

**Notes following a meeting of the Wildflower Meadow Working Group on Tuesday, 6 March at 11.30a.m. at The Almonry.**

**Present:** Cllr D Furness, Cllr C Davies, James Newmarch – East Sussex Highways, Senior Asset Engineer (Soft Estate), Keith Datchler and Jane de Garston ((t)DTC, note taker)

Apologies were received from Cllr Kathryn Field

Terms of reference for the working group were agreed.

KD gave an overview of the reported benefits to health and mental well being from wildflower meadows and provided statistical information for the loss of wildflower habitats since the 1940s.

JN advised with the reduction in funding for verge cutting in East Sussex to twice a year this should support the wild flower verges as contractors will be requested to cut in late summer and autumn.

It is hoped that risings from the cutting of Battle Cemetery grass in the autumn will also provide seed to wildflower meadow areas.

JN advised where a road safety issue has been raised for a site this will be monitored to ensure sight lines are appropriate.

There are several schemes and opportunities for promoting and extending the wildflower verges and meadow areas.

KD reported he is working with several organisations who are offering support and information on wildflower introduction. Kew Gardens has a scheme with £10m available for seeds. There is a new App being trialled for mobile phones which is providing locations and information on what wildflowers would have been present in the past and offering sounds that would have been heard.

CD enquired how species are decided upon. KD advised, where possible, the seeds are selected on local provenance but with some of the seed schemes this is not possible.

**Action:**

DF to make application to Kew for seeds

KD to send details of App to DF for consideration.

In addition to wildflower initiatives there are bee groups and a project to introduce the Short Haired Bee to areas of the South East as they pollinate Red Clover which is being lost without the bees.

**Action:** DF asked KD to invite Dr Nikki Gammans of Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Project to speak at Parish Assembly.

Kew Gardens are commissioning a survey of wildflower meadows, this is repeating of a survey 25 years ago. Dr Kate Ryland is undertaking aspects of this survey.

**Action:** KD asked JN if East Sussex could consider funding to allow Dr Ryland to be employed to undertake local surveys

Listing of risings was discussed. Last year Caldbec Hill was lifted by a contractor appointed by Battle Town Council. JN advised anyone is welcome to apply for a licence to cut the wildflower meadow/verges as haymaking.

It was agreed a table display at the parish Assembly would help promote and provide information regarding the wildflower project. KD suggested Grow Wild who are offering seed packs might be able to provide seeds for interested residents.

In 2017 a volunteer group was formed to support the planning and monitoring of the wildflowers. It was agreed a meeting should be scheduled for the week after the Parish Assembly to include the volunteers and the local bee keeping group to discuss the way forward for this year.

**Proposed Date & time of next meeting: Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May at 11.30 a.m.**