

**From:** Susan Carey, Cabinet Member for Environment  
Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

**To:** Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022

**Subject:** Kent's Plan Bee revision

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of report:** n/a

**Future Pathway of report:** n/a

**Electoral Division:** All – countywide

**Summary:** Kent's Plan Bee is the County Council's pollinator action plan. It sets out the contribution we can make in helping to address the decline of pollinator species. This report outlines how the Plan has been refreshed and revised, building on the achievements of past two years.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to endorse the revisions made to the Plan Bee pollinator action plan.

## **1. Introduction to Kent's Plan Bee**

- 1.1 In July 2019, Kent County Council adopted Kent's Plan Bee<sup>1</sup>, our pollinator action plan, which sets out the contribution the County Council can make in helping to slow and reverse the decline of pollinators in Kent.
- 1.2 The Plan responded to the National Pollinator Strategy for England and the call to local authorities to use their regulatory powers and other functions to deliver, inform and engage others to participate in work that will benefit pollinators. The Plan recognised that the County Council, with its wide-ranging responsibilities, services and land holdings, was well placed to make a significant contribution directly through changes to its land management activities, but also provide leadership on this issue within the county in order to safeguard our native pollinators.
- 1.3 Consequently, Plan Bee set out to:
- Make the County Council a community leader in action for pollinators, leading the way in its own operations and property and by supporting others.
  - Ensure that pollinators' needs are always considered throughout Kent County Council's work and services.

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<sup>1</sup> [Kent's Plan Bee pollinator action plan - Kent County Council](#)

- Put the conservation of pollinators and their habitats at the heart of the Council's land management and planning.
- Make Kent County Council a significant contributor to the recovery of pollinator populations which will support biodiversity and the need of the county's agriculture.

## 2. The need for Plan Bee

- 2.1 Many plants rely on insects to pollinate their flowers – most plants cannot set seed without being pollinated (receiving the pollen, usually from another flower). It has been calculated that one of every three mouthfuls of food we eat depends on pollination, with the annual benefits of insect pollinators to the British economy valued at £691 million (Living with Environmental Change, 2014).
- 2.2 Despite their importance, pollinators are in serious decline, as a result of habitat loss, pesticides and climate change. The Bumblebee Conservation Trust reports that two species of bumblebees went extinct in the past 80 years, with eight species, a third of those remaining, now endangered. Butterfly Conservation reports similar concerns, with over three-quarters of our butterfly species having declined since 1976<sup>2</sup> and two-thirds of our common and widespread moths declined between 1968 and 2007<sup>3</sup>.
- 2.3 As Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee members heard in May 2022, the citizen science survey Bugs Matter<sup>4</sup> reported a decline in flying insects of 59% between 2004 and 2021. More worrying still was that in Kent this figure was 72%. They noted that these figures indicate a rapidly declining trend in insect abundance nationwide, which is consistent with research that has reported declining trends globally.
- 2.4 The 2021 State of Nature in Kent report<sup>5</sup> has shown how action can bring about positive change for pollinators. Collaborative efforts across the county have resulted in increased numbers of the nationally scarce butterfly species Heath Fritillary and Duke of Burgundy, an expanded range of the Adonis Blue and an apparent increase in generalist species of ants, bees and wasps.
- 2.5 However, the report notes that whilst some specific species gains have been made, habitat loss, fragmentation, changes in land use and climate change all mean that it is likely that the broader trend of decline across this group of insects will continue.
- 2.6 Therefore, Plan Bee remains a vital part of action in efforts to tackle pollinator decline in Kent.
- 2.7 Kent's Plan Bee began as a member led initiative by Sean Holden who now chairs a cross party member group which, together with the Cabinet Member for Environment, oversees this work. The delivery of Plan Bee is supported by officers from the Natural Environment and Coast Team within the Environment

<sup>2</sup> <https://butterfly-conservation.org/sites/default/files/soukb-2015.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://butterfly-conservation.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/StateofMothsReport2021.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [Bugs Matter \(kentwildlifetrust.org.uk\)](https://bugs-matter.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/)

<sup>5</sup> <https://kentnature.org.uk/state-of-nature/>

and Waste Division (GET) and has specialised input from a part-time officer, seconded from the Bumblebee Conservation Trust.

- 2.8 However, Plan Bee is a whole authority plan, and its delivery relies upon the efforts of many services, not least of all the soft landscape teams of highways and infrastructure.
- 2.9 On 20<sup>th</sup> October 2022, County Council received an update on Kent's Plan Bee, which reflected on its achievements since work began in spring 2020. These achievements are noted again in appendix 1.

### **3. Review and refresh of Kent's Plan Bee**

- 3.1 In 2022, the Plan Bee members group instructed a review and refresh of the action plan to ensure the plan remained current and reflected local priorities for action. Consequently, some changes have been made.
- 3.2 The original objectives have been slightly reworded, albeit delivering the same outcomes. A fourth objective has been added, to monitor and evaluate, so that we are able measure the actual impact of our action and the progress being made. The Plan's refreshed objectives are now for Kent County Council to:
  1. Manage the land it owns, controls and influences in a way which benefits pollinators' habitat and forage.
  2. Work with partners across the county to better protect pollinators and improve the habitats on which they rely.
  3. Raise awareness of the importance of pollinators and the need to safeguard these vital insects, mobilising the people of Kent to take their own action within communities, workplaces, schools and homes.
  4. Monitor and evaluate its action for pollinators, so that we understand the impact of our efforts and direct continued action and resources to where they are most needed.
- 3.3 Actions within the plan have been updated and revised to reflect the next stage of our efforts to be delivered under Plan Bee and/or to better emphasise our priorities for action.
- 3.4 A new action for the Plan is the development of the "Kent Pollinator Pledge". Kent's Plan Bee is intended to be delivered 'with' residents, businesses and organisations in Kent and the Plan Bee officer resource is therefore directed where it can make the most impact, in sharing information on how people can make changes that will help pollinators. The Plan Bee Facebook page and newsletter addresses this in respect of individuals but there is potentially more that can be done with parish and town councils, community groups, schools and others that can affect land management on a larger scale.
- 3.5 Therefore, in 2023, Plan Bee will begin the development of the "Kent Pollinator Pledge", a self-guiding toolkit with advice that enables the development of action to support pollinators. It is intended that this will include a dedicated online resource, where the pledges can be made and those that have pledged, will be listed. In the first instance this will be designed for, and promoted to, the county's parish and town councils and community groups but over the years

specific guidance for new target audiences, such as schools, businesses, farmers etc, will be added.

- 3.6 It is hoped that this will create a network of activity across the county and, through the pledges, we can monitor what is actually being done at the local level.
- 3.7 The other notable addition to the plan is the actions that sit under the new monitor and evaluate objective. Action under this new objective will include the establishment of annual pollinator surveys, using the UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme's flower insect timed count survey method (or something similar). Surveys will be set up at selected sites across County Council owned and managed land, to monitor the effect of land management practices on pollinator numbers and provide an indicator of the impact of Plan Bee.
- 3.8 This will not only boost the national survey effort but will also identify what of our own measures are most effective in boosting pollinator numbers. We will look to Kent County Council's Environmental Champions network and staff working at the chosen sites for volunteers in the first place and full training and support will be made available. We also hope Kent County Council's elected members will sign up to assist.
- 3.9 Other actions under this objective include:
- Contributing to the annual Bugs Matters survey through our own service fleet vehicles and encouragement of staff participation.
  - Publishing a set of Plan Bee performance measures and reporting progress against these, every two years. A draft set of monitoring measures are presented in appendix 2.
  - Keeping up to date on the latest scientific evidence on pollinator health and respond as appropriate in respect of decision-making, asset management and service delivery.
- 3.10 The Plan has also been updated to reflect the new understanding we have of pollinator numbers in the county, as a result of the two 2022 reports Bugs Matters and State of Nature in Kent. And further, the achievements of Plan Bee to date have been highlighted.
- 3.11 The draft Kent's Plan Bee pollinator action plan, refreshed for 2022, is appended to this report.

#### **4. Priorities for next 12 months**

- 4.1 There are a number of priorities for Plan Bee within the Council over the next year. The Kent County Council estate soft landscapes contract and pest control contract are both renewed this year (2022). The Plan Bee officer is engaged in this work and advising on how these new contracts could be designed, so that the management of our estate presents better opportunities to support pollinators and limit potential impacts on them from maintenance activities.
- 4.2 The Highways weed control contract renewal in 2023 will provide the flexibility to undertake trials of alternatives to traditional pesticide use and will allow small

scale experimental trials determine efficacy and cost implications of these alternatives. Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee are referred to the November 2022 meeting paper on this contract renewal.

- 4.3 On November 22nd, we'll be continuing the conversation about land management for pollinators by making this the topic of our annual Plan Bee Summit.
- 4.4 Work will continue with district and borough councils to work towards the adoption of local pollinator action plans and the delivery of improvements for pollinator habitats. To facilitate this, we intend to host a summit with our district partners in spring 2023.
- 4.5 We will continue our ongoing public engagement work and annual No Mow May campaign. Plus, as noted above, we will begin work on the development of the "Kent Pollinator Pledge" and establish our annual pollinator survey work.

## **5. Financial implications**

- 5.1 Changes to the way we deliver our services may be cost neutral or beneficial, if made at an early stage in planning. Where there are financial implications, these will be considered as part of that service delivery review process.
- 5.2 Staff resources to support the delivery of Kent's Plan Bee will continue to be absorbed within the existing budgets, with the core Plan Bee staff resource provided by the Natural Environment and Coast team. There are no identified additional costs as a result of this action plan refresh.

## **6. Legal implications**

- 6.1 There are no legal implications in relation to Kent's Plan Bee.

## **7. Equalities implications**

- 7.1 A new Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed for the refreshed Plan Bee. There will be limited negative impact from Plan Bee and these impacts can be reduced or avoided all together with appropriate management.
- 7.2 The main potential impact will be where new land management practices could cause access issues for those with a disability or age protected characteristic. These will need to be considered on a site-by-site basis and appropriately managed.
- 7.3 The other potential impact will be where public facing/engagement material is developed. For all public facing work, design and accessibility standards will be followed to ensure these materials are appropriately accessible.
- 7.4 There are also opportunities to have a positive impact by considering how land management practices for pollinators may also deliver enhanced visitor/resident experiences for people within the age and disability protected groups – for

example by designing pollinator friendly habitat to also provide sensory experiences.

## **8. Other corporate implications**

- 8.1 Plan Bee supports the ambitions of the adopted Kent Biodiversity Strategy. It also has links to the Council's recently adopted tree establishment strategy Plan Tree, which, with considered planting and natural regeneration projects, has the potential to deliver forage, shelter and habitat corridors for pollinators.
- 8.2 In time Plan Bee will also be linked to the Kent Local Nature Recovery Strategy, required under the Environment Act, which will map priority areas for nature and recovery actions.

## **9. Governance**

- 9.1 There are no governance issues in relation to Plan Bee.

## **10. Conclusions**

- 10.1 Kent's Plan Bee has delivered significant progress against its four objectives over the past two years. As operations are largely tied into contracts, the rate of change in respect of the way we deliver our services and manage our estate is progressive and will continue to be delivered over time.
- 10.2 Good gains have already been made and the commitment of the Council to this agenda is well demonstrated, through both action and the additional budget secured to enable these actions.
- 10.3 The level of engagement with the Facebook platform, public campaigns and the two previous summits suggests this is a widely supported agenda. Therefore, the proposed development of a Kent Pollinator Pledge will help galvanise this support into measurable action on the ground.
- 10.4 The development of monitoring will help us more accurately measure what's being done, and its impact, so that we can direct resources to where they're most needed.
- 10.5 The refreshed Plan Bee pollinator action plan provides the framework for further work to build on the excellent foundations of the past two years and continue to deliver additional benefits for pollinators in Kent.

## **11. Recommendation(s)**

### **Recommendation(s):**

The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to endorse the revisions made to the Plan Bee pollinator action plan.

## **12. Background Documents**

- The impact of Kent's Plan Bee – appendix 1

- Draft Kent's Plan Bee monitoring measures – appendix 2  
Draft Kent's Plan Bee pollinator action plan 2022 – appendix 3  
Equality Impact Assessment for Kent's Plan Bee pollinator action plan 2022 –  
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ecSDDisplayClassic.aspx?NAME=SD7537&ID=7537&RPID=54103682&sch=doc&cat=14935&path=13335%2c14935>
- Kent's Plan Bee Kent County Council's Pollinator Action Plan  
[https://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/103905/Kents-Plan-Bee.pdf](https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/103905/Kents-Plan-Bee.pdf)

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