CYNGOR
Sir y Fflint
Flintshire
COUNTY COUNCIL

WILDFLOWER & WEED CONTROL

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



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Introduction

Wildflower sites can sometimes raise questions, whether that is from colleagues, councillors or the public. Below we have compiled a list of frequently asked questions which you may refer to. If you have any further queries, please contact biodiversity@flintshire.gov.uk.

Why are we doing this?

There are a number of drivers which have resulted in the development of the wildflower project.

Nature, environment and people

Wildflowers are important components for nature. More than 200,000 species rely on floral plants as a food resource, while 90% of flower plant species depend on animal visitors for an aspect of their reproduction [1] . this close relationship highlights the reliance wildlife has on these now endangered habitats.

Grasslands provide essential resources to sustain our pollinator populations, which are critical as a food source for other wildlife, as well as pollination of crops. Food scarcity is very real concern globally with an increasing population to feed, and by ensuring we have a healthy and biodiverse pollinator populations in Flintshire, we can ensure food security from local farms providing food for our communities [2].

The North Wales countryside is renowned for its beauty, resulting in tourism being a large economic influence. While some sites are more remote, promoting wildflowers in our urban areas brings more colour to grey urban spaces, whilst providing a more naturalistic and visually interesting space for tourists. Further to this an increasing 55% of people live in an urban setting globally, disconnecting them from nature. With this percentage expecting to be 70% by 2050, an increase in mental and physical health concerns are set to increase in tandem [3]. Nature prescriptions are already being provided by health professionals who have recognised from current research that time spent in or near nature can vastly improve overall health [4]. Public health is a real concern that can be supported by the presence of wildflower areas.
With a 97-99% decline in natural wildflower meadows since 1930, Flintshire County Councils work ensures that we are preventing total loss in these habitats, and a gradual improvement in grassland cover across Flintshire [5].

Legislation

Legislative drivers are also key to the changes in estate management. One of our primary drivers is the Section 6 'Biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty' of the **Environment (Wales) Act 2016** which requires action to be taken by public authorities to maintain and enhancement biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems [6]. Compliance with this duty must be evidenced, in addition to forthcoming requirements of the **Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Bill**, which will lead to national biodiversity targets.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 requires local authorities to act sustainably to avoid creating problems for people now and in the future [7]. By maintaining and enhancing natural spaces for public health and environmental benefit we are ensuring a more sustainable future for communities in Flintshire.

How to we fund the wildflower work?

Grant funding has been instrumental in to the wildflower project. It has supported all aspects of the work including; project staff, training, machinery, seed and contractor costs and engagement.

These beneficial changes have not redirected council budget from other priorities.

Long-term goals are also factored into project plans, to ensure that our estate is managed sustainably, for example investing in cut and collect machinery for maintenance and long-term enhancement of sites. By taking cuttings away, we reduce fertility of the soil, resulting in less growth of vigorous grasses, and over time less mowing and cut and collect.

The long term vision for the work is to create an estate which is better for people and nature which has lower maintenance requirements.

Why do sites look so different?

Wildflowers and grass grow as a result of many environmental factors, for example, the soil conditions, site history, the weather and the management. Many of the factors are out of our control making meadow restoration complex. A one-size-fits-all approach isn't feasible and each site needs to be managed according to individual requirements.

Each new wildflower site is assessed thoroughly, we have a range of approaches to creating wildflower sites the approach will be tailored to the site. For example a site may already have a good variety of wildflowers in the seed bank, we would want to protect and enhance that without adding seed so we would manage to support this. Another site might have minimal diversity and be set in an urban area and highly visible, this would be considered for seeding.

As a result, each site will look different , in fact variation is essential to ensure we support different species.

To find out more detail about our approach see our webpages **here**.

Why are sites less colourful or become less colourful?

Annual flowering plants (plants that grow once and then die) are the species which create the brightest colour display (for example, Cornflowers, Poppies, Corn Marigolds). While these species can be seeded from wildflower seed mixes, they would rarely flower together in abundance in a meadow the annual wildflower sites are not a naturalistic meadow but they do provide additional colour in the first year and a burst of colour at high profile sites.

Perennial species (plants that regrow year on year) are longer term wildflowers that will persist in the ground and flower year on year, (for example Knapweed, Birds-foot trefoil and Oxe eye daisies). Perennial species maybe less vibrant but they do provide longer term diversity, can provide a longer flowering season and help reduce soil erosion.

There is ongoing cost and input required to maintain all our wildflower sites as traditional meadows are a managed habitat however annual seeded wildflower sites are higher maintenance as they need to be recreated each year. Due to this they provide less biodiversity benefit. By including perennial species in our sites, the site becomes more sustainable long-term and supports a greater variety of species whilst still providing some colour to the local area.

How long does a wildflower site take to develop?

This will vary across sites, for seeded sites it will depend on the seeding time and the weather. For sites we are improving through management it can take years.

We live in an fast paced world, where we can expect immediate results.

Flowering plants rely on the seasons and the weather, taking time to develop and evolve. While it is not always preferable or convenient, we need to emphasise the importance of allowing the sites to develop.

Are the wildflower sites managed?

Yes. We have recently been streamlining our processes and we are always improving where we can. We have mapped our sites which contributes to our monitoring program which involves surveying every site and analysing individual site requirements. We regularly take on site suggestions from colleagues, public and councillors.

If you have concerns regarding sites or any suggestions please contact us using the email provided above.

Do we consider visibility splays?

We do not include visibility splays as part of the wildflower project as these are maintained as part of roadside health and safety priorities and protocols. If you have concerned regarding visibility please contact the Streetscene department who will arrange for it to be mown.

Do wildflower sites encourage dog fouling, litter, cause fire risks or attract vermin?

Dog fouling and litter are widespread issues that are not isolated to Flintshire or wildflower areas. In larger sites we have mown areas which allow access for litter pickers to collect any litter which may have collected in long vegetation.

Fire risks occur as a result of thatch buildup. Every site has a cut and collect schedule, therefore preventing any build up of thatch and associated fire risk at our sites.

Rats and mice are attracted to regular food sources and litter, there is no clear evidence to suggest they would be attracted to long grass.

Why are wildflower areas not neat?

The opinion that wildflower sites and areas of longer grass are not neat and tidy is one of our biggest challenges, this perception is not isolated to Flintshire. Nature isn't always neat and tidy but it is essential for our health and wellbeing and survival.

We have a huge number of features in the public realm which are not particularly nice to look at, for example, bins, bollards, drains and railings. These features provide a necessary function just like our wildflowers and grasslands.

As a community we need to reframe the importance of these natural assets, our grasslands perform multiple functions and provide many benefits as outlined in the 'Why are we doing this?' section.

Why have weed control practices changed?

As a local authority we are following Welsh Government guidance to minimise use of the herbicide glyphosate or any other toxic chemical due to their potential for harm to people.

'Weeds' or pavement plants are essentially wildflowers growing in the wrong place. Using grant funding, we have invested in a number of alternative treatment methods, for example, hot foam, mechanical weed rippers, heat, and a quadbike with mounted spray capabilities with which we use alternative nontoxic chemicals.

Further to this we are supporting local initiatives to encourage public involvement in maintaining pride in our local area through weed removal.

For further information on our weed control changes see our "Weed Control Briefing November 2025"

What are we doing to help create understanding about our wildflower and grassland sites?

Engagement and awareness is a key component of this project. We are helping to change perceptions through signage, mown boarders and paths which highlight site intention. A successful wildflower roadshow has been run for the last 2 years; visiting important events across Flintshire. This will continue in 2026.

Through engagement we aim to improve understanding of the importance of meadows and raise awareness through our website [8], leaflets, social media posts and running public events.

References

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4. NHS England - https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing/green-social-prescribing/

5. Plantlife - https://www.plantlife.org.uk/learning-resource/managing-meadows/

6. WG Environment (Wales) Act 2016: https://law.gov.wales/environment-wales-act-2016

7. WG Wellbeing Future Generations Act (2015): https://www.gov.wales/well-being-future-generations-act-essentials-html

8. Flintshire County Council – Wildflower webpage https://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/LeisureAndTourism/Countryside-and-Coast/Wildflowers/Home.aspx



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biodiversity@flintshire.gov.uk