

Rats run in rubbish 'free for all' at bin stores

An increase in fly-tipping at bin stores across West Lothian has caused concern about a boom in rat sightings, councillors have been told.

Local area committees have heard that the bin stores have become a "free for all", with rats seen around piles of black bags and furniture dumped.

The council acknowledged there are issues and said that the problems were fuelled by a "thoughtless minority".

At Whitburn Local Area Committee Councillor Mary Dickson said she had been receiving regular complaints about the number on black bags being dumped at bin stores and at flats and many householders reported seeing rats.



Some of the worst offending has been along Longridge Road with bags of household rubbish dumped, also along the Clutrig Burn on the southern boundary of the town. She also highlighted fly-tip sites such as the old Labour club.

Councillor Dickson: "We need to look at how many bins there are at flats – a lot of the complaints I get are people talking about rats being in and out the bins. I know a lot of people do recycle but there are some who just don't care, and it's the rat issue that's causing the problem."

Eirwen Hopwood from Operational services said: "The general public are getting fed up with fly-tipping. That's why we are getting a lot more reports.

Cllr Dickson said: "One of the reasons with the increased in fly-tipping is that people cannot get access to recycling centres if they don't have access to a car?"

Across in East Livingston and East Calder councillors have had similar complaints. Chair of that local area committee Councillor Danny Logue said this week: "There's a lot of people fly-tipping near the new bin stores; there's a lot of rubbish. I've seen a sofa and a cooker, and various bags of rubbish.

"It seems to be a free for all. Does that happen in other areas?"

David Lees from Operational Services told the meeting: "Bin stores are a concern throughout West Lothian. Part of it is possibly due to bins being full or contaminated, and people in the properties are thinking they are doing the right thing, leaving bags next to bins."

He added: "Waste teams have been looking at certain areas and working with Housing staff, putting out letters to tenants making them aware that they should not be leaving bags."

A West Lothian Council spokesperson said: "We have issues with communal bins stores around West Lothian caused by the actions of a small, thoughtless minority.

"The majority of residents use the shared bins correctly, but when the minority choose to contaminate bins, or leave bags or fly-tipping in front of the bins and prevent access for our staff and vehicles, it causes issues for everyone. The property manager is then responsible for clearing any waste that prevents our staff from emptying the bins.

"We would encourage local residents to recycle and use communal bins stores responsibly, so they do not become an issue for everyone else. Anyone who has evidence of those using bin stores for illegal fly-tipping can report it to us via <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/flytipping>.

The spokesperson added: "Rats are commonly found across the UK including West Lothian and can live in any environment that

provides them with food, water and shelter. Making sure areas such as communal bins do not become over-flowing can avoid providing rats with the kind of conditions that could help them become an established problem.”

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter