

Pollinator Strategy

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Pollinators are essential for biodiversity and our wider environment. They maintain the diversity of wildflowers and support healthy ecosystems, particularly by helping plants to produce fruits and seeds which birds and other animals rely on. Pollinators are considered to be a 'keystone species' owing to their importance in supporting a range of ecosystem functions. As such they are of enormous value to agriculture as well as public open spaces and ultimately our health and well-being.
- 1.2 There are at least 1,500 species of insect pollinators in the UK. Most are native species of bumblebees, solitary bees, wasps, moths, butterflies, beetles and flies. Of these the honeybee is normally kept as domestic stock managed in hives by beekeepers. Most pollination is carried out by insects, however there are numerous species such as, birds, smaller foraging mammals and indeed humans that carry out supplementary pollination of plants.
- 1.3 Unfortunately, pollinators face many pressures, including habitat loss, pests and diseases, extreme weather, competition from invasive species, climate change and pesticide use.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 The purpose of this pollinator strategy is to set out the actions we are taking in North Northamptonshire Council's parks, open spaces, and highway verges to help reverse the decline in pollinator populations.
- 2.2 The strategy draws on statutory obligations for environmental protection, introduced by the Environment Act 2021, national policy related to supporting pollinators.
- 2.2 This document will be reviewed annually, with regular monitoring of how the Council is achieving the action plan within this strategy and publication of key performance indicators.

3.0 Strategy outcomes

- 3.1 The Environment Act 2021 (the Act) operates as the UK's new framework of environmental protection. The Act enshrines environmental protection into law.
- 3.2 The Act sets out the legal framework for significant reforms to local authority waste and recycling services, as well as creating new statutory duties for local authorities on nature recovery. Taken together, the Act establishes a new relationship between central and local government on environmental improvement.
- 3.3 The Act strengthens the duty on public bodies to conserve and enhance biodiversity, including mandating a requirement on developers to provide a 'net gain of biodiversity' through the planning system, and a duty for identified Responsible Authorities (of which North Northamptonshire Council is one) to produce a Local Nature Recovery Strategy by the end of 2023.
- 3.4 More specifically, in 2014 Defra produced a [National Pollinator Strategy](#) with the primary aim of expanding food, shelter and nest sites across all types of land so that pollinator species can survive and thrive.

- 3.5 The policies and actions identified in this North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) strategy are underpinned by the Environmental Act and the [National Pollinator Strategy 2014](#) with the aim of delivering outcomes at a local level – notably expanding food, shelter and nesting sites across all types of NNC land to support pollinator species - boosting their chances of survival and allowing them to thrive. More specifically to help achieve the five main principles identified in the National Pollinator Strategy of:
1. more, bigger, better, joined-up, diverse and high-quality flower-rich habitats (including foodplants, nesting places and shelter) supporting pollinators.
 2. healthy populations of wild pollinators and managed bees which are more resilient to threats, including but not limited to climate change.
 3. no further extinctions of known threatened pollinator species.
 4. enhanced awareness across a wide range of businesses, other organisations and the public of the essential needs of pollinators.
 5. evidence of actions taken to support pollinators and pollination services.
- 3.6 With regards to council policy, a greener and sustainable environment is one of North Northamptonshire Council's key commitments. The management and development of the council's parks, open spaces and highways represents a significant investment in time and money towards this commitment, as well as providing enormous cross-cutting benefits to North Northamptonshire residents, notably for health and wellbeing. Further information regarding the council's key commitment to a 'greener and sustainable environment' is available at:
- [North Northamptonshire Council Corporate Plan](#)
- [Northamptonshire Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2023](#)
- 3.7 The council manages a range of different wildlife habitats in its country parks, urban parks and greenspaces, woodlands, nature reserves and highways networks and there are significant opportunities to further improve these areas by implementing this strategy, particularly in urban areas.
- 3.8 This strategy will apply to the following organisations and employees
- NNC
 - Sub-contractors acting on behalf of the Council
 - Suppliers
 - Commercial customers

4.0 Pollinator Strategy

4.1 Key actions to be taken to improve conditions in North Northamptonshire Council's parks, open spaces and highway verges:

1. Increase forage resources for pollinator species

- Leave more long grass/meadow areas in less formal parts of the parks and open spaces to allow flowers to bloom and seed. Prioritising areas that connect to each other and to existing wildlife habitats and corridors. This action will also help protect against soil erosion resulting from hotter temperatures and drought by maintaining stronger root systems of grasses and other perennial plants. Within park management plans, consideration will be given to the need for fire breaks, particularly with neighbouring landowners. If practical and of ecological value, work to improve the floral diversity of these areas and reduce the dominance of coarser grasses.
- Where suitable, allow verges to flower and become rich in early sources of pollen from March through to June as part of the 'Pardon the Weeds' campaign.
- Plant at least 1 tree for every one we remove, per the Tree Management & Care Policy.
- Plant and encourage a native understorey of flowering plants such as hawthorn, blackthorn, honeysuckle, particularly in woodland and marginal areas.
- Where parks are subject to anti-social behaviour problems, interventions will be managed such to avoid the need to remove any re-wilding or pollinator friendly initiatives, with any interventions considered as part of a multi-agency solution.

2. Improve habitats for nesting and overwintering pollinators

- Keep some areas of long grass throughout the winter as a refuge for insects - cutting on a 3-year rotation to ensure that the areas do not become rank and lose floral diversity.
- Acknowledge the importance of bare ground areas for ground-nesting species. Ensure that not all paths and desire lines are hard surfaced or re-turfed, as these are important nesting areas.
- Leave patches of nettles and other larval food plants for breeding butterflies and moths.
- Avoid planting new specimens of tree species which can be damaging to bumblebee species, such as *Tilia petiolate*.
- Where practical, support projects that create bee 'hotels' to encourage mining and leafcutter bees to nest.
- Ensure suitable bio-security measures for new planting if plants are being imported.

3. Reduce Pesticide use

- Wherever practicable, aim to reduce the use of pesticides and ensure that where any treatment application is required that it is minimised by sensitive application techniques such as spot spraying with the most up to date technologies and products and reducing/phasing out blanket spraying of herbicides for weed control.

4. Participate in pollinator projects and action

- Engage with stakeholders in areas where significant change is likely such as through our 'Pardon the weeds, we are feeding the bees' signage etc
- Support or deliver projects aimed at increasing the diversity and abundance of pollinating insects, where practical.
- Aim to involve people in improving their environment, such as through volunteering in parks etc.
- Include learning about pollinators in our Education Ranger led Outdoor Learning activity programmes with schools and groups.

4.2 The above actions will be delivered by:

- Applying the actions identified in this strategy to our ongoing land management work programmes.
- Communication and engagement with stakeholders through social media campaigns, direct consultation with residents and 'on-site' information such as our (already tested) 'feed the bees signage'.
- Identifying and promoting new sites for biodiversity improvement and ensuring record keeping and monitoring performance.
- Education and training to ensure the continued development and application of the strategy in the maintenance of NNC's parks, open spaces, highways.
- Building on the work previously undertaken by the legacy sovereign authorities and the Northamptonshire Local Nature Partnership including the Northamptonshire Biodiversity Action Plan and the Natural Capital Investment Plan, existing policies such as the council's Procurement Policy, and linking with related policies and strategies under development such as the NNC Tree Management & Care Policy, such as the replacement of felled trees.
- The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) will be a strategic spatial strategy that maps the most valuable habitats in North Northamptonshire, proposals for improvements and priorities for nature recovery specific to North Northamptonshire. As such the actions outlined in this pollinator strategy will feature in the LNRS for North Northamptonshire.

4.3 Examples of pollinator work to date:

- The council's country parks, woodlands and nature reserves have a long history of managing habitats to improve wildlife, including pollinators. Much of this is achieved through volunteer work programmes supported by the park and woodland Rangers. These parks contain some very valuable wildlife habitats and are the home to nationally scarce species such as Black Hairstreak and Purple Emperor Butterflies at Fermyn Woods Country Park.
- More recently, valuable work on improving pollinator habitats in urban areas has been trialled in the Kettering and Corby areas which received international recognition and was shared widely on social media. This included the use of 'feed the bees' information signage in verges and parks, to help people understand why their local landscape is changing.

This work has been well received and demonstrated the potential for further improvements to our urban greenspaces and will be expanded across North Northants in the areas where the council has responsibility for green spaces.

5.0 Next steps

- 5.1 The Pollinator Strategy provides a strong basis for the council to take forward proactive campaigns to enhance and promote the natural environment. The following delivery plan is proposed to be undertaken through 2022 and 2023:
- Publication of the strategy on the council's website, including the production of a graphic designed version to promote to residents.
 - Work with internal and external partners to identify further areas of land for pollinator habitat improvement with a phased plan for introduction.
 - Review use of pesticides across the council, with a view to reducing use as much as possible. Train and develop staff – Ongoing.
 - Publicity campaign with residents and businesses, including social media.
 - Introduce new mowing regimes and 'feed the bees' signage.
- 5.2 The following performance indicators will also be introduced as soon as practicable to support the Councils regular monitoring of the strategies actions.
- The number of trees felled, the reason for felling, and the number planted per Annum
 - The volume of pesticide used across North Northamptonshire – Establish a baseline for Grounds services in Wellingborough area.
 - Area of habitat improved (via set aside etc) hectares per Annum.