



Scottish Wildlife Trust: Lothians Group Newsletter

Spring 2026

2026 Lothians Events

Thursday 19th March – 7:30pm to 8:30pm. Online talk.
Edinburgh Shoreline.

Karen Chambers and Leonie Alexander will talk about their work in a range of marine ecosystem projects around the Forth estuary. Registration will be at:
<https://www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/our-events/>

Thursday 16th April – 7:30 to 9:30pm. In person.
AGM then Planning and Nature in the Lothians

The Lothians group AGM 20 minutes, followed by a talk on Nature and Planning in the Lothians region by Tim Duffy covering the work of the group, its impact, successes, challenges, and hopes for the future.

Sunday 26th April - 10:30am – 2pm. Guided walk.
Woodhall Dean. Led by Lesley Fairweather. Numbers are limited to 12 so booking is essential. Link as above.

In person events are held at The Cornerstone Centre, St Johns Church, Lothian Road/Princes Street Corner, EH2 4BJ. Events are free. Doors open 7:15pm. Donations welcome. Teas/coffee provided.

From the Chair – Dr Tim Duffy

There was a problem with the distribution of the Autumn 2025 newsletter hence both the Autumn and Spring issues now appear in your magazine. I am pleased to report that following our appeal we now have a new newsletter editor with professional experience of writing and publishing and they will start with the Summer newsletter.

We have another appeal for assistance. If you believe you have never received an email from us with a web link to the PDF longer version of our newsletter or a specific email inviting you to one of our talks in person or online or outings, then please send your email address (and membership number if possible) to webmaster@swtlothians.org.uk. Your email will be passed to SWT HQ where they will administer it under GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) rules for which they are responsible, and we can then ask them to email our Lothians actual membership wishing to receive such email communications. HQ have provided

us with recent more detailed information on our Lothians current membership which helps us address the wide gap between membership and those who are officially explicitly not wanting to receive emails from the local group. Our current Lothians memberships is 6819. Of these 3939 have requested that they don't receive the Trust's magazine nor emails from HQ or the Lothians Local Group. Another 767 are deemed to have explicitly requested not to receive Lothians Local Group emails. On GDPR record only 4505 members currently wish to receive Local Group electronic newsletters meaning that there are at least 1154 members who may not realise that they could get more than this hardcopy summary newsletter. Yes, it's all a bit complicated to follow!

There are advantages for subscribing SWT members to being contactable by the Lothians Group in this way - it is a benefit of being an actual SWT member in the Lothians. If you only receive this hardcopy newsletter consider emailing webmaster@swtlothians.org.uk to be added to the emailing list.

Planning Matters

East Lothian

Some of you have kindly joined me in helping ELC (East Lothian Council) to re-survey its existing Local Biodiversity sites (LBS) for the first time in many years. This has been in the form of phase 1 habitat surveys with an easy to use survey manual produced by local expert Ben Averis and in addition some detailed checking for the presence/absence of priority plant species and other groups on the sites. I am very pleased to report that at a recent meeting with Lydia Miller of the countryside section and two planners, there to learn about the re-assessment system - we assessed two sites (and passed them!) and in February will meet to assess 20+ more. Completing this process is important to inform the imminent new Local Plan in East Lothian and we must complete this habitat stage by end July 2026. We also need to complete the priority plant checking process by then and I am very pleased to report that the East Lothian BSBI (Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland) recorder Marion Moir and her BSBI volunteers have agreed to complete this process by then. Some

volunteers hoped to do some of these plant records but if you have not been put off by the bureaucracy hoops involved in doing survey work for the council please could I ask you to reapply to do Habitat survey work as there are still 30+ sites to be investigated by the end of July 26. So Lydia and I formally ask for one more push to get this done and please contact Lydia to re-join in 2026 noting that we will all survey from 1st April onwards. We have a kind offer from Ben Averis again who will do another training/refreshing day on his habitat survey method on either Tuesday March 24th or Saturday 28th March at Donolloy reservoir. So please email if you want to help us finish the habitat surveys this summer – and are up for training/refresher (12 places only!) at the end of March just in time for the start of the survey season. Good progress is being made and there is light at the end of the tunnel! **Contacts to help:**

Imiller5@eastlothian.gov.uk + timrduffy1@gmail.com

Midlothian

Our new Midlothian planning representative Alison Macfadyen reports that we've had loft conversions requiring bat surveys at the Penicuik Mill Lade and Dalkeith Estate. There has been a shed erection and a home extension potentially affecting the Bonnyrigg disused railway and Penicuik House sites. In respect of these application, bee bricks, homes for hedgehogs, plants for pollinators and bird boxes have been suggested. Tree work such as that at Ironmills Park, Waverley Railway Gorebridge to Tynehead and Newbattle Abbey must be undertaken outwith the bird breeding season and with consideration of bat roosts. The erection of three new houses near to the Bush Estate and Glencorse Burn prompted suggestion of creation of hedgehog highways, native tree planting and species rich native hedges. A proposed solar array at Glencorse House more than 500m from the Greater Crested Newt breeding pond but within 100m of another pond with potential for breeding requires a Greater Crested Newt Survey by a qualified Ecologist. These are but a few examples from the last four months of activity.

Contact: MidlothianPlanning@swtlothians.org.uk

West Lothian

We are seeking a West Lothian planning representative but meanwhile the relatively well staffed West Lothian council Ecology and Biodiversity team is forging ahead on all fronts with great progress.

City of Edinburgh Council

We are searching for a planning representative here which is a simpler job, in that the council will write to you if there is a planning application that affects or is near a Local Biodiversity Site. These are very well protected in the new Local Plan and so very few applications typically affect a designated LBS. The only problem is when a council department, other than the planning department, tries to give itself planning permission or promotes a development as existing policy that affects a LBS.

The second council public consultation on the now infamous plan to use the Roseburn Path LBS (designated and protected strongly in the brand new local AND previous local plans) as a new tramway segment ends 17th Nov 26. www.savetheroseburnpath.com

We will continue objecting on the grounds that instead of offering one route on existing roads and one on this disused railway path as the options to choose from, neither option should have included Roseburn Path LBS. i.e. both options should have been on existing road routes. The latest Local Plan does, for historical legal reasons, includes a policy that safeguards the Roseburn Path disused railway LBS for potential use in the future as a transport corridor due to legislation from 2006. We argue that all local plans and Scottish government National Planning Policy Framework 4 (NPF4) since that date i.e. the modern view on biodiversity and greenspaces, makes the 2006 policy contradictory and completely out of date and irrelevant. Three months on and we have still heard nothing official about decisions from the consultation and only interpretations of statements by the Scottish Government Transport secretary Fiona Hyslop that might imply the Edinburgh Tram proposal should be incorporated into a SE Scotland Transport review of transport issues in the wider area which is just about to start and may take a long time.

Tim Duffy, Planning secretary. timrduffy1@gmail.com

There is much more on our local Lothians website with our extended version of this Newsletter with photos and other news. The longer newsletter is also emailed to Lothians members.

Search [swtlothians](http://swtlothians.org.uk) or www.swtlothians.org.uk

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