

# **Villagers vow to continue campaign for footpaths**

**Residents of West Lothian's Island village have vowed to continue to push for footpath connections to vital services.**

Campaigners have fought for more than a decade to establish a footpath network linking Stoneyburn to neighbouring communities.

The village sits in the heart of West Lothian less than two miles from other small communities but there's no way to walk safely to it.

While villagers have had some success, they are frustratingly just 120 yards shy of completing a footpath to East Whitburn along old mine railway lines.

Now campaigners are making a video to show to council officers some of the issues regular walkers in the area face.

Sandy Edgar of Stoneyburn Vision Group took walkers to the edge of the hardstanding path along the route of old pit railway lines around Foulshiels bing. At what would have been a junction of lines is now a sea of mud, only walkable after a few weeks of dry weather of which there's few.

"You can see Hen's Nest Road, [in East Whitburn over beyond the trees, it's about 120 yards away." he told the Local Democracy Reporting Service.

Plans to complete the path have stalled as negotiations with

landowners have come to nothing, councillors at this month's meeting of Fauldhouse and the Breich Valley Local Area Committee heard.

Meanwhile proposals to connect the village with a footpath and cycleway to vital services in Fauldhouse are in the planning stage and may be two to three years away as land transfers are negotiated.

Around £2m has been agreed from national funders including Sustrans to build a path connecting the two communities and some local landowners are on-side, others are not, and negotiations will have to be concluded.

The nearest pharmacy and GP facilities to Stoneyburn are now in Fauldhouse some three miles west. There's little in the way of shopping facilities and few buses in any direction.

The B-road connecting the two communities is narrow winding rural road densely lined with heavy tree and shrub cover and no pavements.

Villagers who walk regularly say they ventured on to the route, which has the 60mph speed limit in the past – during lockdown- when it was quieter but wouldn't do it now.

“There's too much traffic and it's too overgrown,” said one villager, Carol Regan who regularly uses what footpaths there are around the village for daily exercise.

Fellow walker John Mushet said; “You wouldn't want to walk it not with the 60mph limit in it.”

Sandy told the LDRS “Young families who want to go out for a cycle, a path would take them off the road. Just now they have to load their bikes into the car and go off to somewhere like Beecraigs park to go for a family cycle. People who use mobility scooters or those using wheelchairs cannot get out of the village. They have nowhere to go. What we need is access

for all.”

He added: There’s some locals who don’t want it. They don’t want the path because they don’t want the people. But there’s going to be 300 more houses in the village. If we’re going to have a lot more people we’re going to need a lot more infrastructure. The path is just one of those things.”

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter