

## **Re-Wilding and Wildlife Corridors**

### **Maintenance by NEDDC Streetscene Grounds Maintenance and Works to Improve Biodiversity**

The District Council's Grounds Maintenance section undertaken maintenance throughout the district on a wide range of sites including verges, open spaces, recreation grounds, and flower beds.

As part of this maintenance, consideration is given to attracting insects and wildlife, and improving biodiversity.

#### **Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

Derbyshire County Council's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (currently at draft stage) compliments our aims for biodiversity.

Nature recovery is about enhancing and protecting our best nature-rich sites and creating new and restoring sites where there is opportunity. This can have a range of ecological, economic and social benefits.

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Derbyshire will describe opportunities and prioritise for Derbyshire to help nature recover. Through the mapping of actions (measures) and identifying areas that could become of importance for biodiversity, it will show where we can protect and enhance, and where we can create and restore, whilst conserving and improving the character and quality of Derbyshire's diverse landscapes.

The LNRS will cover the district of North East Derbyshire and become a statutory plan that will need to be taken account by the District Council both within its planning function and its wider decision-making once the Strategy has been approved.

## **Current Maintenance and Plans**

### **Verges and Green Spaces**

Verges are maintained within a maintenance programme, with urban verges cut high frequency (optimum 12 cuts) or low frequency (optimum 6 cuts), and rural verges with optimum 2 cuts swathe width within the second cut every three years being a full width. At some sites specified by Derbyshire County Council, a full width is cut is undertaken of the rural verges.

Open spaces and recreation grounds are similarly maintained within a maintenance programme, with grass normally cut high frequency (optimum 12 cuts), some sites are cut low frequency (optimum 6 cuts).

Where bulbs (e.g. crocus, daffodils) are planted, the bulbs are mown around until mid-June to allow the bulbs time to die back.

Where wild orchids are identified as growing, notes are added to the maintenance programmes and the first cut is delayed until July.

During recent years, the District Council has participated in No Mow May at select sites, and identified some sites for reduced maintenance.

## **Flower Beds & Planters**

The District Council has flower beds on a roundabouts, verges and open spaces. In addition, we have raised planters around the district.

Traditionally the District Council have used seasonal bedding, planting the beds out twice a year with summer and spring bedding.

The District Council maintains flower beds and containers at the following sites:

- **Arkwright Town**
  - A632 Chesterfield Road traffic island
- **Calow**
  - Church Lane verge near Top Road junction
- **Clay Cross**
  - Coney Green Road traffic island
  - Coney Green Business Centre, Coney Green Road (entrance bed and two containers)
  - \*Library Grounds, Holmgate Road
  - A61 High Street front of Clay Cross Clinic (two beds and pit tubs)
  - \*A61 High Street side 171 (west side of road) (two beds)
  - Sharley Park, Market Street entrance bed
- **Dronfield**
  - Dronfield Sports Centre (two beds)
  - Dronfield Library Gardens, High Street (two beds, two urns, one tower container and four containers)
  - Gosforth Lane junction High Street (two tower containers)
  - Lea Road junction School Lane (two beds)
  - Rawlins Court (seven beds)
- **Duckmanton**
  - A632 Chesterfield Road junction Buttermilk Lane traffic island
- **Eckington**
  - A6135 Littlemoor/B6053 Rotherham Road ATCO crossroads gore
  - Pinfold Street bus station verge
- **Grassmoor**
  - North Wingfield Road side of doctors
- **Killamarsh**
  - Killamarsh Sports Centre, Stanley Street (pit tub)
- **Old Tupton**
  - A61 Derby Road junction Ashover Road (Tupton Tap) traffic island
- **Ridgeway**

- High Lane/Geer Lane verge
- **Tupton**
  - A61 Derby Road junction Queen Victoria Road traffic island
- **Wingerworth**
  - Mill Lane Offices (two containers by entrance door, four containers in quad)

*\* Beds at High Street (side 171) and Library Grounds, Holmgate Road maintained under service level agreement for Clay Cross Parish Council.*

Seasonal spring bedding is delivered in October and planted October/early November. Seasonal summer bedding is delivered in late May and planted in May/early June.

