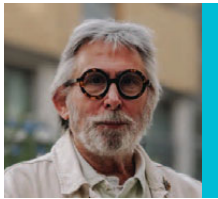


HOW LOCAL COUNCILS CAN HELP CONSERVE BEES AND OTHER POLLINATORS



Dr Luke Dixon, Co-founder of the Bee Friendly Trust, shares practical and affordable ways local councils can support bees, pollinators, and wider biodiversity.

In cash strapped times nobody wants to take on extra responsibilities, let alone find the funding and resources for new activities. Yet making our environments more friendly for bees and other pollinators does not have to be arduous or expensive, and every living thing will benefit – even rate payers.

Simplest of all is to do nothing. Allow areas of grass to go wild, creating little havens for wildflowers on verges and roundabouts, setting aside a metre of meadow around municipal lawns. The wildflowers will soon take over, springing from the seed bank in the soil or blown in the wind. Once the wildflowers begin to thrive, bees and other pollinating insect will come to forage, and birds and small mammals will come to forage on the insects and plants. Places will become self-sustaining.

Responsible guerilla gardening can be encouraged, seeding on patches of bare soil (the poorer the better) and planting English bluebells in shady spots.

Reduce the use of pesticides – they do not just kill pests – and go peat free with your compost. Again, no costs involved and money actually saved.

Look after your hedgerows and plant a hedge when you might have built a fence.

Make a plan. Think how all these small initiatives can be linked up, creating green corridors around the whole of your patch to allow birds and bees to fly, seeds to be blown around, and the public to notice a greener and more pleasant townscape. Some signage can raise awareness, and the signs can be created by local schools, perhaps pictures of the plants and creatures that share your local area.



Let every citizen know that they can do something, however modest, whether it is placing a handful of bulbs on their porch or window box or cutting a hedgehog hole in their garden fence to allow them to scurry away.

Businesses can also play their part. Pubs can make use of their gardens, offices their car parks, shops can hang baskets. All are part of the public realm. We have found railway stations full of possibilities and train companies keen to help.

Making your authority bee friendly should be a collective effort. And once you have done your best, you can apply for a Bee Friendly Award, like Arundel (shown above) did in 2022. The awards celebrate villages, towns, and cities plus community groups, schools, and business across England for their bee friendly initiatives. We launched the awards in 2001 as the Bee Friendly Town Awards, but after lobbying from some villages we widened their scope.

The awards:

- celebrate the habitat-forming initiatives that create new homes for wildlife
- showcase the collaborations that are helping to extend pollinator pathways across the nation
- shout about the people making positive change happen

This year's awards were announced in April in time for recipients to publicise their success on World Bee Day, 20 May 2026.

Next year's entries will be due on 15 March. We look forward to hearing from you.