

Wildflower Site Proposal following A Successful Pilot Project

The Wildflower Feasibility Group consists of the following Councillors in conjunction with Highworth Town Council Grounds Team:

- (Mrs) L Vardy
- K Saunders
- R Williams
- G Evans

Terms of Reference:

To set up a Working Party to assess areas for the planting of wildflowers in the Town. Councillors agreed to set up a Working Party to explore the viability of creating some areas for wildflower planting in the Town.

Environment & Leisure 8th August 2020 minute 8.

The project so far:

The project was slow to get off the ground as the decision to go ahead with the pilot plots wasn't made until mid-November 2019. The wet winter and early spring created logistical issues in digging out the beds, which meant they were not ready for sowing until early March 2020.

Over the winter research was carried out on potential seed mixes and a kilogram of Plant life's Cornfield jewels mix was purchased. Sowing took place during the early weeks of March 2020. Whilst the rains had stopped the winds had increased and it was problematic to find calm enough days to sow the plots.

Lockdown and the long spell of dry weather meant seed germination was slow, but after a slow start the beds have forged ahead and having been providing increasingly spectacular displays over recent months and are still going from strength to strength.

The turf & earth removed from the Fair View beds was piled along the side of the beds furthest from the bungalows, to provide habitat for burrowing insects such as solitary bees. This was also done to discourage some of the residents and their visitors who drive all over the grass at Fair View from driving over the flower beds.

The beds have been positively received by both residents of Fair View & Park Avenue and the general population of Highworth as a whole. No direct complaints have been received. Understandably there were one or two on the social media pages whilst the seed was establishing itself but these comments received short shrift from other users of the sites.

The Wildflower Group surveyed sites around the Town. Sites were short-listed and it was agreed with all the sites put forward it was too large a project to take forward together and therefore would be completed in phases, taking into account residents views on future locations. Once the sites had been shortlisted a short survey was prepared for Public Consultation.

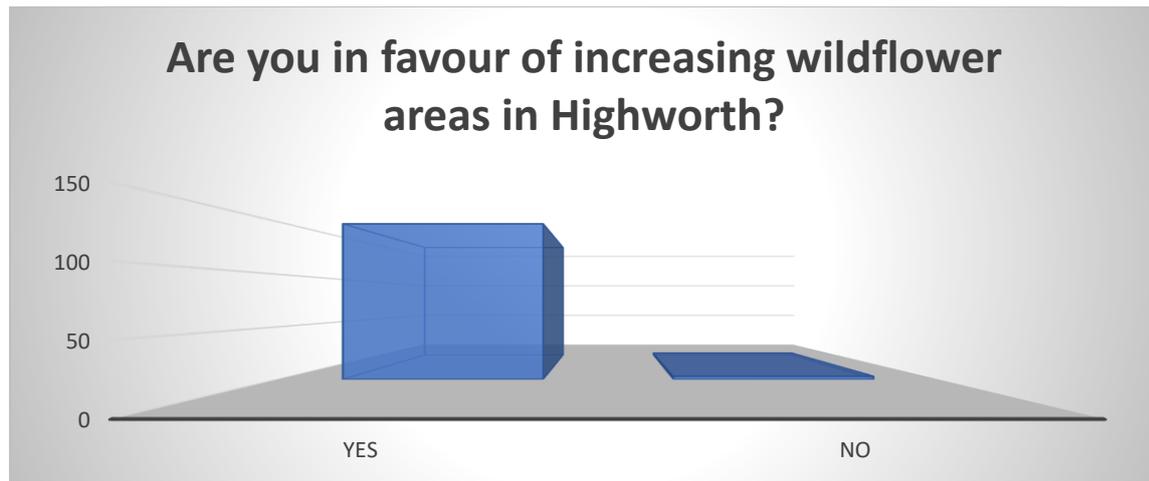
Survey

A Public Consultation ran for a period of 2 weeks. The survey was published on the Highworth Town Council Facebook Page which was shared to 4 individual Highworth

Facebook Groups. It was also published on the Highworth Town Councils Website. A report was given in the Public Council Meeting and paper copies of the consultation were hand delivered to all houses surrounding the proposed sites. Posters were also displayed in the window of the Council Offices and paper copies available on request. An A-board was displayed at the Saturday Market advertising the survey and Councillors were available to answer and questions or concerns residents may have.

Results

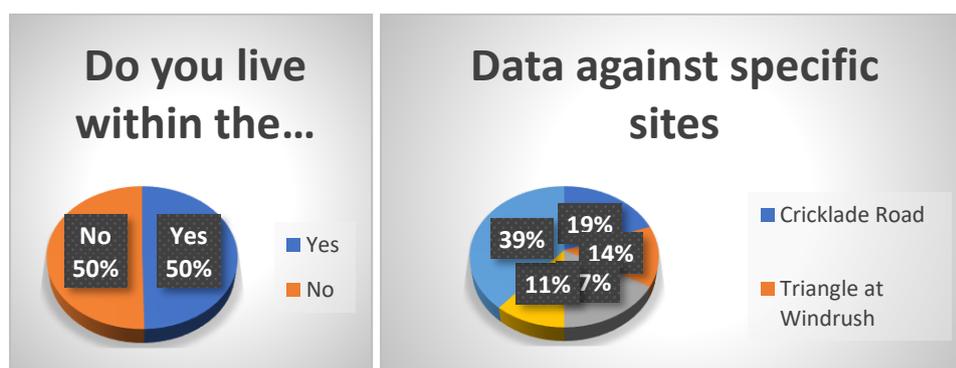
3 responses were received via paper copies along with 165 online responses. (of the 165 responses 16 were partially completed).



98% of people who completed the survey were in favour of increasing the wildflower areas within the Town. A wide variety of reasons were given:

- To increase bio-diversity
- Visually enhance areas of the Town
- To attract bees and insects
- Improve mental health
- Make people happy
- Reduce the cutting and pollution from the mower
- Allow children to have a wider variety of natural environments

Half the responses received were from residents who live directly near a proposed site, of these responses 92.7% of people were in favour of all the sites proposed. The only site not to score well was the junction at St Michaels Avenue with 14 responses identifying this site as unsuitable (16.5%).



65 responses identified additional areas within the Town and this will be brought forward to the next Wildflower Meeting and looked at in more detail in phase 3 of the pilot scheme.

There is overwhelming support from the community to assist with this project 42.5% of responses received were willing to assist with project, equating to 62 contact details being submitted. These will be followed up with an email or telephone call to advise of the next stage and time frame.

Recommendation

The recommendation from the Wildflower Feasibility Group to the Environment & Leisure Meeting is to continue with this project and prepare for the second phase in converting the following sites:

1. Cricklade Road
2. Triangle at Windrush
3. Along the wall outside Brewery Street car park
4. Near Priory Green, Roundhills Mead

The Maintenance Schedule has been submitted to Swindon Borough Council as requested and the results of the Public Consultation have also been shared. This will allow the variation to the Deed to be finalised and the Project can move forward. A Resolution is required by Environment & Leisure to allow such Variation to the Deed.