



HELPING POLLINATORS LOCALLY

DEVELOPING A LOCAL
POLLINATOR ACTION
PLAN OR STRATEGY

Table of Contents

Pollinators need our help!	2
1. Why develop a local Pollinator Strategy or Plan?	2
1.1 How can local authorities help our insect pollinators?	3
2. What are native pollinators?	4
2.1 How useful are our pollinators?	4
2.2 Are our pollinators in trouble?	4
2.3 Why are our pollinators in decline?	5
2.4 The benefits to local authorities of conserving our pollinators include	6
3. Government Pollinator Strategies and other relevant legislation and guidance.....	7
3.1 The National Pollinator Frameworks	7
3.2 Local Authority Duties and obligations	7
3.3 Other relevant policies for Local Authorities	8
3.4 Buglife's Pollinator Manifesto	8
4. Developing a Local Pollinator Strategy or Plan	9
4.1 Key elements of a Local Pollinator Strategy or Plan	10
4.1.1 Helping Pollinators through regulatory functions	11
4.1.2 Using Land to benefit pollinators (Land Management)	13
4.1.3 Raising awareness in the wider community	17
4.1.4 Wider opportunities on the Local Authority estate	18
4.1.5 Monitoring action and publicising success	19
5. Buglife and Pollinators	21
5.1 The B-Lines Programme	21
5.2 Get Britain Buzzing.....	21
5.3 Urban Buzz	21
5.4 Greater Bristol Pollinator Strategy	22
6. Friends of the Earth and Pollinators	23
6.1 The Great British Bee Count	23
7. Other organisations and Pollinators.....	23
Annex 1: Useful sources of information:	24
Annex 2: Example Pollinator Plan template	25
Contact Details and Credits	30

Pollinators need our help!

This message is coming from scientists, wildlife organisations and Government. The National Pollinator Strategy for England, the Action Plan for Pollinators in Wales, the Scottish Pollinator Strategy and the All Ireland Pollinator Action Plan all highlight serious declines in our native pollinators and make a call for action from everyone to help conserve these species. Local authorities across the country are being asked to use their regulatory powers and other functions to deliver, promote and enthuse others to participate in work which will benefit pollinators. Local authorities are well placed to make a significant contribution directly through land management and development control, whilst also providing leadership on this issue across their local communities.



1. Why develop a local Pollinator Strategy or Plan?

Local authorities with their wide ranging responsibilities, services and land holdings are in a unique position to help safeguard our native pollinators. Significant opportunities exist in local authority work, including in their role in local planning and as managers of public green space and green infrastructure, and land such as schools, roadside verges and roundabouts.

A Local Pollinator Strategy or Plan provides an opportunity to review current management of parks and other green space, often identifying new more attractive and potentially cost saving opportunities. Making changes will not only benefit pollinators but will provide higher quality public green space; helping to bring people closer to nature, with the health and wellbeing benefits this provides.

The development of a Local Pollinator Strategy or Plan provides local authorities with an opportunity to offer advice and leadership to local communities on an issue directly relevant to everyone, and which has the potential to improve the local environment in which people live. Developing and implementing a Local Pollinator Strategy or Plan shows commitment from the local authority that it is doing its part in conserving our pollinators and is accepting Government challenges to take action.

The development of a Local Pollinator Strategy or Plan will:

- Ensure the needs of pollinators are enshrined across the breadth of local authority work
- Increase awareness of pollinators across all sections of the local authority
- Widen the awareness of pollinators and their requirements within local communities
- Help identify previously unknown opportunities for pollinators
- Ensure the conservation of pollinators is at the heart of land management
- Help ensure that local pollinator populations recover and are able to provide beneficial pollination services to farming and other food producers
- Identify opportunities for collaborative and locally-owned initiatives

Developing and implementing a Local Pollinator Strategy or Plan is much more beneficial than carrying out small-scale, piecemeal work, as it will help ensure whole urban and rural landscapes become fit for purpose to support pollinators and other wildlife for many years to come.

1.1 How can local authorities help our insect pollinators?

Local authorities are uniquely placed to take positive action for pollinators. The range of local authority responsibilities and activities, along with often large landholdings offers an abundance of opportunities for pollinator conservation. Key areas of work include:

- **Conserving pollinators through Local Planning and Green Infrastructure works**

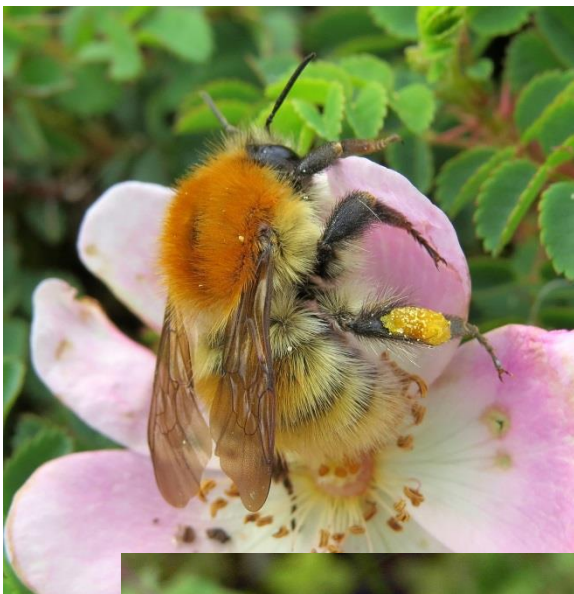
Local authorities can use planning tools such as Local Plans and other planning policies, Section 106 (S106) agreements, planning compensation, avoiding development on high quality urban wildlife sites etc. to protect and enhance local pollinator populations and the habitats upon which they rely.

- **Managing land to benefit pollinators**

Local authorities can make a significant contribution to pollinator conservation by implementing and enabling positive management on Local Wildlife Sites and managing other areas of land such as parks, roadside verges and other green space more sympathetically. They can also provide guidance to other land owners and farmers, encouraging wider work on pollinators.

- **Enthusing others to take action**

Schools, businesses, local communities and private individuals can all help to develop the flower-rich environments which our native pollinators need. Local authorities have a major role to play in raising awareness of the importance of safeguarding our pollinators and enthusing and working with local people to help conserve these pollinators and other wildlife.



2. What are native pollinators?

Our native pollinators include bumblebees and other bees (250 species), butterflies and moths, flies, beetles and wasps. In all there are over 4,000 species of insect in the UK that carry out the pollination of our native wild plants and our food crops.



2.1 How useful are our pollinators?

Many plants rely on insects to pollinate their flowers and so complete their reproductive cycle – most plants cannot set seed without being pollinated (receiving the pollen, usually from another flower). It has been calculated that one out of every three mouthfuls of the food we eat depends on pollination and the annual benefits of insect pollinators to the British Economy have been valued at £691 million (Living with Environmental Change, 2014).

2.2 Are our pollinators in trouble?

- Half of our 27 bumblebee species are in decline.
- Three of these bumblebee species have already gone extinct.
- Across Europe 38% of bee and hoverfly species are in decline.
- Two-thirds of our moths are in long term decline.
- 71% of our butterflies are also in decline.

Without bees, hoverflies and other insects visiting flowers, there would be no strawberries, apples, avocados, chocolate, cherries, olives, blueberries, carrots, grapes, pumpkins, pears, cotton, plums or peanuts....

And very few flowers in our gardens and countryside.

2.3 Why are our pollinators in decline?

Habitat loss – The most significant cause of pollinator decline is the loss and degradation of habitats which provide food, shelter and nesting sites for pollinators. The loss of wildflower-rich grasslands is one of the most important issues. Over 3 million hectares of these habitats have been lost in England alone since the 1930s, through modern farming and urban or industrial development. Many wildflower-rich habitats now exist as small areas separated from each other by more hostile land uses, making it more difficult for insects to move around our countryside and towns. Brownfield sites which often provide refuges for species which have already suffered because of other habitat losses are also now disappearing at an alarming rate. In London over two thirds of the important brownfield sites were redeveloped between 2005 and 2013.

Pesticides – Increased use of pesticides has had a major impact on pollinators and the plants on which they depend. The use of neonicotinoid pesticides is of particular concern. These are systemic pesticides which can be applied as a seed dressing (the preferred delivery mechanism in England) or spray and have a high toxicity to insects. Even when applied as a seed treatment the insecticide is taken up by the whole plant and so can expose pollinators via nectar and pollen. Three neonicotinoid pesticides have been banned by the EU from use on flowering crops since 2013 when a high risk to honeybees was identified. Since this ban was put in place the scientific evidence that neonicotinoids harm bees has grown even stronger, and has found that wild bees could be even more at risk than honey bees. It's worth remembering that honeybees are just one of the many species of pollinator in the UK and wild bees actually do more crop pollination. Evidence is also growing that the use of neonicotinoids on non-flowering crops such as wheat could be a risk to bees because of the way these pesticides leach into the environment and are taken up by other plants such as wildflowers next to crops.

Herbicides are not usually directly harmful to pollinators in themselves, but their excessive use can diminish the supply of flowering plants on which pollinators depend.

Climate change – by disrupting seasonal patterns and shifting the flowering periods of plants, climate change can deprive pollinators of crucial food supplies, especially if they are specialists that depend on one or very few species of plant. Extreme weather events such as floods or droughts are a threat. There may also be more subtle effects such as increased survival of parasites in milder winters; or wet springs and summers which promote vigorous grass growth and change the microclimate in which some insects thrive.

These factors can act in combination and reinforce each other. For example pollinators may need to move to a different area in response to a changing climate, but cannot do so if habitats are fragmented. Loss of flower-rich habitats enforces dependence on intensively-farmed crops, where pollinators are more vulnerable to the effects of pesticides.

2.4 The benefits to local authorities of conserving our pollinators include

- Increased public engagement and awareness in pollinators increases support for local authority pollinator and/or wildlife work
- Improved and increased biodiversity
- An improved local environment for the enjoyment of local people with associated health and well-being benefits
- Improved access to nature, by bringing nature into the heart of urban green spaces
- Potential savings on management of parks, verges and other local authority managed green space
- Helping to develop and improve green infrastructure
- Safeguarded local horticulture and other food production through avoidance of pollination deficit
- An opportunity to shout about the good work for pollinators already happening in your area

Local authorities already helping pollinators

Dorset County Council “will prohibit use of neonicotinoid pesticides on County Council land where the power exists to enforce this”. In discharging its functions as a planning authority, and in giving planning advice via its environmental advice services, will seek to ensure that pollinator habitats are protected and enhanced, and will require, where possible, that new development results in a net gain for pollinators in line with national and locally adopted planning policies (Dorset Action Plan for Pollinators 2016)

Newcastle City Council’s Bee strategy commits to “raising awareness in the local community of bees and their declines”

Islington’s Bees Species Action Plan aims “to work with the local partners in the creation of at least one new wildflower area in a public open space per year”

The Greater Bristol Pollinator Strategy 2015-2020 aims to “protect key populations of S41-listed pollinators and habitats through the planning process”

Aberdeenshire Council’s Pollinator Action Plan commits to “Reviewing the use of annual bedding plants which are very poor for pollinators and replacing with perennials which are beneficial to a range of insects”

3. Government Pollinator Strategies and other relevant legislation and guidance

3.1 The National Pollinator Frameworks

The National Pollinator Strategy (England)

The UK 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 looks to 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.

In taking action across these five areas, Defra aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- More, bigger, better, joined-up, diverse and high-quality flower-rich habitats (including nesting places and shelter) supporting our pollinators across the country.
- Healthy bees and other pollinators which are more resilient to climate change and severe weather events.
- No further extinctions of known threatened pollinator species.
- Enhanced awareness across a wide range of businesses, other organisations and the public of the essential needs of pollinators.
- Evidence of actions taken to support pollinators.

3.2 Local Authority Duties and obligations

Local authorities have a Duty to conserve biodiversity in exercising their functions under the **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006**. This Biodiversity Duty requires all local authorities to make biodiversity an integral part of policy and decision making. This includes the restoration and enhancement of pollinator populations and habitats.

Developing and implementing a Local Pollinator Strategy or Plan will help to demonstrate local authorities' commitment to biodiversity and help to fulfil their legal duty whilst also contributing toward delivery of key objectives outlined in the National Pollinator Strategy.



**By helping pollinators you
will also help other wildlife
and make local
environments more
attractive for local
communities to live in.**

3.3 Other relevant policies for Local Authorities

The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (Section 37) which requires development plans “to include policies encouraging the management of features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild flora and fauna.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) paragraph 117 requires planning authorities to minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity by ensuring planning policies:

- Plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale across local authority boundaries
- Promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets, and identify suitable indicators for monitoring biodiversity in the plan.

Specific commitments under the Natural Environment White Paper (2011) are also potentially beneficial for pollinators, such as establishing green corridors along roads and railways.



Sympathetic management of roadside verges can provide increased food and nesting opportunities for pollinators and other wildlife

3.4 Buglife’s Pollinator Manifesto

Buglife’s Get Britain Buzzing: a Manifesto for Pollinators produced in 2014 outlines 7 key principles and 27 actions to arrest the alarming decline in UK pollinator populations. This manifesto highlights the dire state of many of our pollinators and the need to take action now otherwise our children and grandchildren will not be able to enjoy and rely on the many benefits these species provide. The Manifesto is clear that we need ‘sustainable populations of all pollinators’ and that it is essential to work towards the 7 principles if we are to save and sustain our pollinators.

“Governments and Local Authorities should develop and implement Pollinator Action Plans”.

Other key actions outlined in the Manifesto include:

“Local and national planning guidance should be clear that developments are expected to incorporate pollinator friendly green infrastructure”

“Management of public open space must provide more shelter and nesting areas for pollinators”

4. Developing a Local Pollinator Strategy or Plan

Developing a Local Pollinator Strategy or Plan does not need to be a massive undertaking, however it is important that it seeks commitment and involvement from across the local authority, so that awareness and subsequent actions for pollinators are enshrined into all parts of local authority work. Local Nature Partnerships and wildlife organisations should all be in a position to provide further advice and information on local habitats and species, and to help to join up work on the ground.

A Local Pollinator Strategy or Plan should sit alongside other Local Biodiversity Action Plans, greenspace and green infrastructure strategies, and link into existing Local Development Plans or policies. It should outline a range of positive principles and associated actions which can be applied across the management of local authority projects, assets and decision-making processes. At its core, it should be about providing pollinator food and shelter across all types of land so that our pollinators can survive and thrive.

A Pollinator Strategy or Plan is a call for action – inviting all parts of the local authority and local community to do something to help pollinators.

The message is:

“Everyone can do something and every little thing can help”.

The current financial climate and pressures in which local authorities are working in may discourage some local authorities from considering developing a Local Pollinator Strategy or Plan. There is however a lot that can be achieved without additional expenditure and a lot that can be done by others through the provision of advice and support. Work for pollinators does not have to result in any budget implications in fact in some areas there may be potential for cost savings to be made. For example Burnley is one of the most deprived districts in the UK and is facing the largest cuts of any. Their “Re-thinking Parks” project has brought about new approaches to managing woodland, meadows and perennial planting. While popular with the public and increasing volunteer involvement, it has saved £58,000 initially plus a further £43,000 each year.

The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology point out that “Investment in green infrastructure has a greater positive effect in economically deprived areas than affluent areas. Economically deprived communities spend more time in their neighbourhoods, and the quality of these green spaces has a larger impact on their health and wellbeing”.



Annual wildflowers providing a nurse crop for a perennial meadow at Grangepans meadow, Bo’ness

4.1 Key elements of a Local Pollinator Strategy or Plan

A good Local Pollinator Strategy or Plan should work across all aspects of local authority work and responsibilities, aiming to influence work at all levels. It should aim to utilise local authority assets for the benefit of pollinators and work with the local community to ensure the general public, local businesses and other landowners are made aware of the positive things they can all take and encourage them to take action.

Ideally a Local Pollinator Strategy or Plan will include key actions and targets, however even a simple statement of intent recognising the value of pollinators and identifying some simple key messages and actions for the local authority and the local community will go some way to helping raise awareness of the plight of pollinators and initiate a longer-term change in approach/appreciation. An example Local Pollinator Plan template is provided in Annex 2.

There are many ways local authorities can take action for pollinators.

We recommend that a good Strategy should include objectives and actions under the following themes:

- 1. Helping pollinators through regulatory functions - Local Planning/ Development control**
- 2. Using land for the benefit of pollinators (land management)**
- 3. Raising awareness in the wider community**
- 4. Wider opportunities on the local authority estate**
- 5. Monitoring actions and publicising success**

Further information on these themes along with some suggested actions are given on the following pages.



Wildflower meadows provide food for pollinators such as solitary bees and the Common carder bee

4.1.1 Helping Pollinators through regulatory functions

The Natural Environment White Paper enshrines “the protection and improvement of the natural environment” as a core objective of the planning system. The planning system can play a vital role in the conservation of our wildlife habitats and species, including the protection and enhancement of pollinator populations and habitats. Local planning and development control has an essential function in protecting existing, and creating new pollinator habitats. Key elements of, or commitments within a Local Pollinator Strategy or Plan should include:

1. A review or revision of existing plans and planning policy to ensure the habitats (including brownfield sites) which support, or could support pollinators are recognised and given adequate protection.

All local authorities will have plans and policies relating to the protection of habitats, species and greenspace. It is important to adjust or utilise existing policy frameworks to recognise specific habitats of pollinators and to create new habitats and/or improve existing areas in which pollinators can thrive. The current pressures to secure economic growth and new housing will constantly threaten many habitats of importance for pollinators and our brownfield habitats in particular are under increased threat, however development needs to be balanced with the direct value of pollinators to our food production and the value of flower-rich habitats to the health and wellbeing of local communities.

2. Mapping of existing pollinator habitat and identification of new sites where land could be better managed, or new habitats created to help pollinators move around urban areas.

Maps of current habitat resources, potential pollinator habitat and ‘networks’ should be developed and promoted to developers and local communities. Ideally these maps should be integrated with existing initiatives such as green infrastructure plans and national pollinator initiatives such as B-Lines.

3. Ensuring key populations of priority-listed pollinators (NERC Act, Section 41 species) and habitats, as well as locally threatened species are protected through the planning process.

These species and habitats have been identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action across the country.

4. Developing planning guidance to ensure development results in net gain for pollinators.

The Mitigation Hierarchy (avoid, mitigate and as a last resort compensate) should always be strictly adhered to, however further guidance should be provided to ensure development also provides a quantifiable benefit for pollinators

5. Using S106 agreements and other measures to ensure pollinator friendly habitats are created as part of development.

The needs of pollinators and potential enhancement opportunities should be considered early in the planning and/or design process. Planners should be more proactive in requirements for planting schemes, to advocate species of local provenance and known value for wildlife.

6. Ensuring planning officers have training in, or access to ecological expertise to ensure that the needs of pollinators are considered in their work.

Reductions in local authority staffing has reduced the capacity of local planning officers in some areas. It is essential that councils retain ecological expertise within their workforce and that this includes expertise relating to pollinators and their habitat needs.

Case Study - Making a B-Line for the North East

The B-Lines programme is developing a network of wildflower-rich areas across the UK, from the coast up into our hills and mountains and from the countryside into our towns and cities. The Making a B-Line for the North East project aimed to develop several key stretches of the B-Lines network across Sunderland and South Tyneside.



Working with Durham Wildlife Trust, Sunderland City Council and South Tyneside Council, the project carried out habitat restoration on 12 Local Wildlife Sites and two Sites of Special Scientific Interest. In particular the project focussed on restoring wildflower-rich grassland through programmes of scrub clearance and re-instatement of cutting. In addition green hay was been harvested from nearby wildflower-rich grasslands and used to restore and create new areas of grassland.



Wildflower-rich grassland creation and restoration at Copt Hill, Houghton-le-Spring, Sunderland



The project has also focussed on increasing wildflowers, and the pollinators which depend on them in local green space and local parks in South Tyneside and Sunderland. Yellow rattle and other common wildflowers have been seeded and/or planted in strategically located areas of land. Relaxed cutting regimes in some areas led to unexpected appearances of orchids and other wildflower species where they had not previously been seen.

Training has been provided to local authority staff to increase understanding as to how simple changes to grassland management can help pollinators.



The project has also focussed on getting young people interested in pollinators and wildflowers. Buglife and Durham Wildlife Trust led education activities at 14 primary schools, engaging with over 300 children. Schools sessions helped pupils learn about the process of pollination and why this is so valuable to both wildlife and people. Durham Wildlife Trust has also worked with 7 schools to create pollinator habitats on their schools grounds and wildflower seed packets were provided to 80 local schools. New educational resources produced through the project are available on the Buglife website.

The project was supported by J. Paul Getty JNR Charitable Trust, [Biffa Award](#) and [Northumbrian Water](#)

4.1.2 Using Land to benefit pollinators (Land Management)

The National Pollinator Strategy for England promotes five key actions for gardeners, farmers, local authorities and landowners through the “Bees Needs: Food and a home”:

- i) Grow more flowers, trees and shrubs to provide pollen and nectar
- ii) Leave areas of your garden to grow wild
- iii) Cut grass less often to allow plants to flower
- iv) Don't disturb insect nests and hibernation spots
- v) Think carefully where to use pesticides

These simple actions should be both enshrined across the work of local authorities and promoted to local communities, however more detailed management guidance will produce increased benefits for pollinators and key elements are outlined below:

1. Ensuring Local Wildlife Site protection and management - ensure appropriate management of pollinator habitats including accommodating nesting/shelter and forage requirements, as well as seasonal changes in need.

These sites play a significant role in supporting populations of common and rare pollinators and it is essential that they are managed appropriately. Local authorities should commit to managing sites in their ownership and provide guidance to other land owners. Note it is not just wildflower-rich grasslands which are important for pollinators; woodlands, ditches and ponds, hedges and trees all offer important forage, shelter and nesting areas.

2. Reviewing parks management and looking for opportunities to manage land for the benefit of pollinators - (for example reducing frequency of grass and hedgerow cutting regimes, removal of cut grass from wildflower-rich grasslands etc.).

It is not only Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest which are of value to pollinators. There are considerable areas of other land such as parks which with relatively minor changes to management can provide food, shelter and nesting for pollinators. There is also strong evidence to show that improving people's access to nature in these areas can provide significant benefits to people's quality of life and health. Some local authorities have demonstrated that the cost of creating and managing wildflower meadows can be cheaper over time than maintaining regular amenity mowing regimes.



Reducing cutting frequency on some parkland areas in South Tyneside has increased flowering of common wildflowers which in turn provide valuable pollen and nectar for insects

3. Reviewing amenity planting schemes (including tree planting and bedding planting) aiming to increase the value of these for pollinators.

Some plants can provide very useful supplies of pollen and nectar whereas others can be of no use at all. Native plants are important as they can provide both adult and larval food sources. The Royal Horticultural Society has developed a useful list of plants 'Perfect for Pollinators' https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/pdf/conservation-and-biodiversity/wildlife/rhs_pollinators_plantlist. Other options include the use of annual meadow mixes which can provide cost savings over traditional bedding plants, and also provide significant additional benefits for pollinators. Also consider which trees and shrubs to plant as these can provide significant quantities of pollen and nectar.



Trees and shrubs such as Cherry-plum, Goat willow and Blackthorn, Plum, Wild cherry, Crab apple and larger willows provide important pollinator food in early spring

4. Changing mowing regimes on road verges etc. to allow more wildflowers to bloom naturally.

Roadside verges and roundabouts are often maintained as short grassland. This may be required for road safety purposes but often it is just carried out as it has always been done this way. Reducing cutting frequencies, or creating wildflower lawns or meadows can be an effective way to provide attractive areas beneficial to pollinators and potentially reduce management costs. Likewise hedge cutting regimes can be changed to allow better structure to develop in hedgerows and flowering shrubs to bloom for longer.

The precise timing of mowing regimes depends on the vegetation being managed. As a general rule nectar-rich plants should be allowed to finish their flowering period. Early flowering species such as Dandelion and Primrose are of particular value for pollinators as they emerge in the spring. Cuttings should be removed where practicable to keep fertility low and prevent growth of rank vegetation.

Isle of Wight Council plans to reduce verge cutting, saving £11,000 a year. This will allow more wildflowers to bloom, benefitting pollinators, while essential road safety standards are maintained.

5. Reviewing pesticide policy and looking to cease use of neonicotinoids and reduce usage of other pesticides.

There is growing evidence of the harmful effects that pesticide use can have on pollinators and other wildlife. Local Authorities should aim to use pesticides only if absolutely necessary (for example the control of Japanese Knotweed where reliable alternatives are not yet fully developed) and avoid using pesticides on flowering plants or where pollinators are active or nesting.

Of particular concern is the use of neonicotinoid pesticides. Local authorities should ensure that bedding plants, bedding plant seeds or amenity turf have not been dressed with neonicotinoids. This policy will need to be implemented through procurement both from external contractors and in-house services.

Dorset County Council is stopping the use of neonicotinoids on land owned by the council

This is a key part of their 'pollinator strategy' adopted in June 2016.

6. **Providing training to staff (ground maintenance, parks departments, estate management, pest control, highways) to raise awareness of the needs of pollinators and the impact of management regimes such as mowing.**

Often only small changes to the management of land can make a significant difference to the value of land for pollinators and other wildlife. An increased awareness across staff (and contractors) can result in new opportunities or ways of working being identified leading to benefits to wildlife and people and potentially cost saving as well.

Case Study – Cornwall Street, Plymouth

As part of the national Urban Buzz project Buglife has been working with Plymouth City Council to improve the local environment for native pollinators. This work has included creating wildflower meadow, changing cutting regimes and developing new pollinator ‘feeding stations’ and ‘nesting sites’ throughout the city.



Cornwall Street is one of five sites worked on by Urban Buzz in the pedestrianised zone in Plymouth city centre. It consists of three separate raised beds which cover approximately 40m² which originally contained annual bedding plants (primulas or begonias) which the Council had to replace and replant at least twice a year.



In order to retain and improve the seasonal interest of these beds, the project worked with the Council to replant them with dwarf pollinator-friendly shrubs, such as lavender and rosemary, which would keep their leaves all year round. A variety of different flower shapes were used and it was ensured that there would be flowers available for as much of the year as possible.



These beds are in a very central location and this project helps to provide refuges for insects in an otherwise very concrete and urbanised area. A lot of bumblebees have been seen visiting the few plants that have flowered so far, but it will really come into its own the following year. It generated a lot of public interest and enabled us to talk to a lot of shoppers about the project as we were planting, many of whom were also keen to get involved.

4.1.3 Raising awareness in the wider community

1. Providing advice to local gardeners, allotment holders and community groups regarding positive works for pollinators.

Private gardens and allotments can be incredibly important for pollinators and other wildlife. Small changes to management, for example growing more pollinator friendly flowers and shrubs, or reducing the use of pesticides can massively increase the value of the millions of gardens which adorn our towns and countryside. Providing simple clear advice to gardeners and demonstrating the Council's own 'pollinator friendly' land management can promote millions of small changes which all add up to significant changes for pollinators.

2. Raising awareness of pollinators to local residents and businesses.

For pollinator conservation to be successful we need to let people know how important pollinators are. There are many ways to raise public or business awareness such as mailings, events, flower/meadow creation, garden-pollinator awards etc. Businesses may also be persuaded to sponsor local pollinator work.



Annual wildflowers and wildflower plug planting can be a great way to engage with local communities.

3. Working with schools to create pollinator-friendly habitats on school grounds and educate schoolchildren about pollinators.

Schools grounds are a substantial resource which could 'work harder' for pollinators by creating wildflower-rich areas or planting pollinator friendly plants. There is growing evidence that children benefit from outdoor learning, so there are both educational and health benefits from involving schools in pollinator conservation. Lessons learned at school often lead to new things being tried at home.

4. Participating in and supporting any wider pollinator projects and initiatives, including integrating pollinator needs into pre-existing schemes and initiatives.

Many pollinator projects and initiatives are already happening around the country (for example see below for information on B-Lines and Urban Buzz). Providing local authority support for these initiatives and helping to enable local delivery may be more useful than developing separate new projects.

5. Working with Town and Parish Councils and lower tier authorities.

Everyone can do something to help pollinators so working at a local scale can help to spread the word more effectively and initiate more action. The adoption of a pollinator plan provides an excellent hook for communication with other bodies that have responsibility for managing open spaces. Case studies can be promoted and general principles and sources of local advice set out. This communication is of course two-way as initiatives to help pollinators may be underway at a local level which deserve wider exposure.

6. Working with Local Nature Partnerships and others to raise awareness with farmers and landowners.

Pollinators in our countryside are under threat from pesticide use and habitat loss. More joined up work is required to raise awareness in our farming communities and to encourage participation in pollinator conservation, including agri-environment schemes.

4.1.4 Wider opportunities on the Local Authority estate

1. Look for opportunities for ‘greening’ buildings and other estates.

Green roofs, green walls, sustainable urban drainage systems are just a few of the opportunities to help pollinators. However smaller scale work such as installation of bee hotels or pollinator friendly hanging baskets are all worthwhile.



Bee hotels provide great nesting spaces for many bee species. Pollinator friendly formal plantings can provide valuable pollen and nectar.

2. Review management of other local authority land, for example farms.

As landlords, local authorities can encourage tenants to adopt pollinator-friendly farming and land management practices, for example through moving to Integrated Pest Management, sowing and planting to benefit pollinators, providing clean open water, and entering into agri-environment schemes. A policy of restricting the use of harmful neonicotinoid pesticides with the aim of their eventual elimination should be clearly set out, although local authorities may not have the legal means at their disposal to enforce such restrictions within existing tenancy agreements.

3. Look for opportunities to help pollinators across local greenspace.

A wide range of activities are possible across local greenspace, for example planting pollinator friendly street trees such as pussy willow, alder and hawthorn which provide a valuable source of pollen and nectar for pollinators.

4.1.5 Monitoring action and publicising success

1. Annually review actions/success.

It is important to keep track on progress of the Pollinator Strategy or Plan, to share and promote success, and to learn from mistakes. Where relevant, information on pollinator activities should be communicated to wildlife organisations or recorded on systems such as the B-Lines map.

A Pollinator Plan is only as good as its implementation. Some actions, such as changing mowing and cutting regimes, will depend on contractors for their successful adoption in practice. So it's important that the effectiveness of the Plan is regularly monitored.

It is a good idea to establish a local pollinator forum so that successes and problems can be shared and fed back into the development of the Pollinator Plan over time.

Some pollinator-friendly features, such flower strips and meadows, or “bee hotels”, do degrade over time. So at the outset a commitment needs to be secured to their ongoing maintenance and replacement as needed.

2. Carry out Habitat assessments of pollinator habitats and targeted pollinator surveys.

In many areas there will be limitations in the understanding of pollinator populations. At present there is no national standard for monitoring pollinators, however there are a number of monitoring schemes co-ordinated by wildlife organisations and carried out by volunteers such as Bumblebee Conservation Trust (Bee Walk) and Butterfly Conservation (Big Butterfly Count). Local authorities should utilise their local communications channels to enthuse local people to participate in these national initiatives as a first step in increasing knowledge of pollinators in the local area. Buglife has an urban habitat assessment for use by local communities (see [https://www.buglife.org.uk/sites/default/files/Urban%20Buzz%20Pollinator%20Potential%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.buglife.org.uk/sites/default/files/Urban%20Buzz%20Pollinator%20Potential%20(1).pdf)). Local Environmental Records Centres provide an essential service in providing baseline species and habitat data and helping with surveys and monitoring and should be used and supported.

Case Study – Bee Worlds

The creation of the Bee World (flower-rich strips) at Stanah Park in Wyre Estuary Country Park, the Flyde. This was a combined effort by Year 5 of Baines Endowed Primary School, Thornton, the rangers and volunteers of Stanah Park and the two resident Honey Bee keepers, Irene and Alan.



5. Buglife and Pollinators

5.1 The B-Lines Programme is working to develop a network of wildflower-rich areas across the UK helping to support our native pollinators and helping them to move more easily around the country.

B-Lines is being developed as a response to recommendations made in Sir John Lawton's 'Making Space for Nature' review; identifying and creating linkages between our key wildlife sites. B-Lines also provides a framework within which we can make a major contribution towards the National Pollinator Strategy.

The B-Lines are being mapped across the UK in partnership with local authorities, Local Nature Partnerships, Statutory Agencies and other conservation partners. B-Lines are identified as 3 km wide linear pathways which link together existing important wildflower-rich areas (e.g. SSSI, Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, nature reserves, BAP habitats) – these habitat areas forming the foundations of the new B-Lines network. Further guidance on how the B-Lines are mapped and should be developed to provide the greatest benefits to wildlife and people is provided in other Fact Sheets. B-Lines aims to create and restore at least 150,000 hectares of flower-rich habitat across the UK. Making this happen will take time and will need local authorities, farmers, land owners, wildlife organisations, businesses and the general public to work together to create flower-rich grassland in the best locations.

For further information - www.buglife.org.uk/b-lines

5.2 Get Britain Buzzing - The 'Get Britain Buzzing' campaign aims to highlight the crisis facing British pollinators and to transform amenity grassland in our urban parks and along road verges into colourful species-rich wildflower and grassland meadows.

Through this campaign Buglife have delivered 'Buzzing' projects in Glasgow, York, Muirton (in Perth), Plymouth and Peterborough. Buglife currently have active 'Buzzing' projects in Fife, North Lanarkshire and Torbay. Additionally, Buglife 'Buzzing' projects have included the creation of living green roofs, improving habitat on brownfield land and encouraging people to create bee hotels in their gardens.

Many of Buglife's 'Buzzing' projects have involved:

- Planting plug plants and seeds of a variety of native wildflower and grassland species with the help of local communities and schools
- Planting Yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) which is a hemi-parasite of grasses and reduces their growth thus improving wildflower species diversity in a meadow
- Altering grass cutting regimes
- Creating bee banks for ground-nesting solitary bees
- Planting flowering trees and hedgerows
- Improving management of grasslands
- Attending events to enthuse about the importance of grasslands for pollinating insects, other wildlife and people.

For further information - www.buglife.org.uk/buzzing-projects

5.3 Urban Buzz is an exciting project using innovative techniques to create eight 'Buzzing Cities' in England and Wales for pollinators, transforming mown and unused urban sites into 200 hectares of rich and vibrant habitat for pollinating insects, and engaging 80,000 people with their local Buzzing Hotspots. Urban areas provide enormous opportunities for habitat creation and can contain a remarkable number of species; for example 35% of UK hoverfly species were recorded in a single garden. Urban Buzz is creating and modifying habitat throughout the urban landscape for pollinating insects, providing more high quality nesting and forage sites. This includes the planting of trees, shrubs, formal beds and native meadows, as well as the installation of living roofs and walls, nesting habitat walls, bee banks and bee hotels. Sites are being selected to improve habitat connectivity, making pollinators more resilient to changes such as development, climate change and pollution; allowing their movement across a city.

Everyone can get involved and there is an interactive web map for each city, where people can add their local Buzzing Hotspots, as well as help to choose, create and design Buzzing Hotspots for pollinators. The eight Buzzing cities chosen to benefit through this project are: Birmingham, Cardiff, Plymouth, York, Bristol, Ipswich, Leeds and Leicester. These cities have been chosen for their potential to deliver the National Pollinator Strategy which sees improving habitat in urban areas as key to tackling pollinator decline. With more flowers and wildlife, these cities will be more attractive, and healthier and happier places to live.

For further information - <https://www.buglife.org.uk/urban-buzz>

5.4 Greater Bristol Pollinator Strategy - In 2015 a partnership of eight organisations including local councils, NGOs and universities developed and published a local pollinator strategy for the Greater Bristol urban area. The Strategy comprises specific aims and actions intended to raise awareness of pollinators and promote the creation and maintenance of good pollinator habitat across the city. The Strategy Steering Group includes Avon Wildlife Trust, Bee Bristol, Buglife, Bristol City Council, Bristol Friends of the Earth, South Gloucestershire Council, the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England.

The aims of the Greater Bristol Pollinator Strategy are to:

1. Identify and protect existing habitat for pollinators
2. Increase the amount of pollinator habitat
3. Raise awareness of pollinators to the public, businesses and private landowners
4. Provide best practice guidelines in line with the latest research

The Strategy is a key element of the Get Bristol Buzzing initiative. For further information about the Greater Bristol Pollinator Strategy, including progress reports and latest news, see www.getbristolbuzzing.org

6. Friends of the Earth and Pollinators

6.1 The Great British Bee Count

The Great British Bee Count, sponsored by Waitrose and supported by Buglife, encourages the public to learn more about the incredible diversity of bee species in Britain, the threats they face, and what they can do to help.

Using a free smartphone app, participants can identify and record some of the more common bees they spot in their gardens, parks, schools and countryside.

In 2016, 97% of the participants surveyed (2,000 individuals) said they had been inspired to take action to help bees as a result of taking part in the Great British Bee Count. These actions varied from growing bee-friendly plants, and mowing less, to cutting out pesticides and sharing information about bees on social media.

In the same year, 383,759 individual bee sightings were recorded in total, from Scilly to Shetland. Participants reported White-tailed bumblebees, a category that includes buff-tailed and garden bumblebees, as the most numerous ones they spotted. Cotoneaster was reported to be the garden plant most favoured by the various bee species.

The data from sightings are made available to the public. They are also uploaded to the National Biodiversity Network, where they can be accessed by researchers, local authorities and other interested organisations.

www.greatbritishbeecount.co.uk

7. Other organisations and Pollinators

Several other organisations exist which can help advise on specifics of managing land and other assets for the benefit of pollinators.

The Wildlife Trusts in particular are likely to be valuable partners. They are active across the UK and will have detailed knowledge of nature in the area, and a large membership.

In conjunction with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) The Wildlife Trusts have published Bees' Needs - <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/bees-needs> - which promotes five simple actions which everyone can do for pollinators. The Bees' Needs website also hosts several pollinator guidance notes produced by Defra.

The Bumblebee Conservation Trust (BBCT) is a UK-based national charity with in-house technical, scientific skills and experience in habitat creation and restoration for bumblebees and pollinators generally. They have produced a local authority pack (see Annex 1), which can be used by community groups wishing to encourage their council to plant more bee friendly plants.

In conjunction with Bournemouth University, BBCT have developed a website specifically for Local Authorities to access to resources and best practice. The Pollinator Exchange website can be found here: <http://www.pollinatorexchange.org/>. Local authorities are encouraged to upload any resources to this site.

Annex 1: Useful sources of information:

Buglife – Get Britain Buzzing: A manifesto for pollinators <https://www.buglife.org.uk/pollinator-manifesto>

National Pollinator Strategy for England 2014

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/409431/pb14221-national-pollinators-strategy.pdf

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/474386/nps-implementation-plan.pdf

Action Plan for Pollinators - Wales

<http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/consmanagement/conservationbiodiversity/action-plan-for-pollinators/?lang=en>

Scottish Pollinator Strategy

<http://www.snh.gov.uk/about-scotlands-nature/species/invertebrates/land-invertebrates/pollinator-strategy-consultation/>

All Ireland Pollinator Action Plan

<http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/All-Ireland%20Pollinator%20Plan%202015-2020.pdf>

Buglife B-Lines Pollinator sheets - <https://www.buglife.org.uk/advice-and-publications/publications/b-lines-resources> and local authority guidance

Buglife information on Neonicotinoid insecticides <https://www.buglife.org.uk/campaigns-and-our-work/campaigns/neonicotinoid-insecticides>

Buglife Urban Buzz information - <https://www.buglife.org.uk/advice-and-guidance-2>

‘Managing Transport Corridors for Pollinators’ and ‘Managing Urban Spaces for Pollinators’ (Buglife)
www.buglife.org.uk/sites/default/files/Transport%20Corridors%20Pollinator%20Sheet%20Final.pdf

www.buglife.org.uk/sites/default/files/Urban%20Pollinator%20Sheet%20Final.pdf

Living with Environmental Change: Managing urban areas for insect pollinators. As town and cities continue to grow how can land managers help insect pollinators in urban areas?

<http://www.nerc.ac.uk/research/partnerships/ride/lwec/ppn/ppn20/>

Planning for a healthy environment: good practice guidance for green infrastructure and biodiversity”, TCPA and the Wildlife Trusts, 2012

www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/TCPA_TWT_GI-Biodiversity-Guide.pdf

DEFRA advisory notes – urban, transport gardens, industrial etc <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/bees-needs/information-sheets>

Status and value of pollinators and pollination - A report to DEFRA

<http://nora.nerc.ac.uk/505259/1/N505259CR.pdf>

Friends of the Earth - Local Authority Bee Guide <https://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/local-authority-bee-guide-46885.pdf>

Bumblebee Conservation – Local Authority Pack

https://bumblebeeconservation.org/images/uploads/Local_authorities_pack_full.pdf

Annex 2: Example Pollinator Plan template

XXXXX POLLINATOR STRATEGY 20xx – 20xx

A Commitment from the xxx Council

xxx is committed to helping to conserve the UK's pollinators by ensuring the council will consider the needs of pollinators in the delivery of its duties and work. xxx will seek to protect and increase the amount and quality of pollinator habitat and manage its greenspace to provide greater benefits for pollinators. We will ensure local people are provided with opportunities to make xxx more pollinator friendly.

Our vision: *Our local environment will be rich in flower-rich habitats, helping support sustainable pollinator populations and making places more attractive for people to live and work in*

Aims: The Council and its partners will work together to:

- Ensure the needs of pollinators are represented in local plans, policy and guidance
- Protect, increase and enhance the amount of pollinator habitat in xxx to prevent extinctions and improve the status of any locally threatened species
- Increase awareness of pollinators and their habitat needs across local residents, businesses and other landowners
- Increase the contribution to pollinator conservation of all land under the ownership of, or managed by the Council
- Improve our knowledge and understanding of pollinators in our local area

Background to the Strategy

The Importance of Pollinators

Our native pollinators include bumblebees and other bees (250 species), butterflies and moths, flies, beetles and wasps. In all there are over 4000 species of insect in the UK that carry out pollination of our native wild plants and our 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 vegetables and fruits including apples, pears, strawberries, beans and peas.

Pollinators under threat

Our pollinators are in trouble

- Half of our 27 bumblebee species are in decline
- Three of these bumblebee species have already gone extinct
- Two-thirds of our moths are in long term decline.
- Across Europe 38% of bee and hoverfly species are in decline
- 71% of our butterflies are in decline

The most significant factors leading to these declines in pollinator numbers include:

1. Habitat loss – The most significant cause of decline is the loss and degradation of habitats which provide food, shelter and nesting sites for pollinators. The loss of wildflower-rich grasslands is one of the most important issues. Over 3 million hectares of these habitats have been lost in England alone since the 1930s, the loss being attributed to more intensive farming and urban/industrial development.
2. Pesticides – There is growing evidence that the use of pesticides is having harmful effects on pollinators including honeybees, wild bees and butterflies. Wider effects throughout ecosystems are also of concern and pesticides have been implicated in other declines such as farmland birds and soil organisms. The use of

neonicotinoids is of particular concern. These are systemic pesticides which can be applied as a seed dressing (the preferred delivery mechanism) or spray and have a high toxicity to insects.

3. Climate Change – long term changes can deprive pollinators of food supplies at times when they need them, increase their exposure to parasites and diseases, or change habitats so that they are no longer suitable. There may be gains as well as losses but a resilient network of good pollinator habitat across the area is needed for them to be able to adapt and take advantage of changes.

What pollinators need

Pollinators need many of the things we need – food, shelter and nesting areas.

Food – Pollinators need food (nectar and pollen) throughout the season from March through until September. Many plants and trees can provide these food resources, including many so called ‘weeds’ such as dandelions and thistles. In addition to flowers, many pollinators need other food resources to support their different life stages – for example butterfly and moth caterpillars need particular plants to feed on.

Shelter and nesting - Dense vegetation such as tussocky grassland, scrub, mature trees, and piles of wood and stone can provide essential habitat for hibernating pollinators. Many species overwinter as adults including queen bumblebees, and some butterflies and hoverflies, others as eggs, larvae or pupae. Old burrows and dense vegetation are used by bumblebees, with sunny slopes and dry ground used by ground-nesting bees such as mining bees.

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.

Pollinators in xxxxxxx

Key principles of the Strategy

This strategy has been developed to raise awareness of the plight of pollinators and to ensure the Council and its local residents, businesses and landowners are provided with information to help us all protect and increase our pollinator populations. This strategy is designed to ensure the needs of pollinators are enshrined across the breadth of Council work and to increase awareness of pollinators across our local community.

Working with partners and partners initiatives

Where possible the Council will join forces and participate in other local, regional or national pollinator programmes or projects. More joined up collaborative action for pollinators will help ensure a future for these very important species. Key national initiatives include Buglife’s B-Lines programme which aims to create a network of wildflower-rich areas across the UK.

Strategy Objectives and Actions

Aim 1: To ensure the needs of pollinators are represented in local plans, policy and guidance

	Objective	Specific Actions	Target	Start and End Date
1.1	Increase the protection afforded to pollinator habitats and the species they support by ensuring appropriate recognition in local plans and policies	Carry out a review of existing surveys and biodiversity mapping to identify key pollinator habitats present in the area		
		Take forward a review, and where required revise current policies to take account of the needs of pollinators		
1.2	Increase the profile of habitats of value to pollinators in biodiversity asset, green infrastructure and other maps	Survey habitats, including brownfield, parks, verges etc. to assess their importance for pollinators		
		Review and revise biodiversity asset maps to recognise importance of pollinator habitats		
1.3	Recognise and capitalise on opportunities to create pollinator friendly habitats as part of new development	Raise awareness of and promote the creation of pollinator friendly features with developers		
		Use Section 106 agreements to ensure greenspaces in new developments are made pollinator friendly		

Aim 2: To protect, increase and enhance the amount of pollinator habitat in xxx and prevent any extinction and improve the status of any locally threatened species

	Objective	Specific Actions	Target	Start and End Date
2.1	Increase the value of Local Wildlife Sites for pollinators	Ensure the needs of pollinators are taken into account in the management of all Local Wildlife Sites which are owned or managed by the Council		
		Provide information on the needs of pollinators to other owners /managers of Local Wildlife Sites		
2.2	Increase the value of parks and other greenspace for pollinators	Identify areas of parkland which will benefit from a reduced cutting regime		
		Work with local communities to develop a balanced approach to park management to support a range of uses and wildlife benefits		
		Reduce grass cutting on 25% of public green space		
2.3	Reduce the impact of pesticides on pollinators and other wildlife	Review use of pesticides by the Council and aim to reduce this by 30		
		Cease use of neonicotinoids including seed dressings, plants and turf.		

Aim 3: To increase awareness of pollinators and their habitat needs across local residents, businesses and other landowners

	Objective	Specific Actions	Target	Start and End Date
3.1	Increase awareness of pollinators in the local community and within local businesses	Provide information on pollinator friendly gardening activities to local residents and local allotment holders		
		Create pollinator friendly flower beds in parks and link these to interpretation about pollinators		
		Promote pollinators to local business forums and individual businesses as a way to help biodiversity and improve the local environment		
3.2	Increase the number of young people who understand the value of their local pollinators	Encourage local schools to develop wildflower areas in school grounds		
		Develop a pollinator award for schools		

Aim 4: To increase the contribution to pollinator conservation of all land under the ownership of, or managed by the Council

	Objective	Specific Actions	Target	Start and End Date
4.1	Make council owned land and buildings more pollinator friendly	Establish and maintain a network of "Bee Hotels" across the parks and public open spaces.		
		Ensure plants in flowerbeds around Council offices, etc., are pollinator friendly		
		Ensure green roofs and or pollinator nesting features are installed on new Council buildings and publicise this work as good practice		
4.2	Reduce use of neonicotinoids across the local authority estate	Provide all tenants with advice on pollinator-friendly farming including information on the harmful effects of neonicotinoid pesticides. Prohibit the use of neonicotinoid pesticides which have been linked to the decline in pollinators on Council land where the power to do this exists.		
4.3	Increase the area of pollinator habitats on local greenspace managed by local groups	Work with and support 'friends of groups' to manage and create pollinator habitats		

Aim 5: To improve our knowledge and understanding of pollinators in our local area

	Objective		Specific Actions	Target	Start and End Date
5.1	Establish effective monitoring of work being carried out in our area		Carry out a brief review of achievements annually and publicise success to local communities		
			Encourage staff and contractors to feed back on actions they take for pollinators and provide an award for best practice		
5.2	Increase information on the status of pollinators		Encourage local people to support national pollinator monitoring schemes		

Contact Details and Credits

Buglife - The Invertebrate Conservation Trust is a registered charity

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HELPING POLLINATORS LOCALLY

DEVELOPING A LOCAL POLLINATOR
ACTION PLAN OR STRATEGY

