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EAST LOTHIAN COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE

Annual Report 2016/17





47km coast managed



182
schools



117
other groups



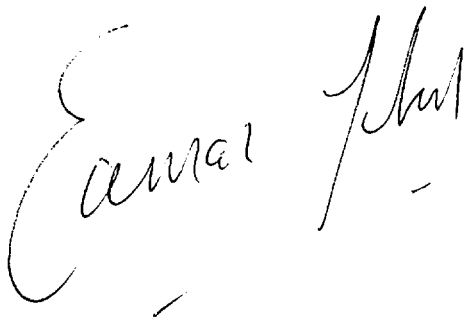
5,994
people at
Big Nature Festival



FOREWORD

"I am delighted to present Countryside Service's Annual Report for 2016 – 17.

This report captures and highlights both the range and depth of work completed by East Lothian Council's Countryside Service within the past financial year."

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eamon John', written in a cursive style.

Eamon John
Manager Sport, Countryside & Leisure

Feedback on how you find the report, how easy it is to follow and depth of information should be directed to; landscapeandcountryside@eastlothian.gov.uk



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1. SUMMARY



The Countryside Service exists to protect East Lothian's biodiversity and promote sustainable management, responsible use, access and enjoyment of the countryside.

The Service delivers a number of Statutory Duties, together with a number of national targets identified by the Single Outcome Agreements (SOA), in conjunction with 4 objectives of the East Lothian Council Plan.

The Service owns and/or manages 29 sites covering 2,400 hectares that have international, national and regional designations for their wildlife. There is an obligation to ensure these sites are maintained in a favourable condition.

The Service ensures that access is taken and managed responsibly. It is responsible for an extensive core path and rights of way network including the John Muir Way and National Cycle Paths. This is one of the most extensive local

authority networks of core paths providing active travel alternatives as well as health and recreation opportunities.

The Service raises awareness of the importance of biodiversity, implementing the East Lothian Biodiversity Action Plan, assessing Local Biodiversity Sites, conserving wild plants and animals, and promoting land management that benefits wildlife.

These functions are carried out by Countryside, Biodiversity and Outdoor Access Officers and the East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service (ELCRS).

This, 7th Countryside Report, provides a summary of a series of individual reports, available upon request (appendix 8.2), prepared to record the actions and events occurring within the defined remits of the Service during the April 1st 2016 to 31st March 2017 period.

2. STAFF

2.1 PERSONNEL

The Countryside Service comprised 11 countryside rangers, 2 countryside operatives and 5 office-based staff.

There were a couple of staff changes this year. Laura Douglas returned from maternity leave in August, to recoup her role as Dunbar (East area) countryside ranger, a position that had been covered temporarily by Brian Dawkins.

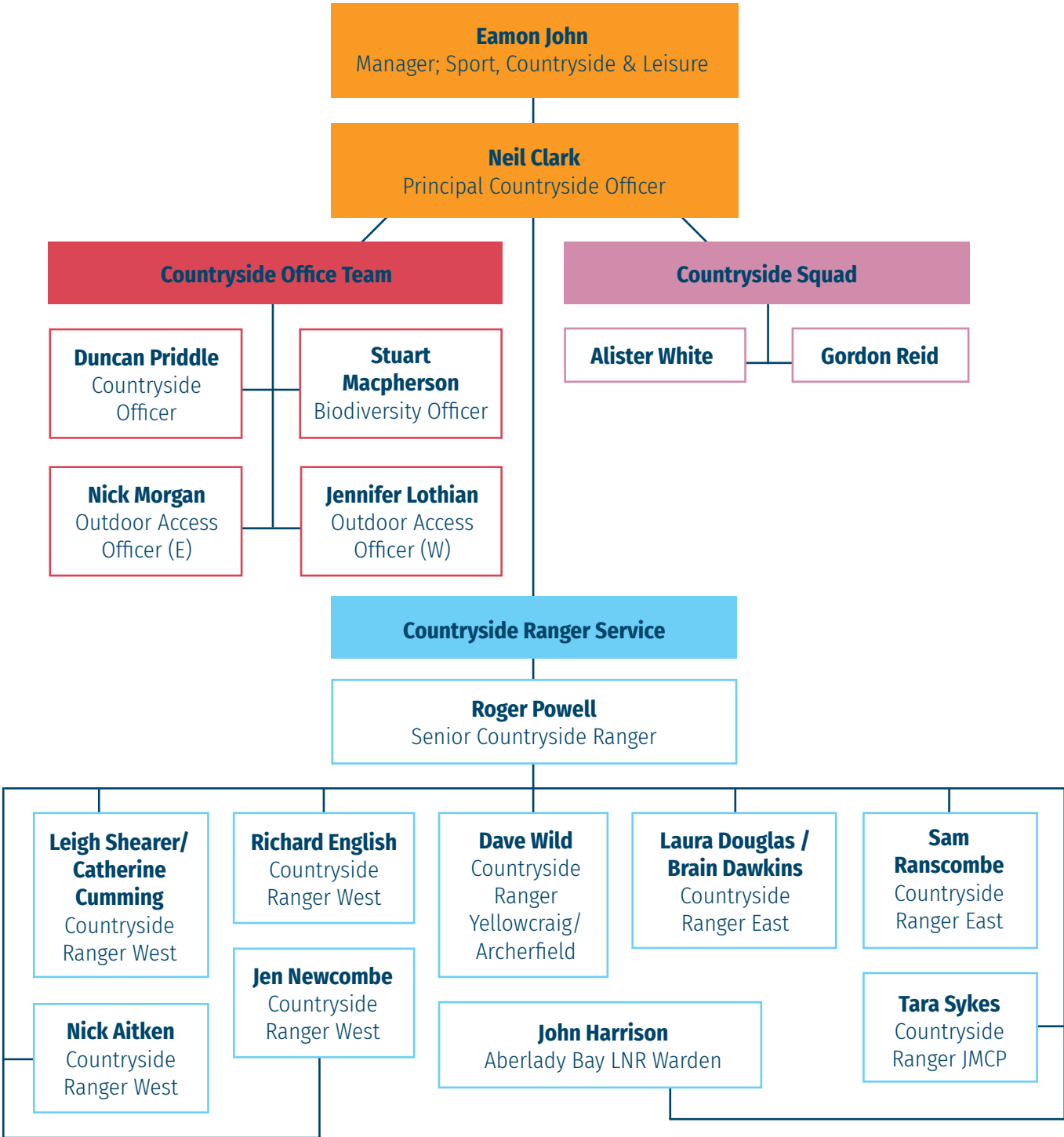
Similarly, in September, Leigh Shearer left on maternity leave, and her position was covered by the appointment of Catherine Cumming.

Lastly, Bobby Anderson, Senior Countryside Ranger (East area), retired, after completing 30 years with the Service. At the time of writing, the post is being left vacant whilst the Countryside Service undertakes a Service Review.

Richard English	Countryside Ranger	Brian Dawkins	Countryside Ranger
Leigh Shearer	Countryside Ranger (to September 2016)		(maternity cover to July 2016)
Catherine Cumming	Countryside Ranger (Jan 2017 – current)	Laura Douglas	Countryside Ranger (from August 2016)
Sam Ranscombe	Countryside Ranger	Jen Newcombe	Countryside Ranger
Nick Aitken	Countryside Ranger	John Harrison	Nature Reserve Warden
Tara Sykes	Countryside Ranger		
Dave Wild	Countryside Ranger	Roger Powell	Senior Countryside Ranger

Bobby Anderson	Senior Countryside Ranger (<i>retired August 2016</i>)	Stuart Macpherson	Biodiversity Officer
Alister White	Countryside Squad	Duncan Priddle	Countryside Officer
Gordon Reid	Countryside Squad	Neil Clark	Principal Countryside Officer
Nick Morgan	Outdoor Access Officer	Eamon John	Manager Sport, Countryside & Leisure
Jennifer Lothian	Outdoor Access Officer (0.6fte)		

2.2 STRUCTURE



3. WHERE WE OPERATE



The Countryside Service operates throughout East Lothian, with extensive focus given towards the sustainable management of the coastline. East Lothian Council owns and / or manages 80% of the county coastline – 75km. The Countryside Ranger Service provides day-to-day management, specifically at the sites identified in the map below (Map1).

