Bio-diversity team to look at ways to tackle algae at Beecraigs Loch

A survey of water quality at a popular West Lothian beauty spot could provide answers on how to deal with polluting weeds.

Scientists working on water quality in the River Almond are also studying the growth of algae bloom in Beecraigs Loch at the country park.

Countryside manager Andy Johnston told the Linlithgow Local Area Committee that the study could direct future management of the loch.

Councillor Sally Pattle, chairing the meeting said: “I note that your surveys of the loch have finished. Is this being done with the work that University of Stirling has been doing in Linlithgow Loch”.

Linlithgow Loch is owned by Historic Environment Scotland and it is carrying out studies of algae and other pollutants along with SEPA. Hundreds of fish were killed in the loch recently and it suffers from pollutant run off from the nearby M9 as well as algae bloom.

Mr Johnston told councillors: “It’s a separate independent survey. We are due to get a report back from Stirling University on the work they’re doing on the River Almond. We will get a report back towards the tail end of this year on the work happening at Beecraigs.

“We have work on the reservoir dam itself by our flood risk colleagues. They inspect that routinely and do work on the dam. We’re also looking at the water quality in the loch itself, the blue green algae side of things through the Nature Restoration Fund we have a consultant compiling a report for the bio-diversity team.”

A West Lothian Council spokesperson added: “In common with many areas of still water around Scotland, Beecraigs Loch can face issues with water quality caused by blue-green algae blooms.

“The loch is a designated Local Biodiversity Site (LBS) and a much-loved part of Beecraigs Country Park, so steps are being taken to improve water quality and enhance nature at this well-used recreational site.

“A specialist consultant has been working for the last year to carry out a condition and feasibility study of the Loch and surrounding area. This aims to establish the current water quality, identify any potential sources of pollution/nutrient loading and carry out an ecological condition survey of loch and the associated habitats.

“This study should be completed shortly, with recommendations for improvements and future management options to increase biodiversity at Beecraigs Loch and its associated habitats. We will consult with key partners and the public on the most appropriate course of action following the conclusion of this study.”

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter