

"Bee Friendly City comes to Woolsington Parish"

The creation of an extensive Wildflower Meadow in Woolsington

Newcastle City Council created the **Bee** Strategy to promote the importance of bees. There are over 200 species of bees in the UK, but bee populations have been **declining** in the last few years due to various factors including loss of habitat, disease and use of pesticides.



For some time the Parish Council and the Woolsington Residents' Association have been in consultation with the City Council's Grounds Maintenance and Ecology teams, discussing requirements for grass cutting **and a bee-friendly** wildflower meadow in the village of Woolsington. Our vision is to have a mown pathway running from The Oval to the Wheatsheaf Farm bordered with wildflowers. An additional benefit will be a reduction in the amount of regular grass cutting required.

The Parish Council began this process by bordering much of this strip with Hawthorn whips (funded from the Biodiversity Project for 21/22).

We now have some very good news to report – Woolsington Parish is one of the selected pilots for the City Council's "Bee Friendly City Strategy." (See <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/citylife-news/investment-biodiversity-create-buzz-city> for more details of the scheme)

The location of our pilot scheme is the wide verge in Woolsington heading north from the Farmer's gate to the Wheatsheaf Farm junction.

- The grass between the white paint line and the road will be cut as normal
- A grass footpath, meandering along the border of the hedge-row for the full stretch, will be cut regularly
- The grassed area in-between the mown path and mown verge will be for native wild flowers

The mowing has already started but it will be a while before the wildflower area is seen in all its glory as careful soil preparation is needed.

This current year, a **Grillo** machine will scarify the wildflower grass area in order to discourage grass growing and the grass clippings will be collected to reduce nitrogen levels. Wildflower seed will then be sown in the second year.



The system

Left: a regularly cut mown path following the line of the hedgerow.

Centre: to the left of the white line, the location of the wildflower meadow

Right: to the right of the white line, a regularly cut roadside border.



The scheme is being run in partnership with the University of Newcastle; students will do the performance monitoring and will judge the success of each pilot by measuring Bee population numbers.

We understand that Woolsington was selected not just because of the suitability of the site but also in recognition of the achievements made by the Parish Council with its ambitious Biodiversity and Conservation project and the magnificent efforts of the local community with landscaping in Woolsington.

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