Historically, the District Council have alternated between polyanthus, and pansies and bellis, for its spring bedding, albeit orders may be subject to availability of seed and germination. However, winter pansies offer no benefit to bees and other insects, so the council's winter bedding often does not benefit biodiversity.

In addition to pansies, some other annual bedding plants such as begonias and busy lizzies offer little benefit to insects.

Furthermore, the purchase of spring and summer bedding has meant:

- Reduced visual amenity as result of removing bedding plants, when they are looking good, to plant up with new bedding
- Ongoing cost of purchase and planting
- Waste from packing (planting trays)
- Environmental impact of transportation of over 18,000 plants twice a year
- Protection against risings costs as result of increased cost of labour or material (e.g. planting trays, compost)

Alternatives options for District Council floral bedding displays:

- Stop planting spring bedding – plant once a year (summer only), and leave the summer bedding in to overwinter.
- Remove floral beds and reinstate to grass.
- Plant floral beds with wildflowers, to be cut down once a year.
- Replace seasonal (spring and summer) bedding with perennial bedding schemes.

It should be noted that many of the sites are roundabouts which are sponsored by local businesses, and removing the beds completely may result in a reduced interest from sponsors/advertisers. For the 2023/24 financial year, sponsorship has generated £9,265, and for 2024/25 year sponsorship is anticipated to generate £12,480.

Establishing perennial bedding schemes can extend the flowering season, increasing the benefit to bees and insects, and increasing the visual impact for residents.

During the initial establishment period, beds may appear sparse, due to the team leaving space to spread and fill out as they grow.

In recent years, some sites have had a limited number of perennial plants planted to leave in overwinter. This provided more structure to those beds and an extended flowering period, and slightly reduced the number of plants required on those sites.

In December 2023, a plan for moving to perennial bedding in the north of the district was put in place, when the bedding was ordered for summer 2024.

During summer 2024, the District Council planted approx. 3,800 perennial plants in Arkwright, Calow, Dronfield, Duckmanton, Eckington, Killamarsh and Ridgeway. Some of the beds in those areas contain a mix of annual and perennial planting.

With some of these sites, winter bulbs will be planted for added colour during the winter/spring period.

The perennial planting ordered was a mix of planting which will provide nectar and pollen for bees, butterflies and many other types of pollinating insects. The perennial planting mix ordered for summer 2024 comprised of:

- Arenaria Montana 'Blizzard' – not only good for bees, but evergreen
- Campanula carpatica Pristar White / Deep Blue
- Echinacea purpurea 'Cheyanne Spirit'
- Gaura lindheimer 'Whirling Butterflies' – known for attracting bees and butterflies
- Coreopsis grandiflora 'Early Sunrise'
- Rudbeckia 'Goldsturm'

The scheme of improvements to Dronfield Civic Centre also includes establishing a new perennial planting scheme, and this will further reduce the quantity of seasonal bedding required.

The combined result of this has decreased by more than 5,200 the number of new plants (annuals) required for spring 2025.

Order for	Quantity of plants	Cost	Average cost per plant
Summer 2022	16,292	£5,871.60	36p
Spring 2023 (rec'd Oct 2022)	15,633	£4,238.00	27p
Summer 2023	19,080	£7,056.85	37p

Spring 2024 (rec'd Oct 2023)	18,252	£6,048.00	33p
Summer 2024	18,972	£8,222.70	43p (63p / 33p*)
Spring 2025 (rec'd Oct 2024)	12,996	£3,436.50	26p
Summer 2025	13,473	£5,817.30	43p

*Additional beds (i.e. Coney Green Road traffic island) were established in 2023, which resulted in the higher quantity ordered for 2023. The inclusion of perennial bedding was reflected in the higher cost for summer 2024.*

*\*Average cost in areas where perennial bedding used was 63p per plant, compared with average cost of 33p per plant in other areas of district.*

Whilst the perennial planting is more expensive, it benefits biodiversity and through the reduced number of new spring and summer annuals required reduces the cost of future orders. This saving is reinvested to extend the perennial planting provision around the district.

