

BRENT'S BEE CORRIDOR



The Bee Corridor



From a concept.....



..... to a reality



We created meadows...



....that brought visitors!



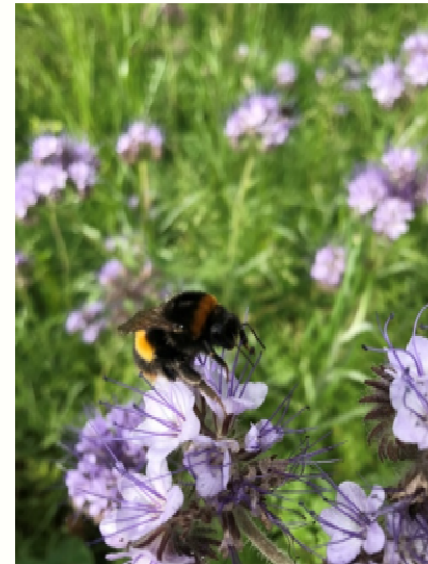
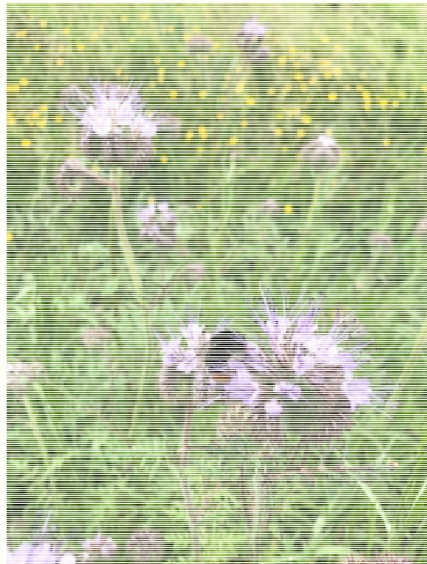
What did we do differently?

- In the first year we created meadows by transitioning from mown amenity grass to long grass
- In the second year, we recognised the need to make changes
- Something different was needed, so wildflowers were introduced
- We used a mix of 70% perennials and 30% annuals
- Seeds were selected based on the specific clay soil found in London
- We were adamant that no glyphosate would be used
- We wanted to make the sowing look naturalised



Then we crossed everything and waited for nature to take its course

And at 6.30 pm on the 4th June....



The first arrivals were the bees



Closely followed by the butterflies

Painted Lady



Marbled White



Small Heath



And finally came the people



54 likes
juliegoldsmith Wildflower meadow #summerevening
at #barhampark #londonboroughofbrent
#wildflowermeadow #londonparks #acavastudios

We began monitoring the results

- We set a schedule to visit each of the 22 wildflower areas that made up our corridor
- On each visit we would photograph the flowers, the grasses and any insects, butterflies and bees
- This gave us the start of a biodiversity record to allow us to track the impact of our corridor



So what had changed?

Yorkshire Fog



Grassy
Vetchling



Sheep's Sorrel



Some of our findings

- No use of chemicals in the preparation enabled grasses from buried seed to grow
- The variety of grasses in the borough has been incredible e.g. Yorkshire Fog, Cat's-tail and Meadow Foxtail
- Grasses are just as important for attracting breeding grassland butterflies, for example, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Ringlet and Marbled White
- Unusual plants such as Sheep's Sorrel and acid grassland plants, thrived
- We also discovered Bush Crickets, Ladybirds, beetles and inquisitive Dragonflies searching for prey



What are the outcomes?

- We successfully increased biodiversity *and* saved money
- Knowledge and information has been shared with many other councils
- We are still receiving enquiries from other countries; the most recent from a park manager in Milan
- The Bee Corridor provided food for thousands of bees
- As well as creating habitats for a multitude of other insects with a new ecosystem
- People are really excited about our wildflower meadows



Good communications are key



DIRECTION

Every service or facility that Brent Council provides has been in some way affected by budget cuts imposed in the last eight years of government austerity. Unfortunately in many cases, creative solutions have helped reduce the impact. Funding cuts might otherwise have had. One such innovation in the management of our parks – the introduction of meadow areas – had the additional but intended consequence of enhancing the biodiversity of our open and green spaces, and will remain an integral part of our environmental strategies for the foreseeable future.

