



**HEDGE END TOWN
COUNCIL**

POLLINATOR ACTION PLAN

2019-2023

**ADOPTED SEPTEMBER 2019
RECREATION & AMENITIES COMMITTEE
(MINUTE R159)**



1. INTRODUCTION

There are over 4000 species of insect in the UK that contribute to pollinating our native wild plants and food crops. Insect pollination is extremely important to the UK economy, with estimated values of £691 million annually. Without pollinators we would struggle to grow many of our vegetables, fruits and crops.

There is evidence that bees and other pollinator populations are less healthy and abundant than they have been. If action is not taken, pollinator declines will have serious implications for food production and the ornamental garden, since many plants rely on bees and other insects, such as hoverflies to transfer pollen from one flower to another in order to set fruits and seeds.

Half of our 27 bumblebee species are in decline. Two-thirds of our moths are in long term decline. Across Europe 38% of bee and hoverfly species are in decline. In the UK it is estimated that 71% of our butterflies are in decline.

A study published in 2017 found a 75% decline over 27 years in total flying insect biomass in protected areas in Germany, which is thought to be representative throughout similar habitats and landscape across Europe.

Sir David Attenborough has said: “In the last 5 years the bee population has dropped by 1/3. If bees were to disappear from the face of the earth, humans would have just 4 years left to live.”

Our insects need help!

2. AIMS

To promote pollinating insects and associated wildlife to create a local environment that is rich in wildflower habitats, helping to support sustainable pollinator populations and making our open spaces more attractive for people to live and work.

3. NATIONAL POLLINATOR STRATEGY

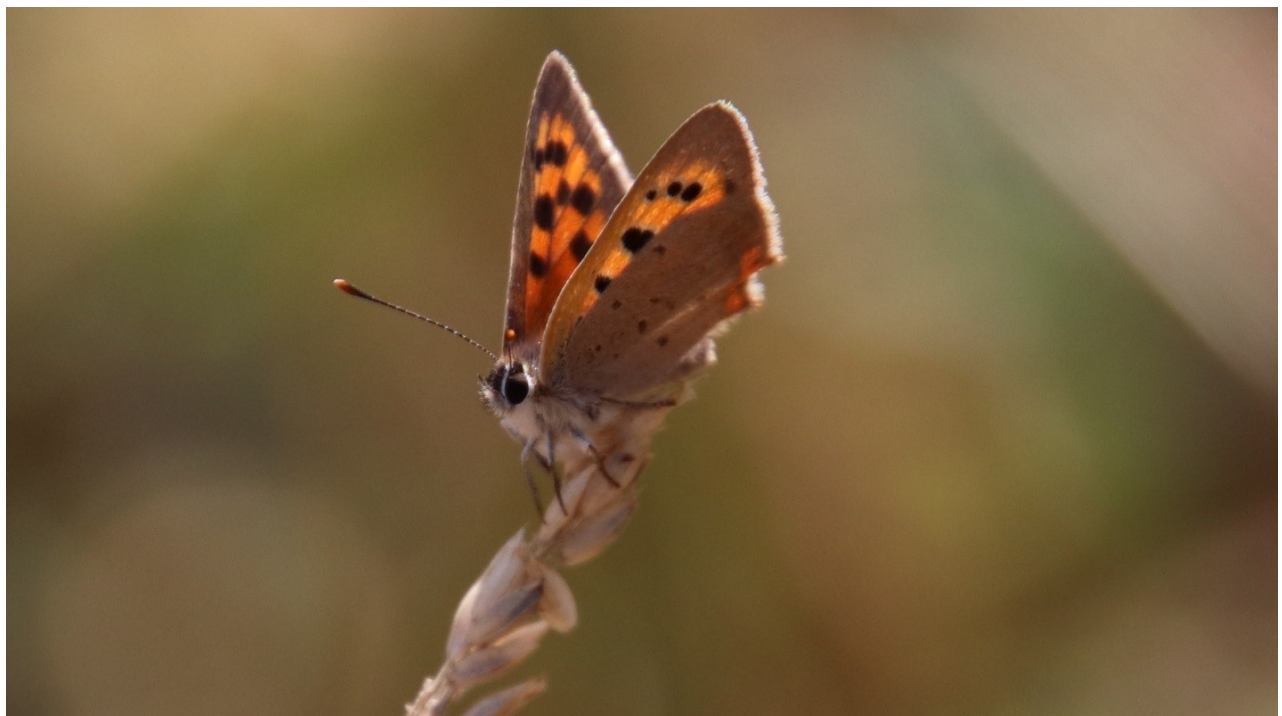
The Government's National Pollinator Strategy for England (2014) sets out a 10-year plan to help pollinating insects survive and thrive across England. The Strategy outlines actions to support and protect the many pollinating insects which contribute to our food production and the diversity of our environment. It is a shared plan of action which looks to everyone to work together and ensure pollinators' needs are addressed as an integral part of land and habitat management.

In particular the Strategy asks local authorities to take a lead across many of their work areas and duties, including their role in local planning and also as managers of public and amenity spaces, brownfield sites, schools, car parks, roadside verges and roundabouts.

4. WHAT ARE WE CURRENTLY DOING?

In January 2019 Wildern Nature Park and surrounding countryside sites were brought together to form Wildern Local Nature Reserve (WLNR), and Hedge End Town Council committed to a 10-year management plan for the site.

Over the last 2 years 'Friends of Wildern Local Nature Reserve'(FWLNR) have been incredible in their efforts to record species within the Reserve, they have confirmed identification of 16 species of Dragonfly, 27 species of Butterfly, over 100 moths, 90 to 100 Hoverfly, over 34 Bee species, over 30 Beetles and many other species within the Reserve

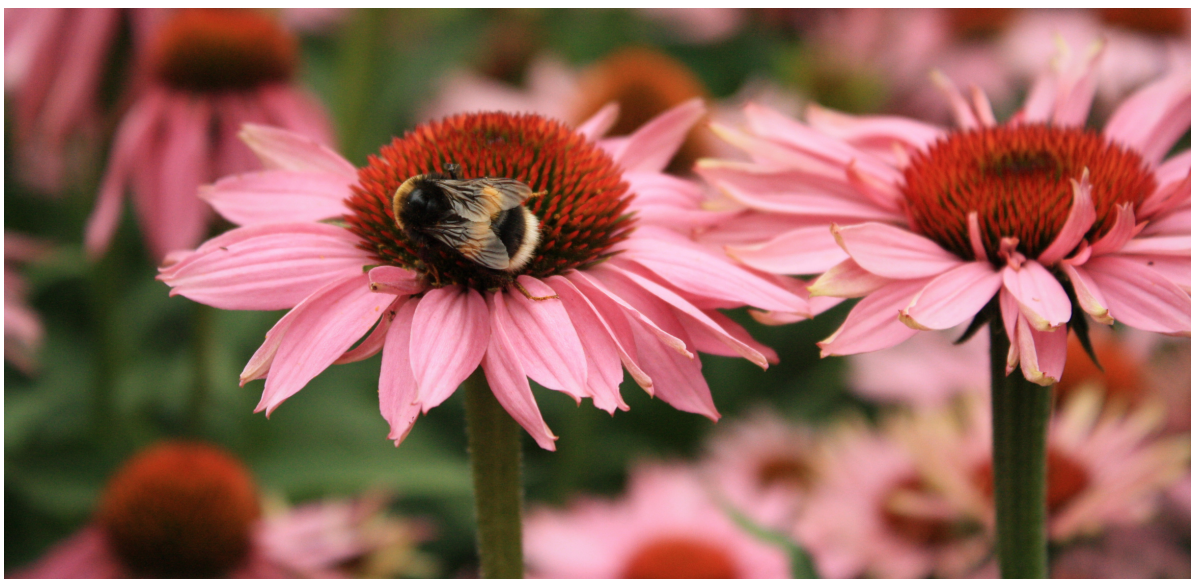


Part of the Reserve (Coltsfoot Paddock) is set aside as a wildflower meadow and grazed for conservation for 3 to 4 months of the year. This area has proved to be the richest in terms of biodiversity and is a real hotspot for the Hedge End. The County Ecologist described it as 'The Meadow in the middle of Wildern NP is still very good, the two Dexter's have their work cut out, but were doing an excellent job, lots of flora interest there, including several of the old meadow indicator species. Given that it's smack in the middle of Hedge End still a brilliantly diverse and species rich habitat complex'.

Coltsfoot Paddock flora highlights include Southern Marsh Orchid, Blue Pickerel, Ragged Robin and Common Cotton-grass.

Butterfly species include Red Admiral, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Green Hairstreak, Purple Hairstreak and Large Skipper. Of the 27 species of butterfly recorded within the reserve, 15 were identified at Coltsfoot Paddock, this clearly demonstrates the ecological value of wildflower meadows and their importance to healthy insect populations.

Outside of the Local Nature Reserve our sites are actually somewhat over managed and less insect friendly, there are some highlights; a small area dedicated to wildflowers in Albert Road Cemetery, Merlin Gardens pond and footpath are likely to have reasonable insect diversity and Dowds Farm ponds also shows promising signs. We can do more.



5. WHAT POSITIVE CHANGES CAN BE MADE TO SUPPORT POLLINATING INSECTS AND WILDLIFE?

Historically open space management has focused primarily on appearance and recreation with a neat and tidy approach to grass cutting, shrub maintenance and trees, wildlife and insects have been low on the agenda. The culture is changing, many Councils and other land managers are finding new ways to manage these sites, setting aside areas for wildlife and relaxing the traditional regime to allow nature to thrive.

