

APPENDIX 3: CASE STUDIES

Grassland improvements through overseeding

A number of Council owned sites, such as cemeteries, require grass to be managed in a formal way and cut on a regular basis. This can limit the diversity in grassland species and provides little biodiversity value.

To help improve this, we have overseeded areas at a number of these sites to introduce species such as birds-foot trefoil and clover into the grass sward. These species are known to tolerate intensive mowing regimes and add well needed nectar sources for pollinators, alongside increasing the amenity appeal of the area.



Results of overseeding at Kenilworth Cemetery after 5 years

Meadow creation

Making changes to the way we maintain grassed areas can significantly improve the diversity and richness of these habitats and support numerous species.

We have introduced meadow areas into a number of our parks and open spaces creating flower-rich grasslands which benefit insects and add lots of colour throughout the seasons.

The process used to create these meadow areas includes: initial cultivation or scarification; followed by overseeding with a species rich seed mix; then frequent grass cutting in the first year to allow the seed to establish; followed by an annual cut from the second year to allow the meadow to flourish.



Meadow area in front of Jubilee House, Kenilworth



Meadow area at Warwick Cemetery



Meadow area on the former golf course at Abbey Fields, Kenilworth (created by the Friends of Abbey Fields)

Bird seed and nectar areas at Newbold Comyn

As part of ongoing habitat improvements at Newbold Comyn, we have created strips of unmanaged grassland alongside the football pitches, seeding them with insect and bird friendly seed mixes. These areas have been allowed to self-establish and now provide important seed and nectar sources for a range of insects and birds as well as foraging and shelter opportunities for other species such as hedgehogs and reptiles.

These areas also act as important transitional zones connecting the adjacent nature reserve with other habitats.



Bird seed and nectar strips alongside football pitches at Newbold Comyn, Leamington Spa



Thistles at Newbold Comyn, Leamington Spa

Acid grassland restoration at Abbey Fields

An area of rare acid grassland at Abbey Fields has been restored and brought back into appropriate management.

Acid grasslands can support particularly rare plant species and specialist invertebrates not found in other habitats.

The acid grassland at Abbey Fields has been allowed to grow out and is now cut and baled once a year, allowing species such as Harebells to flourish (as shown in this photo).



Harebells on acid grassland at Abbey Fields, Kenilworth



Acid grassland at Abbey Fields, Kenilworth

Bird feeding crops at St Mary's Lands, Warwick

As part of the management plan for St Mary's Lands, we have set aside an area specifically for bird feeding crop. A bird feeding mix has been sown targeting farmland birds as well as also providing enhancement for other (non-bird) target species. These crops are left unharvested over winter providing a reliable food source for seed-eating birds and shelter for birds, insects and mammals. This photo shows a patch of bird food crop, which includes sunflowers.

In addition, we have undisturbed areas at St Mary's Lands to create tussocky grassland for ground nesting birds such as skylark, along with wet/damp areas and ponds to benefit a whole host of species.



Bird food crop, including sunflowers, at St Mary's Lands in Warwick

Spring bulb planting

We have introduced spring bulb planting into some of our parks and open spaces to provide early food and nectar sources for pollinators waking from hibernation. Flowers include crocus and daffodil.

With the decline of certain insect species, particularly bees, and other species waking earlier from hibernation due to a warmer climate, these additional early sources of food and nectar are vital to their survival.

These bulb displays can be seen in many places across the district including: Abbey Fields in Kenilworth; Clarendon Square, Victoria Park and Fords Field in Leamington Spa; and St Nicholas Park in Warwick.



Crocuses at Victoria Park, Leamington Spa

Habitat boosts for invertebrates and other wildlife

An old derelict toilet in Warwick Cemetery has been converted into a giant bug house to provide essential habitat for pollinators and other species.

The bug house is made entirely out of recycled materials, with log piles for roosting insects and holes drilled for solitary bees and wasps. In addition, old hanging baskets have been used to create nesting chambers for hedgehogs, and there is space in the roof and access points to encourage roosting bats and birds.