In addition to the coast, the Countryside Service manages a number of inland sites, together with

348km of Core Paths. This work is undertaken by the Countryside Ranger Service in conjunction with the Outdoor Access Officers.

Lastly, there are other duties delivered by the team – through the work of Biodiversity / Access and Countryside Officers which involve working with private landowners, NGOs, and other stakeholders in the advancement of nature conservation and access management interests.



Principal Sites Managed by the Countryside Service.

4. WHY WE DO IT



In the delivery of on-site management of Countryside sites, the wider access network and biodiversity issues and the sharing of knowledge about the countryside; the Countryside Service is meeting and contributing towards a number of national, regional and local duties and objectives. These are a combination of;

- Statutory requirements - section 4.1
- Requirements of the Single Outcome Agreements and East Lothian Council Objectives – section 4.2

4.1 STATUTORY DUTIES FULFILLED BY THE COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE

The following Statutory duties are delivered by the work of the Countryside Service;

4.1.1 BIODIVERSITY

- **Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.**
“It is the duty of every public body and office-holder, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions”.
- **Wildlife and Natural Environment Scotland Act 2011.**
“...a public body must prepare and publish a biodiversity report ... on the actions taken by the body in pursuance of its duty.”
- **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.**

- **Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.**
- **EU Habitats Regulations 1994 and Habitats Directive;**
“...to protect rarer wildlife species;
...to further the conservation and enhancement of the natural feature specified.”

4.1.2 ACCESS

- **Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967**
“...to assert, protect and keep open any right of way”.
- **The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003**
“...to uphold access rights,
to publicise the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, prepare, adopt and review the Core Paths Plan, establish a Local Outdoor Access Forum.”

4.1.3 LAND MANAGEMENT

- **Dog fouling Act, 2003 (Scotland); Control of Dogs Act 2010, 2012 (Scotland).**
The Countryside Ranger Service actively promotes responsible dog ownership.
- **Environmental Protection Act (1990)**
Local Authorities have a duty to keep roads, highways and public spaces free from litter.

4.2 REQUIREMENTS OF THE SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENTS AND EAST LOTHIAN COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) represent the mechanism for delivery of Scottish Government aims for local communities. The over-arching priority to reduce inequalities across and within communities cuts across 10 individual outcomes. In turn, these 10 SOAs operate in tandem with the 4 objectives of East Lothian Council’s own plan;

- Growing our Economy
- Growing our Communities
- Growing the capacity of our Council
- Growing our People.



During 2016-17 the Countryside Service delivered on a number of these Council Objectives, together with the following SOAs:

SOA1 – East Lothian has a growing, sustainable economy.

SOA3 – Communities in East Lothian are able to adapt to climate change and reduced finite natural resources.

SOA4 – All of East Lothian’s young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

SOA5 – East Lothian’s children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed.

SOA6 – In East Lothian we live healthier, more active and independent lives.

SOA8 – East Lothian has high-quality natural environments.

SOA10 – We have stronger, more resilient, supportive, influential and inclusive communities.

5. WHAT WE DO

The operations of the Countryside Team are divided up between an office-based team, covering Outdoor Access, Biodiversity and over-arching Countryside Projects; together with a site-based, Countryside Ranger team.

5.1 THE WORK OF THE COUNTRYSIDE RANGER SERVICE CENTRES AROUND 4 OBJECTIVES:

- to welcome the local community and visitors to East Lothian’s countryside and coastal sites and enhance their enjoyment of the sites;
- to assist and advise on countryside access;
- to provide an experience and promote understanding of the countryside through environmental interpretation and education for the community of East Lothian and its visitors;
- to ensure the countryside and coastal sites owned or managed by East Lothian Council,

that have the potential for leisure, informal recreation or nature conservation are managed in a sustainable manner.

5.2 The Outdoor Access Officers fulfil the statutory requirements of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act (2003); manage the Core Path network, together with responding to other national policies guiding path and active travel development.

5.3 The Biodiversity Officer fulfils biodiversity statutory requirements and in addition responds to regional and local policies, including the East Lothian Local Development Plan and assesses Local Biodiversity Sites.

5.4 The Principal Countryside Officer directs work, provides management for the team and oversees land management and conservation of the Countryside Estate. The Countryside Officer assists this process with a specific emphasis upon delivery of project work which, by its very nature, varies annually.



6. WEATHER SUMMARY

Being an outdoor service, meteorological conditions play an important role in the delivery of duties. April conditions were colder and wetter than 30 year average (Met Office, 2016). A cool May was followed by a summer marked by changeable conditions, but overall average precipitation and temperatures. Relatively benign wind conditions were also a feature of much of the summer.

In keeping with the past few years, there were extensive periods when the prevailing winds were

on-shore NE breezes, bring their own specific management issues (see section 7.4.3).

September saw an improvement with increased temperatures and low rainfall. During autumn and winter temperatures remained above the long-term average and there were only occasional winter storms and lower than average precipitation. No snow-lying days were recorded at lower levels.

7. WHAT WE DID

This section highlights key elements delivered by the Unit. Where applicable, they are coded (e.g. SOA 6, 8) in accordance to their relationship to meeting with Single Outcome Agreements outlined in section 4.2.

7.1 OUTDOOR ACCESS

7.1.1 RESOLVING ACCESS ISSUES

Local Authorities are responsible for upholding access rights. During 2016/17 there were 13 separate access issues reported to the Council. These were investigated and either resolved, or currently still await resolution. The number of issues is slightly up from 2016 (11 incidents) but the trend is a general reduction in complaints since the Land Reform Act came into effect (2003). Several of the reported access issues were obstructions to routes, but there were also reports of irresponsible dog walking and irresponsible horse riding, causing conflicts with other access takers.

Outdoor Access Officers continued to facilitate quarterly meetings of the East Lothian Local Access Forum, the external advisory body on outdoor access, which consists of a balanced membership of access taker and land manager representative organisations as well as various statutory bodies.

7.1.2 PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE ACCESS.

The Outdoor Access Officers and members of East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service



continued to publicise the Scottish Outdoor Access Code at events, on displays, in presentations, and in publications including map leaflets and in ELC Countryside newsletter 'Mud in Your Eye'. (SOA 4/6/8).

Officers continued to monitor Planning Applications and ensure that adequate provision of paths and active travel routes were included in any new sizeable development. They sought to ensure that new developments did not impact on the existing path network, instead promoting connectivity via green spaces for the benefit of people and wildlife (SOA 6/8).

7.1.3 PATH MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

The Outdoor Access Officers worked with several agencies to maintain and enhance the path network. At 348km, the Core Path network is one of the denser networks managed by a Local Authority.

CASE STUDY 1

East Lothian 'On the Move' project.

Working with colleagues in the Sustainable Transport Officers' Group, the Outdoor Access Officers and Sustainable Travel Officer obtained funding from the Scottish Government's 'Smarter Choices, Smarter Places' (SCSP) fund (£91,000 in 2016/17), for improving active and sustainable travel in East Lothian. Entitled 'East Lothian on the Move', this project was undertaken in partnership with all six Area Partnerships, and involved Local Action Planning through focused community engagement. Following public consultations, Area Partnerships created and prioritised Action Plans to deliver active and sustainable travel improvements in their respective areas, which had been suggested by local people. These Area Action Plans will be incorporated into and form key components of the Active Travel Improvement Plan and Area Plans. (SOA 3/6/10).



CASE STUDY 2

Upgrade to Pencaitland Railway Path

Outdoor Access Officers were delighted to secure £275,000 Transport Scotland funding from Sustrans to upgrade an additional 4km of the Pencaitland Railway Path. This work complemented similar work that was funded by Sustrans Scotland during 2015-16. It is anticipated the enhanced path surface will encourage more people to get active and explore the countryside in that area. The upgrading work was supported by, and well received by the local community. (SOA 3/6/10).



Funding partner Sustrans joins ELC Countryside staff and local residents at the improved Pencaitland Railway Path



Pencaitland Railway Path, before and after upgrade

CASE STUDY 3

Glenkinchie Path

In partnership with Glenkinchie Distillery (Diageo), Fa'side Area Partnership and members of Pencaitland Community Council, the Outdoor Access Officers developed and constructed a new path connecting the Pencaitland Railway Path to Glenkinchie. The Distillery was keen to promote sustainable travel to the distillery, to enable and encourage visitors to travel there safely off-road by walking or cycling. Fa'side Area Partnership and Pencaitland Community Council were also keen to develop a connecting path between Pencaitland and Glenkinchie village to enhance walking and cycling opportunities for both local people and visitors to the area. The new 1km long path was constructed by ELC Amenity Services and funded by Fa'side Area Partnership and Diageo. (SOA 3/6/10).

Glenkinchie Path: funding partners Fa'side Area Partnership and Diageo join members of Pencaitland Community Council, Recharge youth group and ELC Countryside and Amenity Services staff



Other projects completed during 2016/17 by the Outdoor Access Officers included:

- Creation of a new path through woodland in Ormiston. The path was highlighted as a priority during the East Lothian 'On the Move' public consultation and was constructed by ELC Amenity Services (SOA 6/10);
- Improvements to Fa'side's Core Paths Network. Following their Paths Audit (undertaken by local community representatives and facilitated by East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service and 'Recharge' youth group from Tranent), additional 'Public Path' signs, bins and benches have been ordered and will soon be installed on the core paths, as requested by local people (SOA 4/6/10);
- Core Paths Audit for Musselburgh Area. An audit was undertaken in the Musselburgh area. The audit was a priority action of the Musselburgh Area Partnership's active travel sub-group, and was led by 'Recharge' youth group from Tranent with input from the Outdoor Access Officer, Countryside Rangers and Path Wardens (SOA 4/6/10);
- Dunbar Cliff – top trail. A number of infrastructure improvements were completed (SOA 6).

CASE STUDY 4

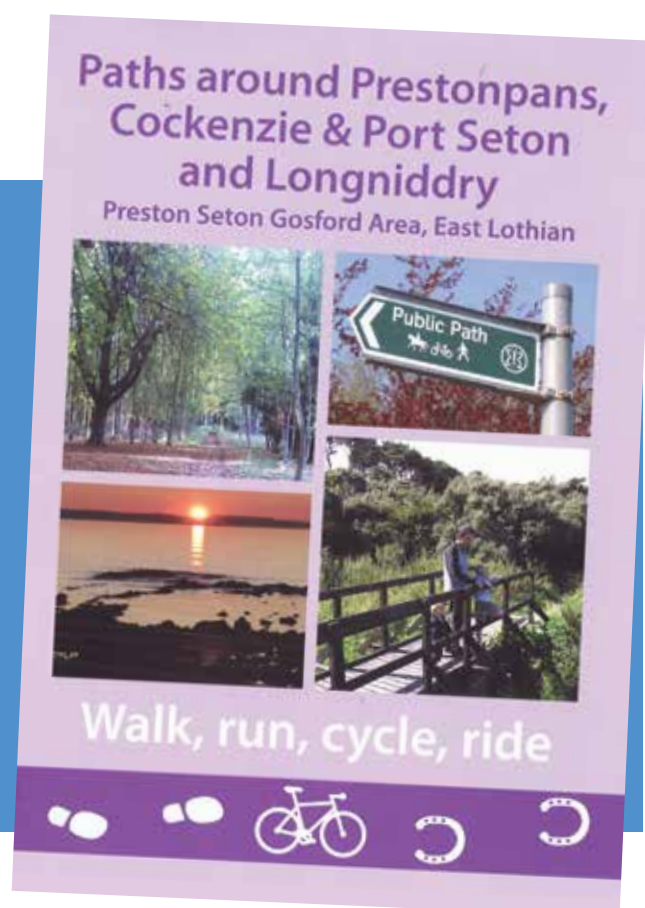
Paths leaflet ; Preston Seton Gosford

Outdoor Access Officers worked with Preston Seton Gosford Area Partnership's 'On the Move' active travel sub group to produce a leaflet showing paths in the locality. The leaflet promotes core paths in the area and encourages people of all abilities, both residents and visitors, to explore them. The leaflet also highlighted the route of the John Muir Way along with other places of interest, in the aim of encouraging wider tourism to the area. The leaflet was funded by the Scottish Government's 'Smarter Choices, Smarter Places' fund 2016/17 as part of the East Lothian 'On the Move' project. (SOA 1/3/6/10)

7.1.4 PATH PROMOTION

The Outdoor Access Officers were part of the working group that successfully applied for £90,000 from *Paths for All's* 'Smarter Choices, Smarter Places' grant scheme. 2016/17 funding delivered 3 projects, which included £30,000 for continuing the 'East Lothian On The Move' active and sustainable travel project, match funded by the Area Partnerships. This joint funding totalling £60,000 was spent by the 6 Area Partnerships (£10,000 each) on prioritised active and sustainable travel initiatives in their respective areas.

Outdoor Access Officers continued to attend local and regional fora to promote the paths network. Officers attended meetings of the Central Scotland Green Network, the Scottish Outdoor Access Network and the John Muir Way Partnership, which all contribute towards the sustainable development of paths initiatives (SOA 1/6). Similarly, Officers attended the ELC Active Travel Group, which exists to deliver this key element of the Council's local transport strategy (SOA 3/6).



7.2 BIODIVERSITY



7.2.1 LOCAL BIODIVERSITY SITES

East Lothian's Local Development Plan was drafted in 2016 and included the designation of Local Biodiversity Sites (LBS). LBS are areas of habitat that have particular biodiversity value. Where possible the designation forms a network for nature that stretches across the county.

Boundaries of LBS were identified using a variety of information sources, mainly based on wildlife maps produced previously. These included:

- The boundaries of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) provided by Scottish Natural Heritage and boundaries of Wildlife Sites previously identified by the Scottish Wildlife Trust;
- The location of semi-natural habitats in East Lothian, based on surveys carried out in the 1990s. They show areas of good habitat whether they occur in a designated site or not;
- The Ancient Woodland Inventory, produced by Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland, which identifies areas that have been woodland for at least 150 years;
- Notable species locations, provided by The Wildlife Information Centre. The location of rare, protected or otherwise significant species in East Lothian was used to emphasise the importance of areas of semi-natural habitat and to identify areas of significance that may not be reflected by their habitat type;



- Site visits were made where possible, to provide additional information.

A concern was the need to designate networks of habitats, rather than isolated wildlife locations. Habitats were therefore included in the designation where they helped to link Wildlife Sites or SSSIs, even if they were not of outstanding value in themselves.

