

Safety warnings as storm clear up continues

West Lothian residents have been advised not to visit local cemeteries and churchyards, along with the country parks, as staff work to clear fallen trees and repair damaged headstones in the wake of storm Eowyn.

The council's arborist teams tackled more than 600 trees toppled across the county and surveys are ongoing at Beecraigs, the largest of West Lothian's country parks.

Cemeteries, including Brungrange at West Calder were also badly hit with damaged and fallen trees and headstones toppled by Friday's storm, described as "a once in generation event."

Contractor costs to help with clear-up are likely to run into thousands of pounds, it was warned.

A spokesperson for West Lothian Council said: "The strong winds of the Red Weather Warning had a huge impact on the area."

They added: "The council's arborist teams were dealing with over 600 fallen trees enquiries because of the winds, which led to a number of roads being closed. The majority of these have now re-opened, thanks to teams working through the weekend to clear them."

Visitor centres and other facilities in the parks will remain closed until this process is completed.

The spokesperson said: "We have around 100 urban parks, 400 play areas and other play areas including MUGAs, outdoor gyms, and skate parks etc. It will take a few weeks to inspect them all properly. If you are out and about, please be cautious regarding accessing these open space areas and facilities.

"We are also advising residents not to visit the 32 cemeteries and churchyards cemeteries maintained by the council unless it is considered essential. These areas all have mature trees, tall headstones, and high walls which could have been impacted by the winds.

"It will take our teams some time to check them all, so please be cautious if you need to visit a cemetery and steer well clear of headstones, trees, and walls".

Bathgate's Glasgow Road cemetery has now reopened, the council confirmed today (Tuesday).

Linlithgow High Street was closed by Police Scotland because of fallen masonry on Friday but has now fully re-opened. Bus shelters were blown from their sockets in Livingston and Dechmont, and had to be moved to safety by council staff.

The council's street lighting team is continuing to carry out repairs to hundreds of street lights that have been damaged.

Leader of West Lothian Council Lawrence Fitzpatrick said: "Thanks to all the dedicated council staff who worked to tackle the impact of Storm Eowyn.

"I can't recall West Lothian facing such high winds, which were described on the BBC as a 'once in a generation' event.

"Special praise must go to our Roads operatives, Arborists, street lighting teams, social care staff and everyone else who was out during the Red Weather warning period and over the

weekend to deliver the essential services people rely on.

“There’s still a lot of work to do to clear up all the damage caused by the storm, and hard-working council staff will continue to make every effort to ensure services are brought back to normal as soon as possible.”

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter