



The B-Lines Update

Issue 10 - Our Partnership Issue

June 2017

Welcome to our latest update

Welcome to the 'partnership issue' of the B-Lines update. As B-Lines spread across the country their development is increasingly driven by partnerships, whether with individual farmers, local authorities, wildlife charities, schools, churches, businesses or other organisations and you can read a little more about some of these in the coming pages. B-Lines continues to look for opportunities to deliver more pollinator-friendly habitats and we are always on the look out for others to contribute in 'their' part of the network. If you have any queries about getting involved or staying up to date with our work contact: Info@buglife.org.uk



Buff-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*)

Throughout 2017 we are taking a big step forward with our work with partners thanks to help from the Postcode Lottery, so we would like to thank both them and all their players for their help. Over the coming months we will be working with a least eight new partnerships stretching from Scotland down into Sussex and across to Wales.

Helping Pollinators in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

A successful grant application by the Lowland Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) to Defra's LNP pollinator fund is allowing Buglife and other partners to promote work for pollinators across Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, Natural England and Buglife will be running a series of pollinator focussed workshops in July and September looking at encouraging local communities, local councils, businesses and land owners to take action for pollinators and to spread the pollinator message more widely. We are delighted to be part of this partnership and look forward to working with the LNP and partners into the future to deliver B-Lines across the two counties.

Falkirk's Pollinator Way

Falkirk's Pollinator Way is an exciting new project that with the help of schools and communities will transform parks across Falkirk into colourful and diverse wildflower and grassland meadows.

This partnership between Falkirk Council and Buglife will transform regularly mown amenity grassland in parks into attractive and diverse wildflower and grassland meadows. The selected parks are close enough together to form a series of stepping stones which pollinators and other wildlife can use to move and mix between. These parks will be known as 'Pollinator Parks' and will be transformed by sowing a native seed mix, planting native wildflower plants, leaving grassland uncut and managing the areas for wildlife.

Primary schools and Secondary schools local to the selected parks will be invited to help with the creation of these new meadows. This is a fantastic opportunity for schools to learn about the role that their local greenspace plays in supporting pollinating insects and to improve their local area for the use of outdoor learning. Additionally, this project will encourage schools to take local ownership of the parks to ensure long-term use of the area for outdoor education and monitoring of the pollinators using the meadows created through this project.

This project is funded by Scottish Natural Heritage and Falkirk Council.

A mobile network for bees..... Ecotalk

Buglife are pleased to be partnering with Ecotalk to help Britain's bees and other pollinators.

Ecotalk, which is powered by Ecotricity, Britain's greenest energy company, uses money from customers' bills to buy land to give back to nature. This land will provide new habitat for pollinators and other wildlife and help us take another step to conserving our native bees, butterflies, hoverflies and beetles.

We hope the land purchased will provide vital habitat stepping-stones in the B-Lines network, helping pollinators move more easily around both our countryside and urban areas. So by using a mobile network, people can help support another network for bees – The B-Lines.



Marmalade hoverfly (*Episyrphus balteatus*)

ecotalk
Powered by **ecotricity**

Buglife and Ecotalk are also asking people to make a 'Pollinator Promise' – making a public statement about how they plan to help pollinators at home, at work or through campaigning for positive action www.pollinatorpromise.co.uk/. As part of this promise, people can make a donation to B-Lines, helping us spread the word even more widely. Come to the Ecotalk stand at Gardeners World live, Glastonbury and WOMAD to find out more and make your promise.

Making a B-Line for Essex sea walls

Sea walls (vegetated earth embankments) are vital engineered structures for the defence of low-lying areas along estuaries and the coast of the UK such as the Pevensey Levels, much of the Essex seaboard, the North Kent Marshes, and the Gwent Levels. There are over 2,000 km of sea wall in England and Wales, most of which lies within the mapped B-Lines network. Sea wall flood defences support some of the richest modern bumblebee assemblages, with 14 social species capable of regularly exploiting this habitat. This includes five UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) species: Shrill carder bee (*Bombus sylvarum*), Brown-banded carder bee (*B. humilis*), Moss carder bee (*B. muscorum*), Large garden

bumblebee (*B. ruderatus*) and Red-shanked carder bee (*B. ruderarius*).



Flower-rich grassland at Little Oakley

There have been concerns that sea wall mowing regimes, especially where entire sea walls were mown to a short sward height (< 10 cm) in summer (July and August), were not favourable to the conservation of rare insects such as bumblebees. This method of cutting was likely to remove much of the available bumblebee forage resource in one event. Rare and endangered bumblebee species such as *B. sylvarum* are likely to continue to decline unless

suitable flower-rich foraging habitats, including sea walls, are sympathetically managed.

To combat these pollinator declines, grassland management has been changed on the Essex coast over the last 10 years. Over 118 km of sea walls in Essex (30% of the 391 km of defences) are now managed by the Environment Agency (EA) with pollinator conservation in mind. For example, several sea walls are rotationally cut (different sections cut each year) while others are cut once annually from mid-September onwards to preserve foraging and nesting habitats for bumblebees. The altered mowing of Essex sea walls contributes to the delivery of the UK Government's National Pollinator Strategy, launched in 2014, and Buglife's B-Lines project. It is hoped to extend favourable pollinator management to sea walls in Norfolk and Suffolk over the next few years in conjunction with the B-Lines project.

Tim Gardiner, Environment Agency

Further reading:

Gardiner, T., Pilcher, R. & Wade, M. (2015) Sea Wall Biodiversity Handbook. RPS, Cambridge.

www.essexfieldclub.org.uk/portal/p/Sea+Wall+Biodiversity+Handbook



Flower-rich grassland at Foulness Island

Northern Powergrid to get ‘buzzy’ helping make B-Lines

Northern Powergrid, the company responsible for keeping the lights on for 8 million customers across the North East, Yorkshire and northern Lincolnshire, has joined forces with us to help develop the B-Lines network.



The electricity distributor, with its network of more than 63,000 substations and some 60,000 miles of overhead power lines and underground cables spanning 9,650 square miles, is looking at how it can modify management on particular land assets, whether around offices or substation, to provide food and shelter for pollinators. In addition we hope that Northern Powergrid will help us engage with local communities on the B-Lines getting more of them to contribute in gardens, schools and public greenspace.

Gordon Walker, Environmental Manager at Northern Powergrid, said: “We’re really excited to be working with Buglife and are looking at how we can help them with their campaign to build more B-Lines across the region. We have thousands of substations across our network and we’re working with Buglife to identify locations for future Habitat Management Plans which will create areas of flower-rich grassland, whilst enhancing the ecological value of our sites. We’re also looking at how we carry out reinstatement work after large projects to enable us to routinely include habitats that will help encourage and support pollinators and local wildlife.” For more information contact paul.evans@buglife.org.uk

Widening Farm Advice for pollinators

Our Farm adviser is buzzily raising awareness of pollinators around the B-Lines of Kent and Sussex – however now there is a huge appetite for more advice in the farming and land owning sectors. So in February and March this year we ran two ‘training for advisors’ workshops to provide other farm advisors and organisations with the information and confidence they need to provide pollinator advice while delivering their own core work. These workshops were attended by over 50 individuals from across Sussex and Kent and were extremely well received. By providing training for other advisors we expect the amount of pollinator advice being provided on farm visits will grow and grow and grow.



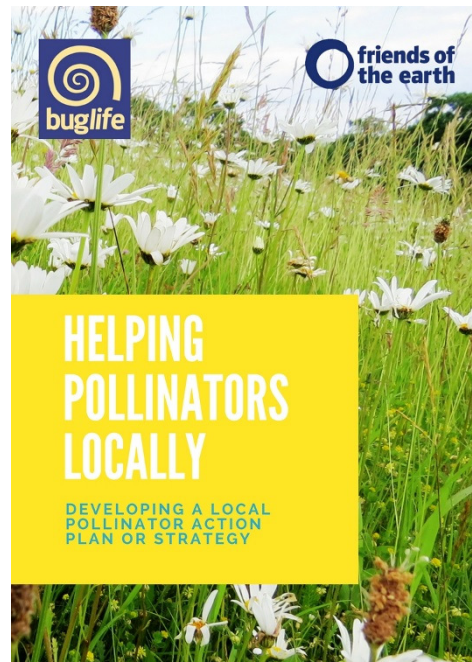
As resources to deliver farm advice on the ground become tighter there is an ever growing need for advisors to offer more holistic and joined up advice, so it is important that we all become more well informed. The Farm Wildlife partnership, which brings together many of the leading wildlife charities is already working to provide more integrated land management advice – see more at www.farmwildlife.info. If your organisation is interested in gaining more experience around insect pollinators please contact Laurie Jackson - laurie.jackson@buglife.org.uk and we can discuss your needs.

Local Authorities working to help pollinators – others urged to do so

Many local authorities around the country are taking action to help pollinators - whether by planting pollinator friendly flowers and trees, reducing pesticide usage or creating wildflower meadows. However there is a lot more that could be done. Buglife and Friends of the Earth have recently published “Helping Pollinators Locally – Developing a Local Pollinator Action Plan” which spells out some of the policies local authorities could undertake, including:

- Use the planning system to protect and increase pollinator-friendly habitat;
- Manage council-owned or council-managed land to benefit bees and other pollinators;
- Encouraging others to act. Local authorities can work with and encourage schools, businesses, local communities and individuals to help develop the flower-rich environments which our native pollinators need. The guide encourages local authorities to develop a Local Pollinator Action plan, embedding the needs of pollinators across all of its functions and work;

And of course a Local Action plan can also outline the local authorities commitment to helping develop the B-Lines network – helping us develop parts of the network and getting the message out to an even wider audience. Please join us today in developing the B-Lines.



If you would like to discuss the development of a Local Pollinator Action Plan please contact paul.evans@buglife.org.uk or download the document at www.buglife.org.uk/sites/default/files/Helping%20Pollinators%20Locally.pdf

Making links across the Suffolk Landscape

Three farming groups covering the Sandlings, Felixstowe Peninsula and the Shotley Peninsula in Southeast Suffolk have come together to develop a more wildlife friendly landscape. Over 60 farms are involved covering in excess of 21,000 hectares of what is primarily commercially farmed land. This area is also very rich in wildlife habitats, some of which are of international importance including heathland & dry acid grassland, lowland meadows, coastal & floodplain grazing marsh, and riparian habitats.

All three farming clusters fall within the Suffolk B-Lines and already provide some very important habitats for insect pollinators. Buglife will be working with FWAG and the farmers to highlight opportunities to further enrich the landscape for pollinators; providing additional food (pollen and nectar), shelter and nesting areas and making links between habitats. This July Buglife will be providing training sessions for farmers as well as helping to develop pollinator plans for some of the farms. It is hoped that over the next five years the Sandlings, Felixstowe and Shotley Peninsulas will become a pollinator friendly part of the UK-wide B-Lines network.

South Wales B-Lines

The mapped B-Lines network for south and south-west Wales has now been finalised and is available on our website. Buglife is now working with Swansea City Council and Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council to develop its first Welsh B-Lines project. If you have ideas on how we can develop parts of the B-Lines network in Wales please contact Clare.Dinham@buglife.org.uk



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Our churchyards can make vital B-Lines for good nature

What have St James's, Piccadilly; Holy Trinity, Barrow upon Soar; St Mary the Virgin, Saffron Waldon and All Saints, West Alvington along with 70 churches in the Chichester diocese and hundreds of others around the country in common? They are all on B-Lines and they can all play a part in this nationwide project.

Buglife and the Church of England's national environment programme 'Shrinking the Footprint' have joined together to encourage every church on a B-Line to help bees and other pollinators. Sensitively managed areas of wildflower meadow, old trees and blossoming shrubs found in many churchyards provide essential food and nesting resources for our wild pollinators. Churches without these existing habitats can also help by allowing wildflowers in grassland areas to flower and in more formal areas, flower beds or tubs, by planting pollinator friendly plants. Of course parishioners can also take action at home, on their farms or their places of work.

We probably all know of somewhere where we would see butterflies when we were young but which has since been built upon. In recent years much of our wildflower-rich meadow land has been lost which means that our church yards are becoming more and more important. So we want to make sure that they become spiritual service stations for our friends the pollinators as they travel the land bringing life to our plants and agriculture.

We are currently trialling work in a few dioceses, including Chichester, however many churches across the country are taking part in Cherishing Churchyards Week (3 -11 June) and we hope many will take up the challenge to cherish our pollinators too and make sure our churchyards play their part in ensuring the country's B-Lines provide non-stop pollinating traffic lanes.



Highways helping to fill in gaps in the B-Lines network

There is an estimated 400,000 km of roads in England Scotland and Wales and a large percentage of these have roadside verges of varying width and type. Many roadside verges are incredibly important for wildlife and Plantlife (<http://plantlife.love-wildflowers.org.uk/roadvergecampaign2016>) are highlighting their value for plants. Of course where there are wildflowers there are wild pollinators!

Roadside verges across the country provide core resources for pollinators and many have the potential to contribute towards the B-Lines, providing valuable stepping stones of habitat within the network.

Buglife has been working with and supporting Highways England across England to develop projects for pollinators. One of these which has been accepted for Highways England funding is work around J45 (Hook Moor) of the M1. This project will enhance species-poor grassland areas, thereby helping to provide a greater diversity of floral resources for a wider diversity of pollinators. In addition the project will plant new native species hedgerows to connect with surrounding hedgerows and provide additional nesting and overwintering habitat. This will also provide another link in the chain of stepping stones of habitat along the B-Lines network.