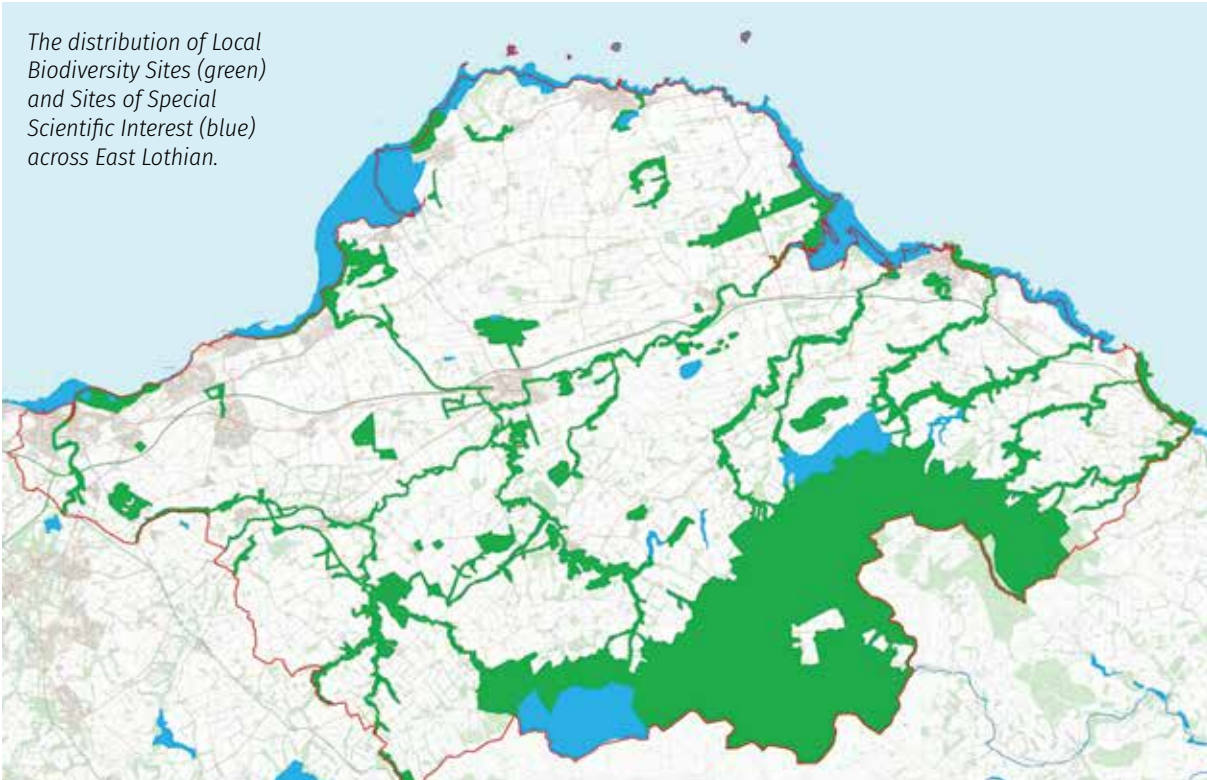
The designation, and associated policies in the Local Development Plan, recognised the importance of the network of LBS and SSSIs and offer a level of protection against inappropriate development. Although this is necessary, the designation itself does not yet result in any ecological enhancement.

7.2.2 BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT OF COUNTRYSIDE SITES

The Biodiversity Officer devised and conducted an assessment of the condition of 12 countryside sites. Elements of biodiversity that were assessed in each site included:

- the condition of different habitats and how they were managed,
- the number of butterfly species recorded in a year,

The distribution of Local Biodiversity Sites (green) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (blue) across East Lothian.



- populations of species that reflected a particular character of the site,
- the presence of invasive non-native species such as Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed,
- the condition of notified features, if the site is designated as an SSSI,
- the presence of semi-natural habitats in a 1,000m buffer around the site.

Additionally non-ecological considerations were also given weighting, for example the level of public use of a site.

A score was applied to the current condition of each factor and a score was applied to reflect the desired and achievable condition of each factor. Site quality was converted into a number that could be plotted on a graph. By identifying the condition of each factor on an annual basis it will be henceforth able to chart the condition of different sites. New projects or ecological management can be implemented where a site score is seen to decline.

With the resident population of East Lothian projected to grow by 30% in the next 25 years, countryside sites will undoubtedly get much busier. It is essential that these sites are managed as effectively as possible so that they remain in good condition and continue to provide a quality experience for the increased numbers of visitors that will result.

The Biodiversity Assessment provides the methodology to gauge the condition of various aspects of biodiversity and to summarise this in an easily understood way, together with recommending steps to improve site quality (where relevant). An annual assessment of each site will be undertaken to monitor the level to which the site has improved towards its target.

This assessment process was developed to provide a simple indicator for SOA 8, based on a sophisticated methodology.

Further information on both projects can be obtained by emailing the Biodiversity Officer at smacpherson@eastlothian.gov.uk.

7.3 EAST LoTHIAN COUNTRYSIDE RANGER SERVICE

7.3.1 WELCOMING VISITORS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The Countryside Ranger Service continued to provide day-to-day management for Scotland's busiest and most designated coast. Over the year, the 4 principal coastal car parks recorded 1,730,000 visits, with additional town beaches and smaller car park locations bringing the total figure of



coastal visits to an estimated 2.5 million. The beaches continued to attract people for a variety of reasons, from general recreation and enjoyment through to specific interest groups; for example Belhaven Bay (John Muir Country Park) is the most accessible and fastest growing surf destination in Scotland. *"The proportion of visitors to East Lothian who said that the area's beaches strongly influenced their decision to visit the area, 39%"* (Tourism by Numbers). Within these sites, the Countryside Ranger Service was responsible for the management of 8 Seaside Award beaches and 13 designated Bathing Waters.

Countryside Ranger presence on-site enabled information and interpretation to be given to visitors so that they could gain the best possible experience from their visit and to encourage them to return. *"The proportion of visitors who stated that their expectation was "better than expected" rose continuously over the years from 15% in 2003 to 23% in 2011 to 41% in 2015; this is an excellent trend line"* (Tourism by Numbers).

CASE STUDY 5

Big Nature Festival

In conjunction with RSPB Scotland, East Lothian Council's Countryside Service co-ordinated the (2nd) Big Nature Festival at Levenhall Links, Musselburgh. During the weekend of May 21st-22nd a series of exhibitors attended and a range of events were held. A total of 5,994 people attended the event, with on average each person spending £59.27.

The focus for the weekend was promoting nature conservation and the Countryside Service had a large exhibition marquee which was extremely popular and allowed the Team an excellent opportunity to reach a wide audience and inform them about natural history. Countryside Volunteers provided extensive support in setting up and running the exhibits.

Despite the popularity of the event, however, budgetary considerations proved prohibitive for the RSPB to hold the event for a 3rd year. It is anticipated that the Countryside Service instead will attempt to take the best elements from the Big Nature Festival, whilst reduce some of the overheads, to produce a smaller but more cost-effective and qualitative experience in 2018. (SOA1/8)



7.3.2 PROVIDING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

The Scottish Government has recognised the significant role that being active in the outdoors can have in improving physical and mental well being. The Countryside Ranger Service delivered a range of events and activities for young people designed to help them explore the natural world and to encourage them to spend more time in the outdoors.

The Junior Ranger Service continued to meet during the academic year on alternate Friday afternoons. This group age between 11-17 years and meet to undertake a variety of practical projects and nature conservation work. 2016-17 saw 14 Junior Rangers complete their John Muir Explorer Award, centred upon discovering and learning about the natural history of the River Tyne. (SOA 4/5)

Countryside Staff continued to provide a range of paper-based and e-based products to promote responsible access and to increase people's knowledge and understanding of the natural environment. Monthly articles were produced for the *East Lothian Courier*, the in-house countryside magazine *Mud in Your Eye* was produced 3 times during the year, with 2,000 copies on each occasion being distributed to local outlets. Two books – the *East Lothian Core Paths Plan* and *The Best of East Lothian's Wildlife*, continued to be marketed at selected retail outlets. The Countryside Rangers continued to provide regular posts to social media and experienced a steady growth in followers to over 1,500 on Face book. (SOA 1/10)



7.3.3 WILDLIFE MONITORING AND CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT

The Countryside Service is responsible for the management of 29 sites, together with a core path network which extends to 348km. Many of these sites are designated for their nature conservation importance. Countryside sites are managed closely to safeguard their natural history interests, together with promoting responsible enjoyment of the outdoors. Each site's



Group	No. of groups	No. of people taken	SOA
Schools	182 (200)	5,056 (4,366)	4/5/6
Other groups	96 (66)	1,546 (983)	4/6/8
Talks	21 (20)	856 (n/a)	4/6/8/10
Events (excluding Big Nature Festival)	8 (n/a)	472 (n/a)	4/8/10
Summer events programme	58 (34)	900 (529)	4/5/6

(last year's figures in brackets)

CASE STUDY 6

Knox Green Angels

The Green Angels is a nature-based nurture group for girls from Knox Academy. The girls were those highlighted by the school that would benefit from work to build self confidence and resilience, as well as increasing their friendship circles. The group was developed in partnership with the conservation charity, The Green Team and with the pupil support base in the high school.

