Valuing Nature in the Public Realm

Cllr Tony Dawes, Bungay Town Council

Paul Mackie, Lead Officer (Environment & Climate Change), East Suffolk Council

Councillor Sally Noble, Deputy Portfolio Holder for the Environment, East Suffolk Council

Betsy Reid, volunteer member of Greener Waldringfield

Councillor Rachel Smith-Lyte, Portfolio Holder for the Environment, East Suffolk Council

Daniel Wareing, Environmental Sustainability Officer, East Suffolk Council / Secretary, East Suffolk Greenprint Forum

Agenda

- Introductions
- Case studies (5 minutes each):
  - Wild About Wickham
  - Greener Waldringfield Village Verges
  - Bungay Town Council
  - East Suffolk Council
- Workshop – 25 minutes
- Reflections closing remarks – 10 minutes

Aim of the workshop and key messages

- You will hear about some case studies to stimulate thoughts about the value of nature in the public realm

- Our session is intended to air some of the issues that we face when renaturing and generate solutions to foster greater acceptance of and love for nature in our shared environments

Nature First

Case Study 1 - Wild About Wickham

WILD ABOUT WICKHAM
NATURE NEEDS YOU!

📍 Wickham Market village hall

📅 Saturday 3 February 🕐 12pm - 4pm

FREE ADVICE AND INFORMATION FROM...
- RSPB
- Transition Woodbridge
- Green Gym
- Hedgehog Rescue
- And much more!

Case Study 2 – Greener Waldringfield

Since 2007/8 the wildlife group have been working with the support of the parish council and with residents to make our verges more useful to wildlife and more interesting and attractive to see as we humans move round the village. This leaflet is to keep villagers informed about the project and the aims behind it.

Hundreds of daffodils and thousands of snowdrops and crocuses have been planted by volunteers. These provide an early source of nectar and pollen for bees especially bumble bees which are in decline. They also look pretty. Many were planted along School Road and Cliff Road in verges maintained by the County Council.

Others were planted into privately owned verges where the residents wished to join in with the project.

Above, Star of Bethlehem
Left, Corn Marigold

Wildflowers were grown from seed and planted out into the verges. These flower among the long grasses after the bulbs are finished., for example cowslips in April/May and ox eye daisies in June/July.

Above, cowslips; , right, ox eye daisies and hawkbit

Foraging ground

Areas of long grass and flowers provide shelter and food to many small creatures such as the caterpillars of butterflies including Gatekeeper, Skippers and Ringlet, and also moth larvae, beetles and small spiders. These are in turn food for the insect eating birds arriving later in spring such as the Chiff Chaff and Spotted Flycatcher. Other birds which are with us all year such as blue tits also need tiny insects to feed their young.

The county council are asked to cut the long grass areas when the wild flowers have finished setting seed, while maintaining the surrounding short areas all year as usual. The wildlife group intend to rake off the cut grass to reduce soil fertility so would like to be alerted when this has been done .

Case Study 2 – Greener Waldringfield

Other species which used to be common have in recent times decreased drastically: the hedgehog for example and the song thrush. These need insects, snails and slugs to survive. One of the reasons for this may be loss of habitat due to loss of hedges and trees and the foraging areas under them. Also, changed agricultural practices, pesticide use and the increased cleverness of machinery such as strimmers and leaf blowers in gardens may have something to do with it.

How to get involved

The wildlife group would like to hear from anyone interested in helping wildlife survival by allowing part of their roadside verge to grow long for part of the year –either just in spring for bulbs to flower or later into summer—and allow the group to plant more spring and summer bulbs and perhaps introduce other plants such as Ox Eye Daisy, Red Campion and Yarrow. The practical advantages are less time spent on mowing, which might just be done from June to allow bulbs to finish, or from August or September if later flowering plants are introduced. Longer grassed areas also hold water, reducing run-off, and look noticeably green during periods of drought when the short areas turn brown. Anyone interested is invited to contact

Christine Fisher Kay 736384 or Betsy Reid.

Other ideas for helping wildlife are to be found on the rspb website, for example http://homes.rspb.org.uk/page/projects has lots of things for children to do in the garden.

Case Study 3 – Bungay Town Council

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Case Study 4 - ESC Feed the Bees

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Group discussion

▶ With others at your table for 30 minutes, please discuss these key questions:

- What place does nature have for you in a healthy urban or village setting, and how does this differ from the official stance of your organisation?

- What are the tensions between accommodating nature in the public realm and other priorities of our communities?

- How can we quantify and demonstrate the value to our communities of accommodating nature in the public realm, at the local level?

- How can our communities be more involved in the ownership of the policy?

- What more can you do to foster not just acceptance of, but active care for, nature in the public realm by members of the community?

▶ Please get one or two key points ready to share at the end and nominate someone from your table to put them forward

Feedback Time!

- What are the key points from your table?

What are the key themes in working together with our communities to foster active care for the nature we share our spaces with?
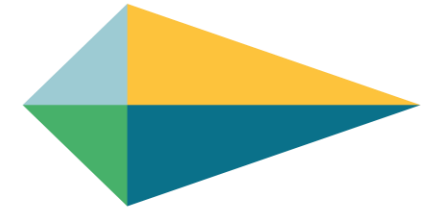
Before you leave…

▶ Before you leave the room today, please complete a post-it note with **one key thing you feel your organisation can do to help make accommodating nature in the public realm the default position rather than just a "nice to have".**

In other words, how can my organisation help Put Nature First?

Thank you!