



Green Gown
Awards 2016



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Finalist's case study

University of York Facilities and Services Helping Bees and Other Pollinators



About the project

Summary

Since 2008, the University of York has been developing a new campus. One of the primary aims has been to diversify habitats on the site and broaden biodiversity. One of the major habitats created has been species-rich meadowland, in order to achieve the primary benefits from this habitat of providing foraging for bees and other pollinating insects.

Project partners

Help and collaboration has been received from Landlife, Urban Buzz, Bug Life and River of Flowers.

Profile

- Higher Education
- 15000 students (includes full and part time students)
- 3500 staff
- Urban fringe

The results

The problem

The potentially catastrophic decline over recent years of an essential beneficial insect and the impact this has on the eco service of pollination to humanity.

The approach

To significantly increase the wildflower population and in turn food source for bees and other pollinators by sowing wildflower meadows, Substituting traditional seasonal bedding with more nectar rich plants. Mass planting bulb areas to provide early season food sources for bees. Making bug and bee hotels to give bees somewhere to over winter.

Our goals

To help reverse the alarming decline in the bee population over recent decades
To help reverse the decline of wildflower meadow habitat over recent decades
To simultaneously create an attractive naturalistic landscape for campus users to enjoy through passive recreation

Obstacles and solutions

Finding a partner to cut, bale and remove hay as part of on-going management	Agricultural contractor and farmer eventually found who were prepared to do this between them.
Dealing with undesirable invasive species	Iterative programme of integrated control methods
Maintaining a proportion of annual wildflowers	Annual cultivation and re-sowing of selected areas
High soil fertility levels	Soil inversion and taking annual hay crops



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Performance and results

Around 20 hectares of wildflower meadow created across campus (approximately 10% of University estate).

Recognised by DEFRA for excellence and best practice in providing food and a home for pollinators

Increased significantly the number and range of wildflowers on campus

Attracted several bee keepers to campus to take advantage of foraging provided for bees

Diversified and increased habitat encouraging other species of fauna – notably birds that are themselves in decline and priority species in UK Biodiversity Action Plan

Provided extra teaching and learning resource for University students and outside groups. Helped to stimulate student interest and involvement with the environment

Provided natural havens for campus users to enjoy and to help improve the wellbeing of staff working on campus

The future

Lessons learned

The initial preparation and sowing of a wildflower meadow is a straightforward operation, but to sustain it over a long term basis (more than a year) presents several challenges which the project is still in the process of dealing with and overcoming. A sustained effort and commitment is required to manage this kind of habitat and perpetuate it.

Sharing your project

- Internally within the organization via the Ecological Management Plan
- Collaboration with Environment Department to appraise students of management philosophies and encourage participation through project and voluntary work
- Presentations and discussions via Green Impact initiative
- Via Conference Office to prospective organisers and delegates
- Engagement with external organisations to progress objectives
- Within peer group around other institutions through liaison with other grounds managers and horticultural officers

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

The University is delighted that it has been shortlisted for this prestigious award. The University is wholly committed to enhancing biodiversity and minimizing our environmental footprint. The campus is already known for its lakes and abundance of wildlife and it is proud of its initiative to help bees and other pollinators flourish on campus.



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Further information

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<http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/estates/operations/grounds/index.html>