

Local Pollinators Project

A Dorset Local Nature Partnership Project



Background

In March 2017 Dorset Local Nature Partnership (DLNP) was awarded £4,000 from Defra's Local Pollinators Project funding for a project between Dorset Wildlife Trust, National Trust and Bournemouth University.

The project focused on three elements:

- Work with local communities to provide large-scale areas of flowers for pollinators
- Directly engage with large-scale land managers at National Trust sites in West Dorset to promote creation for pollinators in farmland
- Enhance awareness and facilitate a knowledge exchange through monitoring and evaluation

Work with local communities to provide areas for pollinators

Community engagement – National Trust



Three 'Big Summer Buzz' events were held at Burton Bradstock over the summer holiday (2017) to engage with the public about pollinators and the habitat work the National Trust was undertaking.

Approximately sixty people (mostly families with children aged 5-15) took part in activities including solitary 'bee-home' making, bug-hunting, and educational puzzles. Feedback was positive, and several families returned to take part in subsequent events.

Big Summer Buzz Event in 2017 © National Trust

Work began on a 'mini-meadow' at the car park at Burton Bradstock, including regular cutting and removal of arisings, and seed broadcast by hand by a local group of NT Volunteers. A management plan was agreed with contractors who manage the car park. An interpretation board with information on the habitat creation work undertaken, the type of wildflowers people might be able to see, and the pollinators it will benefit is being designed and built and was installed in the spring of 2018.

Community engagement – Dorset Wildlife Trust

Three communities were identified for the project: Sturminster Newton, Ansty and Gillingham. Progress was steady in certain areas but, as with many community activities, uptake varied. In Sturminster Newton, a key couple supporting the project retired due to ill health. An activity session was held in the local library to try to enlist other members of the community, but this did not prove fruitful so the project in that community did not progress further.

In Ansty there was considerable initial enthusiasm with 45 individuals taking trays, compost and seed to grow on in June 2017, but fewer attended the planting out day in the August, to create a grass free lawn provide a 'corridor' for pollinators through the village. The plants initially appeared to be establishing well but follow up reports noted that the plug plants were not very successful overall. Further fundraising in the community has led to the purchase of additional plants which has resulted in a mix of wildflowers and grasses including: oxeye daisy, red and white clover, orange hawkweed, birds-foot trefoil, ragged-robin, cowslip and camomile., cocksfoot grass and false oat grass. Pollinators attracted to the site include common carder bee, white-tailed bumblebee, blue dragonfly, hover flies, brimstone and peacock butterflies.



Oxeye daisy, cocksfoot grass and false oat grass © Maria Clarke

In Gillingham there was a slight change of focus to the project and a *Bee and Butterfly Bonanza* event was held in the town to raise the profile of pollinators and encourage people to grow suitable plants to encourage pollinators. Around 400 people attended the event. DWT worked with Gillingham Town Council to increase b-lines through the town. The Town Council agreed to become a Pollinator Friendly Town and will no longer use pesticides or herbicides on their sites. DWT has continued to work with the Town Council, including a meeting in January 2018 to discuss the Polli:Nation surveying a of suitable areas. A site was identified and Polli:Nation surveying was due to take place in summer 2018.

With the additional staff time (as agreed with Defra) engagement with a further three additional communities was undertaken in: East Stour, Shaftsbury and Sandford.



The transformed Wild Flower Meadow in summer 2017 © John Gould

DWT met with a representative of the East Stour Wildflower Meadow and undertook a site visit in December 2017 to discuss ongoing survey work. The site is adjacent to the busy A30 and is an already established wildflower meadow, spearheaded by a resident in a voluntary position. This project has been very important for the area, transforming a neglected area into a valuable resource for pollinators and other wildlife. A display poster has been created to interpret the project to visitors of the site and a Polli:Nation survey will take place in summer 2018.

Discussions were held with a representative in Shaftsbury where pollinator work was already taking place. Unfortunately, it was felt that there were not any existing projects suitable to engage with ongoing survey work at the time, but Shaftsbury Town Council are working to make the town pollinator-friendly and may be a suitable site for surveying in the future.

DWT has worked with a project to develop a memorial garden in Sandford which began in November 2017, with many partners working together to realise the goals. Multiple meetings and site visits were held with the Sandford Heritage Community Group (SHCG), who spearheaded the initiative. DWT has helped to co-ordinate and administer the project alongside SHCG, including ordering plants. Wildflower bulbs have been planted and a wildflower meadow has been sown in March 2018 with help from the local school, which will provide improved habitat and forage for pollinators and wildlife in general. Survey packs were sent to enable the local communities to conduct Polli:Nation surveys in summer 2018.



Planting bulbs Sandford St Martin School © Bev Lagden, Sandford Heritage Community Group



Directly engage with large-scale land managers at National Trust sites in West Dorset to promote creation for pollinators in farmland

Two areas of National Trust land at Golden Cap Estate and Burton Bradstock totalling 6 Ha were identified for wildflower meadow restoration work in 2017-2018.

Donor sites for seeds were identified at Golden Cap and Cogden and these were brush harvested in August 2017, and the seed sorted and prepared by a contractor. A total of 55kg of suitable seed was harvested. Burton Bradstock had more suitable ground conditions at that time, and so the land here was prioritised for re-seeding. The receptor field at Burton (4ha) was cut for hay in August and grazed by cattle during the autumn. National Trust staff followed on from this by harrowing to create bare ground. Seed harvested from Golden Cap and Cogden was hand broadcast across the site in October 2017. Donor seed was collected and sorted by the contractor in the summer of 2017. Burton Bradstock was harrowed multiple times by National Trust staff in September 2017, and seed was hand-broadcast in October 2017.



The team hand-broadcast meadow seed at Burton Bradstock in 2017 © National Trust

At Golden Cap, the National Trust worked with the tenant to plan for meadow restoration. The tenant has undertaken spot treatment of docks and other weeds and adjusted the grazing regime to prepare the site for wildflower sowing in 2018.

Both sites had baseline botanical surveys completed in July by the National Trust Ecologist and volunteers. The National Trust have been in discussion with tenants to manage the sites (and other areas) appropriately for wildflowers and pollinators in the future, and in some cases conservation clauses specifying this have been included in tenancy agreements. Baseline surveys of restoration sites undertaken in spring 2017. Hay cut taken, and ground preparation for seed broadcast has been completed at Burton Bradstock. Weed treatment and ground preparation at Golden Cap has been completed. A management plan was agreed and included within the tenancy agreement for tenant at Golden Cap. A plan at Burton Bradstock to involve use of contractors for hay cut and grazing was agreed up until end of 2017 and work is underway to secure plans for future years.

Enhance awareness and facilitate a knowledge exchange through monitoring and evaluation

The project has enabled future partnership working between the National Trust and Bournemouth University. This includes setting up student placements for summer 2018, when BU students will work on projects at National Trust grassland sites, monitoring the progress of habitat restoration and the impact on pollinator species.

DWT has also been in discussion with Bournemouth University, who run the Pollinator Exchange, a website which is an open-source platform for research about pollinators and reports on projects, from planting to community engagement activities. It was hoped that the communities identified in the project may be able to undertake more detailed survey work to provide data for BU on the value of community wildflower meadows to pollinator populations. Discussions are still ongoing on this aspect of the project. There is scope to upload case studies to Bournemouth University's Pollinator Exchange¹ on the work that has occurred so far.

¹ www.pollinatorexchange.org

More Information

Case studies on the projects are available at: www.dorsetlnp.org.uk/local_pollinators

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