



MANAGING OFF-PITCH GRASS



INTRODUCTION

Pollinators such as bees, butterflies, hoverflies and moths play a vital role in healthy ecosystems. They help pollinate wildflowers, trees and crops, supporting biodiversity and contributing to the resilience of our natural environment.

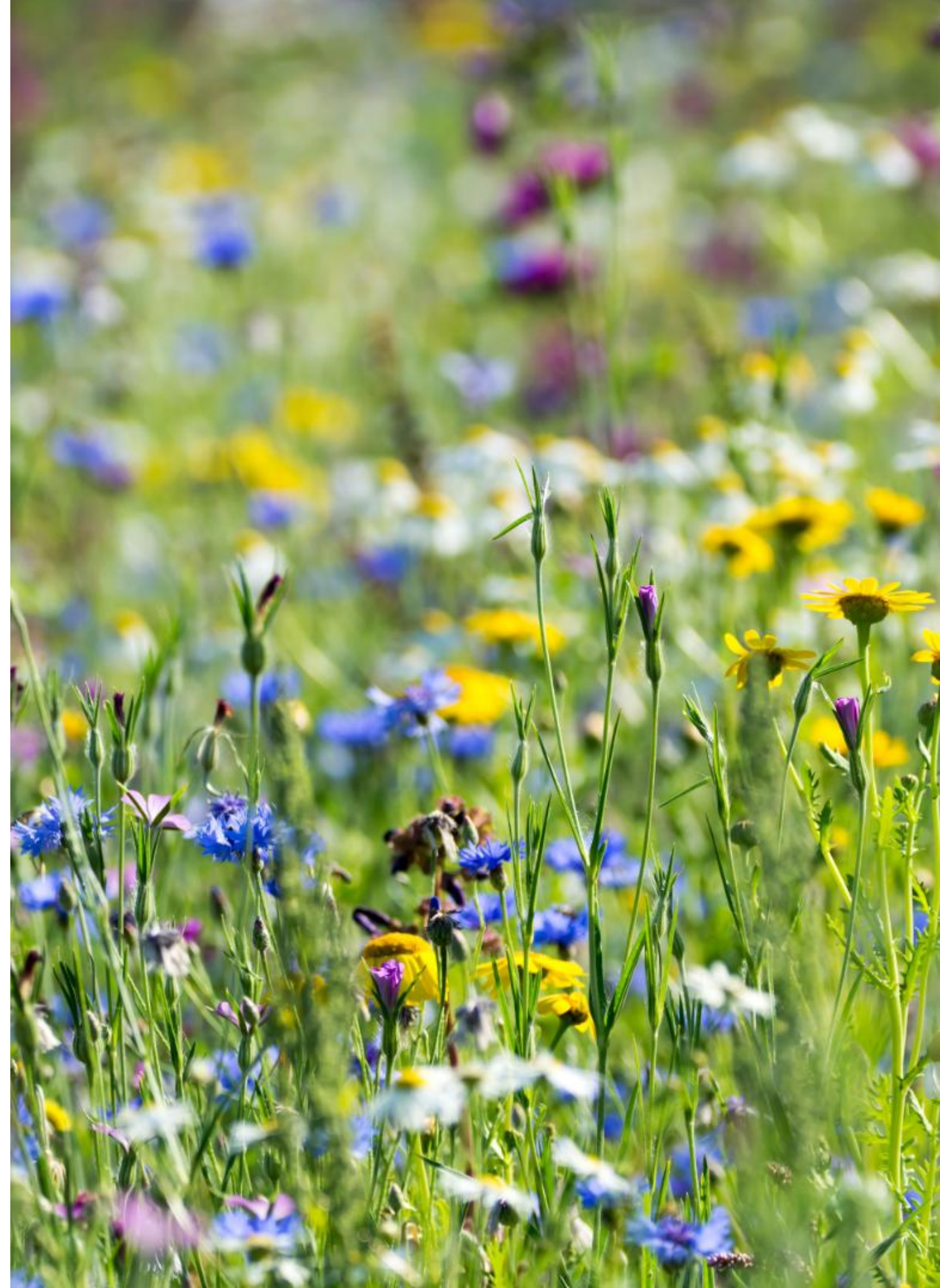
Unfortunately, pollinator populations have declined significantly in recent decades due to habitat loss, changes in land management and climate pressures.

