

Date of Meeting Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

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## Improving Green Spaces for Wildlife

### Report summary:

This report sets out the objectives for and reasoning behind targeted wildlife improvement areas, and covers the following:

The management of designated wildlife improvement areas; legislation, policies and strategies that apply to the transition and designation of green spaces to wildlife improvement areas; the systems used to manage wildlife improvement areas; stakeholders' consultations; communication with residents, similar work by other local authorities, and other resources and infrastructure changes required to make the transitions more efficient.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

### Recommendation:

1. Scrutiny Committee reviews the reasons that the Managing Sites for Wildlife approach was adopted and how this came about.
2. Scrutiny Committee endorses the approaches and amended process of wildlife improvement practices, and notes the wider Nature Recovery Work being led by Countryside.
3. Scrutiny Committee approves wider communication to Councillors regarding this approach, with a feature in the Councillor update.
4. Scrutiny Committee provides any further recommendations for supporting the important strategy of transitioning traditionally maintained green spaces to wildlife improvement areas within climatic (e.g., mild winters and wet springs) and budgeting constraints.
5. Councillors to be able to increase their awareness of the reasoning and history of this approach and how it relates to central and local government legislative and policy frameworks.
6. Councillors help to disseminate this message to residents/voters in order to bridge the gap between Council strategy and residents' expectations of wildlife improvement areas and the continual transition of EDDC-owned green spaces from traditionally mown grass areas to wildlife havens. This will help StreetScene continue to align its targeted work with the legislative framework and Council-wide agendas, policies, strategies and action plans.

Reason for recommendation:

Councillors have varying levels of awareness of the ways in which the creation and management of wildlife improvement areas fits in with legislation, Council policy, service plans and codes of practice. Therefore, it is important to inform and educate Councillors as a whole of the rationale for the introduction and expansion of wildlife improvement areas across the district, which will 'level the playing field' of understanding and, thus, enable Councillors to act as advocates for wildlife improvement areas.

Officer: Paul Fealey, Horticultural Technical Officer, StreetScene, East Devon District Council.

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**Portfolio(s) (check which apply):**

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Communications and Democracy
- Economy
- Finance and Assets
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

**Equalities impact** Low Impact

**Climate change** Medium Impact

**Risk:** Low

**Links to background information**

Policies that are applicable. Include website link/previous report & minutes

[Environment Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

[Council Strategy - East Devon](#)

[Action Plan - East Devon](#)

[Service Plan objectives for 2021-22 v2 003 JA.pdf \(eastdevon.gov.uk\)](#)

[120122 Streetscene key service objectives for 2022-23.pdf \(eastdevon.gov.uk\)](#)

[streetscene-service-plan-2024-2025-final.pdf \(eastdevon.gov.uk\)](#)

[Nature Recovery Declaration for East Devon.pdf](#)

[Agenda for Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 5th October, 2023, 6.00 pm - East Devon](#)

[Devon Nature Recovery Network - Devon Local Nature Partnership \(devonlnp.org.uk\)](#)

[Biodiversity net gain - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

**Link to [Council Plan](#)**

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
- A greener East Devon
- A resilient economy

## Report in full

### 1. Green Spaces not Covered by this Report

1.1 The following green spaces are not covered by this report:

- Green spaces under the remit of EDDC's Countryside/Wild East Devon team.
- Green spaces owned by Devon County Council, which includes highways' grass verges.
- Green spaces owned by Town/Parish Councils.
- Green spaces owned by EDDC but leased to third parties.
- Green spaces designated for sports.
- Residential properties.
- Any other amenity green space not designated as a wildlife improvement area.

### 2. The Management of Wildlife Improvement Areas

#### 2.1 Legislation, policies, strategies and action plans that apply to the transition and designation of green spaces to wildlife improvement areas

2.1.2 East Devon District Council declared a Climate Emergency on 24.7.2019. The intense management of green spaces is an unnecessary contributor to climate change due to carbon releases from powered equipment, conflicting with the vision of EDDC becoming a carbon neutral Council by 2040.

2.1.3 **The Environment Act (2021)** "Through the Act, we will clean up the country's air, restore natural habitats, increase biodiversity...halt the decline in species by 2030. It is imperative that we step up action to boost nature recovery if we are to tackle the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change."

2.1.4 **StreetScene Service Plan 2021/22**, Section 7: "Continue improving the range of areas managed sensitively for wildlife and biodiversity, including reduced grass cutting and meadow creation where appropriate. Supporting the Blue Heart Campaign and informing the public through social media about less intense grass management."

2.1.5 **StreetScene Service Plan 2022/23**, Section 7: "Improve habitat conditions for wildlife. Prioritise the joining up of natural green spaces to improve connectivity for species. Support the development of nature recovery networks to protect and restore wildlife, and provide opportunities to re-introduce species."

2.1.6 **StreetScene Service Plan 2023/24**, Section 5: "Improve our sustainable management of green spaces, building on our Green Space Plan and Natural Green Space Policies." Expected aims: "Help protect the environment, improve biodiversity, linked nature recovery areas, and meet Climate Change Action Plan aims."

2.1.7 **Council Plan. Priority Two: A greener East Devon.** "We shall be implementing rewilding, nature recovery and conservancy schemes to enhance our precious environment... and develop a Local Plan policy that protects the existing biodiversity and to improve and add to it significantly."

### 2.1.8 Nature Recovery Declaration for East Devon

A report to Cabinet on 6.9.23 on the importance of nature recovery due to EDDC being a supporting authority on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy under the Environment Act (2021). *What is the problem?* “We have both a Climate and Biodiversity crises and currently the United Kingdom is within the bottom 10% of countries globally and also the worst G7 nation for biodiversity loss. Nature is key to mitigating and adapting to climate change and supporting health and wellbeing. These twin crises present environmental, social and economic impacts and risks.” *Why is it important for local authorities?* “Sustainable management of public green spaces to encourage wildlife and improve forage for pollinators, including wildflower meadow and longer grass cutting regimes.” Targets: “A minimum of 30% of Council-owned land will be managed for the benefit of nature by 2030.”

### 2.1.9 Devon Nature Recovery Strategy

The Devon Local Nature Partnership states: “We have seen huge losses of wildlife across Devon. Our remaining habitats are largely disconnected from each other, often small and often in poor condition. We all need to take urgent action to create, enhance, expand and connect wildlife habitats across the county – in our villages, towns, countryside and seas.”

2.1.10 **Biodiversity Net Gain (2024)** “Created and enhanced habitats will be secured for a minimum of 30 years.”

### 2.1.11 East Devon District Council Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2025

Our Priorities and Targets (p.15) “Improve the quality and connectivity of natural habitats, Promote Nature Recovery Corridors, Use green spaces for carbon offsetting.”

2.1.12 **East Devon District Council Climate Change Action Plan 2020 – 2040** Objective 5: “Ensure that we address biodiversity and environmental issues as part of our climate change response.”

## 2.2 How the approach came about, how long it has been in place for and how it has developed

2.2.1 This approach has been led by both the climate and the biodiversity crises. Regular maintenance work releases carbon and, due to EDDC not having cut and collect ride-on mowers for traditionally managed green spaces, dropping arisings onto green spaces after mowing and strimming reduces biodiversity and, hence, value for wildlife.

2.2.2 StreetScene has been creating wildlife improvement areas since 2010, starting with the management of thirteen meadow areas for wildflowers and several older cemetery areas, such as at Sidmouth cemetery, for the same purpose. This approach was more widely rolled out following objectives from the 2019/20 service plan, where an approach of managing areas across EDDC’s green spaces for wildlife crystallised and subsequently became more widespread, soon after EDDC declared a climate emergency. This approach is referred to as **wildlife improvement**. The Council recognised that different skill sets were required to assist in the proper assessment of sites to function as wildlife improvement areas, ensuring other amenity uses had been fully considered. The role of Horticultural Technical Officer was created from a vacant Parks and Gardens role to help with these assessments, and with training grounds teams with regards of how to properly manage these sites.

2.2.3 It was recognised in 2021 that better public consultation methods were required for specific areas being targeted for wildlife improvement. Parks and Gardens Officers were employed at this point with experience in consulting with stakeholders about developing wildlife improvement areas. As a result, the consultation process became more efficient and inclusive. Before this period, however, especially during Covid-19, some sites were left for wildlife improvement by (now) former members of staff without public consultations. From 2021, ward members and the portfolio holder

for Coast, Country and Environment were contacted about each wildlife improvement proposals, and their feedback determined whether Officers continued with the proposals and starting public consultations. The face-to-face consultations were carried out in 2022 by Parks and Gardens Officers beside the green spaces that were targeted for wildlife improvement, which proved successful in understanding the feelings of residents and visitors about the proposals. Since then, there have been several online and door-to-door consultations. However, there is still room for improvement. For example, the creation and promotion of more online Have Your Say online public consultations, more face-to-face consultations, and more widely available/accessible documentation are needed to ensure that public consultations are more inclusive so we can be more confident that the results are representative.

## 2.3 Green spaces that are managed by StreetScene

2.3.1 An online interactive UK habitat map of StreetScene-managed wildlife improvement areas across the district was created by Parks and Gardens Officers in 2023, working with Strata. Officers assessed wildlife improvement areas and differentiated them by their flora. These were then documented and presented to Strata. The result is a map of wildlife improvement areas across the district that can be seen on the following webpage: [Improving Green Spaces for Wildlife - East Devon](#) To help with understanding the differences between wildlife improvement habitat types, Parks and Gardens Officers wrote the explanatory text below the map. These sites can also be seen on the Council's eMap due to an extra layer being added by Strata in 2023. This layer assists grounds teams' management of those sites and avoids confusion with regularly mown green spaces and wildlife improvement areas. As new wildlife improvement sites are created, the maps will be updated.

2.3.2 Wildlife improvement areas have different colour coding, based on the nationally recognised UK Habitat Classification System, so that the district's wildlife improvement areas can fit into a future national picture of habitat zoning.

## 2.4 The systems used to manage wildlife improvement areas

2.4.1 For traditionally mown areas, a green space's mowing routine will be dictated by its maintenance requirements and/or its Service Level Agreement (SLA). EDDC operates a cut and drop method when grass cutting general parks and open space amenity areas. It would not be economically or logistically viable to collect arisings from four million m<sup>2</sup> of grass on a regular basis. Periods between maintenance visits of regularly mown green spaces, as grounds teams progress through their rounds, may be up to 6 weeks between cuts. A consequence of climate change is it being more likely for spring to be mild and very wet, punctuated by sunny spells. This perfect storm enables grass to grow very quickly whilst the ground is still too wet for machinery to access. By the time machinery, such as ride-on mowers, can access grass swards, the grass is so long that arisings dropped after being cut are thick enough to block light and kill all but the most vigorous plants beneath – i.e., grasses. This reduces grassland biodiversity, and the layers are often so thick that they are still *in situ* on the next maintenance visit, which adds to the distressed flora. When the arisings decompose into the soil, the resulting nutrition feeds grasses, which then grow at even faster rates, leading to thicker arisings left after the next cut and drop mowing. This further impacts biodiversity levels because of the nutrified grasses outcompeting the growth rates of other plants within the grasslands that can survive the conditions. This negative feedback loop incrementally reduces grasslands' biodiversity levels – at a time when we find ourselves within a biodiversity emergency.

2.4.2 The **first type of wildlife improvement area** is a **natural area dominated by grasses** that is left largely unmown between April and September. When grasses and wildflowers are mown in the autumn, arisings are collected. Larger, more open spaces are cut and collected by a contractor with a flail and bailer due to this method being much more practical than the option for StreetScene to buy and store equipment that would be used for only a short period each year.

This removal of potential nutrition begins to prevent the grasses from outcompeting the less vigorous wildflowers after several years. The continual prevention of soil nutrition by cutting and collection is seen to be changing the biodiversity of natural (unsown) wildlife improvement areas in early 2024, as grasses starved by exhausted soils allow the emergence of more wildflowers. When soils in this wildlife improvement type become impoverished to a level that suits wildflowers at the expense of grasses, the ground of this wildlife improvement area type is prepared, if within budget restraints, and sown with wildflowers.

2.4.3 The **second type of wildlife improvement area**, and by far the fewest in number, due to budget constraints, are **designated wildflower areas**, which are created by a contractor using a PTO-driven stone burier to invert the turf to expose bare soils. Wildflower seed is then sown. With smaller, less accessible areas, a turf cutter is used to remove the turf. These areas are cut and collected each autumn to prevent what would otherwise lead to soil nutrition from decomposing matter feeding grasses. They are also cut and collected in the spring when the ground is not wet enough as to be damaged by the machinery.

2.4.4 Newly procured cut and collect ride-on mowers are used by grounds operatives to remove arisings from less accessible (i.e., for tractors) wildflower areas at the end of the season. to prevent wildlife improvement areas from becoming scrub, which would happen if they were left without any mechanical intervention.

2.4.5 In larger, more open wildlife improvement areas, a contractor uses a tractor and side flail to cut, collect, bail and remove the green waste from twenty StreetScene-managed green spaces across the district each autumn, such as the meadows in The Byes (Sidmouth), Peak Hill (Sidmouth), Phear Park (Exmouth), Littleton Green (Honiton) and Jubilee Field and The Green (Budleigh Salterton).

2.4.6 Transitioning from the first type to the second type of wildlife improvement area dramatically improves the public's perceptions due to the presence of flowers and the accompanying pollinators. Grasses' vigorous growth monopolises this type of wildlife improvement area and prevents natural seed stock of other plant species in underlying soils from becoming established, so residents complain that most wildlife improvement areas consist of just grasses, which look worse as the summer progresses and the grasses dry out.

## **2.5 Consultation prior to creating wildlife improvement areas**

2.5.1 When planning the transition from traditionally maintained green spaces to wildlife improvement areas from 2021, consultations take place to understand the viewpoints of stakeholders. Parks and Gardens Officers consult with Area Officers, Team Leaders and grounds operatives with regards to proposals. These consultations either lead to plans for a green space being shelved due to a number of limiting factors, plans being adapted so that sections of green spaces are put forward to other stakeholders and residents, or plans for the whole of the green space to be transitioned. Provisional designs are then created (for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> scenarios), which are communicated to ward members and the portfolio holder for Coast, Country and Environment. These designs show cue-to-care lines being mown around and, often, through the proposed wildlife improvement area. If there is no dissent, StreetScene management is informed of the plans, which is then fed back to the communications team so that social media coverage can inform local and wider residents to the plans for a particular green space. It is important to note that when Parks and Gardens Officers do not hear back from a particular ward member about proposals, this is taken as a lack of dissent to the proposals. However, Parks and Gardens Officers consistently hear back from the portfolio holder for Coast, Country and Environment, which initially often takes the form of questions to gain more perspective of the proposed area and the location of other nearby green spaces that can be used for amenity or recreation. The Appendices section contains evidence of various forms of consultation.

2.5.2 Parks and Gardens Officers work with EDDC's Communications Officer to coordinate social media posts about proposed green space management changes, and comments are monitored from the four social media channels (and targeted at online noticeboards for particular areas) and fed back to Parks and Gardens Officers. This helps to build a picture of how locals feel about the proposals. Parks and Gardens Officers also write press releases about wildlife improvement areas, such as the '**Let it Grow**' **press release in June 2023**, and the combined press release with Sidmouth Town Council in April 2024 to highlight the importance of both Councils' wildlife improvement strategies.

2.5.3 As examples of the wording of press releases to inform, educate and set expectations of residents, the opening paragraph of the Let it Grow press release is as follows: *'This year, StreetScene has increased the number of green spaces and verges; we are letting the grass grow between April and September to enable nature to flourish. Our "let it grow" approach at these sites is helping to provide habitats for insects and wildlife, reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by dramatically reducing mowing/trimming, promoting sustainable landscapes and encouraging native wildflowers. By enabling vegetation to flower, it provides essential nectar for bees and other pollinators, aiding nature and biodiversity across the district. These carefully selected sites are balanced with more tightly mown areas that are maintained for safety, sport, recreation and amenity purposes that form our green infrastructure.'*

2.5.4 The opening section of the very recent '**Council Mowing in the Sid Valley**' **press release** is as follows: *'The majority of green spaces owned or managed by each Council will be cut approximately every 4-6 weeks in the growing season, and perhaps more frequently if growing conditions demand it. The aim is for people to be able to enjoy activities, such as walking and relaxing on those areas, especially in and around the town and residential areas, as they are of important amenity and recreational value. However, the areas identified for nature across the Sid Valley will be left to grow naturally between April and September each year to encourage grasses and wildflowers to flourish. These areas, known as Wildlife Improvement Areas, will have appropriate signage to inform the public of their designation. In addition, each area will have strips mown next to paved or tarmacked areas so that plants on the edge do not interfere with use of the pathways or reduce visibility. In some areas, additional paths will be cut to allow ease of passage and allow people to enjoy walking through areas designated for wildlife. Invasive species will also be managed, as necessary. This sustainable practice will help enable wildlife to develop, establish vital habitats for insect pollinators and other wildlife, promote sustainable landscapes and encourage a wide variety of native wildflowers.'*

2.5.5 There is one wildlife improvement area that is managed via an SLA with EDDC's Housing department. Between late 2021 to early 2022, Parks and Gardens Officers liaised with Housing to put forward a case for StreetScene to adopt Housing land at Higher Brook Meadow, Sidford in order to plant trees and hedges and reduce regular maintenance levels. All residents of Higher Brook Meadow were canvassed for their opinion by a local resident, supported by Parks and Gardens Officers. Residents were unanimously in favour of the transition and Housing agreed to the change of land use. The residents of Higher Brook Meadow formed themselves into the Friends of Higher Brook Meadow and liaised with Sidmouth Arboretum, which supplied the specimen trees and hedging plants. Preparation and planting sessions were organised with the residents (promoted on social media and communicated to ward members and portfolio holder for Coast, Country and Environment). When the specimen trees and hedging plants were planted, there was a **thirty per cent reduction in maintenance using powered equipment**.

2.5.6 There were two instances in 2022 where Parks and Gardens Officers created online consultations and set up and publicised face-to-face public consultations, at Lymebourne Park, Sidmouth on 12.9.22 and Old Elm Road, Honiton on 13.9.22. On each occasion, the Parks and Gardens Officer carried out a leaflet drop to seventeen residents at Lymebourne and thirty-one residents at Old Elm Road. These were accompanied by social media posts to inform people of the upcoming public consultation, and information posters on stakes in the green spaces. A

gazebo was erected beside each of the green spaces to let residents and visitors know why Officers were there. Mood boards were created to inform the public of the proposed changes, why they are needed, the changes to the land people would see within the first year, and how the land would develop in the longer-term.

2.5.7 Officers conversed with the public on both occasions – and were joined by Cllr Alex Rowe in Gittisham – and took on their advice and guidance. For example, one resident of Lymebourne, after reviewing the proposals, advised Officers to avoid having daffodils beside a footpath junction because of his experience of most people cutting the corner. Also, some residents adjacent to the Old Elm Road green space advised that the creation of a pond without safety fencing was inappropriate in a high-density housing estate predominantly occupied by families. This type of feedback was invaluable. Cllr Alex Rowe confirmed that fifteen people attended the Old Elm Road public consultation. People were encouraged to complete questionnaires as a way of retaining evidence of their thoughts and opinions. See Cllr Rowe’s communication with a former Parks and Gardens Officer about the results of the online consultation, and an example of public consultation mood boards in the appendices section.

2.5.8 In 2023, Beer Parish Council and some Beer residents highlighted to StreetScene their opinions about a Beer wildlife improvement area, such as it being “awful”. Cllr Heath in the Beer Parish meeting on 12.4.23 (section 8 of the minutes) referred to wanting the wildlife improvement area “...to be restored to its former glory”, which would need the re-establishment of an intensive maintenance regime that would have all areas of the green space mown and strimmed low. Cllr Pook responded that there is a disparity between this level of maintenance and the allocated budget. However, neither Councillor referred to environmental reasoning or the climate emergency for the creation of this wildlife improvement area.

2.5.9 A **Have Your Say online public consultation** for Beer was created by Parks and Gardens Officers and promoted by EDDC and Beer Parish Council because it was understood that opinions were divided in the community on how the cliff top green space should look, from some Councillors and residents calling for a regular mowing and strimming regime on the steep gradients that contravened EDDC risk assessments, to residents who were happy with the look and feel of the green space but had not made their opinions known. The survey results were summarised and communicated widely including Beer Parish Council and led to talks about a change of maintenance practices and timeframes at Beer Jubilee without compromising risk assessments based on operatives using hand-held and pedestrian-controlled machinery on steep slopes, and legislated and Council policies, strategies and action plans. The graphical analyses can be seen in the appendices section.

## **2.6 Communication with residents from 2021**

2.6.1 Parks and Gardens Officers consult with residents about proposed wildlife improvement areas via online public ‘Have Your Say’ consultations, social media posts, staked information posters on green spaces (an example can be seen in the appendices section), press releases (see above examples), letter drops, and setting up gazebos on land with proposed wildlife improvements. EDDC’s Communications team use social media platforms, residents’ newsletters and other media channels to highlight proposals to residents. It is important to note that letter drops to local residents and setting up a gazebo at the green space to promote the transition to a wildlife improvement area only occurred several times and were targeted for green spaces adjacent to high-density housing. There is a lot more potential for more face-to-face consultations in the future. Unfortunately, there is a lack of evidence up to 2024 as to residents’ opinions about wildlife improvement areas.

