



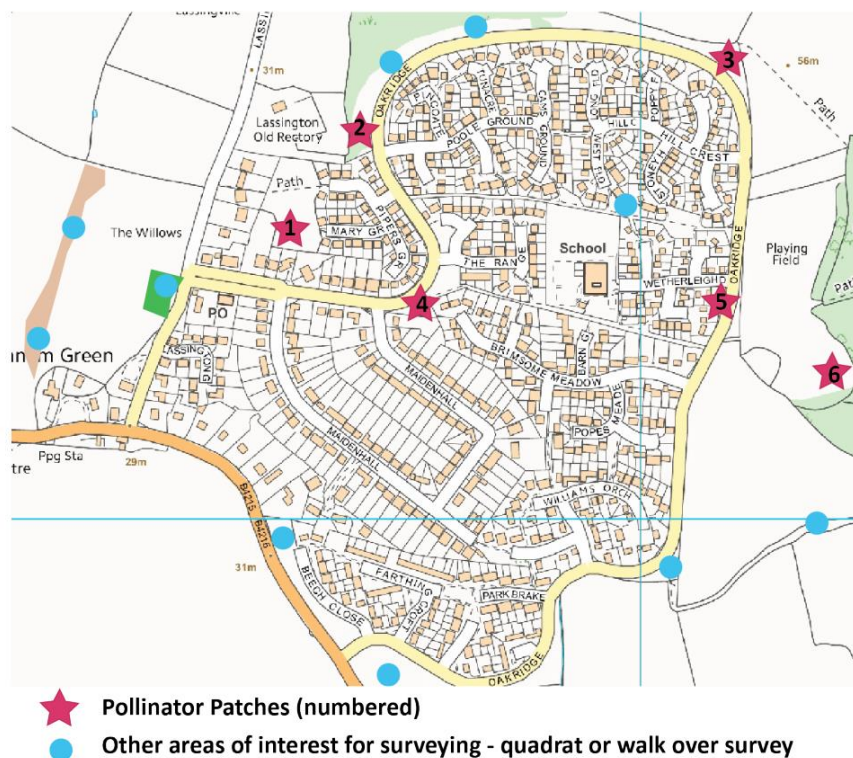
Highnam Wildflower Project – Year 2 review

Highnam Environmental Plan - Objective 1.i Wildflower project – wilding of green spaces via altered mowing regimes and selected planting including designated 'Pollinator Patches'

Pollinator Patches as of 2021:

- Patch 1 - Mary Grove (includes 2 extensions for 2021)
- Patch 2 - Oakridge opp. Poole Ground
- Patch 3 - Oakridge nr. Monkey Bank (includes extension for 2021, see photo below)
- Patch 4 - Maidenhall
- Patch 5 – Wetherleigh
- Patch 6 – Butterfly Crescent – new area previously under management by Butterfly Conservation volunteers (see photo below)

Wildflower Survey locations map - 2021



Patch 3 extension



Butterfly Crescent location in Recreation Ground



Autumn 2021 Review

The agreed 2021 Plan:

1. To continue with the altered mowing regime (**larger mower** to every **6-8 weeks** in all areas, **small mower**, mowing edges and paths following the usual **3 to 4 week** schedule for the established patches.

2. To extend Patch 3 (top of Oakridge) east beyond the second copse of trees into the open area.
3. Community involvement – to train a group of community volunteers in wildflower identification and surveying techniques so that annual records of each patch are collected, to assess the effectiveness of the altered mowing.
4. The EWG were expecting to have to use volunteers to do the final cut of the patches at the end of summer, however once the marker posts had been removed at the end of August, Ubico managed to mow the Oakridge, Maidenhall, Poole Ground and Mary Grove extension patches, even though the vegetation was about 80cm at this point.

How did we do?

Pollinator Patches:

Patch 1 - Mary Grove

Perennial rye and annual meadow grasses dominate in the original patch, with limited flowers due to shading from the trees within in the patch. However, the area still provides a good refuge for wildlife. In July, we booked local naturalist, Ed Drewitt, to provide some wildflower surveying training to a group of volunteers. He pointed out the richness of flower species in the open areas of Mary Grove suggested that it was a prime example of an unimproved grassland (with the presence of Corky-Fruited Water Dropwort suggesting the area could once have been an ancient water meadow). The EWG agreed to extend the area left unmown to preserve the flowering species and notified TBC. Subsequent botanical surveying by volunteers recorded 11 species of wildflowers flowering in the unmown area, compared with 5 in the mown area.

Patch 2 - Oakridge opp. Poole Ground

This has developed well as a species rich perennial meadow patch. It is the best patch we have for floristic diversity and nectar provision. 18 species of wildflowers were recorded in the patch, including cornflowers, mallow, teasles, red clover, common knapweed and bird's foot trefoil. A good variety of pollinators and other wildlife were recorded using this patch, such as common blue butterflies and white tailed bumblebees.

Patch 3 - Oakridge nr Monkey Bank

This natural regeneration patch was extended in 2021 to include an area less shaded by the small tree copses. The area under the trees was dominated by selfheal, birds foot trefoil and cat's ear, with bee orchids also being seen. The open area was predominantly flowering grasses, although it is hoped that going forwards, the collection of the summer cuttings will reduce the nitrogen input and enable the wildflowers present to dominate. The new footpath around the village was installed in October 202 and goes straight through this extension area, so some modification to the patch area will be required for 2022.

Patch 4 – Maidenhall

Some of the seeds planted last year flowered, including the yellow rattle plug plants sown this spring, however the exceedingly wet spring did result in the nursery bed being flooded for many weeks which reduced the success of germination of some species. Continuing the cut and collection of the dominant grasses will hopefully continue to reduce the dominant grass species. Further nursery beds will be seeded in late spring 2022 to continue to try to maintain the burst of colour.

Patch 5 - Wetherleigh Drive

This is a difficult patch to maintain as it is the most 'public' of patches and highly visible to residents on the school run, bus route, and visitors to the recreation ground. The seed bed sown last year flowered successfully, but the surrounding area was still strongly dominated by tall grasses which looked very 'untidy' once they reached full height. In 2022 we will reduce the size of this patch, so that a smaller semi-circle remains. This will be covered by weed suppressing membrane in the winter to kill off the grass species, and then resown with annuals, and larger perennial plants in late spring. We hope this will improve the visual aspect of this patch.


Patch 6 – Butterfly Crescent

This is a woodland edge area, comprising grassland scrub that was previously managed by local Butterfly Conservation volunteers. It has now been subsumed into the EWG's remit and will be managed as part of the Woodland Management Plan. Monitoring of the area, and reporting of the floral diversity will be included as part of the Wildflower project going forwards.

Botanical surveying:

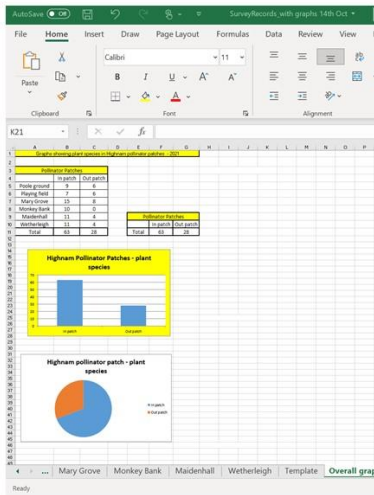
A wildflower identification training day was provided by Ed Drewitt, a local naturalist, to 12 residents who were keen to help carry out regular botanical surveys of the pollinator patches. Equipment for carrying out the surveys, including 1m² quadrats, wildflower identification books and hand-lenses was purchased and the box of equipment made available to all the volunteers as required, with a sign-out form. A survey recording sheet was designed and one volunteer kindly offered to collate all the records on an excel spreadsheet. A WhatsApp group for the volunteers has been created to provide a forum for ID help and discussion. Going forwards, it is hoped that at least 1, and preferably 2 surveys of each patch will be carried out in each flowering season, each of which requires one quadrat inside the patch and a second one outside of the patch in order to assess the effect of the reduced mowing on the floristic diversity of the grass areas.

Wildflower Survey Form



Location name:
Date:
Quadrat size:
Quadrat aerial photos taken?
Surveyor(s) name:
Surveyor email:

Quadrat	IN (No.1)	IN (No.2)	OUT (mown area)
Grid reference			
% bare ground			
Average veg. height (cm)			
% cover of flowering heads			
% cover of grasses			
Flower Species	% cover (approx, doesn't have to total 100% due to vegetation layers)		
Creeping Buttercup			
Meadow Buttercup			
Bulbous Buttercup			
Common Poppy			



Report from Ubico (via TBC):

