

Lowestoft Town Council Wild Flower Meadows Policy

Introduction

Building on its Open Spaces Strategy and in response to the Climate Crisis Policy, Lowestoft Town Council will look to develop Wild Flower areas in suitable locations. These areas will not be progressed to save money indeed in the short term they may need some investment but to improve natural habitats, provide bio-diversity as well as nectar rich sources of food for bees and other insects whilst providing an attractive and varied landscape for the town's population.

Reasons

Wild flower meadows have been in decline for generations due to population growth and the resulting need for housing and transport networks, intensive farming methods and the desire for more ornate plants. Our bee and pollinating insect populations are in decline both due the use of insecticides and this decline in easily accessible, pollen rich food sources. The town council has already passed policy restricting the use of pesticides in its parks and open spaces such that it should only be used for dealing with invasive weeds and should preferably be of a systemic nature. This policy seeks to address what we can do to help increase the availability of pollen rich wild flower availability within Lowestoft and hopefully influence others to follow this lead.

Preparation & Cultivation

Having researched best practise from botanical and environmental experts the council will source wildflower seed from ethical UK seed sources and, working with its contractors, will ensure that best practise is followed when developing sites for planting of wild flower areas. This will include the following processes:

- Scalping of the existing grass by one to three short cuts in quick succession in the early autumn
- Scarification of the area to be seeded following the final cut
- Seeding of the area using an appropriate sustainable UK seed mix with additional Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*).
- Lightly water in with no top dressing
- Allow to over winter
- Observe growth in the early spring and, if necessary, apply additional seed to any bare areas.

The nature of wildflower mix will generally be pollen rich native species which are longer lived or perennial of nature. Annual mixes such as a cornflower/poppy mix will only be used in limited locations.

Once established the wild flower area can be left with only one or two cuts a year. One in the autumn after seed is set and sometimes one in the spring if the grass is growing too strongly to reduce the grasses vigour and encourage the native wild flower species.

Locations and Uses

The council will consider suitable locations from its parks, open spaces and play areas in which to develop wild flower areas. Some may have large areas and others small areas depending on the suitability and use of the location. Where possible the development of wild flower areas will be delivered in such a way to enhance the natural environment and provide natural play space, educational opportunities and adult leisure space by incorporating such features as mazes, hillocks, paths and glades. They may also be used in conjunction with other areas such as community orchards and gardens and possibly allotments where their pollen rich qualities will help attract insects which will then also pollinate crops.

Public Information

In order to ensure that the public are aware when a wild flower site is proposed for an area it will be published on the council's website and signs will be placed up at the location to advise of the plans so that any major objections can be considered. Once the wild flower area has been in place for three years public engagement will take place to see if the site has been successful and, where affordable, a survey carried out by wildlife specialists to see whether the site has improved biodiversity. When carried out the council will publish the results of the research especially to local schools and playgroups.

Conclusion

Lowestoft Town Council is committed to improving the environment for residents and visitors of all kinds and species and believes that natural spaces are important to the health and well-being of all. It is also highly conscious of the climate crisis as well as the crisis in the level of loss of bee population across the UK and Europe and believes that this policy can provide some assistance especially if it encourages others to follow this lead.