Another habitat boost we have introduced into many of our parks and open spaces is the 'standing monolith tree'. Where trees are felled for safety reasons, we often leave a significant portion of the trunk in situ and drill holes for solitary insects such as bees and wasps, as well as creating crevices for bats to use.

Similarly, where trees have died or have lost large branches, we will often leave these in situ (where safe and appropriate) to provide important deadwood habitats for a range of species.



'Bug' House at Warwick Cemetery



Standing monolith in Jephson Gardens, Leamington Spa

Sustainable planting

We started the move to more sustainable planting over 11 years ago. Back then we were planting over 160,000 bedding plants every year for summer displays in our parks and open spaces. Over the years we have reduced this to 40,000, instead creating displays of more sustainable plants which require less watering and maintenance and have greater resilience to our changing climate.

Careful thought is put into all schemes to provide benefits for a variety of species, along with seasonal colour and interest.



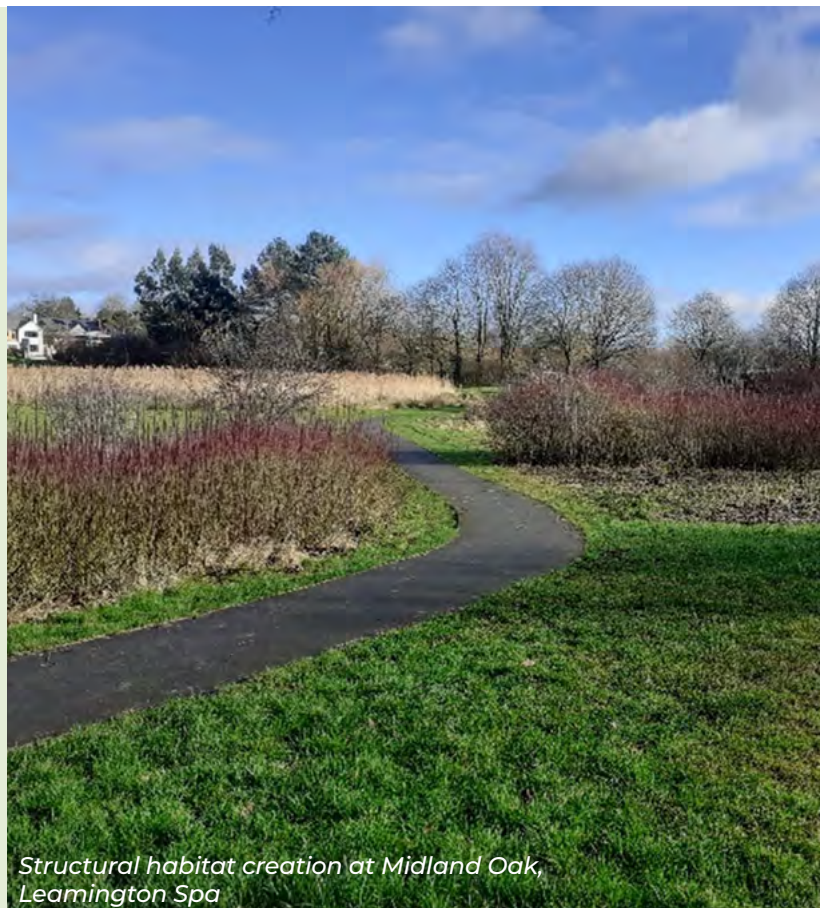
Sustainable planting in Jephson Gardens, Leamington Spa



Sustainable planting outside St Peter's Car Park, Leamington Spa

Structural habitat creation

In a number of our parks and open spaces we have implemented maintenance regimes that help to create different layers of grassland habitat to benefit a range of species. We do this by splitting the site into 5 sections and cutting a different section each year on a rolling 5-year cycle. This photo of Midland Oak in Leamington Spa helps to show the layers of habitat created through this approach – the area to the left is just over a year old, the area to the right at the back is 4 years old and the area just in front has recently been cut and overseeded with teasel and knapweed to provide nectar and seed sources for insects and birds.



Structural habitat creation at Midland Oak, Leamington Spa