

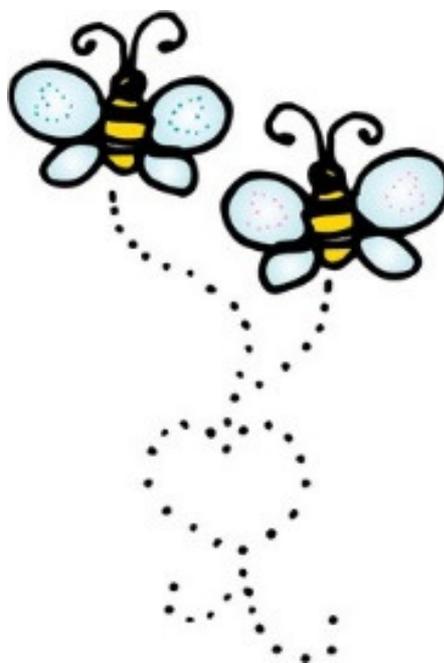


**Gillingham Town Council
Gillingham, Dorset SP8 4QR**



**Pollinators'
Action Plan**

2017 to 2022



Issue date: May 2017

1. Introduction

Bees and other pollinators are essential to food production and therefore to our lives. We are now very much aware that the bee population has been declining at an alarming rate in recent years due to a range of factors and that we must all work together to reverse this decline.



Gillingham Town Council is committed to becoming a 'Bee Friendly Town' by managing its open spaces, planted areas and cemeteries to protect and enhance pollinator habitats and species.

Pollinators need our help and that is why we have produced this Pollinators' Action Plan.

2. Why are pollinators so important and what are the issues?

There are over 1,500 species of insect pollinators in the UK, including bumble bees, honey bees, solitary bees, hoverflies, wasps, flies, beetles, butterflies and moths. All have complex life cycles and specific needs, including food in the form of pollen and nectar and somewhere to shelter and build a nest.

Dorset County Council has approved a set of principles for delivering its services and managing its assets in ways that minimise harm to these important species and enhance their natural habitats.

Pollinators – which include bees, hoverflies, butterflies and moths – are essential as they help wild plants and commercial crops to grow. The number of insect pollinators is highest in the summer coinciding with peak plant growth and supplies of nectar and pollen. Their value to the UK economy has been estimated at more than £400m a year. This is particularly important in Dorset, with its large farming sector and abundance of diverse and wildlife-rich landscapes.



However, pollinators are in decline not just in the UK but worldwide. Threats to their survival include habitat loss and degradation, pests and diseases, climate change and the use of pesticides. These include neonicotinoids, the most widely used insecticides in the world, which have been linked to the decline of pollinators. In 2012, DEFRA outlined the severity of the decline ***'There has been a severe decline in the diversity of wild bees in the countryside ... England has the greatest decline of anywhere in Europe. Since 1900, the UK has lost 20 species of bees. A further 35 bee species are considered to be under threat of extinction.'***

Don't be too tidy. Identify and protect existing patches of natural and semi-natural land to allow wild flowers, shrubs and trees to flourish, providing places for breeding and nesting, as well as food sources for pollinators. Manage existing mixed species woodland by coppicing and thinning to provide food sources such as brambles and wild roses, and nesting places for pollinators. Creating wide sunny rides and other open areas in woodland allows wild flora to grow and creates good conditions for foraging pollinators. Build more bug hotels.



Don't disturb insect nests and hibernation spots.

It is important to make sure pollinators can nest in safety so that they and the next generation can survive overwinter, to start again in the following spring. Some bumble bees nest underground in small mammal holes, under sheds and in heaps of compost or leaves which tend to be dry and dark. Others make nests above ground in thick grass or in trees. The many different species of solitary bees have particular nesting requirements. A few species will make their nests in lawns and many others favour bare patches of compacted soil, especially if sloping and with a southern aspect, where they can dig vertical nest tunnels.

Think carefully about whether to use pesticides. Only use pesticides in exceptional circumstances and think carefully about the use of herbicides – consider all the alternatives and only use where absolutely necessary.

4. Action Plan

Grassed Verges

All the grassed highway verges in the town are the responsibility of DCC Highways but are cut under a Service Level Agreement (SLA) by the Town Council. The minimum regime for cutting stipulated in the SLA is seven cuts per year. The Town Council has been cutting a lot more frequently than this due to requests by residents to keep the grass short. From April 2017 the Town Council will be managing all its areas of public open space which were once contracted out to Dorset Countryside and this increase in grass cutting may result in the frequency of cutting the grassed verges being reviewed. A reduced cutting regime will clearly be of benefit to the bee population.

Planted Areas

The Town Council is responsible for the planted areas in the town. Local businesses have been approached to sponsor the flower beds so that they are kept stocked of plants and flowers all year round. One of the grounds team has a specific responsibility for the maintenance of these flower beds and will be encouraged to source plants that are especially liked by bees and other pollinators.



Public Open Spaces

The Town Council is responsible for 27 hectares of public open space. The majority of these areas are under 0.19 ha. There are 14 areas which cover 0.20 ha or more.

The cutting regime for the smaller areas will be reviewed to see whether it is possible to improve their biodiversity potential.



For the larger areas of public open space there is more scope to leave some areas of grass uncut and over a period of time to introduce a greater variety of grasses, to plant more trees and shrubs, to create b-lines to link with other sites and to generally improve the overall biodiversity of our open spaces. The management plans and the biodiversity action plans for our open spaces specify the areas where this can be achieved and reflect the Town Council's commitment to improve the natural environment of these sites.

Cemeteries

The current maintenance of this site is very time consuming and because of the number of headstones and fiddly areas a lot of the work has to be done by hand held trimmers. It may be possible to review how some parts of the cemetery are maintained in the future. It is not unusual for cemeteries to be left as havens for wildlife, visit: - www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk.

The Garden of Remembrance

This area has a lot of well-established ornamental trees. It is a 'closed' cemetery and an area used for quiet reflection. A plan has already been agreed for part of this public open space to be planted as a 'Butterfly Garden', which has been funded from a successful grant award from Tesco Bags of Help.

Playing Spaces

These areas have little scope for biodiversity improvements. If the areas are not tarred the grass has to be kept short. These areas are litter picked and the rubbish from litter bins collected daily.

Community

All Town Council staff and councillors will be made aware of the importance to encourage and protect pollinators and provided with the necessary information to review management strategies.



The Town Council will engage with other organisations in the town, such as the Allotment Association, Gardening Association, Flower Arranging Groups, the Town Meadow Group, Friends of Gillingham Station, the Parish Church, local businesses, schools etc., to promote bee friendly strategies and reduce pesticide use. To launch the Pollinators' Action Plan a Bee Bonanza event was held in May 2017.



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Hosted for Defra by The Wildlife
Trusts in support of the
emerging National
Pollinator Strategy



The Town Council will request that landscaping designs, which will form part of new housing or commercial developments in the town, are planted with pollinator friendly plants that will provide a food source from February through to October.

The Town Council will engage with other local authorities and environmental bodies to support new projects and activities which will benefit pollinators.

5. Acknowledgements

- a) Buglife The Invertebrate Conservation Trust – www.buglife.org.uk
- b) Caring for Gods Acre - www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk
- c) Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
- d) Devon County Council's Draft Pollinators' Action Plan 2016/21
- e) Dorset County Council
- f) Dorset Wildlife Trust
- g) Gillingham Action for Nature (GANG)
- h) Wildlife Trust - www.wildlifetrusts.org/bees-needs