Football Clubs across Wales can play an important role in supporting pollinators through simple changes to how off-pitch grass areas are managed. Areas around pitches, fence lines, car parks, pathways, embankments and unused corners of Club grounds can provide valuable habitats for wildlife without affecting football activities.

This resource provides practical guidance to help Clubs create pollinator-friendly habitats through adjusted mowing regimes and improved grassland management. It aligns with the objectives of the Welsh Government's [Action Plan for Pollinators](#) and wider nature recovery goals across Wales.

This resource will support your Club to:

- Understand how grassland management can benefit pollinators and wildlife.
- Identify suitable off-pitch areas for biodiversity enhancement.
- Create short-flowering and long-flowering meadow habitats.
- Reduce maintenance costs and resource use in appropriate areas.
- Engage members and communities in biodiversity projects.
- Support your Club's Biodiversity Action Plan and Green Goals.





BENEFITS

Why Pollinators Matter

Pollinators are essential to healthy ecosystems and food production. Many of Wales' native wildflowers, trees and plants rely on pollinators to reproduce.

Football Clubs often have significant areas of grass that are not used for sport.

By managing some of these areas differently, clubs can create important habitats that provide:

- Food sources for pollinators.
- Shelter and nesting opportunities.
- Habitat for birds and other wildlife.
- Improved biodiversity across Club grounds.
- More attractive and natural landscapes.

The good news is that many pollinator habitats can develop naturally through simple changes to mowing practices.



GRASS MANAGEMENT

Understanding Off-Pitch Grass Management

Not all grass needs to be managed in the same way.

Playing surfaces must continue to be maintained to meet football requirements; however, many surrounding areas can be managed specifically for biodiversity.

Examples include:

- Behind goals.
- Along fence lines.
- Around car parks.
- Embankments and slopes.
- Edges of training areas.
- Unused corners of club grounds.
- Areas around spectator zones.

These locations often have limited operational use and can become valuable wildlife habitats.





MEADOWS

What Are Short Flowering Meadows?

Short flowering meadows are areas where mowing frequency is reduced to allow common wildflowers to grow naturally among the grass.

This is one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to support pollinators. Rather than mowing every week, grass is cut approximately every four to six weeks during the growing season.

This approach encourages flowering species such as:

- Dandelions.
- Clover.
- Self Heal.
- Bird's Foot Trefoil.
- Knapweed.
- Buttercups.

These flowers provide valuable nectar and pollen throughout the season.





SHORT MEADOWS

How to Create a Short Flowering Meadow

Identify areas where reduced mowing will not affect football activities. Short flowering meadows can also reduce fuel use, lower maintenance costs and reduce staff and volunteer time spent mowing, in addition to Improve the appearance of Club grounds.

Good locations include:

- Pitch edges.
- Pathway verges.
- Around car parks.
- Boundary areas.
- Open spaces near clubhouses.

Management tips:

- Avoid mowing where possible from early March until mid-April to allow early flowering plants to bloom.
- Avoid cutting during peak flowering periods where practical.
- Cut on a four-to six-week rotation.
- Remove grass cuttings after mowing.
- Monitor the area and adjust mowing frequency if required.

Removing grass cuttings is important because it reduces soil fertility and encourages greater wildflower diversity over time.

Clubs may also consider creating mown pathways through meadow areas to encourage access and enjoyment while protecting habitats.





LONG MEADOWS

What Are Long Flowering Meadows?