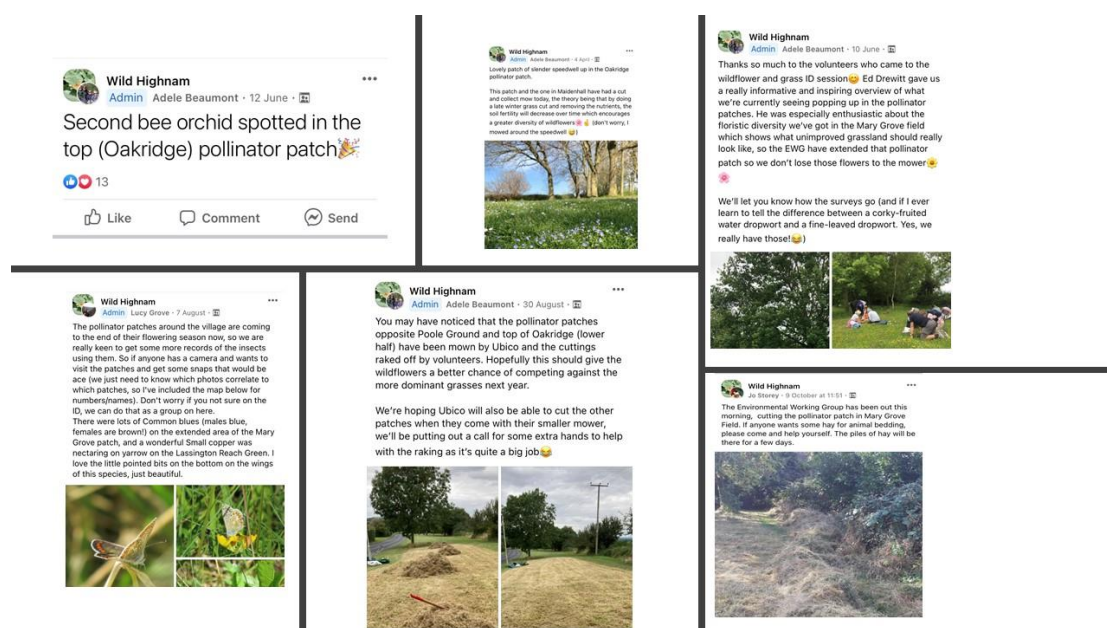
No report received this year. No issues passed on from TBC at the annual review meeting held virtually on 19/11/2021.

Issues arising:

Two complaints were received from a resident, one pertaining to the stakes used in the Mary Grove site being a health and safety hazard. These were replaced immediately with flat topped wooden stakes painted white to improve visibility. TBC confirmed these were suitable. The second complaint was about the placement of the grass cuttings from the Oakridge patch into the hedgerow and ditch. The EWG will ensure that in future, cuttings will not be placed in an area which could impede ditch drainage. TBC confirmed that using the cuttings as a mulch around hedgerows would be acceptable.

Community involvement:

- **Articles** written and published in the 'Village Link' magazine updating on the pollinator patch progress and asking for volunteers to get involved with botanical surveying.
- **Information signs:** In addition to main pollinator patch signs, small signs were again used to help identify interesting species and highlight their importance for wildlife.
- **Email communication** with those who raised issues.
- **September work party** to 'cut and collect' the vegetation from all the patches. Volunteers raked off the vegetation that Ubico had cut, and used a garden mower with a collection box to do a final mow to tidy up the patches. Volunteers used a strimmer to cut the Wetherleigh patch, and an Allen scythe to cut the Mary Grove patch. Cuttings from all were removed to a discrete area to be left to rot down.
- **Facebook posts:** EWG members posting on 'Wild Highnam' community facebook page.



Plan for 2022

Pollinator Patches:

- **Oakridge** patch may need to be relocated once the footpath is completed. EWG members will liaise with TBC in January to agree location.
- **Wetherleigh** patch to be reduced in size and a 'semi-circle' to be covered with weed suppressant by EWG volunteers in Jan/Feb 2022.
- **Mary Grove 'extension'** to be formally included as the Mary Grove patch and staked in March. EWG members to visually inspect this area regularly to check that the grasses do not become too dominant.
- **Butterfly Crescent area** – it was suggested by the Butterfly Conservation volunteers that it would be beneficial to the conservation of the area if Ubico could raise the cut of the playing field turf to a height of 15cm on a 1-2m wide strip in from of the Crescent.

Mowing regime:

- TBC (via Ubico) to mow as per their usual timetable until **March**.
- Community volunteers will then remove cuttings and restake and sign pollinator patches and manage the patches until September 2022 (when stakes will be removed again for mowing to recommence).
- TBC to reconfirm with Ubico the agreed plan of reducing the **larger mower** to every **6-8 weeks** in all areas (with continuation of the **small mower**, mowing edges and paths following the usual **3-4 week** schedule).
- Management methods for each of the patches remains the same as detailed in Appendix 1 of the 2020 annual review.

Botanical recording:

- Refresher session for volunteer botanical surveyors to be carried out in April/May 2022. Aim to do 2 surveys for each patch, one in the start of the season (April/May) and the other towards high summer (July/August).
- Results to be collated in the spreadsheet to be disseminated as required.



Pollinator Patches 2021

