West Lothian Council has new way of cleaning streets

An industrial scale vacuum cleaner which sucks rubbish off the streets is the latest tool being deployed by West Lothian council crews.

Three new teams have been created – redeployed from existing staff – to work their way around towns and villages giving them a deep clean.

And the machine, branded the Glutton, is their secret weapon in the war on grime.

The council has invested £50,000 in three machines for the teams. The teams have already been at work clearing town centre areas in Armadale, Broxburn and Uphall, Bathgate, Linlithgow and Whitburn, as well as village centres in Blackburn, Blackridge, East Calder, Fauldhouse, Kirknewton, Longridge, Mid Calder, Seafield, Stoneyburn, Torphichen, West Calder and Winchburgh.

 Gluttons are in use across the world as eco-friendly EV street cleaners able to clean street spaces that larger driven sweepers cannot.

Local area committees have been told about the roll out of the new teams. In his report to Livingston North Local Area Committee Simon Scott, an Open Spaces Manager with the council explained the role of the new teams.

"Three new teams, of two, have been created from existing

resources. They will work through the main streets of all towns and villages in a cyclic manner.

"These teams will be deployed to provide additional cleansing on top of the routine litter picking and emptying of bins that is already carried out in these areas of high footfall."

The Gluttons are capable of lifting small items such as cigarette ends and reaching hard to get at areas such as tree bases, around street furniture and road channels where there is no access for the mechanical sweeper.

The machines can also be used to loosen and remove detritus along the edge of footpaths and around street furniture. Removing weeds by scraping them out and lifting them.

This work will be additional to the current weed control carried out by the Grounds Maintenance Teams.

In addition the teams will also pressure wash street furniture, benches and street bins during the summer months.

Executive councillor for the environment and sustainability Tom Conn said: "It's fantastic to see our new Cleaner Communities team are having an early impact on our town and village centres.

"We are investing nearly £3 million by the council across street cleansing and environmental enforcement during the next financial year, as part of a renewed focus on improving the environment in our busiest areas.

"It's great to see the positive results of our staff using Glutton machines is already being noticed by some local residents, with the areas where the machines have been used noticeably cleaner and tidier.

"A small investment in the right equipment like this can make a real difference, and enable our staff to have the greatest impact with the limited resources available."

In northern Livingston many of the road signs in northern Livingston are blackened by what is believed to be the deposit of fungal mould which is carried airborne from the nearby Glen Turner distillery.

The fungal mould, *Baudoinia compniacensis* is *a* byproduct of alcohol maturation where what is colloquially known as the Angel's Share evaporates. The mould is found on buildings, vehicles and even plants around the distillery. It has been called whisky fungus.

Councillor Andrew Miller asked Mr Scott at the local area committee: " I know the new team are more cleaning paths etc, but I think it's obvious if you drive through the area that there's a significant proportion of the road signage contaminated and black. I think we all have our own views on how this is happening, but are there any plans to get them cleaned up?"

 Mr Scott replied: "I can take that back to colleagues in Roads Maintenance and highlight the concern." Road sign maintenance is the responsibility of Roads department crews.

Chairing the committee Councillor Anne McMillan: "I'm looking forward to seeing these Gluttons in action because I've heard great things about them from colleagues."

by Stuart Somerville Local Democracy Reporter