

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 25 JULY 2019

**Question to Philip Atkins OBE
Leader of the Council**

By Kyle Robinson

Question

Could the Leader please outline what steps this Council has taken to protect pollinators across Staffordshire? Will he commit the Council to planting pollinator friendly wildflower corridors on County Council owned land and in our County Council owned parks?

Reply

The reason for the decline in pollinators is thought to be mainly due to decline in habitats such as wildflower meadows. The Council considers the needs of pollinating insects in the following ways:

Management of Country Parks

Pollinating insects are considered in our management of countryside sites, in the context of the habitat types they contain. For example, Apedale, Deep Hayes and Greenway Bank Country Parks have important meadows and flowering grass verges including some with rare orchids. We have developed management approaches, e.g. a low intensity grazing plan for the meadows at Apedale to control the more vigorous grasses so that wildflowers can thrive. These will continue to be protected and managed.

Another important habitat for pollinators is heathland, found mainly in Cannock Chase and Chasewater but on many other sites in the county. Our management plan for both sites includes bare ground management for solitary bees and wasps, which are important pollinators.

Cannock Chase and Chasewater heaths have been managed as mixed habitat areas consisting of lowland heath (for which it has been given international status), gorse scrub, scattered trees and copses and areas of woodland and also include important areas of wood pasture and wetlands. By maintaining a diversity of habitats within a site, there are likely to be flowering species across the majority of the seasons when pollinators are active.

Regeneration Sites

The Council advises on the development of regeneration sites and manages habitats on some sites. An example is at Redhill where good meadows have been created and enhanced.

Road Verges

Road verge management is another important way that flower-rich grassland can be maintained. The most flower-rich verges have been managed to ensure that wildflowers can flower and set seed, providing a nectar source for a range of invertebrate species, whilst preventing scrub and bracken from displacing these wildflower species.

Planning advice

When providing ecological advice to third parties, we work hard to retain natural habitats wherever possible, pushing for mitigation or habitat compensation where this is not possible in line with planning policy and relevant legislation.

In artificial situations, e.g. where natural habitats are not present, our advice is to request pollinator enhancements including planting of appropriate flower species and creation of nesting habitat etc. as required.