The girls worked on conservation tasks such as beach cleans, hedge maintenance and meadow raking as well as learning bird identification and how to make a cup of tea in a storm kettle. With repeated sessions, the girls showed increased confidence in both their own selves as well as in their connection with their local environment.



The success of the project was monitored qualitatively by reflections from school staff, the Countryside Ranger and Green Team staff as well as quantitatively by the RSPB's Connection to Nature and self esteem questionnaires.

Angela Freeman, Pupil Support Worker at Knox Academy said of the sessions:

'The girls got so much from the project, their confidence has soared, self-esteem boosted and resilience developed as well as establishing good friendships along the way! The Ranger's passion and enthusiasm for our natural world was so infectious that you've made it 'cool' to get outdoors and explore - true 'girl power'!' (SOA4/5/6/8)



CASE STUDY 7

Aberlady Primary School Trail Cam Project

Pupils from Aberlady Primary School worked with the Ranger Service to study the wildlife in their school grounds and around the village using a trail camera; one of 20 on loan from Scottish Natural Heritage. They managed to get great footage of otters, badgers, foxes and many different kinds of birds, which they subsequently studied in class.

The children went out with the Ranger, looking for tracks and trails to plan where to locate the cameras. Following interviews with the Ranger and learning about video editing, they will use the footage they have gained to submit a 3-minute film into a competition with a chance to win a camera for the school.

The school really embraced this project and every child in the school was involved in some way. The school organised a screening of all the children's films for fellow pupils, teachers and parents. The Ranger Service has also learned a lot about the activities of the mostly nocturnal animals at the local nature reserve from the footage the children have recorded. (SOA 4/5/8)

CASE STUDY 8

Eider Monitoring Project

The Eider Monitoring Project started in 2007 in response to a Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) site condition monitoring report in August 2006 on the Firth of Forth. The report raised concerns about a possible decreasing eider breeding population along the stretch of coast between Longniddry and Dunbar.

The Leithies, a group of intertidal islands east of North Berwick, were identified as a successful site for breeding eider with numbers of 50 or more attempted nests recorded. As a result, SNH notified the North Berwick coastline as being a nationally important area for breeding eider.

The monitoring project was set up by East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service in 2007 to continue to monitor breeding success at the Leithies. The project also records number of visitors and recreational activities along the coastline, which may directly or indirectly disturb breeding eider populations, as well as nest predation. This project has benefited greatly from volunteer assistance. So far 18 volunteers have undergone training in order to monitor the breeding success of Eiders. A rota has been set up to ensure maximum coverage of dates and times and a report is produced by the Ranger Service each year. (SOA8/10)



management is co-ordinated via either the production of a site management plan, or, for smaller sites, a site management statement. Site management plans operate over a rolling 5 year cycle. In 2016-17, replacement management plans were produced for Aberlady Bay Local Nature Reserve, Archerfield & Yellowcraig and Longniddry Bents.(SOA8)

In the conduction of its duties, the Countryside Service works with 6 Advisory Groups, composed of NGO representatives, and local community interests. Additionally, the Countryside Service works each of the Area Partnerships, together with numerous sporting and recreational interests to safeguard and further their enjoyment of the coast and countryside, supporting local groups as and when they wish to take ownership of areas within their communities. (SOA 10)

A number of site-based and / or species-based surveys were conducted during the year, to enhance understanding of the natural history of these sites, and as directed in the assorted site management plans.

7.3.4 COUNTRYSIDE VOLUNTEERS

Countryside Volunteers continued to provide enormous help in the management of Countryside Sites. The table below captures both the proliferation of volunteer groups and the number of hours given by the groups. In addition there were unrecorded hours given by volunteers who in particular gave many hours to the clearance of litter along the coast and to the removal of ragwort from Traprain Law.

In addition to delivering practical conservation and survey work, countryside volunteers have assisted the operations of the Countryside Team in other ways. Individual volunteers regularly supply photographs for use in presentations / reports and one volunteer undertook to produce a monthly newsletter – *Best Boot Forward* – for fellow volunteers. This feature has grown from an initial one page document to in 2016-17, a multi-page magazine which was extremely popular amongst the volunteer group. The magazine also advertised training options for volunteers which were well attended throughout the year.





Best boot forward

Newsletter for East Lothian Council Conservation Volunteers
March 2017

Another month and other BBF. Although there have been a few recent blips in the weather, Spring does seem to be "just around the corner" and already birdsong volume is increasing in the hedgerows, flowers are adding a splash of colour here and there and small things are starting to buzz and flit in summer moments. Noisy!

Thanks to all who have contributed to this edition. Each month I anticipate a slimmer output, but seem to keep ending up with more than enough! I am coming to the end of my "Who's Who" colprits (saving the best ones until last of course). After this the limelight is going to shift to volunteers. If you fancy sharing a bit about yourself: why you volunteer, your wildlife and countryside inspirations etc, then let me know. Otherwise I'll just come begging, or worse still have to make up something about myself.

Upcoming ELC Conservation Volunteer tasks:

New faces always welcome! If you would like to join in with a group for the first time, please get in touch with the relevant ranger to confirm details.



- 1st March & 19th March Aberlady John; jharrison@eastlothian.gov.uk
- 9th March Yellowcraig Dave; dwhite@eastlothian.gov.uk
- 16th March Path Warden team Duncan; djriddle@eastlothian.gov.uk
- 1st April Dunbar Cix Tara/Laura; dcw@eastlothian.gov.uk
- 28th March North Berwick Sarah; sranscombe@eastlothian.gov.uk
- 28th March Levenhall Nick; naitken1@eastlothian.gov.uk

Upcoming events for volunteers

All welcome, but places will be allocated on a first come first served basis. If you would like to secure a place on all or any, please send me an email.

4th March: Beach Clean, North Berwick beach bosting pond 10:30 -12:30
Join North Berwick in Bloom, Surfers Against Sewage, ELCRS, Seabird Centre to turn the tide on litter. No need to book, just turn up! Free entry to seabird centre afterwards.

14th March: Leading guided walks, Haddington 10am-12noon

14th March: Bumblebee training, Haddington 2pm-4pm. All welcome but aimed at volunteers who are new to (or would like a refresher for) our soon-to-start bumblebee surveys.

21st March - Guided tour of Torness Power Station 10am - 12noon

27th April - Mindfulness in Nature, Butterdean Wood 1pm-3pm
Introduction to experiencing nature through meditation skills, bringing attention to breath and body during stillness and movement.

2nd May Amisfield and 5th May Gosford: Crack of Dawn Chorus walks at 5am.
An early morning stroll identifying birds from their song. Please indicate if you have a preference for Gosford or Amisfield (or if happy to go on either).

17th May Wildlife Recording Workshop with Natalie from TWIC. 10am - 3pm, location tbc
Get ready for a summer of wildlife recording! Morning indoor session learning the theory, followed by an afternoon outdoors putting it into practice.

CASE STUDY 9

Levenhall Family Rangers

In the autumn of 2015 a new volunteer group was established at Levenhall Links, Musselburgh. The purpose of the group was to encourage families to come out into their local woodland to carry out conservation tasks and informal environmental education activities whilst enjoying time together as a family in the fresh air.