There are of course challenges, it is not always easy to let go of the past and embrace new ways of working, and it takes time before people understand that nature is not always tidy, it doesn't respect straight lines and has no use for manicured lawns.

By making small changes to our land management we can have big effects.

By rethinking open space management and understanding why we are making these positive changes we can help declining insects and urban wildlife.

	OBJECTIVE	SPECIFIC ACTION
1.1	Change the land management of open spaces to help encourage and protect pollinators and other wildlife.	<p>Reduce strimming around trees to once per year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create wildflower hotspots through changes to the mowing regimes, trialling specific areas in key locations and sowing wildflower seed with a high percentage of Yellow Rattle on high profile sites. • Reduce the number of grass cuts in open space perimeters and less used areas. • Invest in a Flail Mower Collector to help with cutting and collection of grass (essential for maintaining wildflower meadows).
1.2	Increase awareness of pollinators in the local community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of signs in strategic locations promoting changes in land management and the benefits there of. • Use of social media and website to highlight the positive reasons for land management change and the importance of encouraging pollinating.
1.3	Recording of species through volunteers and 'Friends' groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage volunteers to record species throughout HETCs open spaces. • Encourage the use of Living Record to submit records; www.livingrecord.net
1.4	Make council owned buildings more pollinator friendly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate ways to make the buildings insect/ pollinator friendly i.e. through planting bee friendly plants and installing bee/ insect hotels.
1.5	Reduce the impact of pesticides on pollinators and other wildlife.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review HETC's use of pesticides and aim to stop or reduce where practical and where alternative methods are available.
1.6	Ensure that neonicotinoids (Clothianidin, Imidacloprid and Thiamethoxam) which have been linked to the decline in insects are never used.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff to be made aware that the use is prohibited. • Introduce a ban of the use of neonicotinoids within the 2020 Allotment Tenancy agreement.