2.6.2 One such online communication:

[4 April 2023 - Council launches online campaign to help residents support biodiversity on their doorstep - East Devon](#)



2.6.3 In May 2023, residents were informed in the weekly Residents Update, in the press and on EDDC's website that StreetScene has increased the number of its (then 'renatured') wildlife improvement areas, and the important reasons behind the expansion.

[16 May 2023 - More East Devon greenspaces designated as nature recovery areas - East Devon](#)

2.6.4 For Green Space Proposals, see [Green Space Design and Management Proposals - Lymebourne Park Proposal - East Devon](#) for information and design strategies for two green spaces with proposals in 2022 to change regularly maintained urban green spaces in Sidmouth and Honiton to create wildlife improvement areas – to mitigate climate change by vastly reducing carbon release during maintenance operations, and help to redress the ever-dwindling pollinator numbers/species. Another reason for the urban green space transformation proposals is to improve the local environments, especially the transformed green spaces' look and feel, for local residents, which can help with mental health and wellbeing.

2.6.5 In addition, Parks and Gardens Officers created an online East Devon Engagement Hub page that was left open for residents across the district to comment about wildlife improvement areas. Then, residents were referred to the page in relation to specific wildlife improvement areas, which they heard about via letter drops, social media posts, the proposed list of wildlife improvement areas on EDDC's website, or via information placards on stakes in each green space. Therefore, residents' comments were clumped together for specific green spaces, and plans were changed accordingly when there were a lot of negative comments for a proposed wildlife improvement area, such as Winter's Lane in Ottery St Mary. See the following link: [Follow the Conversation on for East Devon Engagement Hub - Commonplace](#)

2.6.6 After the projects were costed and pitched to management, ward members and the portfolio holder for Coast, Country and Environment were consulted with, and communicated back that they were in favour of the proposals. Cllr Alex Rowe attended the Honiton face-to-face consultation in September 2022. EDDC's Communications Officer was involved in promoting the proposals and the dates/locations of the face-to-face consultations.

2.6.7 When budgets allow for transitions to wildlife improvement areas, all the above parties will be communicated with regarding the timeline of transformation to wildlife improvement area, and schools will be contacted with regards to enabling schoolchildren to take part in the wildlife improvement strategies, such as creating log pile habitats.

2.6.8 From 2022, residents who are unable to attend face-to-face green space proposals can leave feedback online, such as here: [Have Your Say Today - Green Spaces Survey - East Devon Engagement Hub \(commonplace.is\)](#).

2.6.9 A local wildlife group has offered to conduct preliminary wildlife (flora and fauna) surveys before and after green spaces' transformations to wildlife improvement areas, and then once per year for several years afterwards, which will hopefully evidence how wildlife has been improved in these areas. Therefore, not only have areas such as these helped to reduce carbon release to help EDDC to meet carbon neutral targets, the creation of these oasis wildlife areas also helps to redress wide-scale pollinator number/species declines in this biodiversity crisis we find ourselves in. **Results in 2023 of biodiversity gain after the transition to a wildlife improvement area on Salterton Road, Exmouth in 2022 evidence a big increase in flora and fauna biodiversity.** See appendices section. Prior to the 0.5km green space strip being converted to a wildlife improvement area, very few wildflowers were able to survive the punishing maintenance conditions, which resulted in a lack of wildlife.

## 2.7 Similar work being undertaken by other authorities

2.7.1 After a national study, a recent Guardian report states that one in five county councils in the UK have embarked on 'rewilding' efforts on their land. North Somerset, for example, is rewilding "as much land as possible" to improve biodiversity by 2030.

[Rewilding 'not just for toffs' as one in five councils in Great Britain get onboard | Environment | The Guardian](#)

2.7.2 Reading Borough Council has 'rewilded' thirty-five hectares of grassland that was previously mown frequently, and has created a Biodiversity Action Plan to set out its targets and reasoning.

[Biodiversity Action Plan Consultation Draft May 2020.pdf \(reading.gov.uk\)](#)

2.7.3 Twenty-five percent of the South Downs National Park is being managed for nature improvement.

[Renature - South Downs National Park Authority](#)

2.7.4 Adur & Worthing Councils have carefully considered the balance between nature and people in its parks and gardens, and have created both wildflower areas by seeding and by allowing flora to grow.

[Renaturing in Adur and Worthing - Adur & Worthing Councils \(adur-worthing.gov.uk\)](#)

2.7.5 Plymouth City Council started wildlife improvement strategies during the Covid-19 pandemic.

[Plymouth City Council is letting the grass grow to promote wildlife - and cope with coronavirus pandemic - Plymouth Live \(plymouthherald.co.uk\)](#)

2.7.6 Exeter City Council created networks of wildflower meadow areas in parks and gardens, and by better management of more regularly mown grass areas.

[Wildflowers - Exeter City Council](#)

2.7.7 Brighton and Hove City Council introduced missing wildlife species to help wildlife be more resilient.

[Rewilding \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](#)

2.7.8 The Mayor of London established the London Rewilding Taskforce so the capital can become rich in nature and home to a range of species. He looked at opportunities for rewilding in London, which reported in March 2023. He also announced the next round of the Rewild London Fund, which is a competition to inspire Londoners as to how their city can be made wilder, greener and closer to nature, as a response to the climate and ecological emergencies by creating and restoring priority habitats across London's urban green spaces.

[Rewild London Fund 2023 | London City Hall](#)

2.7.9 Despite some concerns from residents about wildlife improvement ('rewilding') initiatives in Glasgow's green spaces, the overall response of the Council's efforts from the public were positive.

[CHttpHandler.ashx \(glasgow.gov.uk\)](#)

2.7.10 Portsmouth City Council have recently 'rewilded' seventeen green spaces, created wildflower meadows in twenty-two urban sites and beside seven roads – totalling 4,000m<sup>2</sup>.

[Portsmouth City Council Climate Change Strategy](#)

2.7.11 Coventry City Council, in line with Biodiversity Net Gain legislation, are creating biodiversity offsetting sites across the city's green spaces, which are large-scale, long-term habitat creation and restoration and species recovery programmes.

#### [Ecology – Coventry City Council](#)

2.7.12 Worcester City Council manages unimproved grasslands and urban wildflower meadow areas within walking distance from the city centre – where increasing biodiversity is more important.

#### [Conservation and Wildlife Sites - Worcester City Council](#)

2.7.13 Leeds City Council aims to provide green spaces that are full of nature and wildlife that will help to reduce the likelihood and impact of climate change, by planting trees and by protecting, enhancing and creating wildlife habitats.

#### [Parks and Green Spaces Strategy.pdf \(leeds.gov.uk\)](#)

2.7.14 Since the introduction of central government's Nature Recovery Network and Biodiversity Net Gain legislations in 2024, the number of local authorities that will actively promote online what they are doing to help nature will quickly escalate. The targets of the Nature Recovery Network legislation are to: 'Protect and effectively manage 30% of England's land... for nature by 2030. Halt species decline by 2030. Increase species abundance by at least 10%, to exceed 2022 levels by 2042. Restore or create more than 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat outside protected sites by 2042. Restore or create 140,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitats outside protected sites by 2028, compared with 2022 levels. Reduce the risk of species extinction in England by 2042, compared with 2022 levels.' This means that, by this time next year, there will be many other local authorities promoting their invaluable efforts to create or restore species-rich environments to halt species decline, with the understanding that 'untidy' can no longer be excusable for habitat losses and continually declining species.

## **2.8 Other resources required**

2.8.1 Funding outside of the small Parks and Gardens budget is very much needed for wildlife improvement strategies to increase the number of areas removed from high carbon footprint regular maintenance activities across the district, and the use of a contractor (based on operational capacity of the grounds teams and Parks and Gardens Officers) to invert or remove the turf in preparation of the creation of wildflower areas. Parks and Gardens Officers had the daunting task of removing 125m<sup>2</sup> of turf in early May 2024 to create a wildflower area in Budleigh Salterton, without the planned help from grounds operatives due to how busy they were keeping up with mowing grass they were unable to mow previously due to wet conditions. Due to the concurrence between the most appropriate time to create wildflower areas and the operational capacity of grounds operatives due to climate change causing unprecedented growth levels of grass in early spring, the bulk of the funding required to transition grasses-dominated wildlife improvement areas to wildflower-dominated wildlife improvement areas would be needed for contractors to carry out preparatory work on proposed wildlife improvement areas. Other costs would be for perennial and annual wildflower seed and yellow rattle seed to restrict the re-growth of rye grasses.

2.8.2 Currently, Parks and Gardens Officers can only transition a very small number of grasses-dominated wildlife improvement areas to wildflower-dominated wildlife improvement areas per year, which is not only not doing enough to reverse pollinators' decline, but also generates more complaints from residents due to the vast majority of wildlife improvement areas being dominated by grasses. For example, the obstacles some residents have proposed against grasses-dominated wildlife improvement areas, such as it being a fire hazard or a haven for dog faeces, disappear when these areas are transitioned to areas dominated by wildflowers. This happened in Budleigh Salterton in 2022, where there were so many complaints about the 'new look' of The

Green's wildlife improvement areas. However, these complaints turned into accolades when areas became dominated by wildflowers – and some of the same complainants became advocates of the wildlife improvement strategies. This led to positive public consultation and the creation of a new wildflower area on edge of Moormead housing estate, which overlooks The Green, in May 2024.

2.8.3 This is a good example of how consulting with and listening to stakeholders' views, setting their expectations and then meeting those expectations has led to community engagement of wildlife improvement areas – and the public asking StreetScene to designate regularly managed green spaces to wildflower areas.

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### **Financial implications:**

There are no direct financial implications resulting from the report/recommendations.

### **Legal implications:**

The recommendations as presented currently have no direct legal implication.

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## **3 Appendices**

This section contains the following:

- 3.1 An example of an information poster that, along with others across the district, were secured to stakes and attached to potential wildlife improvement areas to inform residents of proposed intentions.
- 3.2 An example analysis of a Have Your Say online public consultation of a wildlife improvement area to evaluate residents' feelings of a specific wildlife improvement area.
- 3.3 An example of a mood board and information presented to residents in face-to-face public consultations to present wildlife improvement intentions.
- 3.4 An example of a leaflet posted through residents' doors as a back-up communication about a proposed wildlife improvement area.
- 3.5 Examples of leaflets posted through residents' doors about proposed new wildflower areas, and the reasons why they are important.
- 3.6 An example of a wildlife improvement area survey of a new wildlife improvement area to evidence biodiversity increases.
- 3.7 An example of a leaflet by a third-party group on behalf of EDDC delivered to residents as a back-up to another leaflet several months' earlier.
- 3.8 An example of a Friends group's update information regarding the community consultation process and results.
- 3.9 Examples of emailed communication evidencing the consultation process.

### 3.1 An example of an information poster secured to stakes and attached to potential wildlife improvement areas to inform residents of proposed intentions

#### **Potential Wildlife Improvement Area**

East Devon District Council's Parks and Gardens Officers would like to hear your thoughts about initial proposals to convert this green space to a Wildlife Improvement Area.

The proposal is for grounds team members to mow around the perimeter, mow meandering pathways through the green space, and mow an area near to the front/on the corner for local residents to use the area for recreation or picnics.

During the first year, grasses will dominate the green space due to the 'cut and drop' of arisings over the years feeding the soil and allowing grasses to out-compete wildflowers. However, with the introduction of 'cut and collect' mowing in spring and autumn, the soils will no longer be fed by the grass cuttings. This will weaken grasses and allow space for wildflowers.

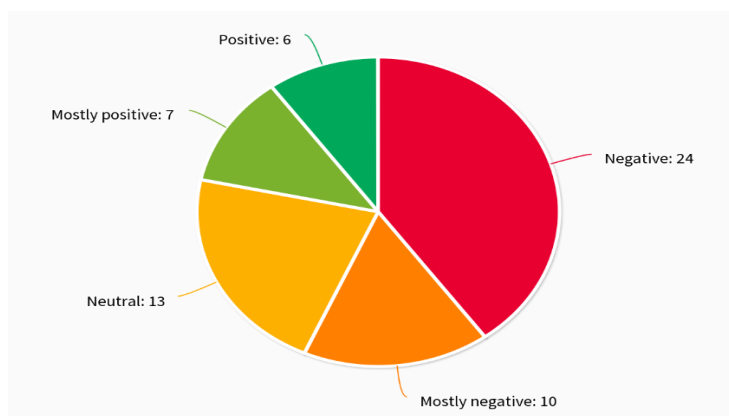
Parks and Gardens Officers then would like to sow yellow rattle seeds, which feed on grasses, to allow more space for wildflower sowing.

Plans for the green space throughout the growing season is for the 2 hatched areas in the basic design below to be allowed to develop for nature, and the areas between and around them are to be mown low once per month through the growing season. Then, in September a contractor will cut, collect, bail and remove the arisings. This means that between September and the following spring, all of the area will be low – but will then be valuable for wildlife for the remainder of the year.

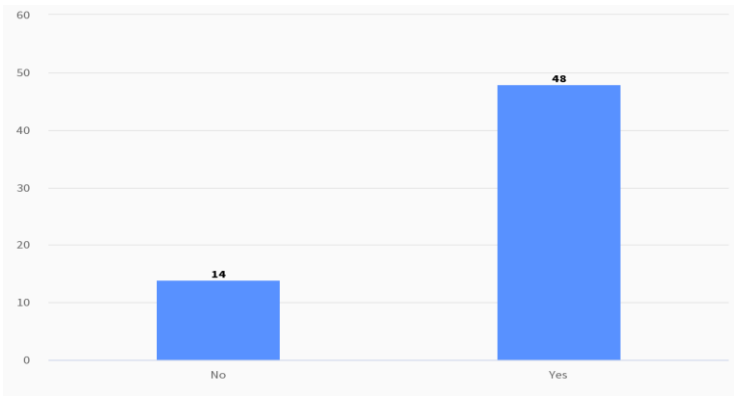
Please do let us know what you feel about this proposal by contacting EDDC's Parks and Gardens Officers at the [parksandgardens@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:parksandgardens@eastdevon.gov.uk) address.

### 3.2 An example analysis of a Have Your Say online public consultation to evaluate residents' feelings of a specific wildlife improvement area

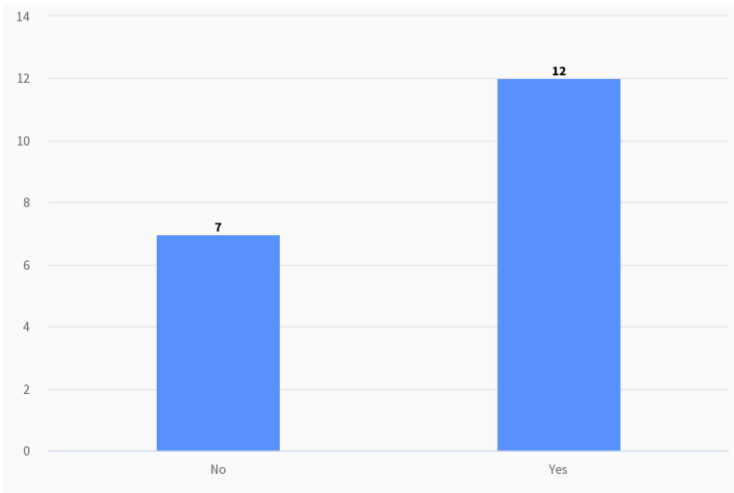
#### **Have Your Say: Beer Jubilee Gardens 2023 – Overview**



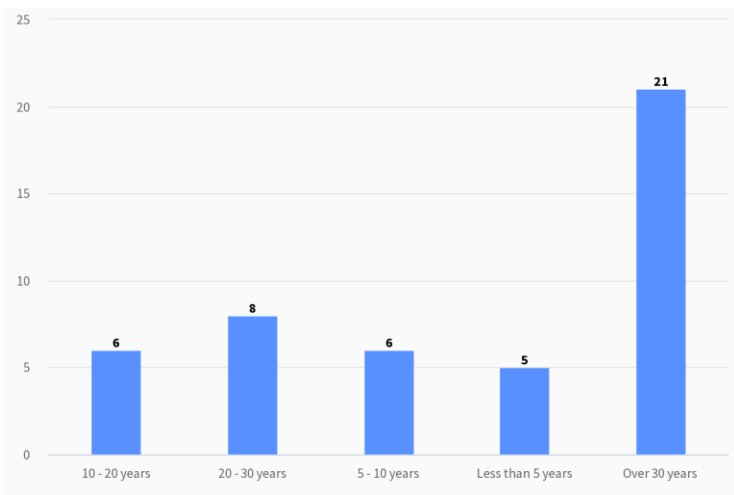
Are you a resident of Beer, East Devon?



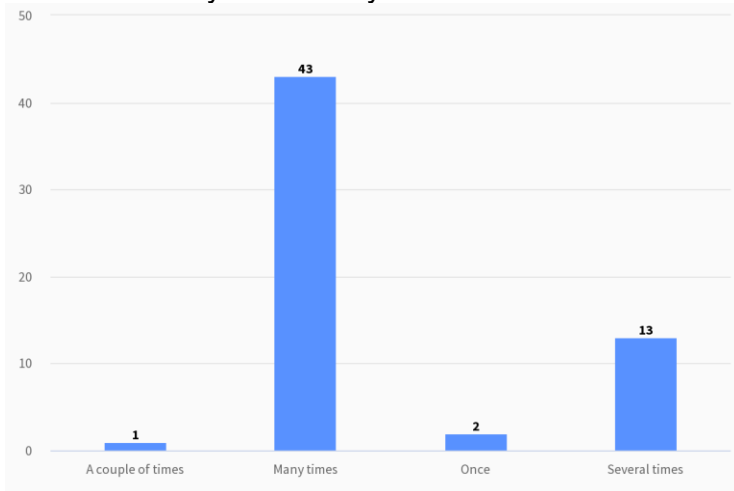
If NO, were you once a Beer resident?



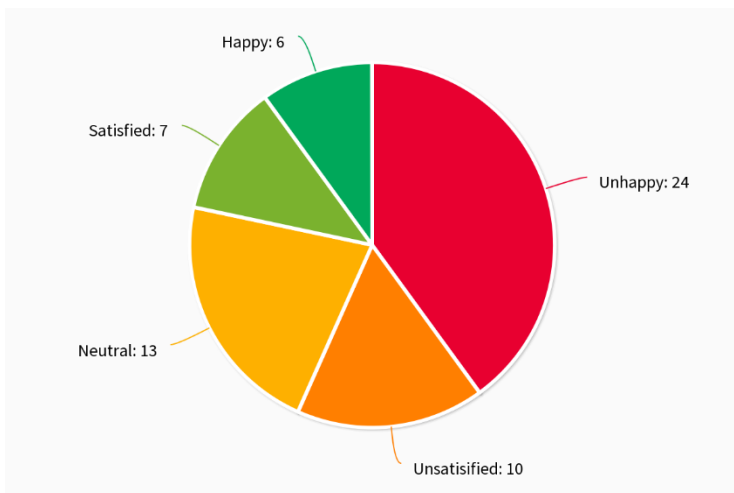
If you are a Beer resident, how long have you lived in Beer?



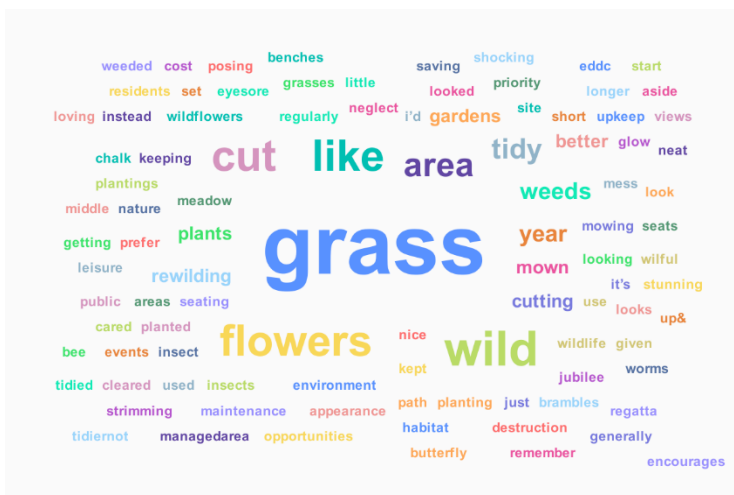
How often do you normally visit the Beer Jubilee Memorial Grounds each year?



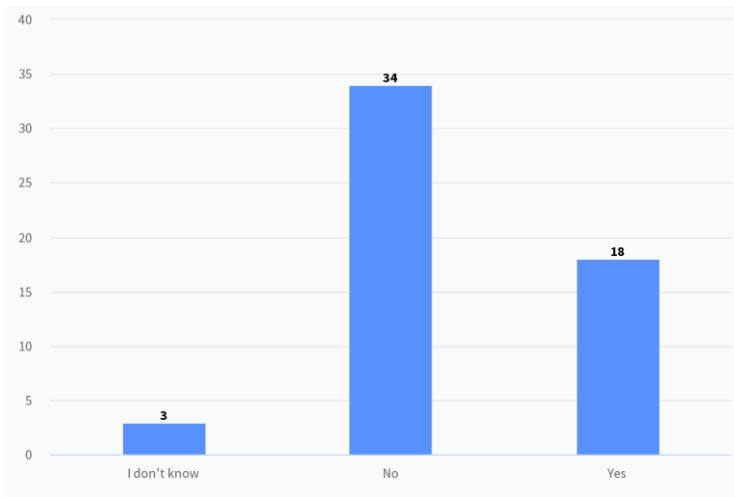
Are you happy with how Beer Jubilee looks and feels?



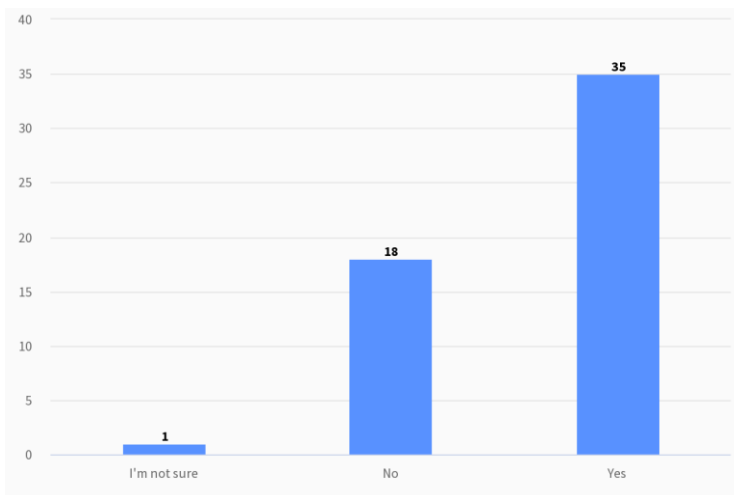
What would you like to see more of or less of?



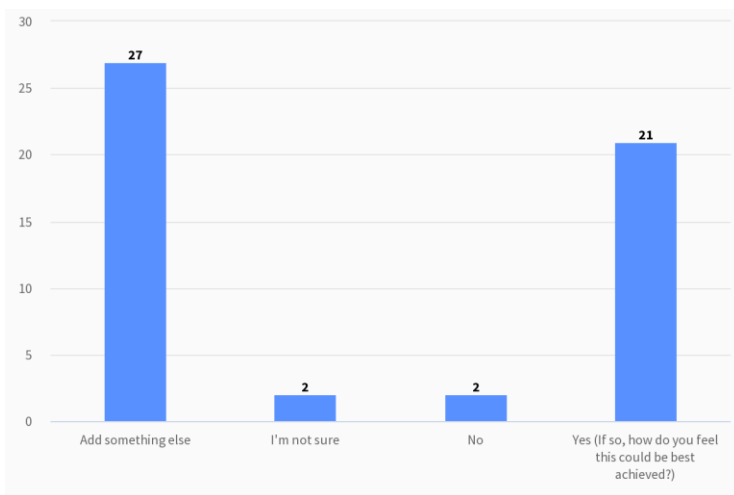
Do you feel that Beer Jubilee has a look and feel that fits in with the natural environment?



Would you like this green space to be maintained as it was in the past, with most sections mown/strimmed?

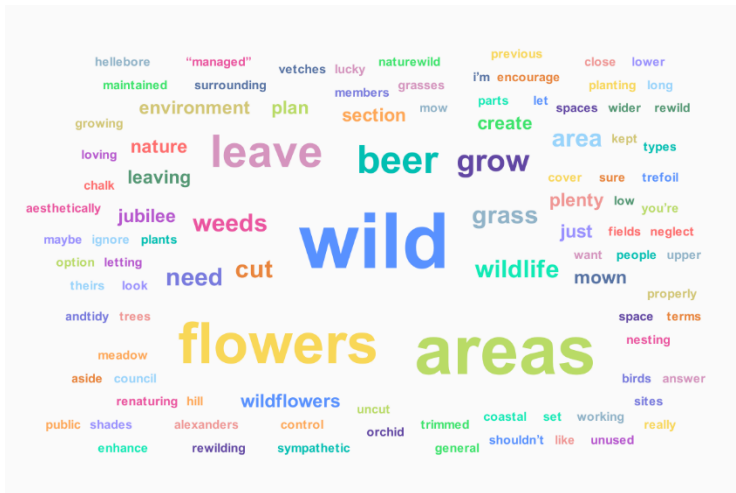


Do you feel that making space for nature is important?

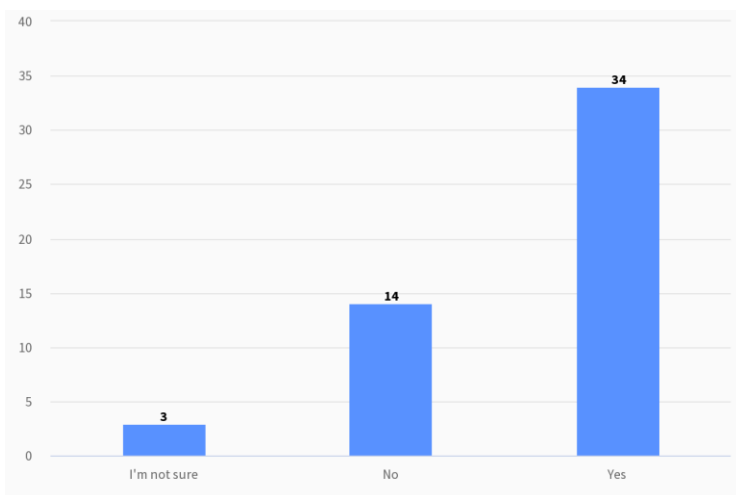




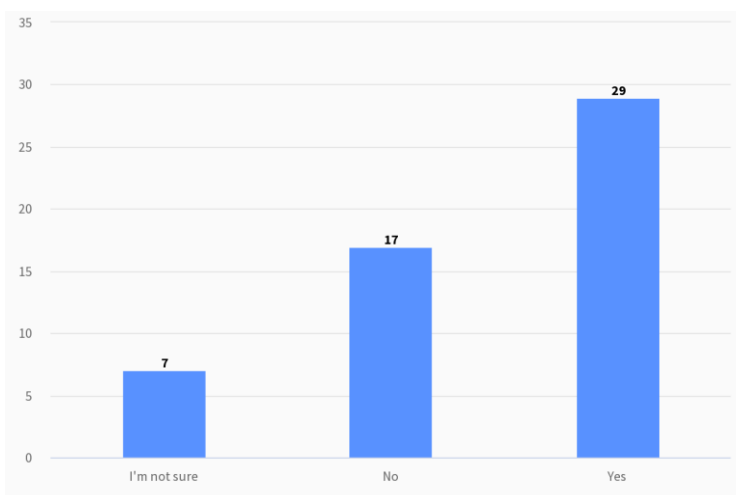
How would you suggest the space for nature/biodiversity be improved at Beer Jubilee?



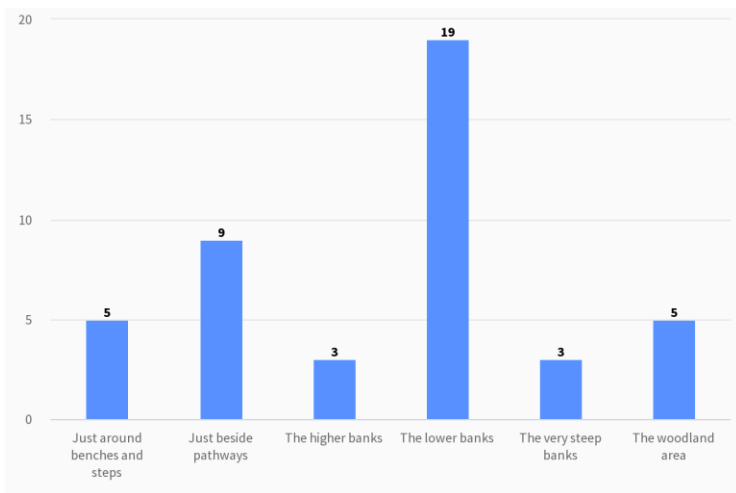
Do you feel that more mowing and strimming will improve how the area, such as the steep banks, will look?



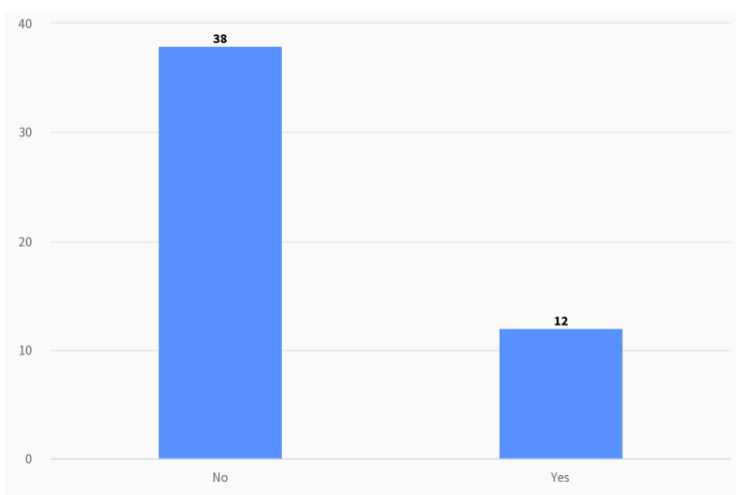
Would you like to see some sections of Beer Jubilee more rigorously maintained, whilst other sections are left to be renatured?



If so, which sections do you think should be kept low?



Would you be interested in volunteering some time on a regular basis to help to maintain Beer Jubilee?



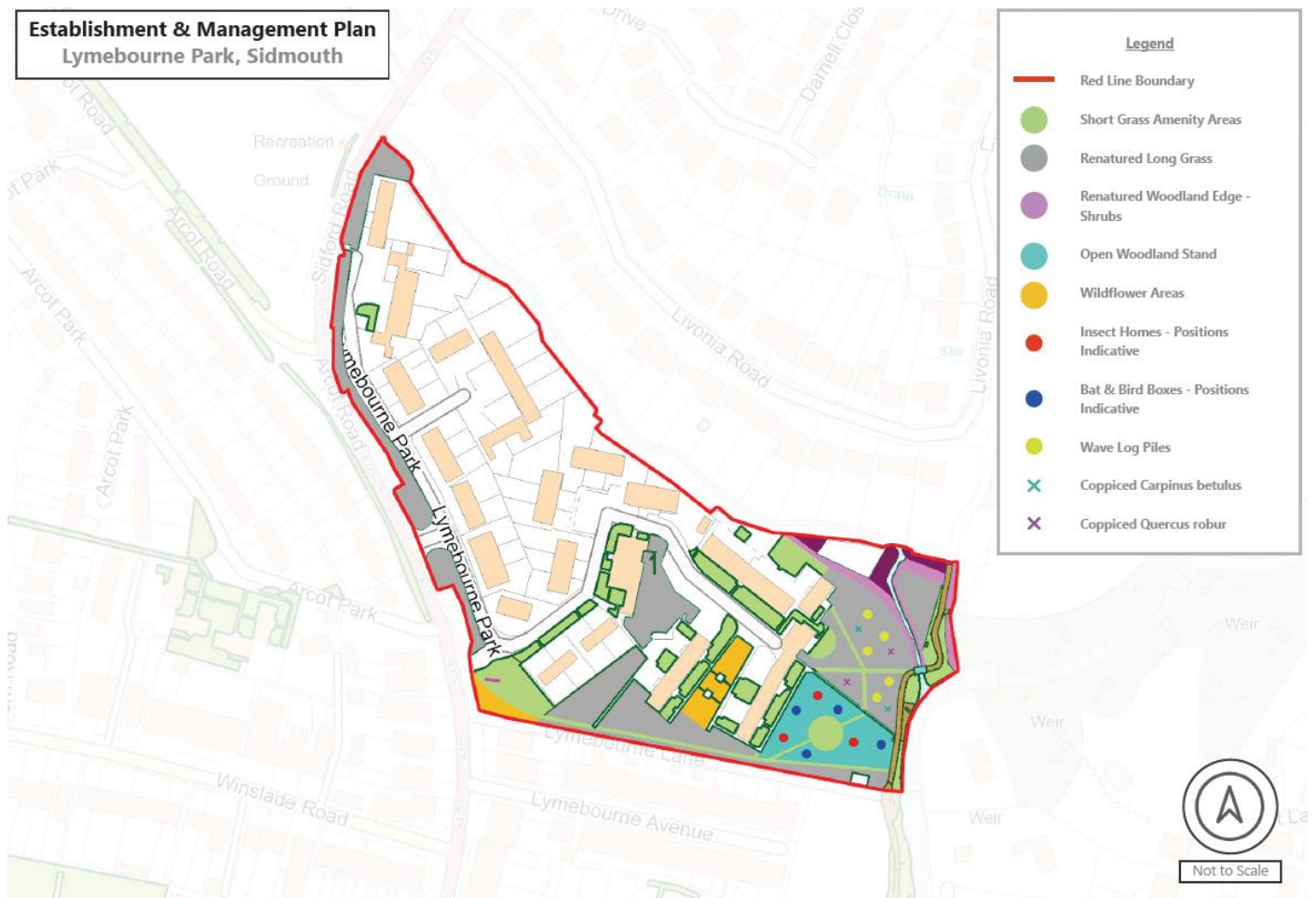
Please add any additional comments in the box below that you feel are relevant but have not been covered above.



3.3 An example of a mood board and information presented to residents in face-to-face public consultations to present wildlife improvement intentions.



**Establishment & Management Plan  
Lymebourne Park, Sidmouth**



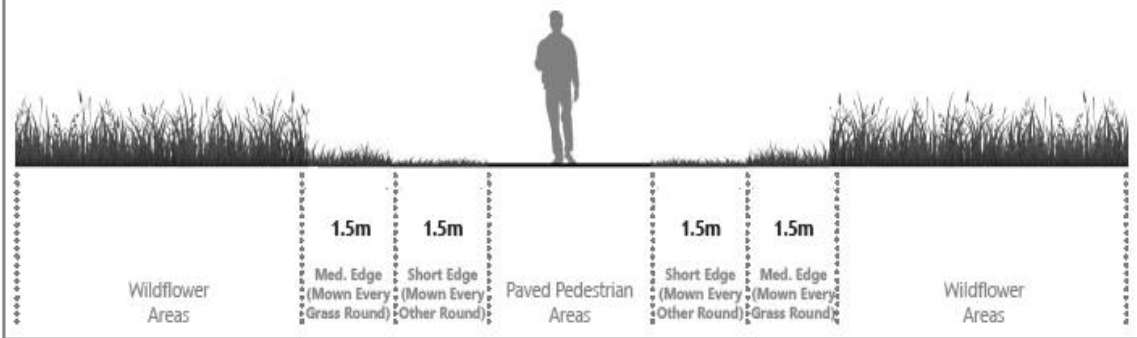
**Lymebourne Park, Sidmouth - Establishment Actions**

| Legend | Type   | Establishment Description   | Notes  |
|--------|--|---|--|
|        | Open Woodland                                      | Native Open Woodland to be Planted by Volunteers (Assisted by Parks & Green Spaces Department). Stakes & Biodegradable Guards to be Used.                 | Part of 2023 Emergency Tree Fund.  |
|        | Wildflower Areas                                   | Designated Areas to be: Scarified by StreetScene; Arisings collected and Piled by Volunteers/StreetScene; and Oversown by EDDC operatives in Autumn 2023. | Wildflower + Grass Mix From Goren Farm Seed (Honiton). 5g/m2. 1 Part Seed to 5 Parts Sand.                                   |
|        | Insect Homes                                       | To be Built and Installed by Local Schools/Community Groups (Assisted by Parks & Green Spaces Department).  | Piled Pallets With Variable Materials Installed and Decorated.   |
|        | Bat & Bird Boxes                                   | Signage and Artwork to be Created by Local Schools/Community Groups. Boxes Installed by EDDC Maintenance Technician in appropriate trees only.            | Cavity and Crevice Bat Boxes to be Used. All Boxes to be 4m+ From Ground, in Sunny Positions and Facing Variable Directions. |
|        | Wave Log Piles                                     | To be Built and Installed by Parks & Green Spaces Department. Logs Bolted Together.   | Logs approx 1.5' long; 3-12" diameter. Recycled From Tree Team's Tree Surgery.   |
|        | Coppiced Carpinus betulus & Coppiced Quercus robur | Single Stem Specimens to be Planted by Local Residents (Assisted by Parks & Green Spaces Department). Stakes & Biodegradable Guards to be Used.           | Planted Autumn/ Winter 2022 or 2023.   |

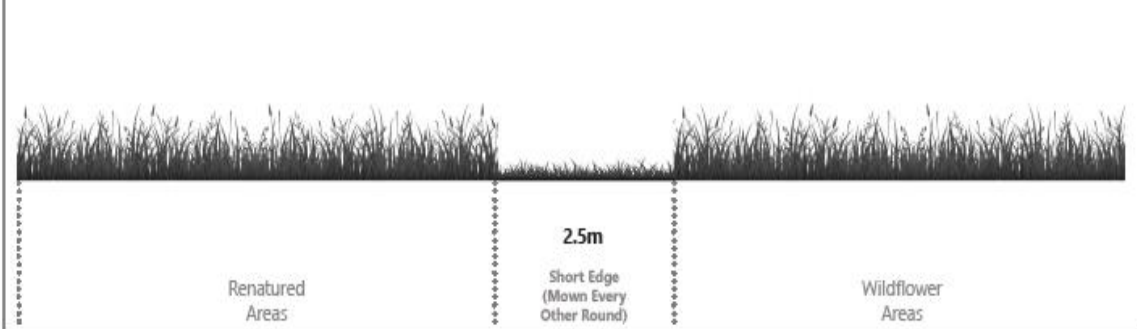
**Lymebourne Park, Sidmouth - Management Actions**

| Legend | Type   | Management Description  | Frequency   |
|--------|--|---|---|
|        | Short Grass Amenity Areas                          | Managed as Existing by StreetScene. Part of Regular Grass Rounds.   | As Existing   |
|        | Renatured Long Grass - Permanent                   | Cut by StreetScene. Potentially Collected By Volunteers - TBC. Yellow Rattle Sown After 1st September Cut.            | Cut Twice Annually: Early-March & September   |
|        | Existing Managed Woodland/ Scrub                   | Brush Cut/ Strimmed by StreetScene. Collected By StreetScene to Make Habitat Piles - TBC.                             | Cut non-trees on a 6 Year Rotation (October) to Develop Shrubby Growth: 2024; 2030...                           |
|        | Renatured Woodland Edge - Herbs                    | Strimmed by StreetScene. Collected By Local Residents Group to Make Habitat Piles - TBC.                              | Cut on a 3 Year Rotation (October) to Promote Flowering Plants: 2023; 2026...                                   |
|        | Open Woodland Stand                                | Ground Vegetation Cut by EDDC. Potentially Collected By Local Residents - TBC (Until Woodland Canopy Develops).       | Cut Twice Annually: Mid-March & September   |
|        | Wildflower Areas                                   | Cut by StreetScene. Potentially Collected By Local Residents Group - TBC. Yellow Rattle Sown After 1st September Cut. | Cut Twice Annually: Mid-March & September   |
|        | Coppiced Carpinus betulus & Coppiced Quercus robur | Coppiced by EDDC Tree Team/ Qualified Tree Surgeon.   | Carpinus betulus Coppiced Every 30 Years: 2052, 2082...<br>Quercus robur Coppiced Every 40 Years: 2062; 2102... |

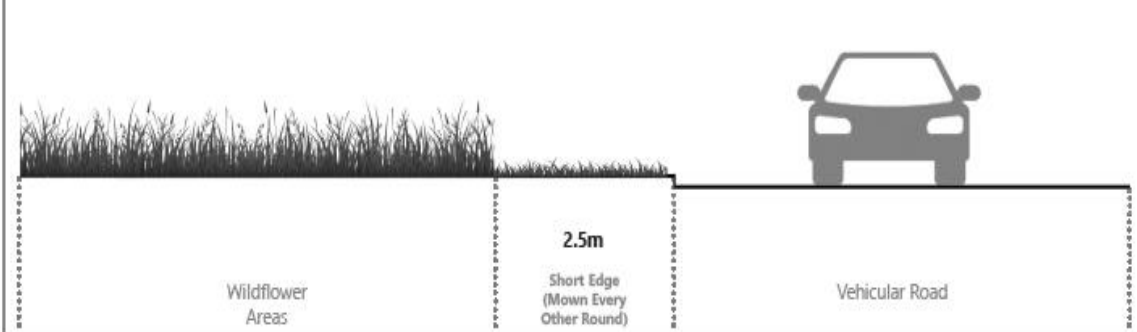
Wildflower/Renatured Area Edges Adjacent to Paved Pedestrian Areas



Other Wildflower/Renatured Area Edges



Wildflower/Renatured Area Edges Adjacent to Roads



Mown Paths Through Wildflower/Renatured Areas



# Native Open Woodland Species Suggestions

Planting Winter 2022/23 - TBC



*Malus sylvestris* (Crab Apple)



*Sorbus aucuparia* (Rowan)



*Corylus avellana* (Hazel)



*Crataegus monogyna* (Hawthorn)



*Prunus avium* (Wild Cherry)



*Prunus padus* (Bird Cherry)



*Betula pendula* (Silver Birch)



*Euonymus europaeus* (Spindle Tree)

Total Area for Planting = 400m<sup>2</sup>  
Row Spacing = 2.5m  
Spacing Between Trees in Rows = 2.5m

Total Trees Required = Approx. 77

### 3.4 An example of a leaflet posted through residents' doors as a back-up communication about a proposed wildlife improvement area. Referred to in section 5.2

Colleton Way /Green Close Green Space Improvements

East Devon District Council are delighted to inform you that there are plans to improve the Colleton Way/Green Close green space.

We will be sowing the outer segments of the space with a dramatic and colourful wildflower mix, which is also great for wildlife. The intention is to create a more welcoming central space for local residents to use and sit within. Amongst the wildflower we will be planting a variety of trees to provide shade and shelter the central space.

In order to maintain a beautiful space, residents should park on-street and refrain from parking on the green space.

We hope you are satisfied with the proposals, but if you would like to provide feedback visit the East Devon District Council website and search 'Green Space Design and Management Proposals' to express your views.

### 3.5 Examples of leaflets posted through residents' doors about proposed new wildflower areas, and the reasons why they are important.

Dramatic and Colourful Wildflower Proposals

Dear Resident,

We are proposing to sow and establish an area of wildflower along the pedestrian walkway, which runs from Brixington Community Church to Birchwood Road.

Once established the wildflower will look similar to the Salterton Road verge wildflower, which you may have seen last year.

The idea is to create a beautiful and colourful pedestrian route, which acts as a valuable habitat for a range of wildlife.

We are looking to sow this spring between late April and early May. Do not be alarmed if the area looks bare as this is to be expected for the first few weeks until the seedlings start to emerge.

Once past this initial period we can look forward to a sea of colour, year after to year.

If you have any questions or concerns, please get in contact through the East Devon District Council 'Contact us' webpage.

An example of what it may look like - Salterton Road wildflower verge

Dramatic and Colourful Wildflower Proposals

Dear Resident,

We are proposing to sow and establish an area of wildflower along the roadside verges at the corner of Rivermead Avenue and Exeter Road.

Once established the wildflower will look similar to the Salterton Road verge wildflower, which you may have seen last year.

The idea is to create a colourful and dramatic gateway to Exmouth in a very high profile area. The scheme will also provide a valuable habitat for pollinators and other wildlife.

We are looking to sow this spring between late April and early May. Do not be alarmed if the area looks bare as this is to be expected for the first few weeks until the seedlings start to emerge.

Once past this initial period we can look forward to a sea of colour, year after to year.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the proposal, please get in contact through the East Devon District Council 'Contact us' webpage.



An example of what it may look like - Salterton Road wildflower verge

Dramatic and Colourful Wildflower Proposals

Dear Resident,

We are proposing to sow and establish an area of wildflower in the green space at the end of Old Elm Road.

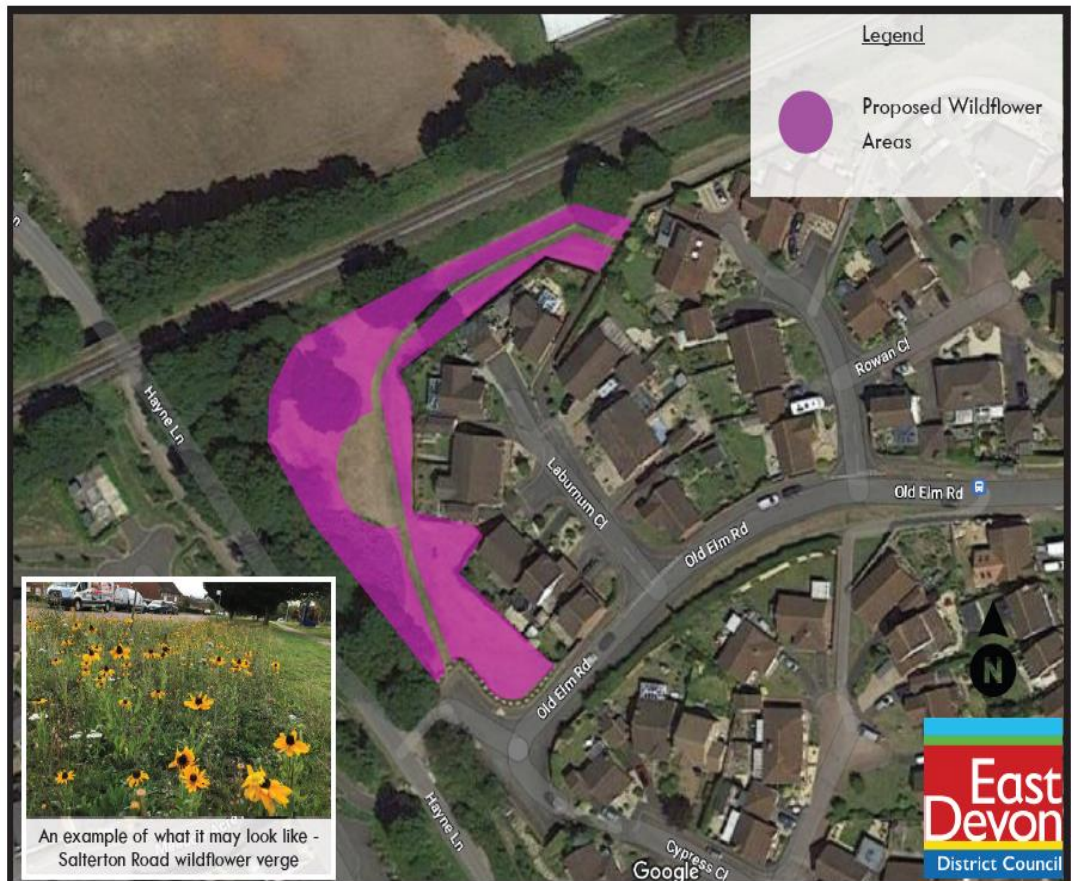
Once established the wildflower will look similar to the Salterton Road verge wildflower, which you may have seen last year.

The idea is to create an area of beautiful and colourful wildflower with a mown path and pocket for local residents to enjoy the wildflower meadow.

We are looking to sow this spring between late April and early May. Do not be alarmed if the area looks bare as this is to be expected for the first few weeks until the seedlings start to emerge.

Once past this initial period we can look forward to a sea of colour, year after to year.

If you have any questions or concerns, please get in contact through the East Devon District Council 'Contact us' webpage.



An example of what it may look like - Salterton Road wildflower verge



3.6 An example of a survey of a new wildlife improvement area to evidence biodiversity increases.

Exmouth Wildflower Wardens **Recording Sheet 2023**  
**Name of site** Rewilded area, Salterton Rd **Location of site** SY023818 **Name of recorders** MD, SE and JG

| Date       | Species               | Abundance | Location | Notes + other species                          | Photo?        |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------|----------|--|---------------|
| 21/07/2023 | Dock sp               | P         |          |  |               |
|            | Yarrow                | P         |          | Butterflies and moths                          |               |
|            | Wild Carrot           | W         |          | Holly blue                                     | Small Copper  |
|            | Ribwort plantain      | W         |          | Gatekeeper                                     | Small Skipper |
|            | Buttercup sp          | P         |          | Common blue                                    | Small White   |
|            | Catsear               | W         |          | Large White                                    | Silver Y Moth |
|            | Hedge mustard         | I         |          | Speckled Wood                                  |               |
|            | Red Clover sp*        | W         |          |  |               |
|            | Self heal             | P         |          |  |               |
|            | Chamomile             | I         |          | Bees   |               |
|            | Broad-leaved Plantain | W         |          | Red Tailed Bumblebee                           |               |
|            | Ox-eye Daisy          | W         |          | Common Carder Bumblebee                        |               |
|            | Dandelion             | P         |          | Leaf cutter bee<br>(probably M. centuncularis) |               |
|            | Common Ragwort        | I         |          | Buff-tailed Bumblebee                          |               |
|            | Hawkweed Oxtongue     | P         |          | Mining Bee<br>(probably A. nigroaenea )        |               |
|            | Corn Marigold         | I         |          |  |               |
|            | Common Storksbill     | P         |          | Several Ants nests                             |               |
|            | ?Smooth Catsear       | I         |          |  |               |
|            | Spear Thistle         | P         |          | 7-spot Ladybird                                |               |

3.7 An example of a leaflet by a third-party group on behalf of EDDC delivered to residents as a back-up to another leaflet several months' earlier.

### Update from Exmouth Tiny Forest

Before Christmas, we delivered a leaflet to you telling you about our plans for a “Tiny Forest” on the edge of St Georges Playing Fields.

Since then, there have been exciting developments. East Devon District Council Parks and Gardens Team have become interested in the project and are supporting us to make it happen, with both manpower and materials.

We are now hoping to plant the Tiny Forest in late February. with the most likely date being Wednesday 28th February. We are sorry it is a weekday, but this is both because of council working hours and also because some pupils from Exeter Road Primary School are going to be involved.

We would like to invite any of you that might be available on the day to come and take part (or watch). There will be a gazebo and refreshments and we hope it will be a nice community event.

The “Tiny Forest” (the size of a tennis court) will be fenced off with chestnut paling and there will be an information board about the project.

EDDC are also planning, on the same day, to plant another 180 trees around the tiny forest, using conventional spacings and method. This will provide an interesting comparison of the two methods of introducing trees into an area.

If you would like to comment or want more information, please do contact us on (mobile telephone number deleted) or using the email (email address deleted).