Biodiversity
Meadows used to be an integral part of the landscape of the UK. However, only 3% of meadows have survived, impacting upon the habitats of many insects and birds. Brent's meadow areas are now bringing back biodiversity into the borough and providing new and thriving eco-systems. We cannot continue to provide large areas of short mown grass which lead to a dearth of insect and animal life, particularly bees.

Equally we recognise that parks are areas which all residents want to use, whether for walking, relaxation, walking the dog, playing with children, picnicking or playing sports. Therefore, 24 out of the 24 parks and open spaces across Brent now have integrated and developing meadow areas. Maps of each meadow area can be found as attachments to the document.




VERGES AND MEADOWS

The meadow areas are then allowed to develop through the year and are cut from the beginning of September onwards. After cutting grass in each meadow area will be removed.

We aim to ensure a balance in the provision of general amenity areas with meadow areas in our parks and open spaces, allowing for everyone to enjoy our spaces, whatever their reason for their visit. There will always be a mowed border around the edge of every meadow as well, which allows people to walk around each meadow area and provides a contrast between the short and longer grass.

When will the verges be cut?
Verges will typically be cut up to six times a year (late to December), but they may receive more cuts at the beginning of a year than at the end. Verge growth is weather dependent and rain and some warmth offers the perfect growing conditions for grass and wildflowers.

Our main concern is that the overall height of grass in our verges does not exceed 30cm and that there are no safety issues at road junctions caused by long grass. We will communicate our cutting schedule at the beginning of the year to all members, so you can share this with residents. We will need to be astute and aware of weather conditions throughout the year.

As soon as the grass starts to grow we will look to start our cutting schedule. It takes eight weeks for one team to cut all the verges in Brent. Therefore at the start of the year, by the time we complete one cutting schedule it may be necessary to start again straight away.

Meadow areas in more detail
Meadow management requires that the selected area is not mowed from March onwards to allow all grass and wildflowers present to grow. Each year the process takes place, the meadow area will become more defined and allow for a more intense habitat.



WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT AS A COUNCILLOR

Verges
An updated cutting schedule will be posted regularly on the following webpage: www.brent.gov.uk/amenity-for-residents/environment/roads-highways-and-grass-maintenance so you can always see when our verges are due to be cut. Verges will be allowed to grow longer in between cuts, and certain wildflowers which include plants such as dandelions and cow parsley will grow faster and be higher than the grass. Wildflowers are now an acceptable part of our verges.

Wildflowers
In selected parks, wildflowers will be sown in small areas from April onwards to allow them to look naturalised amongst our grassed meadow areas. Not every meadow area will have a sown wildflower area in the first year, but we aim to have a wildflower section in each park within two years, providing not only colour for residents and visitors but just as importantly, food for insects, birds and bees.

Communications to residents
We will be ensuring that information about our meadows management process and verge cutting schedule is communicated to residents using the most relevant communications methods.

- Parks Notice boards will show images of the meadow area for ease of reference for residents. We are also looking to install new information boards, telling residents what they can expect to see and find at each location.
- A newly created Biodiversity Portal will provide an on-line source of information of all things related to Biodiversity including links to friends groups, photos and links to initiatives such as the RSPB's annual bird count, butterfly watch and New Gardens Wildflower project.

