



Briefing 22 - 26

National Bees Needs Week (18-24 July 2022)

To: All Chief Executives, Senior Policy Officers Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Key issues

- National Bees Needs Week is running from the 18th July – 24th July 2022. The theme of the week is to call on everyone from individuals, farmers, gardeners, or **managers of urban spaces** – to take five simple actions to care for bees and other pollinators.
- Local authorities have increasingly become involved in providing more spaces which promote biodiversity and in particular bees and pollinators by changing the ways they manage and maintain their greenspaces.
- Public awareness of the need to protect our bees and other pollinators is also growing and requests for more wildflowers and reductions in the use of pesticides and herbicides is part of this awareness.
- National Bees Needs Week, although a short-term event, is seen as a catalyst to promote sustainable support for bees and pollinators across the UK and Government is supporting this work through its own Pollinator Action Plan.
- The briefing note provides a wealth of examples of how to support the 5 easy actions making up the week's events.
- APSE will continue to highlight best practice and innovation within local authorities and communities regarding work which increases and supports bees and pollinator numbers, recognising that this work is not simply a 'nice thing to do', but is in fact critical to sustaining many of our daily food staples and the natural habitats we all enjoy.

As members are aware APSE has been a strong advocate of promoting the health and well-being of our bees and other pollinators. Many will also be aware that Government has developed a Pollinator Strategy to support the need to protect and create more spaces for our pollinators across the UK including this link to the recently published [Pollinator Action Plan 2021-2024](#)

Benefits of Bees and other Pollinators

Pollinators have huge economic benefits to our daily lives. It has been estimated that the work of pollinators is worth almost £700 million a year in terms of the crops they pollinate. Without bees such work would have to be done manually. The estimated cost of undertaking this work manually has been calculated to be £1.8 billion a year.

But pollinators need to be seen as much more than part of an economic system, they pollinate our native and horticultural flora as well as being part of a wider natural ecosystem, which brings untold pleasure to millions of people across the world.

National Bees Needs Week (18 – 24 July) 5 Easy Actions

Many local authorities are now proactively promoting spaces for pollinators through initiatives such as wildflower meadow creation. A good example of this is the Bee Line initiative by Brent Council which won APSE'S Environmental Innovation Award (Parks) in 2019. [You can read about the Brent Bee Corridor using this link.](#)

This year Bees' Needs Week (18–24 July) makes a call on the public to take actions to help pollinators. Local authorities as custodians of large areas of greens spaces, as well as having a duty to promote biodiversity, can also play their part in supporting this initiative, both during the week, and beyond.

The 5 actions being promoted are viewed as relatively easy to do, and regardless of how much space is available – every action, big or small, counts.

Therefore, to help sustain bee populations. The actions are:

1. Grow more flowers, shrubs and trees.

Friends of the Earth provide good information on the most pollinator friendly plants. <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/nature/bee-friendly-plants-every-season>

2. Let your garden grow wild.

The Royal Horticultural Society has plenty of advice on how this can be achieved <https://www.rhs.org.uk/garden-inspiration/wildlife/rewild-your-garden> Tellingly, the best in show garden at this year's RHS Chelsea flower show, was a garden which took re-wilding as its theme. <https://www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-chelsea-flower-show/Gardens/2022/a-rewilding-britain-landscape>

3. Cut your grass less often.

Plantlife, https://plantlife.love-wildflowers.org.uk/about_us as part of the *No Mow May* project, found some astounding results showing lawns cut once a month produce ten times more nectar for pollinators than regularly cut lawns. <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/about-us/news/no-mow-may-how-to-get-ten-times-more-bees-on-your-lockdown-lawn>

4. Don't disturb insect nest and hibernation spots

This advice refers to the need to help bees carry on their lifecycle and produce the next generation of pollinators, it's critical that they have safe spots to raise their young and hibernate over the winter, if they're a species that does this. Different species depend on different locations for example many hibernate or lay eggs in grassy margins, hedges, trees and shrubs, dead or dying wood, patches of soil or walls and fences, so care should be taken when carrying out any gardening work in these areas. Alternatively, gardeners could provide a bee hotel as a nest aid for solitary bees that replicates the cavities in dead wood that they'd naturally choose.

5. Think carefully about whether to use pesticides

Professor David Goulson, a professor of biology at the University of Sussex and a world leading expert on the ecology and conservation of insects, particularly bumblebees, said stopping the chemical spraying in the country's 22m private gardens, along with road verges, parks and other green spaces, could slow insect decline by creating a network of nature-friendly habitats where insects can recover. Professor Goulson spoke at APSE's 2020 Parks Seminar on this very subject.

As well as making changes to the way we manage our gardens and green spaces monitoring for insects in local areas is something we need to do in order to help scientists understand what pollinator populations look like. The [Pollinator Monitoring Scheme](#) is the first scheme in the world to generate data on the abundance of bees, hoverflies and other flower-visiting insects at a national scale. It will provide information that will help us measure trends in pollinator populations and target conservation efforts. Certainly, this is an area which local authorities could help promote, particularly if they are wanting to establish whether the bee friendly-work they are carrying out is making a difference.

This summer, thousands of people will be taking part in a [Flower-Insect-Timed Count \(FIT Count\)](#) and as part of Bees' Needs Week, the public are being encouraged to take part. Anyone can get involved by taking ten minutes to observe flowers and insects in good weather before sharing the information on the app. FIT Counts can be completed anywhere, wherever there is an abundance of flowers, and every observation helps improve survey records and knowledge of pollinator activity. Again, a scheme local authorities can promote amongst their schools and residents.

Celebrate your work in promoting Pollinators.

This Bees' Needs Week, Defra will also be launching the **2022 Bees' Needs Champions Awards** which celebrate the outstanding action taken by community groups, businesses and farmers to protect pollinators.

The awards recognise and celebrate examples of exceptional initiatives undertaken by **local authorities and community groups**, as well as farmers and businesses to support pollinators. Defra has given these awards to people and organisations who have taken inspiring action, however big or small, to benefit pollinators. Whether that's creating a wildflower patch or educating the local community about pollinators. **Applications will close on 14 May 2023.**

To learn more about the awards and apply visit: [Bees' Needs - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/bees-needs)
(www.gov.uk)

APSE Comment

Some may question as to why this briefing note has been prepared for an event which has barely a week to run. The reason behind this note is that bees and pollinators are in trouble. There is a growing public and political concern at the decline of bees and the wider insect population globally.

Insects are critical to ecosystem functions and services. They pollinate most of the world's crops, provide natural pest control services, and decompose organic matter and recycle nutrients into the soil.

According to the Natural History Museum, The UK's insect population has fallen sharply as the invertebrates are affected by rising temperatures and fragmented habitats.

While the declines are dramatic, small changes to our homes and gardens can play a significant part in bringing them under control. We owe a great deal to our insect populations and by creating spaces for them, and reducing harmful chemicals we spray on our greenspaces and gardens, then we can pay back some of the debt we owe.

We have recently been through one of the worst pandemics the world has ever known, and during these times we have found refuge in our green spaces and natural areas, all of which are reliant on our pollinators and insects to sustain them.

Human interactions with nature is just one of many parts which make up the planetary ecosystems which have sustained life for millions of years. Therefore by taking actions, no matter how small they may seem, collectively we are helping to sustain these ecosystems and the variety of species which depend on them, ourselves included. APSE encourages councils to work with communities to support Bees Needs Week.

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