Long flowering meadows are areas where grass is left largely undisturbed throughout the growing season and cut only once or twice per year.

These habitats provide:

- Continuous food sources for pollinators.
- Shelter for insects and small mammals.
- Nesting opportunities for wildlife.
- Greater plant diversity over time.

Because the grass remains undisturbed, these areas often become some of the most valuable biodiversity habitats on Club grounds.

Suitable Locations

Long flowering meadows are best suited to:

- Large unused grass areas.
- Perimeter land.
- Areas behind goals.
- Field boundaries.
- Steep banks.
- Land around training facilities.

Areas should be selected carefully to avoid conflict with football operations or spectator access.



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MEADOW MANAGEMENT

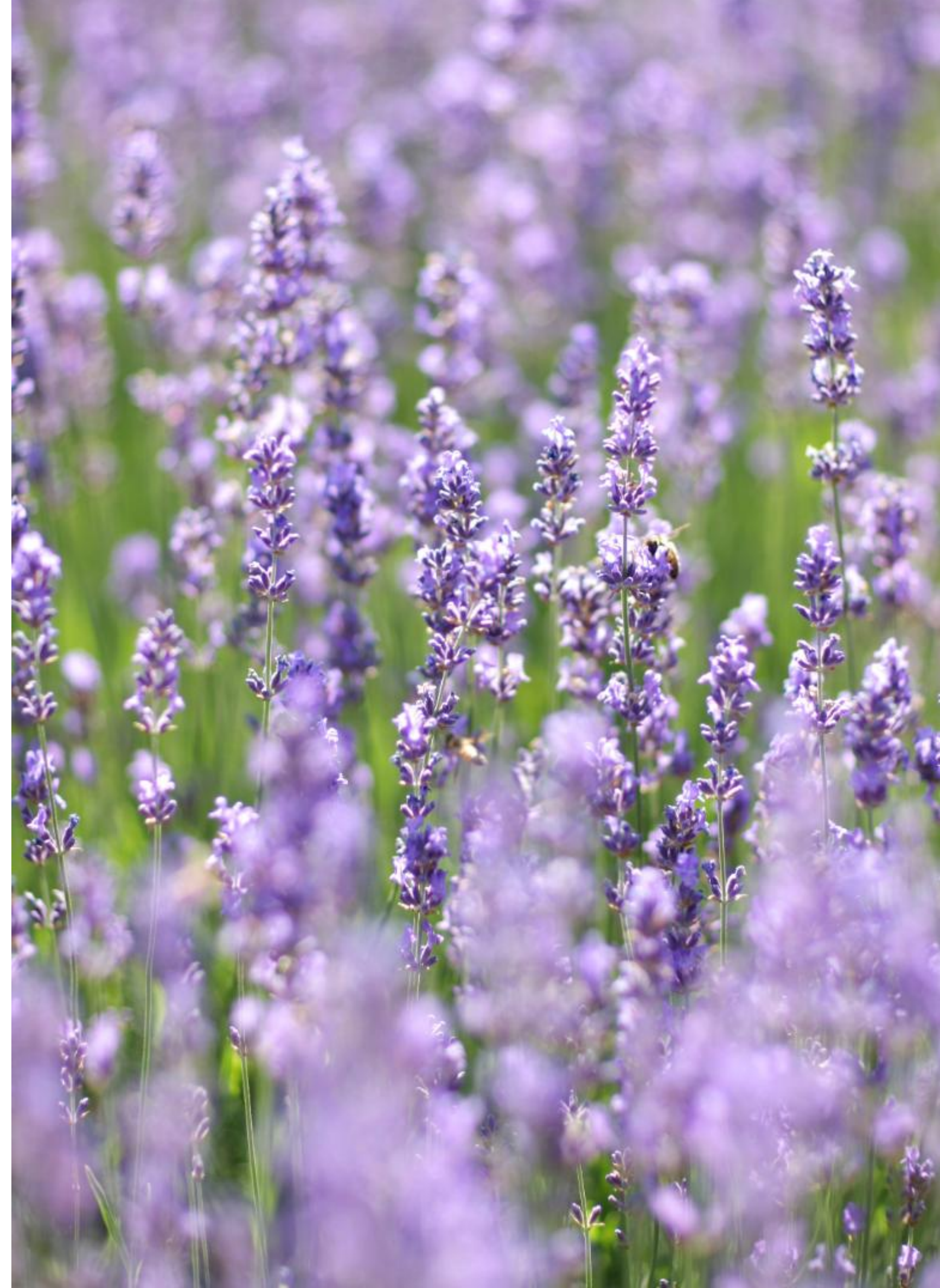
Managing Flowering Meadows

Over time, native species adapted to local conditions will often establish naturally without the need for expensive seed mixes.

Where growth becomes excessive, an additional early spring cut may be beneficial.