As seasonal bedding is grown to order by the District Council's supplier, summer bedding is ordered November/December for delivery the following May, and spring bedding is ordered June for delivery the early- to mid-October. This does mean that any changes to the plans for the beds need to be established at least six months in advance.

For summer 2025, the plants ordered are a mix of perennials and annuals, including plants which will provide nectar and pollen for bees, butterflies and many other types of pollinating insects. The perennial planting mix ordered for this coming summer comprises of *Arenaria Montana* 'Blizzard', *Echinacea purpurea* 'Cheyanne Spirit' and *Rudbeckia* 'Goldsturm', with *Rudbeckia* along with the also ordered *Centaurea cyanus* 'Blue Ball' and *Salvia Merleau Blue* being on the RHS Plants for Pollinators list.

### **Other Works to Increase Biodiversity and Benefit Wildlife/Insects**

The District Council has participated No Mow May since 2023, and apply No Mow May to selected sites.

During 2023 the No Mow May sites 26,000m<sup>2</sup>. In 2024, the No Mow May areas totalled 42,342m<sup>2</sup>, which was an increase of over 63%.

Wild flora seeding has been undertaken at grassed embankments in Killamarsh, Clay Cross, and further seed beds are being established on the centre of Bowshaw roundabout Dronfield, which has been sown with Yellow Rattle to encourage the establishment of wildflowers.

Streetscene and Rykneld Homes have worked with Killamarsh Conservation Group, who established a wildflower bed which is maintained by the District Council.

Members of the public have been invited to propose new No Mow May areas and reduced maintenance sites by way of the No Mow May signage and information on the council's website and social media.

Streetscene are identifying sites and developing plans for re-wilding, biodiversity net gain, and reduced cuts. See Appendix.

### Tree Planting

Planting additional tree canopies particularly across the southern area of the district and creating more biodiverse areas is planned.

Community Orchards are being established around the district. Two Community Orchards were planted on District Council land in Eckington in 2022, and further community orchards will be delivered.

Streetscene are undertaking a £10,000 UKSPF tree planting project during winter 2024/25, this planting is a mix of species and sizes, and part of these planting works new community orchards are being created. As part of this project, we have a site set up as an in-community tree nursery, at Alices View, North Wingfield, where young trees/whips are being planted during February/March 2025.

Streetscene are also developing a Community Tree Nurseries project, with community involvement.

### Biodiversity Net Gain sites

Streetscene are developing a schedule of works to be delivered over 3 years for investment of the section 106 monies received from the developments at Clay Lane (20/00221/FL) and Coney Green Road (20/00830/FL), Clay Cross. These monies are allocated for use on District Council land at Clay Lane, Sharley Park, Egstow and Coney Green Road, and as part of these works a community orchard is to be planted at Clay Lane during 2025.

### Community Tree Nurseries

The District Council is keen to engage the local community and work with local community groups for the maintenance of Community Tree Nurseries.

The primary purpose of the Community Tree Nurseries is to grow small trees on, to transplant to a suitable site elsewhere when the tree is large enough. This would

allow the District Council to invest in small trees, to maximise tree numbers and increase tree planting around the district.

Young trees (i.e. whips or feathered trees) would be purchased by the District Council for planting on suitable sites around the district, where they would be maintained by a local community group at a tree 'nursery' space, whilst the tree is growing on to be a suitable size to replant elsewhere.

When the trees are of a suitable size, some or all of the trees will be dug up and re-planted on elsewhere. Where possible, the replanting will take place in the same parish, however in some cases the trees will be re-planted elsewhere in the district.

Community Tree Nurseries project would be a negotiable commitment, but the District Council would prefer minimum 5 year commitment, though this may vary depending upon the individual tree species, growth rate and initial size.

Community Tree Nursery sites would need to be in publicly accessible areas.

Who would be involved?

The Community Tree Nursery project would invite interest from groups including, but not limited to:

- Parish Councils
- Community Gardening Groups
- Allotment Associations
- Tenants and Residents Associations
- Rykneld Homes Community Involvement Officers on behalf of otherwise unaffiliated groups of tenants

If community groups are interested in taking part in maintaining a Community Tree Nursery, but do not have a suitable site, the group may be able to use suitable District Council site subject to agreement.

The District Council will advertise the project online and promote via email to the above groups.

**Summary of Current Actions and Plans in Sustainability Strategy**

Focal point	Actions/Plans	KPIs - measuring success	Targets – What will success look like?
Flower Beds & Planters	<p>Include pollinator-friendly plants and perennial plants in planting schemes.</p> <p>During 2024, beds in the north of the district were planted with perennial bedding. Further perennial bedding has been ordered for summer 2025, for the south of the district. Using perennial bedding extends the flowering season, reduces waste and environmental impact of bedding deliveries, and benefits pollinators.</p>	% of pollinator-friendly plants planted per year	<p>1% increase per year.</p> <p>Perennials selected for 2024 and 2025 are pollinator friendly with some on the RHS Plants for Pollinators list</p>
Verges and green spaces	<p>Promote green spaces and access corridors in specific areas.</p> <p>Encourage No Mow May.</p> <p>Work with Rykneld Homes and local community groups for on bulb and wildflower planting.</p> <p>Undertake tree planting on NEDDC land.</p>	Resident engagement.	Number of interested party contacts.
No Mow May	<p>Continued participation in No Mow May. NEDDC have participated in No Mow May site 2023, and the size of the land allocated in 2024 was a 63% increase on the previous year.</p> <p>Encourage No Mow May.</p> <p>Continue to invite public engagement and nomination of new No Mow May sites.</p>	Size of land allocated	Minimum additional 3 sites identified each year until 2028.

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Focal point	Actions/Plans	KPIs - measuring success	Targets – What will success look like?
Increase tree & hedge planting	<p>Develop a Tree Management Plan.</p> <p>Refer to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (currently in draft form) when developing plans.</p> <p>Refer to Derbyshire Heartwood Forest &amp; DCC’s Tree and Woodland Strategy.</p> <p>Develop Community Orchards and continually identify potential sites for new or replacement planting, including where trees have been lost due to storm damage.</p> <p>Develop Community Tree Nurseries.</p> <p>Create new hedges and improve existing hedgerows.</p> <p>Explore potential development of new woodland areas.</p>	<p>Tree Management Plan adopted.</p> <p>Number of trees planted.</p> <p>Number of hedge whips planted.</p> <p>Resident engagement.</p>	<p>Tree Management Plan adopted during 2025.</p> <p>1000 trees planted during period 2025-2028</p> <p>1000 hedgerow whips planted during period 2025-2028</p> <p>Number of interested party contacts.</p>
Increase overall biodiversity	<p>Continue to identify sites for No Mow May, reduced maintenance, planting and biodiversity net gain.</p> <p>Identify opportunities to work with partners on schemes to increase biodiversity.</p> <p>Work with Rykneld Homes Community Involvement team on sites for wildflower and bulb planting by local community groups, signage on community orchards, and identifying potential planting sites.</p> <p>Engage with public on identifying potential community orchard sites.</p> <p>Promote schemes undertaken by NEDDC e.g. No Mow May, allocating BNG sites, developing community orchards</p> <p>Delivery of s106 funded schemes from recent Clay Cross developments (20/00221/FL and 20/00830/FL) within 3 years.</p>	<p>Resident/Parish Council engagement.</p>	<p>Number of Parish Council/interested party contacts.</p>