Levenhall Family Rangers started out with just 2 families and their young children attending, but over time it has grown organically through word of mouth, and the monthly sessions have become very popular with local families. It has become a social event as well as a volunteering event with new friendships being forged between families who attend. A bonus being that the woods are now looking better than they ever have! This committed group of local families has taken "ownership" of the local woods and helped to implement a woodland management plan to ensure the continued health of both the woods and the volunteers. (SOA 4/8/10)

Group	Hours	Actual (a) or estimate (e) *comment
Aberlady volunteers	3,204	a
Path wardens	2,161	*recorded hours only, c. 20% do not report
Sheep checkers, Barns Ness	300	e
Levenhall Family Rangers	1,554	a
Dunbar Conservation Volunteers	350	e
North Berwick Law volunteers (inc. pony checkers)	432	a
Biological surveyors (bees, plants)	394	a
Traprain pony checkers	400	e *excludes extensive additional hours contributed by one volunteer
Yellowcraig volunteers	458	a
TOTAL	9,253 hours	

CASE STUDY 10

Evolution of the Countryside Volunteers

The Volunteer Path Wardens represent one of the longest established groups of volunteers, and had previously applied for, and secured, charitable status. This enabled the Path Wardens to be able to apply for grant funding that was not available to unconstituted groups, together with giving the Path Wardens first-hand knowledge of the mechanics involved in reporting to the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). These benefits were seen as worthwhile to share with the other countryside volunteer groups operating with the Countryside Team.

During 2016-17, these volunteer groups came together and an agreement was undertaken to morph the Volunteer Path Wardens charitable group, into a larger, all encompassing charitable group - East Lothian Countryside Volunteers (ELCV). The benefits of having one organisation, under which individual sub-groups could continue to operate, were seen as significant, with economies of scale, the sharing of expertise / resources and the potential to apply for grant funding for wide-reaching conservation projects being identified as key elements. It quickly became clear as well that volunteers were keen to have an increased role in the conservation of their local countryside areas.

To progress this transfer of charitable status, the Path Wardens agreed at their 2017 Trustees meeting to amend their constitution with the plan to seek the wider charitable status for all volunteer groups during 2017-18. Simultaneously, an interim steering group for the ELCV was established, with representation from all the volunteer groups, to drive this application forward. (SOA 8/10)



7.4 OTHER COUNTRYSIDE PROJECT WORK

7.4.1 CONSERVATION GRAZING SCHEME

2016-17 represented the 4th year of the conservation grazing scheme at Barns Ness and Traprain Law, and the 3rd season at North Berwick Law. Two of the sites received annual grazing by Exmoor Ponies, whilst the third site, Barns Ness, received its scheduled grazing by sheep during the winter. A fourth site within Aberlady Bay, also received winter grazing; this scheme having operated now for many years. At all localities, regular welfare checks of the animals were undertaken by countryside volunteers together with Countryside Rangers. Annual monitoring of bumblebee populations together with botanical surveys were also undertaken at these sites by volunteers, to indicate changes to the botanical structure and diversity at each location. It is proposed that after the 5th year of surveying, an assessment will be undertaken as to the relative benefits of the grazing scheme at each location, with modifications to this scheme being implemented as and where necessary.



Members of the public were largely supportive of the presence of grazing animals on-site, though a few complaints were received as to the impact of the ponies upon path surfaces. Conversely it was a good year for the animals themselves, with no reported incidents of worrying by dogs. (SOA 8)

7.4.2 BUILT INTERPRETATION – YELLOWCRAIG/ ABERLADY

As part of a rolling programme to maintain and improve site infrastructure, new signage was designed and installed at two locations. Aberlady Bay LNR received new information boards together with more robust information advising dog walkers not to use the Local Nature Reserve. Secondly, at Yellowcraig, the concrete interpretation block was removed and replaced with a more sympathetic alternative. (SOA 8)

7.4.3 SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Countryside staff and volunteers, in conjunction with other Council departments, continued to control Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) where they occurred on Council-managed land.



Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) and Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) were treated with herbicide. A third plant, Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) was not treated

with herbicide, as given the extent of spread of the plant, it was impossible to deliver a comprehensive control programme. Instead specific populations were identified and cleared by hand.

Prolonged NE Breezes have become a more regular feature in East Lothian in recent years. This is demonstrated by deposits of kelp at a few locations. Dunbar East Beach for a number of factors captures far more kelp than any other location, with the seaweed ending up dumped above the high-water mark where it then starts to decay. The smell of decaying seaweed is unpleasant, though of much greater concern is that the decaying seaweed provides an ideal habitat for kelp flies, which breed in the seaweed before erupting in their millions after which they quickly end up infesting adjacent properties. During 2016-17 3 accumulations of seaweed occurred, and the Countryside Service co-ordinated the removal of the material. As extensive debris was mixed in amongst the material, it was only possible to dispose of the waste at the local landfill site, at a cost of £25,000. Such a cost is not sustainable in the longer-term and several suggestions have been proposed as to the management of kelp infestations, though as yet, given the challenges of access, topography and demand for the product, no solution has been reached. (SOA 3/10)

7.4.4 INCOME GENERATION

Towards the end of 2016 and running into 2017, the Countryside Service has been preparing a Service Review. At the time of this report's publication, specific details of the review were still to be finalised and concluded, though one element that has emerged however is the opportunity for income generation, specifically through wildlife tourism. The potential for income generation across local government is an area being consistently explored. It is seen that ELC Countryside is well positioned to increase its wildlife tourism offer.

This sector is a small, but expanding area of tourism in Scotland. 1 million wildlife trips (as the primary purpose) were recorded in Scotland and in 2011 and the opportunity to see wildlife was identified by 7% of respondents (2015) as a decisive factor in influencing where people chose to visit. (SOA1)

7.5 EXPENDITURE

Expenditure	2016-17 (2015-16 figures if known)	Comments
Employee costs	£599,128.80 (£615,915.00)	
Support services	£40,370.48 (£40,176.14)	
Operating costs	£159,474.31 (£125,807.00)	
TOTAL	£799,489.12 (£781,898.14)	
Income		
External funding for Yellowcraig / Archerfield countryside ranger post	£51,309 (£49,361)	Caledonian Heritable Ltd; Archerfield Estate Ltd
Support funding Levenhall Links	£10,000 (£10,000)	Scottish Power
SRDP	£9,856 (£9,856)	Agri-environment grant scheme
Volunteering matters	£1,500 (£750)	Small grants scheme
Sundry	£318 (£8,155.88)	
TOTAL	£72,983.75 (£78,122.88)	
NET EXPENDITURE	£726,505.37 (£703,775.26)	

8. APPENDICES

8.1 THE COUNTRYSIDE ESTATE

Coastal	Hectares	Owned (o) or managed (m)	Conservation Designation(s)
1. Fisherrow Links / foreshore	176.6	o	SSSI/SPA/Ramsar
2. Levenhall Links, Musselburgh	101.2	o	SSSI/SPA/Ramsar
3. Prestongrange (inc foreshore)	53.7	o	SSSI/SPA/Ramsar
4. Cockenzie & Preston Links	23.1	o	SSSI/SPA/Ramsar
5. Port Seton foreshore	29.2	o	SSSI/SPA/Ramsar
6. Longniddry / Gosford	30.4	m	SSSI/SPA/Ramsar
7. Gullane Bents	60.7	o/m	SSSI/SPA/Ramsar
7. Yellowcraig	28.3	o	SSSI/SPA/Ramsar
8. North Berwick West Bay/Broadsands	151.9	o	SSSI/SPA/Ramsar
9. North Berwick East Beach	82.1	o/m	SSSI/SPA/Ramsar
10. John Muir Country Park	713.5	m	SSSI/SPA/Ramsar
11. Dunbar East Beach	22.7	o	
12. Whitesands & Barns Ness	161.6	o	SSSI/GS
13. Skateraw	42.5	m	SSSI
14. Thorntonloch	10.0	o	
15. Aberlady Bay Local Nature Reserve	582	m	
Inland			
15. Pencaitland railway walk	21.6	o/m	
16. River Esk walkway	12	o/m	
17. Whitecraig railway walk	2.6	o	
18. Haddington-Longniddry railway walk	14.2	o	
19. Haddington Riverside walkway	3.1	o	
20. Byres Hill (Hopetoun Monument)	7.9	o	LB
21. North Berwick Law	36.3	o	SSSI/SAM/GS
22. Traprain Law	42.1	o	SSSI/SAM/GS
23. Butterdean Wood	12.8	o	
24. Woodhall, Pencaitland	24	o	
25. Pencraig Wood	3.6	o	
26. Longniddry Dean	7.2	o	
27. The Glen, North Berwick	2.3	o	
28. Wallyford Bing	12.1	o	
29. Whitecastle Hill fort	1	o	
TOTAL	2,472.3		