6. BENEFITS

a) Wildflower meadows:

- Wildflowers help support dwindling populations of native pollinators including butterflies, moths and bees.
- Wildflower areas include food plants and egg laying habitat for the caterpillars that become butterflies and moths.
- Tall vegetation creates resting places for beneficial insects such as spiders, ladybirds and lacewings.
- Wildflowers are a source of food and nesting material for some bird species.
- They also create a variety of colours, shapes and smells providing an interesting display throughout spring, summer and autumn.
- They can make our parks and open spaces more interesting, relaxing and an overall more pleasant place to be.

b) Reduced mowing around trees:

- Creation of mini wildflower meadows in an ecological network throughout HETC public open space.
- Reduced carbon footprint through less strimming/ mowing.
- Reduced use of harmful herbicides
- Reduce staff hours.
- Reduced damage to trees from mowing/ strimming which is likely the single biggest threat to public open space trees.
- Will create an attractive feature as long as it is consistent.

c) Purchase of Tractor mounted collection flail mower:

- Multi-use attachment that can also be used to for sports pitch verticutting and leaf collection.
- An Efficient method of collecting grass cuttings.
- It would provide additional mowing capacity for all sites through the mowing season.
- It would be more efficient for larger areas as opposed to manual clearance or use of pedestrian mower.

d) Bug Hotels

- Low cost way of promoting support for pollinators.
- Interesting learning opportunity.
- Provides a home for solitary insects.

7. EXPECTATIONS

Wildflower meadows can take time to establish.

Yellow Rattle can aid this process helping to suppress competing grasses. Seeding in high profile areas should give an impressive display, however in terms of ecological benefits, grasses and less attractive plants can be of equal importance. Hedge End Town Council Pollinator Action Plan 2019 - 2023

Annual survey of species numbers will allow us to track the success of the project.

8. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Dog fouling within wildflower meadows has been an issue in the past, this can be monitored and addressed through social media and signage. The non-structural nature of meadows means that we can modify their shape or location to find a form that limits this issue.

9. CONCLUSION

The Hedge End Town Council Pollinator action plan would create over 3000 square meters of additional wildflower meadow in Hedge End, making a significant contribution to the insect life and biodiversity of the area.

By strategically placing the meadows and evaluating them annually we can develop the meadows to suit the individual sites and hopefully reduce issues like dog fouling.

Leaving the grass to grow around trees gives an instant ecological network, whilst helping the trees to thrive, reducing emissions, the Councils carbon footprint, staff time and the use of toxic chemicals. Increased use of social media and the HETC website could help increase awareness of the current plight of our pollinators and may help alleviate any concerns from residents. It could also be a useful place for recording species within the newly established meadows and providing updates on developments.

The action plan needs to remain fluid and can easily be expanded upon. If an area proves particularly successful, or residents request additional sites then this plan should not be a constraint to developing the ecology of Hedge End.

The plan proposes significant changes to the management of HETC parks and open spaces, and whilst a culture change can be difficult, the benefits vastly outweigh any negatives and will help safeguard our future.

Approved at September 2019 Recreation and amenities committee.

10. NOTES

i. Mowing and Trees - Reduced mowing around trees creates mini meadows that can be rich in wildlife, it can help promote healthier trees. Mowed grass grows vigorously and will compete with the tree for essential nutrients and water. Mower damage or strimmer damage is the biggest cause of ill health and structural defects in young trees growing in amenity open spaces.

ii. Yellow Rattle - a pretty wildflower that attaches to grass roots and suppresses their growth enabling wildflowers to flourish in grass lawns and meadows. (Photo in appendix)

iii. Native flowering plants in grassed areas, support the greatest diversity of insect pollinators by providing nectar and pollen resources, places to nest or breed and leaves for caterpillars. Specified areas will be cut less often to optimise conditions for pollinators. Where possible, cutting will be avoided until after July and before the end of September to help promote seed production.

iv. There are lots of different types of bee in the UK – around 250 species! There are 24 species of bumblebees, around 225 species of solitary bee and just a single honeybee species.