

# **Skipton Town Council Pollinator Action Plan**

May 2021

## **An Introduction to Skipton Town Council's Pollinator Action Plan**

**Introductory Statement** from Cllr. Tony Barrett (agreed by STC Councillors)

*Skipton is famously described as being the Gateway to the Dales and in that phrase there is a deep implication of a connection with the natural world.*

*We are currently heading for a national crisis.*

*On 4th Oct 2019, The State of Nature Report delivered a devastating verdict on the current rates of decline of UK species, both for flora and fauna.*

*This reinforces subjective evidence - a drive in the Dales 25 years ago would result in the car windscreen being covered in insects - now no longer.*

*If Skipton of all places can't be bothered to reverse the trend there is even less reason for urban regions to get involved.*

*Skipton Town Council is determined to take a lead.*

*It is already providing pollination areas on its own estate and is working with other land owners and individuals encouraging them to do the same.*

*A local Pollination Plan will not solve the issue at a stroke but it is a hugely important step to raise awareness and provides a bold initial step to address the situation.*

*The environment is rapidly moving up the political agenda particularly with younger people.*

*This action will not only improve the environment but will provide the additional advantage of making the wider political process relevant to young people in our area.*

Skipton Town Council 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 work. Skipton Town Council will protect and increase the amount and quality of pollinator habitat and manage its green spaces to provide greater benefits for pollinators - and people.

Skipton Town Council's Pollinator Action Plan is designed to inspire the residents, businesses, schools, everyone who lives or works in Skipton, and to provide opportunities to make Skipton more pollinator friendly.

The plan details actions to be taken, in parks and green spaces across Skipton. It will be adopted by estates management/public services and Skipton Town Council staff, residents, businesses, schools, land owners and other organisations will be encouraged to support the plan.

## **What is the problem?**

Scientists, wildlife organisations and Government agree that pollinators need our help!

The National Pollinator Strategy for England (2014), highlights serious declines in our native pollinators and calls for action to help conserve these species.

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 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 included in land and habitat management.

Local authorities across the country are being asked to deliver, promote and enthuse others to participate in work which will benefit pollinators. Local authorities are well placed to make a significant contribution through land management and provide leadership on this issue across their local communities.

## **Pollinators under threat**

Our pollinators are in trouble - Half of our bumblebee species and 71% of our butterflies are in decline and two-thirds of our moths are in long term decline. Across Europe 38% of bee and hoverfly species are in decline.

The factors leading to the declines in pollinator numbers include:

- **Habitat loss**  
The most significant cause of decline is the loss, degradation and fragmentation of habitats which provide food, shelter and nesting sites for pollinators. Over 3 million hectares of wildflower-rich grasslands have been lost in England since the 1930s, due to more intensive farming and urban/industrial development.
- **Pesticides**  
There is growing evidence that the use of pesticides is having harmful effects on pollinators including honeybees, wild bees and butterflies. Pesticides impact the wider natural environment such as farmland birds and soil organisms.
- **Climate Change**  
Long term changes in the climate can deprive pollinators of food supplies at times when they need them, or change habitats so that they are no longer suitable. A resilient network of good pollinator habitat is needed for them to be able to adapt to climate change and move across the countryside into new areas.

### **What is the purpose of the plan?**

The purposes of the plan are:

- For the council to be a community leader in action for pollinators in the Council's operations and by their support of others.
- To ensure that the needs of pollinators are always considered throughout Skipton Town Council's work and services.
- To prioritise the conservation of pollinators, and habitats that provide food and shelter for pollinators, in the council's management of parks and greenspaces.
- To contribute to the recovery of pollinator populations which will support both biodiversity and health and well-being.

### **What is the plan doing?**

The plan is:

- Ensuring that the land, road verges, parks and other green spaces that Skipton Town Council is responsible for (i.e. owns, manages or can influence) continues to be managed for the benefit of pollinators.
- Inspiring and supporting the people of Skipton to take action themselves, however big or small, in their communities, schools, homes and places of work to create habitats that provide food and shelter and benefit pollinator populations.
- Helping people to develop friendlier relationships with pollinators and understand the importance of protecting our insect pollinators.

### **What are pollinators?**

Pollinators are insects that transfer pollen (reproductive dust) from one flower to another enabling seeds and fruit to form, and thus the next generation of plants to develop.

Our native pollinators include bumblebees and other bees (250 species), butterflies and moths, flies including hoverflies (270 species), beetles and wasps. It has been estimated that 6,000 insect species in the UK visit flowers and pollinate 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.

### **What pollinators need**

Primarily, like us, pollinators need food to eat and somewhere safe to live.

**Food** – Pollinators need food (nectar and pollen) from flowering plants, throughout the season from when they emerge in March through until September. Many flowering plants can provide these food resources, from wild flowers, hedgerows and trees, to garden plants and food crops. 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** – pollinators need somewhere safe to nest, to lay their eggs, to rear the offspring and to hibernate or overwinter. Old mammal holes and dense vegetation are used by bumblebees, with sunny slopes and dry ground used by ground-nesting bees such as mining bees. 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.

## What is being done in Skipton now?

- **Current projects:**

Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT) Bee Together project created habitat for pollinators and organised events with the local volunteers (tree planting, orchard planting, wildflower seed sowing, planting plugs) along the B-Lines network. At Middletown Recreation Ground a wildflower-rich meadow was sown and an orchard was planted.

Skipton Town Golf Club are working with YDMT Bee Together project to provide food and shelter for pollinators across their site

- **Habitats and management:**

The green spaces across Skipton are managed on an ongoing basis for the benefit of pollinators.

Allotments (Broughton Road Assoc. and Middletown Assoc.) including the Community plots, provide space for residents to grow fruit, vegetables and flowers supporting pollinators and helping them to thrive.

- **Working with the facts:**

It's important to measure how things have changed. The UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme (PoMS) is using citizen science, long-term records and systematic surveys to find out how insect pollinator populations are changing. This provides important data on pollinators, especially wild bees and hoverflies, and how they support farming and other wildlife. Everyone can get involved in the citizen science project by completing a Flower-Insect Timed count (or FIT count), Full details are available from here: <https://ukpoms.org.uk/>

## **The Pollinator Action Plan**

### **Objective 1:**

Ensuring that the land, road verges, parks and other green spaces that Skipton Town Council is responsible for (i.e. owns, manages or can influence) continues to be managed for the benefit of pollinators.

- The timing and extent of mowing will avoid any adverse impacts on pollinating insects and a 'mosaic' mowing approach will be used where possible.

### **Objective 2:**

Inspiring and supporting the people of Skipton to take action themselves, however big or small, in their communities, schools, homes and places of work to create habitats that provide food and shelter and benefit pollinator populations.

- The Newsletters for the allotment associations

### **Objective 3:**

Helping people to develop friendlier relationships with pollinators and understand the importance of protecting our insect pollinators.

**The long term plan.**

In 10 years 100%? of Skipton Town Council's green spaces will be managed to provide room for pollinators, safe spaces for pollinators and residents and visitors will have a friendly relationship with pollinators.

**Recommendations**

These recommendations are for everyone - for Skipton Town Council staff and councillors, for other organisations, businesses, groups and individuals in Skipton:

- Create green spaces across Skipton to provide resources for pollinators and wildlife.
- Manage green spaces across Skipton for pollinators to be safe places for pollinators and wildlife to thrive.
- Engage with people across Skipton to develop a friendlier relationship with pollinators, insects and the natural world.

**Conclusion**

In Skipton many people enjoy local green spaces and support pollinating insects for example through the creation of the wildflower meadow and orchard at Middletown Recreation Ground. Actions taken by the Council, local businesses and local residents will provide diverse green spaces helping pollinating insects to thrive – and in turn, our insect pollinators will support our the natural environment and the food we grow.

## Useful sources of information:

- **National Pollinator Strategy for England 2014**  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/794706/national-pollinator-strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/794706/national-pollinator-strategy.pdf)
- Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust Bee Together  
<https://www.ydmt.org/what-we-do/bee-together>
- UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme (PoMS)  
<https://ukpoms.org.uk/>
- **Buglife B-Lines**  
<https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/>
- **Buglife Pollinator Guidance**  
<https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/b-lines-guidance/>
- **Buglife Habitat Management**  
<https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/b-lines-guidance/habitat-management/>
- **Buglife 'Managing road verges for pollinators'**  
<https://cdn.buglife.org.uk/2020/07/Roberts-Phillips-Managing-road-verges-for-pollinators-report-040119.pdf>
- **Buglife and Friends of the Earth Local Authority Bee Guide**  
<https://cdn.buglife.org.uk/2020/10/Helping-pollinators-locally.pdf>
- **Bumblebee Conservation – Local Authority Pack**  
[https://bumblebeeconservation.org/images/uploads/Local\\_authorities\\_pack\\_full.pdf](https://bumblebeeconservation.org/images/uploads/Local_authorities_pack_full.pdf)