Annex 6

CITY OF YORK POLLINATOR STRATEGY 2020 – 2025

A Commitment from City of York Council

City of York Council (CYC) is committed to helping to conserve the UK's pollinators by ensuring the council will consider the needs of pollinators in the delivery of its duties and work. CYC will seek to protect and increase the amount and quality of pollinator habitat and manage its greenspace to provide greater benefits for pollinators. We will ensure local people are provided with opportunities to make York more pollinator friendly.

Our vision: *Our local environment will be rich in pollinator friendly habitats, helping support sustainable pollinator populations and making places more attractive for people to live and work in.*

Aims: The Council will work to:

- Ensure the needs of pollinators are represented in local plans, policy and guidance;
- To protect, increase and enhance the amount of pollinator habitat on council owned or managed land, and help to improve the status of any locally threatened species;
- Improve our knowledge and understanding of pollinators in our local area;
- Increase awareness of pollinators and their habitat needs across local residents, businesses and other landowners; and
- Work together with partners to deliver these aims.

Background to the Strategy

The Importance of Pollinators

Our native pollinators include bumblebees and other bees (250 species), butterflies and moths, flies, beetles and wasps. In all there are over 4000 species of insect in the UK that carry out pollination of our native wild plants and our food crops. Insect pollination is extremely important to the UK economy, with estimated values of £691 million annually. Without pollinators we would struggle to grow many vegetables and fruits including apples, pears, strawberries, beans and peas.

Pollinators under Threat

Our pollinators are in trouble;

- Half of our 27 bumblebee species are in decline.
- Three of these bumblebee species have already gone extinct.
- Two-thirds of our moths are in long term decline.
- Across Europe 38% of bee and hoverfly species are in decline.
- 71% of our butterflies are in decline.

The most significant factors leading to these declines in pollinator numbers include:

1) Habitat loss – The most significant cause of decline is the loss and degradation of habitats which provide food, shelter and nesting sites for pollinators. The loss of wildflower-rich grasslands is one of the most important issues. Over 3 million hectares of these habitats have been lost in England alone since the 1930s, the loss being attributed to more intensive farming and urban/industrial development.

2) Pesticides – There is growing evidence that the use of pesticides is having harmful effects on pollinators including honeybees, wild bees and butterflies. Wider effects throughout ecosystems are also of concern and pesticides have been implicated in other declines such as farmland birds and soil organisms. The use of neonicotinoids is of particular concern. These are systemic pesticides which can be applied as a seed dressing (the preferred delivery mechanism) or spray and have a high toxicity to insects.

3) Climate Change – long term changes can deprive pollinators of food supplies at times when they need them, increase their exposure to parasites and diseases, or change habitats so that they are no longer suitable. There may be gains as well as losses but a resilient network of good pollinator habitat across the area is needed for them to be able to adapt and take advantage of changes.

What Pollinators Need

Pollinators need many of the things we need – food, shelter and nesting areas.

Food – Pollinators need food (nectar and pollen) throughout the season from March through until September. Many plants and trees can provide these food resources, including many so called 'weeds' such as dandelions and thistles.

In addition to flowers, many pollinators need other food resources to support their different life stages – for example butterfly and moth caterpillars need particular plants to feed on.

Shelter and nesting - Dense vegetation such as tussocky grassland, scrub, mature trees, and piles of wood and stone can provide essential habitat for hibernating pollinators. Many species overwinter as adults including queen bumblebees, and some butterflies and hoverflies, others as eggs, larvae or pupae. Old burrows and dense vegetation are used by bumblebees, with sunny slopes and dry ground used by ground-nesting bees such as mining bees.

National Pollinator Strategy

The Government's National Pollinator Strategy for England (2014) sets out a 10 year plan to help pollinating insects survive and thrive across England. The Strategy outlines actions to support and protect the many pollinating insects which contribute to our food production and the diversity of our environment. It is a shared plan of action which looks to everyone to work together and ensure pollinators' needs are addressed as an integral part of land and habitat management.

In particular the Strategy asks local authorities to take a lead across many of their work areas and duties, including their role in local planning and also as managers of public and amenity spaces, brownfield sites, schools, car parks, roadside verges and roundabouts.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-pollinator-strategy-for-bees-and-other-pollinators-in-england

Pollinators in York

Key principles of the Strategy

This strategy has been developed to raise awareness of the plight of pollinators and to ensure the Council and its local residents, businesses and landowners are provided with information to help us all protect and increase our pollinator populations. This strategy is designed to ensure the needs of pollinators are enshrined across the breadth of Council work and to increase awareness of pollinators across our local community.

Working with partners and partners initiatives

Where possible the Council will join forces and participate in other local, regional or national pollinator programmes or projects. More joined up collaborative action for pollinators will help ensure a future for these very important species. Key national initiatives include Buglife's B-Lines programme which aims to create a network of wildflower rich areas across the UK.

Local Biodiversity Action Plan

The City of York Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) sets out what is special about the biodiversity in York and identifies those plants and animals and where they live that are most at risk in our local area. These are referred to as Priority Species and Priority Habitats. A Priority Species Statement has been produced for Hymenoptera: Aculeata (Wasps and Bees) with an objective to protect and improve the habitat available in York for threatened species of bees and wasps, expanding and linking areas of habitat where possible.

https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/15320/local_biodiversity_action_plan_lbap_2017

York Urban Buzz Project (2015 – 2017)

In 2015 the invertebrate charity Buglife approached City of York Council (CYC) to partner with them for a share of a national grant of more than £1 million from Biffa Award.

The aim of the Urban Buzz project was to improve the quality of the urban environment for pollinators through engaging people in the creation and enhancement of habitats, and raising the profile of pollinators and their importance to the environment.

A full-time officer hosted by CYC was employed and work undertaken on a range of sites termed 'Buzzing Hotspots' across the city area which included creating;

- Bee Banks for nesting,
- Formal beds to increase forage availability,
- Native meadows for forage,
- Shrubs,
- Bee hotels for nesting, and
- Ornamental meadow for forage.

The project targets were all met and surpassed; creating 134 'Buzzing Hotspots', engaging 2,229 people to help create habitat and enhancing 38ha of land.

Glen Mosaic Garden -before and after Urban Buzz work © Chris Ferry

The majority of work was undertaken on sites where there are existing community groups. A hand operated power scythe was purchased through the project for use on sites in York. This equipment facilitates the sensitive management of small-medium sized grassland (annual cutting and removing of arising) that might not otherwise be possible to do within existing grass cutting contracts. This equipment is being hosted by the St Nicks Environment Centre but is readily available for use by all community groups, subject to some basic training, which the council's Environment and Community Officers have received.

https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/pollinator-projects/urban-buzz/urban-buzz-york/

Strategy Objectives and Actions

Aim 1: To ensure the needs of pollinators are represented in local plans, policy and guidance.

	Objective	Specific Action
1.1	Increase the protection afforded to pollinator habitats and the species they support by ensuring appropriate recognition in local plans and policies where relevant.	Ensure the needs of pollinators are incorporated within the City of York Local Plan Green Infrastructure Strategy and Supplementary Planning Document.
		Update the 'Land Use and Wildlife' section of the CYC One Planet Better Decision Tool to include specific reference to pollinators.
1.2	Recognise and capitalise on opportunities to create pollinator friendly habitats as part of new development.	Raise awareness of and promote the creation of pollinator friendly features with developers through the development management process, in particular pre-application advice.
		Ensure the value of Brownfield habitat for pollinators is taken account of in the development management process.

Aim 2: To protect, increase and enhance the amount of pollinator habitat on council owned or managed land, and help to improve the status of any locally threatened species.

	Objective	Specific Action
2.1	Increase the value for pollinators of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and Local Nature Reserves (LNR)	Ensure the needs of pollinators are taken into account in the management of SINCs and LNRs.
2.2	Increase the value of parks and other greenspace for pollinators.	Identify areas of greenspace which will benefit from a reduced cutting regime.
		Work with local 'Friends of' groups to develop a balanced approach to park management to support a range of uses and wildlife benefits.
		Use bedding plants that provide forage for a wide variety of pollinating insects.
2.3	Reduce the impact of pesticides on pollinators and other wildlife.	Review use of herbicides in grounds maintenance by trialling alternative methods of weed control.
		Audit the use of neonicotinoids (including seed dressings, plants and turf) and work to phase out from the supply chain through the procurement process.
2.4	Make council owned land and buildings more pollinator friendly.	Establish and maintain a network of "Bee Hotels" across the parks and public open spaces.
		Include pollinator friendly habitats as part of new Highways schemes where doing so will create a benefit.

Aim 3: To improve our knowledge and understanding of pollinators in our local area.

	Objective	Specific Action
3.1	Increase information on the status of pollinators.	Encourage local people to support national pollinator monitoring schemes and to submit local records to the North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre (https://www.neyedc.org.uk/).
		Make this document available on the council's website with links to further advice and information available on the council's website.

Other Possibilities Subject to Further Resource:

Aim to increase awareness of pollinators and their habitat needs across local residents, businesses and other landowners.

	Objective	Specific Action
	Increase awareness of pollinators in the local community and within local businesses.	Provide information on pollinator friendly gardening activities to local residents and local allotment holders.
		Create pollinator friendly flower beds in parks and link these to interpretation about pollinators.
		Promote pollinators to Ward Councils to encourage inclusion within their funding priorities.
		Encourage local schools to develop wildflower areas in school grounds.

Annex 1: Useful Sources of Information

Buglife – Get Britain Buzzing: A manifesto for pollinators
https://www.buglife.org.uk/pollinator-manifesto

National Pollinator Strategy for England 2014
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/409431/pb14221-nationalpollinators- strategy.pdf

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/474386/nps-implementationplan.pdf

Buglife B-Lines Pollinator sheets - https://www.buglife.org.uk/advice-and publications/publications/b-linesresources and local authority guidance

Buglife information on Neonicotinoid insecticides https://www.buglife.org.uk/campaigns-and-ourwork/campaigns/neonicotinoid-insecticides

Buglife Urban Buzz information - https://www.buglife.org.uk/advice-and-guidance-2

'Managing Transport Corridors for Pollinators' and 'Managing Urban Spaces for Pollinators' (Buglife)
www.buglife.org.uk/sites/default/files/Transport%20Corridors%20Pollinator%20Sheet%20Final.pdf
www.buglife.org.uk/sites/default/files/Urban%20Pollinator%20Sheet%20Final.pdf

Living with Environmental Change: Managing urban areas for insect pollinators. As town and cities continue to grow how can land managers help insect pollinators in urban areas?
http://www.nerc.ac.uk/research/partnerships/ride/lwec/ppn/ppn20/

Planning for a healthy environment: good practice guidance for green infrastructure and biodiversity", TCPA and the Wildlife Trusts, 2012
www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/TCPA_TWT_GI-Biodiversity-Guide.pdf

DEFRA advisory notes – urban, transport gardens, industrial etc.
http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/beesneeds/information-sheets

Status and value of pollinators and pollination - A report to DEFRA
http://nora.nerc.ac.uk/505259/1/N505259CR.pdf

Friends of the Earth - Local Authority Bee Guide
https://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/localauthority- bee-guide-46885.pdf

Bumblebee Conservation – Local Authority Pack
https://bumblebeeconservation.org/images/uploads/Local_authorities_pack_full.pdf