### 3.8 An example of a Friends group's update information regarding the community consultation process and results

## **Community Consultation: Potential Higher Brook Meadow Green Canopy Scheme**

### **Method of Consultation and Summary Outcome**

1. Initial discussion with a group of neighbours around the green following publication of the Queens Green Canopy Scheme. These initial discussions considered how to develop possible community involvement, what environmental and community benefits could be achieved and who should be approached in terms of getting landlord permission and technical/ horticultural support, etc.
2. Letter to all 57 households (2 houses currently unoccupied), prior to being accepted by Sidmouth Arboretum, outlining the possibility of improving the green space. Purpose of letter was to gather further ideas, to share the initial feedback received to date and to invite people who would like to be involved
3. Site meeting held on 24/11/2021 with Sidmouth Arboretum, Cllr Marianne Rixson and 5 residents
4. Phase one design information was circulated to the 57 houses, either by email or by way of a second letter. A copy of the plan and planting details also placed on the side of the playground fence for those who did not wish to receive it electronically. Residents were asked to respond by 3rd December 2021
5. 43 responses were received. All were supportive and no objections to a QGC scheme on the green were received. There were 14 houses that did not respond either way, 3 of which live facing the green itself. The majority of the non-responders live on the hill and perhaps felt it was not as relevant to them
6. A detailed breakdown of which 43 houses responded and the method they used is held in the event EDDC would wish to see the information

### **General feedback received following receipt of draft design**

1. The involvement and experience of Sidmouth Arboretum was welcomed. Households felt reassured that design plans, species types, etc were done professionally and considered both the environment and the community
2. Having the involvement and support of Cllr Rixson was also seen as extremely important to assist in raising the profile of the scheme with both EDDC and Sidmouth Town Council
3. Further offers of support for planting and watering etc were received
4. The potential for later phases on the Green were also welcomed
5. Every household remains aware that the scheme coming into place is still fully dependent on EDDC Housing approval and subsequent funding issues being addressed

### **Design proposal feedback**

1. **Playground fencing hedgerow and trees.** Full support from all responders
2. **Trees on Green Space:** Full support from all responders
3. **Hedging around the outer edges of the Green:** This raised a significant number of concerns. Particularly with those who have to access both the corners and the bend on the east side. (These elements involves 26 of the 57 properties) When cars are parked in the crescent, the road access is only single width. Whilst this would be less of a problem if it was a one way system, unfortunately vehicles and delivery drivers enter and leave the crescent at both ends. Therefore it was felt that the potential for a front facing collision is increased with a solid hedge on an elevated bank. It was suggested that rather than removing everything, that the single shrub/spindle bushes suggested in the original plan could be retained around the bank edge, but away from corners and the east side bend. It was felt that the small group of trees themselves near the two corner areas within the green would not obscure sight lines for drivers in the way that a solid hedge would do.

Parents who had raised concern of potential falls from the elevated bank felt that the presence of these trees and periodic spindle bushes/ small trees would mitigate the risk, whilst not increasing the risk to drivers

### **Next stage**

EDDC will carry out their own consultation as part of their decision-making process  
The community will be kept informed of the outcome of EDDC decision and if successful, a final plan and the subsequent planting schedule provided.

**Margaret Bullock**  
(address deleted) **Higher Brook Meadow 6/12/2021**

### 3.9 Examples of emailed communication evidencing the consultation process

**Below: an email from the leader of the new Friends of Higher Brook Meadow (formed on advice by Parks and Gardens Officers) to Sue Bewes (Housing Manager at the time) about the consultation process that took place about adopting the Housing land for tree planting and creating wildlife improvement areas.**

**From:** Margaret Bullock (email address deleted)  
**Sent:** Monday, December 6, 2021 11:18 AM  
**To:** Sue Bewes (email address deleted)  
**Subject:** Higher Brook Meadow Green

Good Morning

Following a site meeting and receipt of the draft proposed design, all 57 occupied houses in the Higher Brook Meadow postcode were sent details and asked to respond by 3/12/21. I fully understand that in the event that you are considering approving the scheme that you would want to carry out your own consultation, but I thought you may wish to see the outcome of the responses we received.

I have provided a copy to Sidmouth Arboretum and the next stage would be to draw up a final plan to feedback to the residents and for your consideration. However, Sue, in an earlier email you mentioned that you may be considering incorporating a scheme in relation to addressing parking issues. Therefore, I will hold off circulating a final plan until we have received your decision to allow any scheme on your land and/or to await any plans to may have which will require the final planting plan to be amended.

Incidentally, there were two issues that came up repeatedly that I have not included in the design summary feedback document as they don't relate directly to the draft design plan. However, you may wish to know was that whilst the playground was seen as important, its size was felt by many to be disproportionately large in relation to the green space and secondly, that it would be beneficial if something could be done about parking behaviour, as opposed to amount. I assume this to be in relation to individuals who choose to park on the green itself.

Please let me know if there is any further information you require and or if, you wish me to amend the draft plan to incorporate any of your own plans. The community remains fully aware that any progression of the scheme is dependent on your approval.

Best wishes

Margaret

Margaret Bullock  
Friends of Higher Brook Meadow  
(mobile telephone number deleted)

**Below: The reply from a Housing Officer about the consultation process carried out by the Friends of Higher Brook Meadow, which meets Housing standards – and led to the adoption of the green space by StreetScene’s Parks and Gardens Officers and the new Friends group.**

**From:** Alexandra Higgins (email address deleted)  
**Sent:** 07 December 2021 16:16  
**To:** 'Margaret Bullock' (email address deleted)  
**Cc:** Sue Bewes (email address deleted)  
**Subject:** EDDC Housing approval of scheme

Hi Margaret,

Thank you for sending me the full details of the community consultation including the responses of 8 of the 9 EDDC tenants.

I am very pleased to see you have done such a thorough job. Sending through at least one and up to two letters to every property, and the plans to those who provided emails. Also making the plans available on the playpark fence. I noted that in the instance where residents didn't respond in writing to either of the letters, a community member went round and spoke to the residents and you recorded the name of that community person.

Through this method every EDDC tenant who faces the green and all but one of the others (8 out of 9 in total) have responded positively to the proposals.

The consultation has been very thorough and absolutely meets our standards. Further, the engagement with Sidmouth Arboretum around the design and choosing climate appropriate and community appropriate tree species means we are very pleased and impressed with this scheme.

Thank you for your great work so far and we will do our best to play our part as the project goes on.

The project has our approval.

Many thanks, Alex

**Alexandra Higgins**  
**Community Development Worker**

**Below: Reply from the leader of the Friends group regarding the permission to change the land use of Housing land based on a full consultation and Parks and Gardens Officers' communication and plans**

**From:** Margaret Bullock (email address deleted)

**Sent:** Tuesday, December 7, 2021 6:19 PM

**To:** Alexandra Higgins (email address deleted); Sue Bewes (email address deleted)

**Subject:** RE: EDDC Housing approval of scheme

Dear Alexandra and Sue

On behalf of the residents of Higher Brook Meadow, may I thank you for allowing this scheme to go ahead on your land.

I am glad that how we engaged within our community also met your consultation and communication process too.

I particularly want to thank you all for the timely manner in which this decision making process has been completed. I am aware of the challenges of local government and the different aspects and considerations that have to be achieved before a decision can be made. However, you have responded within an exceptionally tight timescale to enable us to meet the constraints of the QGC ordering and planting limitations.

Whilst the planting itself will ultimately be subject to addressing residual funding issues, at least we can approach this aspect knowing that we have your permission.

Best wishes

Margaret

Tall Trees and 43 more HBM households who are supporting this environmental and community initiative

**Below: communication between a Parks and Gardens Officer and a Ward Member about a proposed wildlife improvement area – prior to then going out to a public consultation.**

On 31 Mar 2023, at 18:44, Russell Giblett (email address deleted) wrote:

Afternoon,

I hope you are well.

We are proposing to sow and establish an area of wildflower along the roadside verges at the corner of Rivermead Avenue and Exeter Road.

Once established the wildflower will may look similar to the Salterton Road verge wildflower, which you may have seen last year.

The idea is to create a colourful and dramatic gateway to Exmouth in a very high profile area.

The scheme will also provide a valuable habitat for pollinators and other wildlife.

We would look to sow late April/early May.


The area would look quite bare for the first few weeks until the seed starts to germinate.

But once we get past this period, it should thrive and flower every year with full coverage.

I would be interested to hear your thoughts on the proposal.

Please see below a plan of the proposed area and a picture of the wildflower along Salterton Road.



 This image cannot currently be displayed.

Kind regards,

**Russell Giblett**, MLA, BSc (Hons)  
Green Spaces Development Officer

**From:** Cllr Tony Woodward (email address deleted)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 4, 2023 5:46 PM  
**To:** Russell Giblett (email address deleted)  
**Cc:** Cllr Megan Armstrong (email address deleted)  
Tom Wood (email address deleted)  
Paul Fealey (email address deleted)  
**Subject:** Re: Wildflower Meadow Proposal

Dear Russell

An excellent idea and I look forward to seeing the proposal blossom.  
It would have my full support.

Regards

Tony

Tony Woodward  
Councillor - Exmouth - Halsdon Ward  
M: (mobile telephone number deleted)

**Below: communication between a Sidmouth Councillor and a Parks and Gardens Officer about making a public consultation more inclusive**

**From:** Cllr Denise Bickley (email address deleted)  
**Sent:** 15 August 2022 09:57  
**To:** Paul Fealey (email address deleted)  
**Subject:** Lymebourne Park

Hi Paul

I have been talking with our SVBG committee (Sid Valley Biodiversity Group) about the consultation re 'rewilding'. We are very concerned about it as the Facebook post shows a beautiful vibrant meadow and we need to manage expectations, and have a plan of what is going to happen. Is this your baby? Could the SVBG be involved as 'critical friend' and then would be very happy to organise volunteers when the planning stage is complete.

What they don't want is everything scarified and seeds put down that won't be any good for the following year (Alma Field is a prime example) and would rather be involved to put the work in now at this stage and get it right.

We are also keen to get away from the term 'rewilding' as it isn't going to be that really - maybe 'managed to encourage biodiversity' or 'sensitively managed to help nature' or some such thing.

We are also concerned about the timing of the consultation which anybody working can't get to. Clearly the residents around the area need to be on board, as do the local community.

Huge thanks and hope I don't sound critical - I very much want these green spaces to not be routinely mowed short obviously, but we have to get it right.

Denise

Denise Bickley

Cllr Denise Bickley

EDDC - Sidmouth Town Ward

East Devon Alliance

Member of the Democratic Alliance

Assistant Portfolio Holder, Climate Action and Emergencies

On 15 Aug 2022, at 12:58, Paul Fealey (email address deleted) wrote:

Hi Denise

You are right about the wording not being specific enough and the timing of the consultation not being inclusive. Russell recently went on annual leave and asked me to contact EDDC's comms team about putting something together for the 2 sites he is interested in developing. Russell and I are more keen on the term 'renaturing' than 'rewilding', which I can ask comms to change in an update to the post.

When Russell returns, he should be able to put out an updated post to make his intentions much more clear to people who will not be able to make it to the public consultation day.

Regards

Paul

**Paul Fealey**

Horticultural Technical Officer

**From:** Cllr Denise Bickley (email address deleted)

**Sent:** Monday, August 15, 2022 2:01 PM

**To:** Paul Fealey (email address deleted)

**Cc:** Russell Giblett (email address deleted)

**Subject:** Re: Lymebourne Park

That will be great and thanks for the feedback. Could we also perhaps pencil in a meeting with the SVBG representatives to have a chat through the plans?

Cllr Denise Bickley

EDDC - Sidmouth Town Ward

East Devon Alliance

Member of the Democratic Alliance

Assistant Portfolio Holder, Climate Action and Emergencies