SSSI – Site of special scientific interest
 SPA – Special protection area
 SAM – Scheduled ancient monument

LB – Listed building
 GS – Geodiversity site



8.2 ADVISORY GROUPS

Members of the Countryside Service contribute towards the workings of 6 Advisory Groups. Each Group is site-specific but share similar terms of remit. Groups will comment and advise on management plans, approve the annual work programmes, together with providing recommendations to East Lothian Council.

Annual Reports are produced for each Advisory Group, detailing the work completed by East Lothian Council's Countryside Service at each



location. For a full copy of any annual report please contact landscapeandcountryside@eastlothian.gov.uk

8.2.1 ABERLADY BAY LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

Aberlady Bay was designated as Britain's first Local Nature Reserve and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1952, due to its botanical, ornithological and geological interest. In 2001, the Reserve became part of the Firth of Forth SSSI and much of the site also lies within the Firth of Forth Special Protection Area and Ramsar Site.

The aim of the Reserve is ***“to conserve the geomorphological and physiographical features, the habitats, flora and fauna found within the Reserve and the resultant landscape character”***.

The Reserve continues to be managed by East Lothian Council, with the support of an Advisory Group that represents the landowners, conservation bodies and the local community. A Management Agreement, being redrafted, with the landowners formalises



and defines the management framework. The Warden costs and management projects on the Reserve are funded by East Lothian Council.

The Reserve covers an area of 582 hectares and represents the most extensive complex of sand dune, salt marsh and mudflats in South-East Scotland. It also contains a wide range of associated habitats, particularly calcareous grassland and freshwater marsh; and supports a large variety of plant species with many Scottish and local rarities.

The main ornithological interest of the Reserve relates to the site's national or international significance as a feeding and roosting area for wintering wildfowl and waders, and its regional importance for several breeding species.

The main geological interest is a sequence of Carboniferous Limestones and Teschenite sills as well as the extensive naturally developing sand dune system.

A number of **Management Objectives** (as set out in the Aberlady Bay Local Nature Reserve Prescriptive Management Plan 2012-2016) define attainable goals and set out the annual work programme for the site.

2016-17 saw the production of the 37th Annual Report for the site, the summary findings being;

Reserve Management

- Sheep grazing (October-March) over a 20-hectare plot continued for a 10th year;
- Sea buckthorn clearance continued. No removal by heavy machinery or any herbicide spraying was carried out;
- 2 days were spent clearing the last remaining reedmace in August;
- Non-native invasive plants - giant hogweed and two-spined acacia – continued to be controlled;
- 300m path resurfacing work was carried out.

Wildlife: birds;

- Ducks / geese;
 - Wigeon were much higher than the previous year, with teal at an above average peak and mallard slightly below,
 - Counts of both common and velvet scoters were well above average,
 - Internationally significant numbers of pink-footed geese peaked at 16,406 on 18th September 2015.
- Waders;
 - Sanderling, was recorded at its highest peak level since records began for a second year running and continues to occur in nationally significant numbers,
 - For a second year, golden plover peaked at around 2,500 birds in the autumn while lapwing numbered over 1,500,

- It was the lowest peak count ever on record for ringed plover,
- It was another poor year for breeding wading birds at the Reserve with 3 pairs of lapwing raising a brood (of 3) and 7 pairs of redshanks rearing only one brood (of 2).

- The five-year mean figures for six species of bird continued to be nationally significant, these were: red-necked grebe; Slavonian grebe; eider; velvet scoter; sanderling and bar-tailed godwit.

Wildlife; other

- Vegetation monitoring was carried out in the grazing area and, by volunteers, over a larger area proposed for grazing expansion;
- Monitoring was carried out of greater bladderwort, hairy violet and pyramidal orchid;
- Now in its 9th year, the butterfly transect recorded the second lowest total since it began, of 947 butterflies.

People

- Volunteers carried out 3,000 hours of work on a range of tasks including sea buckthorn removal, beach cleans, sheep lookering, path work and biological monitoring;

- For a 5th year running, no Assistant Warden was employed in 2015 which had an impact on work at the site;
- The Reserve Advisory Group met twice during the year in March and September (which included a tour of the site).

8.2.2 JOHN MUIR COUNTRY PARK

2016-17 saw the production of the 39th report for John Muir Country Park. Originally designated in 1976, the Park extends to 713.5 hectares and comprises of a variety of coastal and estuarine habitats. The majority of the Park is covered by SSSI designations. These help protect the biological, geological and geomorphological features found within this environment. Two further, more recent, nature conservation designations have been put in place. The site is now incorporated into the Firth of Forth Special Protection Area and has also been notified as a Ramsar Site (Ramsar Convention on Wetland of International Importance as a Waterfowl Habitat, 1982).

The diversity of habitats within the Country Park is one reason why this area has proven attractive for public recreation. There has always been a realisation that the interface between the visitor and the natural environment needs to be managed. Since its inception, the Country Park has had a Management Plan, which continues to evolve by taking into account the ever-changing opportunities and pressures.



The overall management aim is **“to manage public recreation and conserve the geomorphology, geology and landscape, and sustain the biodiversity of the Country Park.”**

A summary of activity concluded that 2016-17;

- Monitoring of flora and fauna continued this year in line with the management plan;
- Control of invasive species was undertaken to ensure visitor safety and conserve natural habitats;
- Further changes were made to the car parks to accommodate car park charging infrastructure;
- Site maintenance work was completed as required;
- Work began to improve sections of the cliff-top trail ;
- Monitoring of user groups and their interactions was regularly undertaken to gauge use of the site;
- Dunbar Conservation Volunteers continued to undertake tasks.

8.2.3 TRAPRAIN LAW AND NORTH BERWICK LAW – JOINT LAWS’

The Joint Laws’ Advisory Group covers two sites, Traprain Law and North Berwick Law.

Both sites are striking upstanding features within the lowland East Lothian landscape. Both are designated LGS’ (Local Geodiversity Sites) for their geological and geomorphological importance, Traprain representing a superb example of a laccolith, whilst North Berwick Law is a volcanic plug. Both features were heavily sculpted during the last glacial period resulting in their current shapes today.

Traprain and North Berwick Laws are notified SSSIs due to their geology and botany. In addition, the notification Traprain Law includes reference to the regional significance of the sites for the distribution of lichens found across the site.

Both sites contain archaeological evidence indicating extensive periods of human occupation. The large hill fort on Traprain Law is one of the best known prehistoric monuments in Scotland and, as such, has been notified as



a Scheduled Ancient Monument by Historic Scotland under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. North Berwick Law is also a Scheduled Ancient Monument although little fieldwork, has, as yet, been undertaken.

North Berwick Law is subject to a Conservation Agreement with the National Trust for Scotland.

Public access to both hills for informal recreation and to enjoy the panoramic views from their summits has long been a tradition with locals and visitors alike. Similarly, rock climbing and abseiling have regularly taken place on their crags. The use of management plans and reporting procedures have been established so that the interface between the visitor and the natural environment is allowed to evolve by taking into account the ever-changing pressures being exerted on this landscape.

