

# **One day storm causes more damage in West Lothian**

**Stormy weather which swept across West Lothian last month has brought more damage and flooding for council crews still working to clear up after Storm Eowyn.**

Bad weather saw 79 more calls into the NETs land and countryside teams to deal with new hazards as 60 mile an hour winds battered the county hitting all areas.

Damage was reported from Fauldhouse, to Bathgate, where trees lost boughs in the town's Glasgow Road cemetery, and Beecraigs Country Park near Linlithgow. Many woodland areas are still closed because of the January storm damage.

Tree surgeons and contractors have restarted the Ash Dieback felling programme on B roads in the south-western end of the county around Fauldhouse. The aftermath of Storm Eowyn delayed Ash Dieback work by a month.

The council's countryside teams were deluged in late January with more than 800 calls in the days following Storm Eowyn on 24 January. The final bill for the clear up is expected to run into thousands of pounds in terms of work hours and contractor payments.

Crews worked through the January storm to make safe dangerous trees and clear roads and were out again on Friday tackling the most dangerous falls.

They have since been working through triaged works in clearing

broken and fallen trees on council owned land and areas where there's a potential danger such as alongside footpaths and roads.

Pat McArdle from the NETs team told a meeting of Fauldhouse and the Breich Valley Local Area Committee that last Friday's (21 February) high winds had brought in more calls. "I'll give you some figures from the storm. There were 300 jobs committed and 200 have been completed.

"At the weekend in the mini storm with yellow warnings there were 60 more added because of the high winds. Our arbour team is constantly working, and we've got contractors in. We are still getting requests from rural areas that haven't been touched yet."

Mr McArdle said an initial sweep had been done of danger areas and the work triaged. A lot of initial work has been to open up areas of damage to clear the path in and work crews will go back in to reassess.

"This year the workload will be excessive," he added.

Councillor Pauline Clark said: "There has to be masses of commendation give to the arbourists and others involved after the two storms. I think the work the council has done in that regard has been absolutely fantastic."

She added that one of her concerns was over trees that have been damaged and may present a danger in the next storm.

Mr McArdle said that staff had to assess damage in all areas after initial "make safe work". Further work is undertaken to clear fallen trees and debris that has been made safe and then to return to check the safety of what is still standing.

"We have a duty of care to assess the damage. We will go back and revisit. All areas will be assessed for damaged trees."

Felling work for Ash Dieback is now under way on the B7010

around Fauldhouse, the B792 which runs through the ward from West Calder to Blackburn and B7015 which runs through Stoneyburn to join the main north/ south A701.

A council spokesperson said: "There were 79 separate enquiries / tree incidents reported by the public after the most recent high winds.

"We also had multiple trees down again on managed woodland sites, including Beecraigs and Calderwood, where we have continued working to get paths cleared."

By Stuart Sommerville Local Democracy Reporter