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B-Lines—Frequently asked questions

Background to B-Lines

What does the B-Lines Initiative aim to do?

The B-Lines Initiative aims to substantially increase the area of permanent wildflower-rich habitats in the UK, helping to support insect pollinators and other wildlife. To do this most effectively B-Lines focusses habitat restoration and creation works within the mapped B-Lines network.

What are B-Lines?

The B-Lines are linear pathways running through our countryside and towns, which will join up into a UK-wide network, helping to conserve our insect pollinators and let them move around more easily. The B-Lines are mapped as 3 km wide linear pathways, which encompass and link the best and most extensive areas of existing wildflower-rich habitat.

Why do we need B-Lines?

In living memory there has been a substantial reduction in the area of wildflower-rich grassland in the UK; this has been one of the major contributing factors behind the dramatic declines to our native pollinators. Much of our surviving wildflower-rich habitat now exists as just small fragments, leaving populations of insects left isolated from each other, separated by intensively managed farmland and by our towns and cities. As many insect species have a very limited ability to move and disperse, there is a major risk of them dying out as the small fragments of habitat they depend on are damaged or destroyed. This problem is only likely to increase as species also need to find a way to move around the country as our climate changes.



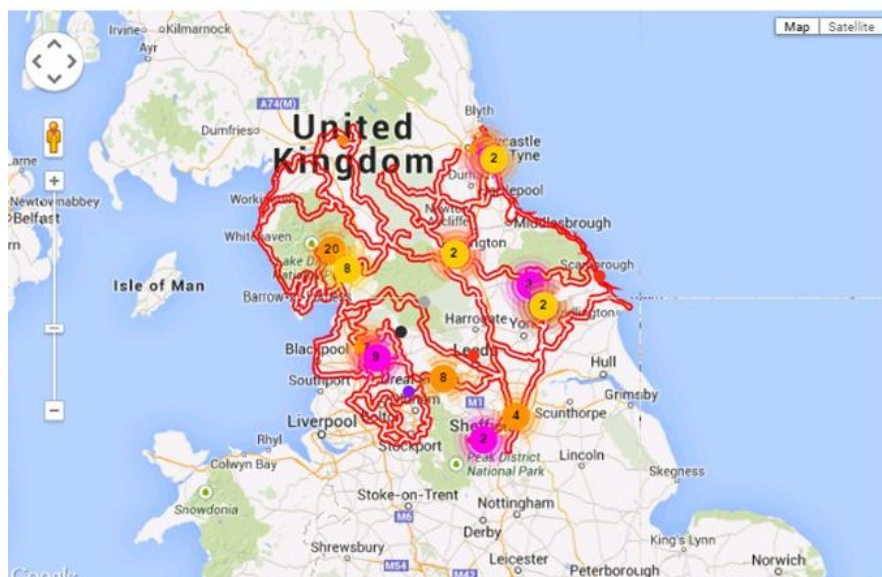
How a B-Lines network could look

How have the B-Lines been identified? The current B-Lines have been identified by collating information on wildflower-rich habitats and then analysing/modelling this to identify key connecting pathways. The B-Lines networks have then been confirmed by bringing together conservation partners and local authorities from across Counties and regions to provide expert, local validation.

Where are the B-Lines?

How can I find where the B-Lines are?

The easiest way is to look at our [interactive map](#) which will allow you to see the B-Lines currently mapped across the country. You can then focus in on individual locations and see some examples of where projects and people are already taking action.



Map Key

Type of work carried out

Wildflower meadow creation ●

Habitat restoration ●

Wildflower plug planting ●

Wildflower sowing ●

School activities ●

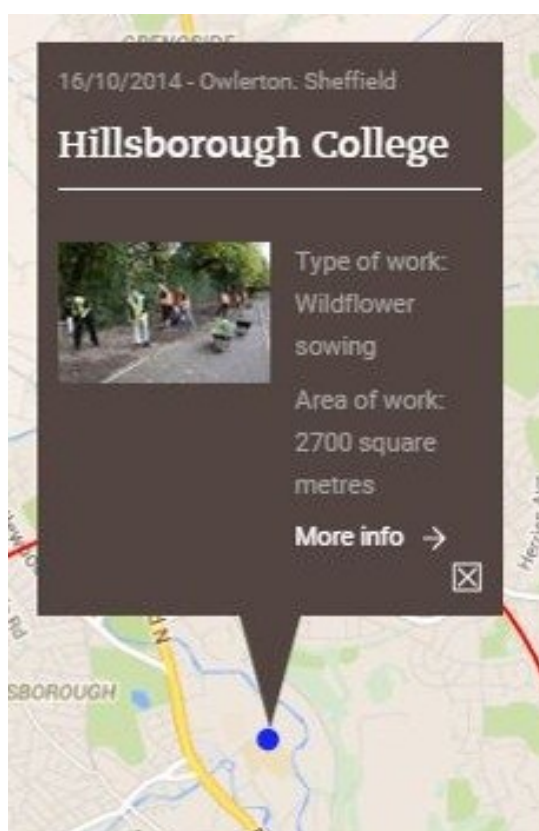
Urban Meadow ●

Bee hotels ●

Wildflower margins, pollen and nectar mixes ●

Green roof ●

B-lines || Interactive B-Lines map



There are no B-Lines mapped in my County – what can I do?

We may already be starting to map B-Lines in your area, so firstly [get in touch](#) and see what is planned. If we are unable to take forward mapping at the present time, it would be helpful if you could try and get your local authority, biodiversity partnerships or other wildlife organisations interested in working with us to do this.

My land or home falls outside the B-Lines network. What can I do?

Just because your land or home does not fall within one of our mapped B-Lines does not mean you cannot take important action to help insect pollinators. So please keep creating

wildflower meadows, or planting wildflowers in your gardens. And if in doubt look at other pages on [our website](#) for ideas.

Creating the B-Lines – the science and practice

What needs doing in the B-Lines to make them work?

The priority is to make existing wildlife sites larger and then to create habitat 'stepping stones' between them. Ideally the gaps between individual habitat areas should be less than 0.5 km. Large blocks of habitat (> 2 ha) are needed to maintain populations of insect pollinators into the long-term, however many smaller wildflower-rich areas will provide important food for foraging insect pollinators. Further information is provided within our [Guiding Principles](#).

What habitats are important to make the B-Lines function properly?

A range of habitats providing both food, foraging, nesting and shelter for insect pollinators is essential. Wildflower-rich areas/habitats, and flowering shrubs and trees are essential to provide pollen and nectar, whereas hedgerow bottoms and uncut grasslands can provide important shelter.

How should the B-Lines be managed?

Creating a mosaic/mixture of different wildflower-rich habitats across a stretch of the B-Lines is likely to have the greatest impact. So look to see what is already there and try do something which will complement this e.g. if there are already lots of wildflower-rich grasslands in the area but no potential nesting/shelter sites, consider creating some suitable rougher areas of grassland.

Are B-Lines only for the countryside?

No! Although large sections of B-Lines will be located in the countryside, this does not mean that the towns and villages along the routes cannot help. Villages and towns within the B-Lines can all help by creating new habitats on village greens and parks, and by making the most of gardens to provide food for insect pollinators.



Marmalade hoverfly (*Episyrphus balteatus*) © Steven Falk



Urban meadows and habitat are important © Steven Falk

Helping create the B-Lines

Who can help create the B-Lines?

Everyone! This includes local communities, farmers, landowners, the general public, schools, local authorities and councils, statutory agencies, wildlife organisations and businesses. We need everyone on the B-Lines to come forward and [play a part in creating them](#).

I am a farmer – how can I help create the B-Lines?

Agri-environment schemes provide significant funding for wildflower-rich habitats. By picking or increasing the amount of the most beneficial management options for insect pollinators, and looking to create new wildflower-rich habitat, farmers and landowners can help develop large stretches of the [B-Lines network](#).

Can my Local Community help create the B-Lines?

Villages, towns and other communities can all get involved by developing action groups to identify, promote and take forward B-Line friendly activities. Urban parks, village greens, roundabouts, business parks, school grounds and private gardens can all play their part.

Do I have to do something really big?

Every small action adds up to something BIG! If enough people and landowners get involved in the B-Lines, every small patch of wildflowers or flowering shrub can make a difference. So please do what you can and as importantly get your neighbours and friends who live, work or manage land within the B-Lines to get involved.

Can Local Authorities help?

Yes! Local authorities can help develop B-Lines through managing Local Wildlife Sites, parks and roadside verges. In addition B-Lines should be identified in local plans, alongside green infrastructure and ecological networks. This will provide a level of protection and will also ensure that opportunities for creating B-Lines can be taken forward through biodiversity offsetting or planning agreements. Further [advice for local authorities](#) is available. Speak to your local authority and encourage them to help.



Wildflower meadow © Leanna Dixon

B-Lines in towns and cities

What will urban B-Lines look like? They will be eventually be made up of mosaics of new insect pollinator friendly habitats, including urban meadows, wildflower-rich road-side verges and roundabouts, green roofs and increased wildflower plantings in parks and gardens. Within each urban area the aim should be to maintain or establish at least some large areas of high quality permanent wildflower-rich habitat (ideally > 2 ha) to provide food (nectar and pollen), nesting and over-wintering shelter. In addition to these core areas of habitat, hundreds or thousands of smaller more scattered flower-rich areas (both native wildflowers and suitable non-native species) developed wherever opportunities arise, will provide valuable 'feeding stations' across your town or city.

Can my local park be used to help the B-Lines? Introducing wildflowers into grassland areas and leaving them uncut for periods of the year so that they can flower, is a simple and cost effective way to help insect pollinators such as bumblebees and butterflies. Planting flowering shrubs, in particular early flowering species such as blackthorn and pussy willow is also very beneficial. And of course using nectar and pollen-rich plants in ornamental plantings can [make a dramatic difference](#).

Can I do things differently in my garden to help B-Lines? Private gardens and allotments make up a large proportion of urban greenspace and have an incredibly important role to play in helping to support wildlife in our towns and cities. Attract insect pollinators into your garden or allotment by providing them with flowers over a large part of the year, potentially from March through to early November. And of course simple actions like eliminating or reducing the use of chemicals, and leaving some areas slightly less tidy in the winter months will all help.

What about Green Roofs – do they contribute towards B-Lines? Land is a very limited and expensive resource in our towns and cities. Creating green roofs on top of buildings can turn an unused space into wildflower-rich habitats, supporting a wide range of insect pollinators and other wildlife. If well designed and carefully constructed to provide a variety of features, including bare ground, wildflower meadows and sandy banks they have the potential to play a major part in increasing the numbers of insect pollinators in our urban areas. Green roofs can be either retro-fitted onto existing buildings or incorporated into new buildings, so there are likely to be many opportunities for their development in all of our built environments.

How can I get my village, town or city involved? Encourage your local authority to recognise the B-Line and get them to start identifying opportunities for creating wildflower-rich areas. And of course make the most land that is available locally - encourage schools, local businesses and churches to develop wildflower-rich areas. And finally promote the B-Lines vision to others in the local community, thereby making use of private gardens to help provide important habitats for our insect pollinators.