan, Partnership Support Officer. Riverwoods is a partnership initiative to create thriving riverbank woods and healthy river systems across Scotland.

Saturday 29th March 1pm – 3.30pm

Musselburgh bird walk with ranger Kristian Purchase

A guided walk around the Musselburgh (old and new) lagoons and seawall. Children would need to be accompanied by an adult. A charge of £3 per person will be payable to East Lothian Council Bookings essential. Details of bookings via Eventbrite will be circulated nearer to the event.

Thursday 24th April 7.30-9pm

Annual General Meeting

The Cornerstone Centre*

The AGM will be followed by a **talk by Ben Averis. Surveying Local Biodiversity Sites in the Lothians.** Ben will give an update on the survey work across the Lothians. SWT Lothian volunteers are working on the East Lothian survey.

Saturday 10th May 10.30am

Woodhall Dean, East Lothian

A guided walk around this Scottish Wildlife Trust reserve, with reserve convenor Lesley Fairweather. Booking information will be circulated by email.

*In person events are held at The Cornerstone Centre, St Johns Church, Lothian Road/Princes Street Corner (EH2 4BJ). This is an accessible venue. Events are free but donations are welcome. Booking for specified events is by Eventbrite and information will be circulated and available online. **Full details of all events** are available online at

[Scottish Wildlife Trust Lothians \(swtlothians.org.uk\)](http://ScottishWildlifeTrustLothians(swtlothians.org.uk))

Any queries please contact editor@swtlothians.org.uk

Summer Events:

Summer events will include the following and more will be added by the next edition of Lothian Talk.

- June -Johnson Terrace Open day, 14.06.25 tbc
- 27th July, Red Moss of Balerno open day – part of the worldwide International Bog Day
- Bawsinch reserve visit in August/September tbc

Report from autumn/winter events

We continue to run both online and in person events. Currently our online events attract a lot more people (100s of people) than our in-person events that are attended by about 30-40 people. We value both types of events and will maintain both. Our recent events were expertly given, varied and interesting and included: Aberlady Nature Reserve Goose Walk; an update on the restoration of the Forth; Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels; a talk on Scotland's bats.

Committee Updates

Change of Chairperson for the Lothian groups committee. The Lothians group chairperson Nicholas Warren is standing down after 6 years of chair responsibility. We extend many thanks to Nick for his reliable steering of the group. We are very pleased he is continuing as a group member.

Interested in becoming the new Chairperson?

We are keen to hear from members who would be interested to discuss applying for the chairperson post. Please contact chair@swtlothians.org.uk

Website refresh and update. We are very pleased to welcome Colin Murray as the new webmaster and he is making great progress in modernising the website. More photographs are needed...

Please send in photos of Scottish Wildlife Trust Lothian sites and of nature-based interest.

Lothian Talk. I am the new editor of Lothian Talk. It is and will be a work in progress. I welcome ideas and feedback, especially on format and content.

Committee welcomes you to come along to meetings, to experience how things work and possibly consider standing for office bearer posts.

Planning Updates

Midlothian

Mine-water pollution of the River Esk continues with a significant input into the river near Dalkeith. The Coal Authority has plans to mitigate this with a new treatment unit, though plans seem to have stalled after planning permission was granted. The Coal Authority held public consultation meetings in Dalkeith to provide information and the opportunity to ask questions about the construction of a new mine water treatment scheme in the town. Funding has been allocated and work on the treatment plant will begin in the near future.

Battery Storage New forms of energy generation require new forms of storage. An application for a storage facility near Dalkeith is in process, for 200MW of storage, adjacent to an electricity substation. While there are no immediate habitat issues, the risk of serious battery fire is ever present and cause can long term contamination. Similar planning applications are in process in other areas.

West Lothian

The Biodiversity Action Plan for West Lothian 2025-2035 has been approved by the council and should be widely available by the time you read this. A public consultation on the excellent related Local Nature Network plan will also occur soon.

City of Edinburgh Council

A local community planning action group, aiming for a wildlife pond and wooded areas at Western Harbour ponds (Leith Docks) asked us to comment on a detailed planning application (24/05114/FUL). Although not a Local Biodiversity Site it is a site that contributes to the mandatory Local Nature Network and is of great importance to the community. Outline planning permission was granted in 2008. We have pointed out that the application for detailed permission now falls under the policies of the new CEC Local Development Plan 2030 and more importantly the new Scotland wide planning policies of the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). Planning permission would have to follow these policies. The council put a Tree Preservation Order on the site last year,

Planning Updates continued

presumably as a test case for the application of the new Biodiversity Emergency Protection of the NPF4 National Planning Policies.

