

# Two toxic sites in West Lothian identified in national survey

West Lothian has been named on a new national database of councils which have potentially hazardous contaminated land.

Two sites in the county were identified in a BBC led investigation as the council responded to Freedom of Information requests.

A council spokesperson insisted that the two sites identified in West Lothian are considered “low risk” in their current undisturbed state.

The investigation revealed that while councils have a statutory duty to inspect potentially contaminated sites many councils claim they do not have the money to do so.

The two local sites- a former quarry in the East Calder area and landfill site in the Armadale area- were identified in a report compiled by the BBC Shared Data Unit.

The report found thousands of sites potentially contaminated with toxic chemicals in Britain have never been checked by councils.

Nine out of 10 “high-risk” areas have not been tested by councils responding to a BBC Freedom of Information request and scientists fear they could pose a health risk as they are thought to contain substances such as lead or arsenic.

The BBC Shared Data Unit found of 13,093 potentially toxic sites that councils have identified as high risk, only 1,465 have been inspected.

A spokesperson for West Lothian Council told the Local Democracy Reporting Service said county planners were well aware of the two sites highlighted in the BBC report.

They added: "We follow a development-led remediation strategy for potentially contaminated land, where sites are dealt with through the planning process, and cannot comment on any specific grant schemes.

"We currently have two sites in West Lothian, a former quarry and a former landfill, which have not been remediated. Both are considered low-risk while undisturbed in their current use.

"Any redevelopment of these sites would require the developer to carry out remediation work in advance of other works taking place."

Other areas in West Lothian were historically used as landfill sites by the city of Edinburgh in the Victorian era. Auldscathie Park on the fringe of Winchburgh was created out of one of the largest landfill reclamation sites in the county in an £8m project which transformed the site into parkland for the growing town. Extensive reclamation and capping works have taken place to revitalise and prepare the site. Some 15,000 trees have been planted.

A total of 27 of 32 Scottish local authorities responded to the data requests identifying thousands of known sites which had seen reclamation work carried out.

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter