4th July 2023

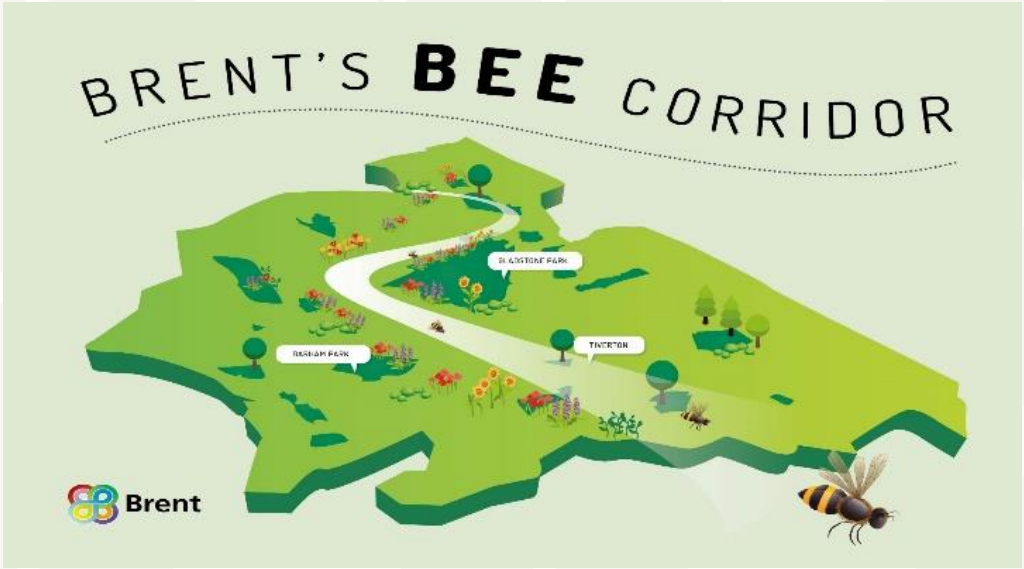
Grass & grassland management



Parks for London

London Parks Benchmarking Group

London Borough of Brent



Grasslands – Managing Public Perceptions

Brent

The concept







Brent

The implementation







Brent

The meadows







Brent

The final feedback







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But before that……the complaints

“Due to the long grass, people have been using the extra cover to take part in “adult relations” throughout the day. A resident, at the meeting, raised the concerns and the sergeant has been informed of the ongoing activity. ”

“I would like to raise a complaint on the maintenance undertaken at the local parks around the Preston Road Area.

Grass has not been cut for months and the grass area of the park is now unusable to due overgrown grass.

Local nurseries are being forced to cancel sports days due to insufficient grass areas available at the surrounding parks.

Further to the above, it has increased concerns of safety. Recently, I’ve seen knives, hammer and long metal rods hidden within the overgrown grass. If I a crime is occur as a result of poor maintenance it is only fair that the council is held liable.”

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…. And there were more…

“Before I put in a formal complaint about the failure/refusal to cut the grass it seems only right to give you a chance to spell out if and when you ever intend to mow it again.

Children are upset at the removal of the goalposts. The creation of a rat-infested litter-strewn dog and fox toilet is becoming a health hazard. The land was given to the local authority "for the purposes solely of public walks"-restricting walkers to a single beaten track hardly complies.

Please do not insult the intelligence of residents by claiming that this is the careful creation of a "meadow"-at least not without looking up the definition of that word”

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And they kept coming....

“Firstly I would like to mention one of the main reasons we purchased this house is because our kids could play in the park opposite our home....

There were not any plans to convert the park into a meadow....and WE are strongly disappointed that the BRENT council took the decision without any consultation from the residents to not cut the grass across the road from our homes.

This in turn has lead to an increased amount of foxes, rats and mice in our area.

My son and I have been suffering terribly from hayfever this year due to the increased levels of pollen and the increased levels of the growth of various plants and grasses right outside our home. We can't even leave our windows open at the moment due to the high pollen count.

My son had to be taken into Edgware walk in clinic on Friday 8th June, due to him not being able to even open his eyes and missed a whole day of school due to your *incompetence and ignorance of not cutting the grass outside our home……”*
continued…..

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And getting longer…….

“…..We already have a huge number of wild foxes running around and now we can't even see them. I DO NOT want wildlife havens for foxes when I have young children at home!

They have even made a home in my garden. They have no fear of me or my family and actually rule our decking by our garage.

I do not understand why we were not consulted about this change as we are tax paying citizens and this change effects us the most.

We would have never agreed to this ridiculous decision made by the Council.

This change, the council have implemented also has decreased the value of our property....

Looking forward for a suitable response for this Brent decision ASAP.”

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So how did we turn it around?

“Councillor I wanted to tell you how beautiful the wildflowers are in Roe Green Park. They still look amazing and have completely transformed it.

I don’t know whose directive it was but I just wanted to let you know how much joy they bring.”

“Last year there was so much controversial conversation to whether it was better to leave the grass to grow longer with complaints - no space for sports and playing and people saying the council were just doing it to save money rather than supporting biodiversity for flying insects, that it was a mess with rubbish being left in the long grass. Many nature enthusiasts were pleased the grass wasn't being cut and that nature was being supported.

This year I feel the council have got it right. While walking today I found it a sea of green with the long grass blowing gently in the wind with waves of colourful wildflowers amongst it, and more importantly bees and butterflies, a beautiful sight. - Happy Brent Resident”

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The comms plan







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Getting the message out



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National Press Coverage



10 NEWS

ENVIRONMENT

London 'bee corridor' to help pollinators thrive

By Tom Bawden
ENVIRONMENT CORRESPONDENT

A London borough is to become the first in the capital to create a "bee corridor" of meadowland to boost the population of vital pollinators.

Bees, hoverflies and other pollinators have seen huge declines in recent years due to pesticides, habitat loss and disease.

This poses a serious long-term risk to the world's food supply as they are responsible for pollinating huge numbers of crops in the UK and across the world.

The bee corridor will comprise 22 new wildflower meadows in the borough of Brent. They will also benefit dragonflies, moths and butterflies.

"Bees and other insects are so important for pollinating the crops that provide the food that we eat," said Councillor Krupa Sheth.

The country's wildflower meadows have declined by more than 97 per cent since the Second World War.

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Social Media Posts

Brent Council @Brent_Council · Mar 21

You might have noticed some busy bees in Tookey Close Open Space this week. Our teams have been digging and sowing seeds to create colourful wildflower meadows for the summer. #LoveWhereYouLive @kkrupas



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5 steps to improving public perception

1. Get political support and involve your Friends of groups
2. Partner with your comms department and publicise your meadows as much as possible, including the entire process from preparation to full bloom and the associated wildlife
3. Be honest about the reasons for the change
4. When selecting your wildflower mix, use sufficient annuals to get you the colour that brings the public support
5. Persistence. This year we are looking to install information boards at each site

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What have we learnt?

- That people *will* notice…….
- That not everyone will be happy
- But when you get your comms message right, everything falls into place
- If you can create a concept; such as the Bee Corridor, its easier for others to want to get involved
- Be Flexible - mow pathways though, change areas if they don’t work

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Meadows, meadows, everywhere







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Thank you for listening



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Visit our Resources Hub

https://parksforlondon.org.uk/resource/managing-grass



Parks for London

London Parks Benchmarking Group