The shared management aim for both sites is **'to conserve and enhance the natural and human heritage'** this being delivered through the implementation of site management plans.

Summary for the 2016-17;

Traprain Law

- 13 ponies continued to graze the site;
- Volunteers undertook grassland and bumblebee surveys for 4th successive year;
- 2 peregrine eggs were laid but only one chick fledged ;
- 2 raven chicks fledged;
- Badgers continued to be active;
- Ragwort removal by Lothian Conservation Volunteers (LCV) was completed on 2 occasions;
- Junior Rangers, East Linton Primary, Community Payback and an individual volunteer cut gorse re-growth on north/north-west side;
- A site assessment report was conducted;
- Fixed point photograph continued to monitor summit grazing and identify areas of concern;
- Concerns regarding the horse damage through trampling of the summit pond and main rampart in particular. Options to address this problem at summit pond being explored;

- The annual Traprain Law race saw 108 runners take part on 11th June 2016.

North Berwick Law

7 ponies continued to graze the site

- Volunteers undertook grassland fixed quadrat surveys and bumblebee transect surveys for 3rd year;
- Unauthorised climbing wall pegs were installed in the quarry causing rock falls;
- Monitoring of maiden pink (*Dianthus deltoides*), meadow saxifrage (*Saxifraga granulata*) and purple milk vetch (*Astragalus danicus*) continued;
- A site assessment report was undertaken;
- Ragwort was removed by North Berwick Conservation Volunteers, Lothian Conservation Volunteers, Scottish Seabird Wildlife Club, SEPA and Lloyds banking group this year;
- Various self-led groups visited the site this year including ELC Outdoor Learning, East of Scotland Butterfly Conservation Society, Edinburgh Natural History Society, Scottish Seabird Wildlife Club and the Mousie Moorland Trust;
- The local Moth Atlas group set moth traps in the quarry and the plantation and provided 126 moth records for the site;
- The annual North Berwick Law race saw 295 runners take part on 3rd August 2016.

8.2.4 LEVENHALL LINKS (MUSSELBURGH)

2016-17 saw the 21st Annual Report produced for Levenhall Links. It highlighted the work carried out or initiated by the Countryside Ranger based at Levenhall Links. The Countryside Ranger is responsible for the day-to-day management of the site and also provides a range of volunteering opportunities, education and interpretation events throughout the year.

Levenhall Links is a 134 hectare area of mixed grassland, woodland and wetland situated adjacent to the mouth of the River Esk on the East Lothian coastline. The entire site is land that has been claimed from the sea using pulverised fuel ash (pfa), a by-product of Cockenzie Power Station.

Areas that have reached capacity for the disposal of pfa have been landscaped to provide habitats that are of significant value



- 1,554 volunteer hours on site and the adjacent areas;
- 256 people benefited from educational activities lead by the Ranger over the year;
- “The Big Nature Festival” returned for a second year and attracted 5994 visitors to the site;
- Biological monitoring of the site entered its 21st year.

both for recreation and wildlife conservation. The site is popular with local people who use it for both formal and informal recreational pursuits.

The bird reserve and lagoon 8 have gained national recognition for their importance for wildfowl and wading birds and were notified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest in 2001. These areas have also been included in the Firth of Forth Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar designations. Because of this the Links has developed as a nationally respected and recognised bird watching venue.

Notable events for the year can be summarised thus;

- 46 Ranger led activities over the year;

8.2.5 YELLOWCRAIG

This is the 13th Countryside Ranger Service Annual Report for Archerfield and Yellowcraig. This report covers the period 1st April 2016 to 31st of March 2017.

Managed since 1944 by East Lothian Council (ELC) and falling mainly within the SSSI boundary, Yellowcraig has a long history of public use and sensitive management. The site is very popular with local residents and visitors from further afield.

In 1999 the eastern section of Archerfield Estate was sold to Caledonian Heritable Ltd (CHL) and in 2001 CHL lodged a planning application for 2 golf courses (Archerfield Links), 100 houses, 50 holiday cottages, hotel,



clubhouse and the restoration of Archerfield House. The golf courses are open and construction of residential accommodation is continuing.

Lying to the west of Archerfield Links Golf Club is the Renaissance Golf Club. The golf course is currently open for play and a clubhouse, lodges and associated facilities are ongoing. Isolated housing development has also taken place within the confines of the course.

The Management Area stretches from Eyebroughy in the West to the Eil Burn in the East. Work is undertaken by East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service (ELCRS) at Archerfield Links and Renaissance Golf Clubs.

The Advisory Group wishes to acknowledge funding from Archerfield House Hotel Management Ltd and Archerfield Links; and from Archerfield Estates Ltd for the employment of a permanent Countryside Ranger.

The overall management aim is to ensure ***'The conservation and enhancement of the natural and historical heritage of the Management Area, via the joint workings of ELC, CHL and Scottish Natural Heritage. The management of visitors within the Management Area so as to prevent so far as is reasonably practicable, direct access from CHL land to the SSSI and generally to minimise disturbance to the immediate and wider SSSI.'***

The year's work can be summarised as follows;

- 457.5 hours of volunteer time conducted on site;
- Damage to SSSI dune grasslands during buckthorn management works;
- Invasive species (pirri-pirri bur) control continued with an expansion to spraying regime;
- Turf nursery grassland management project continued;
- 7 public events led;
- 19 school educational activities conducted;
- New interpretation / built infrastructure installed.

8.3 IMAGE CREDITS / DESCRIPTIONS

Many thanks to Countryside Volunteers A. Marland and S. Beaumont for their kind provision of many of the images included in this report

Front Cover images from top left to right: a bracket fungus; 4 spotted chaser (dragonfly); volunteers weave willow sets; a grazing pony eats hawthorn; blue fleabane

Inside front cover: Common spotted orchids at Blindwells

1. Bumblebee, *bombus bohemicus*, on wild thyme
3. Gullane coast from the air
4. Leveret
- 4.2 Junior rangers at work, Big Nature Festival, 2016
6. Passing shower, seen from Hopetoun monument
- 7.1 Path warden volunteers lead a guided walk
- Case study 2: funding partners meet to launch the reurbished Pencaitland Railway Path -Pencaitland Railway Path before and after upgrade
- Case study 3: funding partners launch the new Glenkinchie path
- Case study 4: cover of the Preston/Port Seton/ Gosford map leaflet
- 7.2 Common frog
- 7.2.1 Fever ponds, local biodiversity site, Garleton ridge
- 7.2.2 Painted lady butterfly
- 7.3 Countryside ranger service badge
- Case study 5: Batman starts a stuffed fox! Big Nature Festival, 2016
- 7.3.2.1 Juiniior rangers badge
- Case study 6: The Green Angels
- 7.3.2.2 Mud in Yor Eye front cover
- Case study 7: Badger track
- Case study 8: Female eider with young
- 7.3.4.1 Countryside volunteers badge



7.3.4.2 Countryside volunteers clearing sea buckthorn,
Aberlady Bay, LNR

Case study 9: Levenhall family rangers

7.3.4.3 Best Boot Forward front cover

7.4.1 Rounding up the flock, Barns Ness

7.4.3 Kelp accumulation, Dunbar East beach

7.5 Waxwings feeding on rowans

8.1 River Tyne, Haddington

8.2 Hereford cattle

8.2.1 Aberlady Bay LNR

8.2.2 Salt marsh at JMCP

8.2.3 The Laws' from the Lammermuirs

8.2.4 Wader scrapes, Levenhall

8.2.5 Coast at Yellowcraig

Back Cover images from top left to right: countryside staff and volunteers at Big Nature Festival; Coast at Yellowcraig; oystercatchers, winter; silver birch bark; junior ranger and the chief exec at the BNF

