



East Lothian Countryside Volunteers (ELCV)

Business Plan 2023

“A business plan is a clear and documented account of the activities you have decided to undertake over a given period of time, and the cost of making them happen. It should cover objectives and strategies, and enable the organisation to deliver more effectively.”¹

Summary

This is the business plan of the East Lothian Countryside Volunteers (ELCV) which is an independent charity set up and run by countryside volunteers. The plan:

- Explains the role of countryside volunteers generally (section 1 below)
- Summarises the history, governance and aims of the ELCV as a charity (sections 2-4)
- Details the ELCV work plan, summarises ELCV’s finances and the risks and assumptions affecting the work plan (sections 5-7)

1. Role and organisation of countryside volunteers

There is an established network of 372 (currently) countryside volunteers, sponsored and organised by the countryside service of East Lothian Council (the Council).

These volunteers help to protect and enhance the East Lothian countryside through a range of work, mainly including:

- helping to maintain the East Lothian Core Paths Network and paths on nature reserves
- litter picking
- removing invasive plant species
- planting trees and hedges
- surveying vulnerable plant and animal species
- looking after grazing animals that are helping towards bringing more flowering plants to our grasslands

Volunteers are organised into local/specialised groups and work in close partnership with are often directly supervised by the countryside service, as shown below.

Group	Countryside team contact
Barns Ness – sheep checking	Nick Aitken
Dunbar Conservation Volunteers	Nick Aitken/Tara Sykes
East Lothian Volunteer Path Wardens	Dave Wild
Friends of Levenhall Links	Nick Aitken/Laura Douglas
Friends of Aberlady Local Nature Reserve	John Harrison
Friends of Yellowcraig	Robbie McEwen
Junior Rangers	Meryl Norris
Mountain Hare Monitoring Group	Catherine Cumming
North Berwick Conservation Volunteers	Jen Newcombe
<i>Continued over</i>	

¹ Source: Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), the national membership organisation for the voluntary sector ([here](#))

Group	Countryside team contact
North Berwick Eider Monitoring	Jen Newcombe
North Berwick & Traprain Laws Pony Groups	Dave Wild
Plant, Bee & Butterfly Surveyors	Catherine Cumming/ Nick Morgan
River Tyne – Control of Invasive plants	Dave Wild (Tyne team)

2. ELCV charity history

ELCV was established as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) in 2017. It built on the work of the predecessor charity, the East Lothian Volunteer Path Wardens (ELVPW), established in 2013. ELCV encompasses a wider range of volunteer activity than its predecessor.

3. ELCV Governance

As a charity ELCV operates under a constitution approved by OSCR, the Scottish Charity Regulator. Our registered charity number is SC044495.

Presently about 182 countryside volunteers (out of the total of 372) are registered as members of the ELCV charity.

ELCV has a “two-tier” membership structure. This means individual volunteer members elect a board of trustees annually and the trustees are responsible for leading the charity’s activities. There are currently eight trustees compared to the maximum limit of 15.

The trustees will meet at least every two months to monitor progress of the work plan (section 5. below), consider any changes or additions to the plan and ensure other obligations of the charity for example approving spending, organising the AGM are satisfied. Normally representatives of the countryside service will be invited to attend and participate in meetings, although they may not take part in any formal decision-making (voting) by trustees.

The trustees will seek to ensure that ELCV projects are co-ordinated between volunteer groups and will approve all spending by the charity.

4. ELCV aim and objectives

The Council’s countryside service is responsible for organising and supervising directly most work done by countryside volunteers.

ELCV aims to support volunteers’ conservation activity to maintain, protect and enhance the countryside, its wildlife, heritage and accessibility for communities and people in East Lothian.

ELCV’s specific objectives are to:

- encourage volunteer groups to develop, lead and implement individual conservation projects
- secure funding for these projects
- publicise the work and role of volunteers to stimulate community interest and additional volunteer involvement
- provide a collective voice for volunteers

To support these objectives ELCV shall:

- work closely with the council's countryside service
- liaise and collaborate with other interested parties as required, for example local land owners and managers, primary and secondary schools
- ensure that all activity is completed so as to protect sensitive environmental habitats and species and provide clear benefits such as improved amenity, local environment and access.

5. ELCV work plan

Improvement projects

Any volunteer may propose ideas and initiatives at any time to improve their areas. Anyone wishing to do so should contact one of the ELCV trustees to discuss their idea.

Previous projects

Improvements previously organised and funded by ELCV include:

- Aberlady Volunteer Hub. Developed and delivered 2017-2022, this is a new base for volunteers to pursue a wider range of conservation activity on Aberlady reserve. It cost ~£5,900 with funding secured from the Scottish Ornithologists Club, Wemyss & March Estate, Gullane Area Community Council, Cala Homes and private donations.
- Blindwells Graylings Butterflies. With £1,000 grant assistance from Butterfly Conservation Scotland (East), the pioneering project translocated a colony of this butterfly species of high conservation concern away from a new housing development to a more stable site in Levenhall Links.
- Tyne - Giant Hogweed eradication. ELCV continues to work with landowners to rid the Tyne and its tributaries of Giant Hogweed and other invasive species. In 2019 ELCV secured £1,000 from Scottish Natural Heritage to defray some costs but since then the landowners have met all of the costs.
- Funding for the purchase of protective clothing, machinery and training for all volunteer groups with grants and donations secured from Sustrans, local businesses including the North Berwick Golf Club and private donors.

Current/ ongoing projects

We regularly discuss with the countryside service priorities for further improvement projects that ELCV may assist. This has resulted in the list of current projects at Annex A that ELCV aims to progress in the coming year. ELCV may identify and progress other projects as the need or opportunity arises.

Other activity

The trustees will engage with the countryside service who organise the annual "Volly Jolly" gathering, to which all volunteers are invited. This provides an opportunity to celebrate the work of all the volunteers and encourage their future activities.

Publicity

ELCV will continue to maintain a Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ELCVPost/> and website elcv.org.uk that publicise our charity and the work of volunteers.

ELCV will provide a regular article for the council's "Mud in Your Eye" newsletter, which is published roughly every 2 months with news about what's happening to the wildlife and countryside of East Lothian.

Some individual volunteer groups have their own websites which they will continue to maintain and develop without direct ELCV involvement.

6. Finance

The main resources available to ELCV are 1) the time and skills of volunteers 2) grant funding obtained to support individual projects and 3) cash reserves.

Every year volunteers donate around 10,000 hours of work, according to the council's records. This is worth at least £140,000 a year, assuming the work had been done by paid staff rather than volunteers.

Over the last five years ELCV has obtained and spent almost £20,000 external funding on specific projects. Around half of the external funding has come from sources not available to the council. External funding sources include grant-making trusts, conservation bodies and local businesses.

At 31 December 2021 ELCV had uncommitted cash reserves of £2,393, of which the trustees have reserved £736 specifically for path warden activities.

ELCV will operate financial procedures and governance in line with OSCAR requirements (and any requirements set by funders) to ensure proper management of funds. We will provide a budget for any cash spending required for any project in the work plan where external funding is sought.

7. Business plan assumptions and risks

The main assumptions are that:

- The countryside service will continue to organise and supervise directly most work done by countryside volunteers.
- The current level of voluntary support will be sustained and increased
- External resourcing and funding will be available to allow us to progress projects

The main risks to ELCV activities are that 1) the trustees cannot win sufficient engagement and support from volunteers to allow us to progress projects 2) we are unsuccessful in seeking external funding.

ELCV trustees will manage these risks by:

- Inviting each local volunteer groups to nominate one or two members each to attend and contribute to trustee meetings
- Seeking to appoint a named ELCV trustee or member to be responsible for the progress of each project identified in section 5. above/ Annex A
- Meeting regularly as trustees to review project progress
- Publicising ELCV work through articles in Facebook, our website and "Mud in Your Eye"

- Promoting collaboration between volunteer groups, ELCV trustees and the countryside service in seeking external funding.

ELCV trustees
April 2023



Annex A - East Lothian Countryside Volunteers – Current projects list April 2023

For each of these projects, ELCV will seek funding for materials where required; the countryside service will aim to deploy volunteers to install improvements on the ground.

Project	Comment	Key contacts		
		ELCV	Volunteer group	Council
1. Renew and replace tools for Path Wardens.	No current requirement for new tools but further funding for these may be required in future.	Terry Page	-	Dave Wild
2. Tyne - Giant Hogweed eradication	Ongoing, no external funding required currently.	Dave Quarendon	-	Dave Wild
3. North Berwick Glen - information boards	Being produced - order placed with relevant companies.	Anne Pearson	North Berwick Conservation Volunteers	Jen Newcombe
4. North Berwick Law - Boardwalk marsh area	A revised plan - Post and rails to define the path are completed and consideration now is suitable hardcore to raise the level of the path.	Peter Wells	North Berwick Conservation Volunteers	Jen Newcombe
5. Linkfield Marsh Dunbar	Horse and wheelchair-accessible path over Linkfield marsh. Scope to be determined.	Anne Watson & Dick Gill	Dunbar Conservation Volunteers	Dave Wild/Tara Sykes
6. Seafeld pond, Dunbar - water quality improvement.	The introduction of reed beds or rafts to improve oxygenation of water and diversify habitat	Anne Watson & Dick Gill	Dunbar Conservation Volunteers	Catherine Cumming/Tara Sykes
7. Levenhall - floating island.	Construction of floating platforms to reduce disturbance of swan-nesting sites	Eric McDonald	Friends of Levenhall Links	Nick Aitken/Laura Douglas
8. Pencraig - information boards	To re-instate interpretation and information boards at the viewpoint. Need to estimate materials & costs	Dave Quarendon	-	Jen Newcombe
9. Typha - collection at Aberlady and North Berwick	To harvest and sell on Typha heads for commercial use to SaltyCo, to increase ELCV funds.	Anne Pearson & Dick Gill	Friends of Aberlady LNR & North Berwick Conservation Volunteers	John Harrison & Jen Newcombe