We are supporting Highways England in developing further projects within the B-Lines on other areas of the A1, A64 and A42, and hope that more and more funding will be provided by Highways England for pollinator work within the B-Lines.

But of course it is not only the verges of major trunk roads which support pollinators, we need all local authorities to manage their roadside verges sympathetically, providing feeding stations and nesting areas for pollinators around the B-Lines network. Further information on the value of all

transport corridors for pollinators can be found here - [www.buglife.org.uk/sites/default/files/Transport%20Corridors%20Pollinator%20Sheet%20Final 1.pdf](http://www.buglife.org.uk/sites/default/files/Transport%20Corridors%20Pollinator%20Sheet%20Final%201.pdf)

Other new pollinator advice

Alongside the pollinator advice for 'transport corridors' see above, Buglife have also produced information for Urban Areas, Farmland and Woodland. All of these guidance documents can be downloaded at- www.buglife.org.uk/b-lines-hub

B-Lines working across our Chalk landscapes

We are delighted to be working with key partners in the Kent Downs and the Chilterns.

In Kent we are supporting the 'Old Chalk New Downs' project which covers an area of around 10,000 hectares of the North Kent Downs and includes a number of small fragmented patches of chalk grassland. This project run by Kent County Council falls primarily within the B-Lines network and aims to create a more connected chalk downland landscape, addressing fragmentation by increasing existing habitats' size and extent, improving condition and linking areas through creation of corridors and stepping stones. Old Chalk New Downs will play a key role in developing this part of the B-Lines network and Buglife will be helping to raise awareness of the needs of pollinators by running a series of workshops across the project area.

In the Chilterns we are working proactively with the 'Chalk, Cherries and Chairs' project run by the Chilterns Conservation Board, and are looking to develop projects to improve the quality of pollinator habitats and the connections between them over the coming five years.

Working with the Land Trust

An exciting new partnership for B-Lines is our join up with national land management charity, the Land Trust. Although the partnership is in its infancy we are looking to see how we can make the Land Trust assets work harder for pollinators.



We are starting by looking at clusters of Land Trust sites in Yorkshire, and have already identified where some small tweaks to management could provide major benefits to pollinators. At Fryston near Castleford, changes to cutting regimes will help enhance wildflower-rich grasslands, providing more food for bees, hoverflies and other pollinators. As part of this work we are also aiming to involve local communities in activities for pollinators.

This partnership has a good foundation as Buglife, the Land Trust and the RSPB have been working together at Canvey Wick nature reserve in Essex for several years. Canvey is an outstanding site for pollinators, with 140 different species of bees and wasps including important populations of UK Priority Shrill carder and Brown banded carder bee. The habitat mosaics which occur on the site, comprising of areas of sandy bare ground, herb rich open grassland, ditches, seasonally wet fen grassland and scrub, provide wonderful habitat for pollinators and other wildlife. Canvey already provides one of the key pollinator hotspots on the B-Lines, and in partnership with the Land Trust we hope to enhance it further. Over time we hope to make other Land Trust sites hotspots for pollinators, thereby developing key stepping stones in the B-Lines network.



Urban Buzz creating urban pollinator hubs on the B-Lines



Buglife's Urban Buzz project, which for the last 18 months has been working in Cardiff, Plymouth, York and Birmingham, is soon to expand into Leicester, Bristol, Ipswich and Leeds. Over one hundred pollinator sites will be enhanced or created in each of these four 'new' cities, which will provide more pollinator habitat within the B-Lines network - www.buglife.org.uk/urban-buzz

Can you help create the B-Lines ?

We are keen to work with, and develop new partnerships to deliver stretches of the B-Lines network, both in our countryside and urban environments. B-Lines is a great opportunity for us all to work together to create something really big, so if you have any contacts who might be interested, please forward them this B-Lines Update. Thank you.

To stay up to date with progress keep visiting www.buglife.org.uk/b-lines-hub .

A big thank you...

And finally a big thank you to the players of the People's Postcode Lottery. A grant from the Postcode Lottery is helping us to engage with more partners and communities across the country and is helping us make a step change in B-Lines development. Over the course of this year we hope to be working in many more areas of the UK.



And finally some of our other key partners we would like to thank:



Photographs © Suzanne Burgess, Steven Falk. Laurie Jackson, Tim Gardiner, Sarah Henshall.