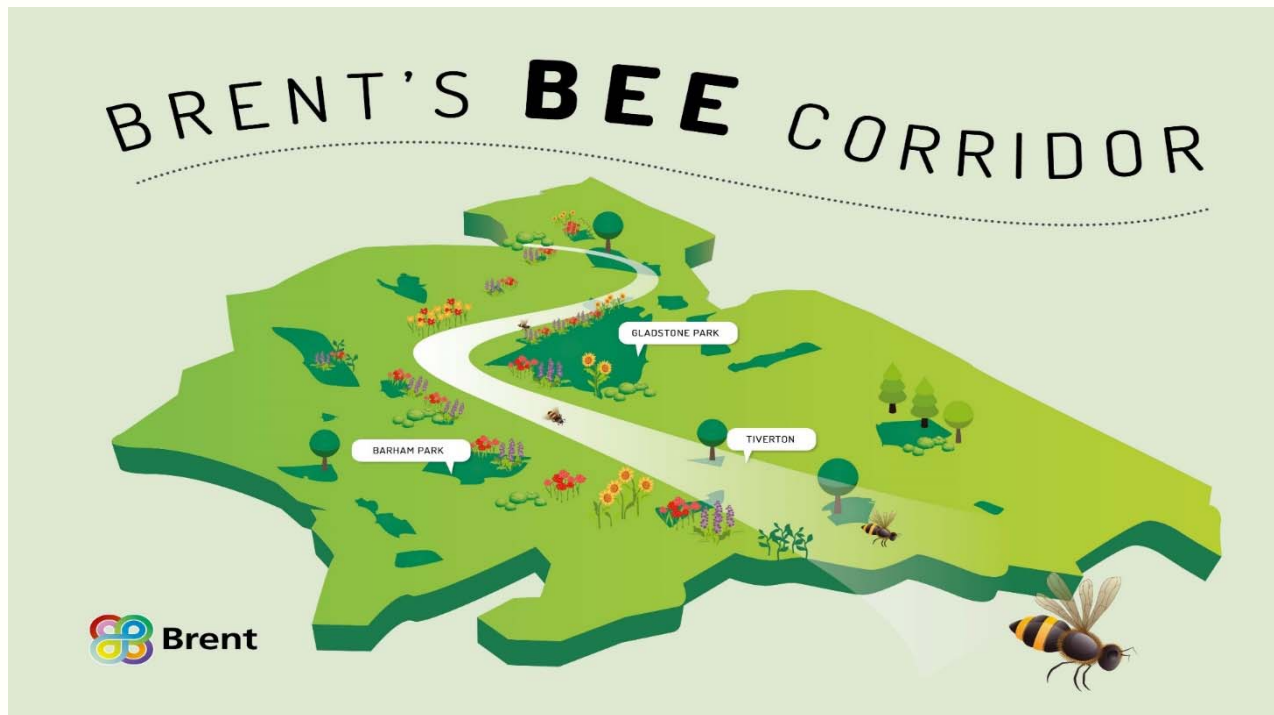
Who do I contact for more information?
Any queries on verges and meadows can be raised with your local High Street Head/Manager or our Parks and Horticulture Officers at: neighbourhoodmanagers@brent.gov.uk

Apps & icons in your area. Meadow areas app





The Bee Corridor



What a successful year



What next for the London Borough of Brent?

Expanding our corridor to include roundabouts and verges

Further monitoring of insects and wildlife to create a biodiversity database

Wildlife photography competition to encourage residents to get involved

Annual monitoring and evaluation of each wildflower meadow area

Looking to sow shade tolerant wildflowers around tree bases



But it's not just about our borough

This initiative has high transferability with relative ease and low cost

It has the potential to facilitate the creation of a national bee corridor

We inspired others to see that wildflower meadows in parks can work; local press reported that neighbouring Barnet were introducing a new bee corridor a month after ours

It has implications for the future management of parks worldwide

It has demonstrated a clear link between improved mood and being in nature; our residents loved the corridor as much as the bees!

We have been able to demonstrate that it's possible to increase biodiversity in times of constant efficiency savings

It has captured the imagination of the public

Brent



We're looking forward to a longer corridor for the bees



Thank you for listening

