

Appendix 1 - The impact of Kent's Plan Bee

1. 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 and Waste Division (GET) and has specialised input from a part-time officer, seconded from the Bumblebee Conservation Trust.
2. However, Plan Bee is a whole authority plan, and its delivery relies upon the efforts of many services, not least of all highways' soft landscape team and infrastructure's soft landscape team. Work in earnest began in spring 2020 and the below summarises some of the Plan's achievements over the past two years.

Action against objective 1 – manage the land it owns or controls or can influence in a way which can benefit pollinators' forage and habitat

3. In February 2022, it was agreed that the existing rural swathe cut regime of one cut per year would be changed to provide much greater gains for pollinators. At an additional cost of £300k per annum, the swathe cut moves to two cuts each year running March to May and September to October, allowing for the key flowering period and optimum time for foraging pollinators to be free of cutting activity. In order to provide the most benefit to pollinators, the programme of cutting will be tiered so that the verges that present the most value to biodiversity (for example Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Roadside Nature Reserves, Bee Lines and Bee Roads) will be cut at the earliest and latest periods of March and late October.
4. This step change in approach means that much larger areas and lengths of the network are now managed for pollinators, providing greater opportunity for wildflowers and wildlife generally to be supported. By focussing on verges of higher value to pollinators (Bee Roads) or those verges in areas of known importance to pollinators (Beelines), we can ensure effort is targeted to where it is most needed and offer the greatest benefits. Consequently, over time, this new approach will create an extensive network of habitat mosaics across Kent which are interconnected and managed to optimise the range of habitats provided for pollinators across Kent's rural verge network.
5. Verge management along the Fastrack route in North Kent is being adapted specifically with pollinators in mind and, in particular, the rare Shrill Carder Bee whose residence in Kent Thameside is one of just three locations in England where this pollinator is found. Along Fastrack's dedicated and shared bus route in the Dartford area, 10 pollinator road verges have been established and more are planned in Ebbsfleet and Gravesend, in addition to the installation of green roof bus shelters. Further to this pollinator planting, is the creation of the bee bus, a double decker on the route featuring the Shrill Carder Bee and promoting the Kent's Plan Bee.
6. At Allington Household Waste Recycling Centre, species rich grassland and trees for the benefit of pollinators have been included in the landscaping and designed to provide forage and habitat throughout the whole year.

7. The land management plan for the closed landfill site, Shaw Grange (near Charing), has specifically included measures to provide for pollinators including only mowing parts of the meadow every two years to provide the structure needed by bees for sheltering and overwintering; and increasing the number of flowering, pollen rich plants by collecting arisings after the annual cut.
8. Kent County Council's country parks are managed for the benefit of biodiversity, and pollinators are an integral part of this activity. The grassland areas are managed to maintain flowering plants and grasses diversity, with cuts in late September/early October and cuttings removed to maintain optimum soil condition. The parks also provide extensive opportunities to engage with the public, with planted bee beds, interpretation and events dedicated to pollinators. At Brockhill Country Park (Hythe) habitat is specifically managed for the benefit of solitary bees to provide foraging and nesting opportunities.
9. Pesticide use is another aspect of land management to be considered. In 2021, the Council reviewed its pesticide use and found that there was no use of the damaging neonicotinoid. The Chairman of the Plan Bee member group and Cabinet Member for Environment also lobbied the UK, and other European Governments, to take a stand against permissions for emergency use of neonicotinoids and urged Kent MPs to take part in a debate about this pesticide.
10. The impact of the herbicide glyphosate on bee species remains under review. Despite the work of the Highways Soft Landscape Team in reviewing the industry and market and trialling weed control methods, no viable, effective, affordable and environmentally friendly alternatives have yet been found, and so it remains in use. Both the Kent County Council estate soft landscape contract renewal in 2022 and Highways weed control contract renewal in 2023 present opportunities to reduce the use of pesticides and further examine and trial alternatives to glyphosate.
11. Delivery of action under the land management objective does have its challenges, not least that existing contracts can limit the speed of change and that this change is often associated with an additional cost. The Kent County Council estate soft landscape contract renewal in autumn 2022 presents an opportunity to further extend action under this objective and ensure real changes across the county council's land for the benefit of pollinators.

Action against objective 2 – for Kent County Council to use the planning system to protect pollinators and improve the habitats on which they rely

12. In delivering against this objective, we have focussed on supporting districts and boroughs to adopt their own actions for pollinators. To assist this, the Plan Bee blueprint was developed, focussing on the range of opportunities that could be taken at the local level. The draft blueprint is currently being tested by working with Canterbury, Swale, Thanet and Gravesham Councils.

Action against objective 3 - to mobilise the people of Kent, to take action themselves; Kent's Plan Bee aims to help them to greater awareness of the importance of pollinators in all our lives and everybody's need and ability to act to protect them

13. To really deliver change for pollinators, we need action across the whole county not just on the land we own and manage. Therefore, mobilising the people of Kent has been a key focus of our work to date.
14. In 2021 we launched our Plan Bee Facebook page¹, which provides a direct means to connect with interested people all over the county. The page is followed by over 1,500 people; in the past month, posts reached over 18,000 people. A dedicated communications plan sets out a rolling campaign to inform and influence. In addition, we circulate a dedicated monthly newsletter, circulated to over 2,300, which summarises news and information and provides advice on what the reader can do and what they might see that month. Further information is also available from the County Council website².
15. Specific campaigns have included the 2021 public perception survey³, designed to help us understand what people understood about our pollinators and their thoughts on alternative approaches to green space management. This survey had over 5,000 responses plus returns and provided an interesting insight that has been used to influence future public engagement work.
16. In 2022, we launched a No Mow May pledge, where 336 individuals and 16 organisations across the county pledged to not cut their grass for the month of May. This amounts to a total area of land left uncut of 14 hectares/35 acres, which roughly equates to almost 500 tennis courts. Leaving grass uncut for this month allowed wild plants to grow and flower, providing forage, food plants and nesting areas for pollinating insects at a critical time of the year. The No Mow May pledge will be repeated annually and we hope that it will show an annual increase in participation and therefore gain for pollinators.
17. In January 2022, the Kent Children's University Pollinator Challenge⁴ was launched. This is a 12-month programme of pollinator themed activities and learning for children aged 5 to 14. Although designed for the Kent Children's University programme, this activity pack can stand alone and has been shared with Kent's schools and promoted via the Facebook page and newsletter.
18. Plan Bee has also engaged with stakeholder and businesses across the county. Two Plan Bee summits have been held, in 2020 and 2021. Both attracted large numbers of attendees – the 2020 event was one of the Council's best attended online events that year, with 240 people taking part – demonstrating the level of interest in this important agenda.
19. Kent Ambassadors have also supported the Plan's work. Penny Williams, from the Big Plan Group, designed Plan Bee's logo and brand and advised on the establishment of our Facebook site. Mike Bax hosted the Plan Bee Members Group at his farm in Shadoxhurst, so members could witness first-hand how land management can benefit pollinators.

¹ [Kent's Plan Bee \(facebook.com\)](https://www.facebook.com/kentplanbee)

² [Pollinators - Kent County Council](https://www.kent.gov.uk/pollinators)

³ [Pollinator public perception survey report - Kent County Council](https://www.kent.gov.uk/pollinator-public-perception-survey-report)

⁴ [Children's University \(kentchildrensuniversity.co.uk\)](https://www.kentchildrensuniversity.co.uk)