East Lothian

Some SWT Lothian members have volunteered with the East Lothian Council Local Biodiversity Site monitoring survey – for the habitat surveys that started last year. One third is done with two thirds to go by October 2025! We encourage botanical minded members who may be interested in the specific task of checking pre-2016 botanical records (with detailed as possible grid reference) – with BSBI support – to contact Tim Duffy

By Dr Tim Duffy SWT Lothians Planning Secretary Full planning report is available

Planning contacts

East Lothian & CoEC & West Lothian

Tim Duffy timrduffy1@gmail.com

Midlothian Susan Manson

susanmanson12@btinternet.com

Report from Lothian Reserves

Julian Warman - Scottish Wildlife Trust Reserves Manager for the Lothian Reserves - reported to committee on the work achieved on 13 sites across the Lothians. Work included removal of invasive species such as Himalayan Balsam; bracken control to enable grass health; wall and fence repairs; path and walkway repairs; tree care and tree planting; grazing license for 2 of the Scottish Wildlife Trust Shetland bulls at Duddingston and grazier licences at 2 other locations; 6 stalker licenses approved for deer number management at Woodhall Dean; removal of hazardous ash impacted by Ash dieback – and two incidences of fly tipping.

Please refer to a fuller report which is available online on our refreshed and updated website.

Editor's note – Citizen Esk Project of the Forth Rivers Trust is a good point of reference for pollution of the Esk [Citizen Esk | Forth Rivers Trust](#)

Full versions of edited articles are available online at [Lothian Talk | Scottish Wildlife Trust Lothians \(swtlothians.org.uk\)](#)

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Planning Matters January 2025

West Lothian

The Biodiversity Action Plan for West Lothian 2025-2035 has been approved by the council and should be widely available by the time you read this. A public consultation on the excellent related Local Nature Network plan will also occur soon.

Midlothian

Minewater Treatment Facility

Minewater pollution of the River Esk continues with a significant amount of it pouring from a tunnel into the River South Esk at the so call Junkies Adit in Dalkeith. Since the closure of mines in Midlothian minewater has found its way into a series of underground tunnels with the bulk of it coming out at the Junkies Adit. The Coal Authority has plans to deal with what is a significant polluting input to the Esk and beyond. However plans seem to have stalled after planning permission was agreed.

The Coal Authority held some public consultation meetings in Dalkeith to in their words 'to provide residents with information and the opportunity to ask questions about the construction of a new mine water treatment scheme in the town'. Funding as always is the issue but it would appear that works on the treatment plant will begin in the near future. Applications to remove some trees has recently been granted.

Battery Storage

New forms of energy generation are requiring new forms of storage. An application for Battery Storage has been on going near to Dalkeith. This for 200MW of storage. This particular site is adjacent to an existing electricity substation. While there no immediate habitat issues the risk of fire and the battery going on fire is ever present. Once a fire starts it cannot be dealt with by traditional means so often they just burn and cause long term contamination to the site and its surroundings. More battery storage applications are appearing all over the country so it is an issue we should all become aware of."

Edinburgh

A local community planning action group for wildlife rich pond and wooded areas at Western Harbour ponds at the end of the western harbour of Leith Docks asked us to comment on an in-detail planning application (24/05114/FUL). Although not an LBS it is the sort of site that contributes to the now mandatory for councils Local Nature Network and is of course of great importance to the local community. We have pointed out to the council that as the application for detailed permission (outline permission given in 2008) now falls under the policies of the new CEC Local Development Plan 2030 and more importantly the new Scotland wide planning policies of the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), any such permission would have to follow those more modern policies – which would certainly preserve this site for biodiversity as there are other sites that can be appropriately development in the locality. The council itself put a TPO on the site last year so presumably they are already appreciating that this is a test case for the application of the new Biodiversity Emergency protecting NPF4 National Planning Policies.

East Lothian

Some of you have volunteered to help with the East Lothian Local Biodiversity Site monitoring survey – for the habitat surveys that started last year. One third done now two thirds to go by October 2025! Now I ask for any botanical minded members who may be interested in the specific task of checking pre-2016 botanical records (with detailed as possible grid reference) – with BSBI support – of certain priority plants of special importance to individual sites once they have been habitat surveyed. Please contact me below.

Dr Tim Duffy SWT Lothians Planning Secretary -
timrduffy1@gmail.com

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susanmanson12@btinternet.com
; **East Lothian and CEC & West Lothian temporarily:** Tim Duffy - timrduffy1@gmail.com;