

From: vharvey
Sent: 05 August 2012 20:14
To: david.hopkin@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk; Pat Kingsnorth
Subject: verges and biodiversity

Dear Cllr Hopkin and Ms Kingsnorth

South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth are requesting the Partnership Committee to manage the verges and the green open spaces owned by both councils to support biodiversity, in particular bees and butterflies following the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act , section 40 and the advice of Government White Paper Natural Choice. We would ask you to cut the verges less to allow wildflowers to grow and to seed, and to remove the grass when cutting certain areas. They would like this to be an ecologist led project starting off with some pilot areas and then spreading across the whole of Central Bedfordshire.

A formal decision by the Partnership Committee to start this process would help the process of planning this and the eventual altering of contracts, and we believe that it is very important.

This has been triggered by the unintended illogicality of while the Town council pays to plant wildflowers in some areas, in other areas the verges full of wildflowers including in one incident bee orchards are cut down. Frequently cutting verges with wildflowers and leaving the grass cuttings means that the grass grows more strongly chokes out the wildflowers and needs cutting more frequently.

Verges and green spaces can play a major role in creating corridors and a mosaic of habitats in supporting wildflowers and bumble bees and butterflies and other wildlife. The Government White paper on biodiversity Natural Choice highlights this opportunity to create habitat to support bees and insects. It also highlights the loss of the bee population partly due to loss of habitat and the potential costs of losing insect pollinators to the the UK. It has been estimated at £1.8 billion per year.

South Bedfordshire Friends of the earth are requesting an ecologist led approach and a very practical approach and are well aware of the needs of highway safety. Just leaving grass to grow long does not ensure wildflowers or a beneficial habitat. some areas of long grass and nettles provide a very valuable habitat for some insect and hibernation for some butterflies and nests for bees, however long grass usually means that wildflowers are choked out and cannot grow. The main challenge to wildflowers is the richness of the soil due to the large amount of nitrogen used in farming. Leaving the grass cuttings also enriches the soil. Cutting at appropriate

times of year late summer and occasionally late spring as well, and removing the cut grass etc., impoverishes the soil weakening the grass and giving the opportunity for wildflowers to flourish. This could mean a cost saving due to much less frequent cutting.

However this needs to be planned as some areas are already good for wildflowers and just need cutting once or twice a year, other areas have very rich soil and will take a lot of work to produce wildflowers. Also some areas are more suitable for leaving slightly wilder and some are not.

We have had interest from some people (residents) about piloting some areas close to where they live and explaining the concept to their neighbours so that they do not think that the council is just ignoring the areas also helping increase the amount of wildflowers through planting etc.

This is a project that not only could save money on grass cutting but could also make a real improvement to biodiversity in the area and has the potential to make CBC stand out as an exemplar Local authority.

many thanks

Victoria Harvey

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