A typical approach includes:

- Leaving the area uncut throughout spring and summer.
- Carrying out a cut during late summer or early autumn.
- Removing all cut material after mowing.
- Allowing natural regeneration of local wildflowers.





POLLINATOR PLANTS

Support Pollinator-Friendly Plants

While natural regeneration is often the best approach, Clubs can also increase biodiversity through targeted planting.

Consider planting:

- Native wildflowers.
- Pollinator-friendly shrubs.
- Native hedgerows.
- Flowering trees.

Examples suitable for many parts of Wales include:

- Hawthorn.
- Blackthorn.
- Rowan.
- Hazel.
- Field Maple.
- Wild Rose.
- Honeysuckle.

Using native species generally provides the greatest ecological benefit.



COMMUNICATION

Use Signage and Communication

Help Members Understand the Changes

One of the most common challenges with biodiversity projects is that members may assume longer grass areas are simply being neglected.

Clear communication helps build understanding and support.

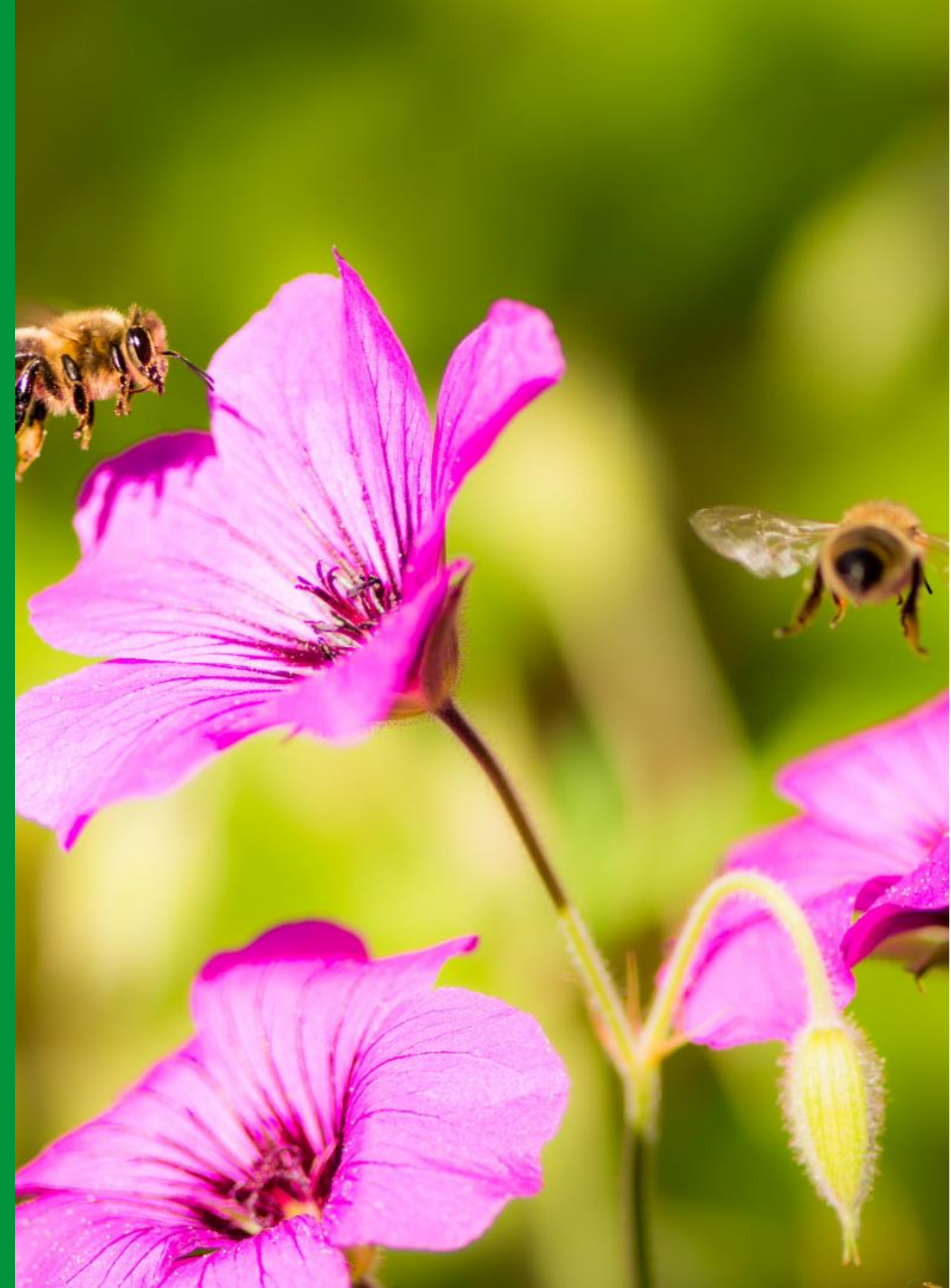
Consider using:

- Biodiversity signs.
- Interpretation boards.
- Social media updates.
- Website articles.
- Volunteer engagement events.

Explain why areas are being managed differently and highlight the benefits for pollinators and wildlife.

Where possible, use bilingual Welsh and English signage.





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CELEBRATE

Celebrate Success

Clubs should share progress with members and the wider community.

Ideas include:

- Pollinator counts.
- Before and after photographs.
- Wildflower monitoring.
- Community planting days.
- Youth engagement projects.
- Highlighting impact on nature and the wider community.

Celebrating success helps build support and encourages long-term participation.



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AVOID MISTAKES

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Good planning and communication are often the key to success.

When creating pollinator habitats, avoid:

- Planting non-native invasive species.
- Mowing during peak flowering periods unnecessarily.
- Leaving grass cuttings on site after cutting.
- Applying pesticides in biodiversity areas.
- Creating habitats without explaining the purpose to members.





FURTHER SUPPORT

Managing off-pitch grass differently can deliver significant benefits for pollinators, biodiversity and the wider environment while often reducing maintenance requirements and costs.

You do not need to transform your entire site. Start by identifying one or two suitable areas and trial a different mowing regime. Monitor the results, engage members and expand successful projects over time.

Many of the most successful biodiversity projects begin with small changes that gradually grow into wider habitat creation initiatives.

Use what you have learned in this resource to:

- Inform one of your two mandatory Green Goals.
- Identify areas suitable for pollinator-friendly management.
- Support your Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Reduce mowing and maintenance impacts where appropriate.
- Engage members and volunteers in biodiversity projects.
- Improve habitats for pollinators and wildlife.
- Track biodiversity improvements year on year.

Even a small area of grass managed for pollinators can provide valuable habitat, support nature recovery and help create a greener future for football in Wales.

Further information on Biodiversity can be found at www.faw.cymru/TogetherGreener-biodiversity

If you require support with this resource, please contact sustainability@faw.cymru