

Biodiversity Project

Several years ago Town Council engaged with All Saints PCC to see how mowing could be reduced and wild flowers encouraged in the churchyard. Although the PCC supported the approach for 2 years the initiative was not successful because of lack of cooperation by the contractor.

In 2023 Councillors Illingworth and Dowie proposed a trial project to reduce mowing and encourage wild flowers to grow on some of the grass verges beside the A170. Advice was received from NYCC and Ryedale Environment Group as to how to proceed. The project was unanimously approved by members of the Town Council.

Wild flower seeds were purchased from The Forest of Flowers at Huby. These were all native seeds harvested 20 miles from Kirkbymoorside. The seeds were planted in an allotment in Autumn 2023 and plug plants planted out in the designated areas in Spring 2024. The planting was done by Cllr Illingworth and myself and five volunteers who responded to an item in the Moorsider.

In 2024 I became aware that the North York Moors National Park Authority had a project called *Grubs Up!*, one aspect of which was to create a pollinator corridor along the A170. The Town Council was made aware of this and unanimously voted to take part in the project.

In summer 2024 a survey was carried out by Cllr Illingworth to identify the plants in the areas and in Autumn the verges were cut by the contractor. A week later the cuttings were raked away by six volunteers and myself.





Yellow rattle seeds (donated by NYMNPA) were planted in all the areas with the aim of reducing the soil fertility and encouraging more wild flowers. I presented a progress report to the Town Council and it was agreed to extend the areas to include a section of verge near the sports field and another on Old Road. There was a meeting with the contractor to discuss his involvement. In Spring 2025 when the contractor did the first cut and collect of the season he unfortunately cut a wider area than had been agreed and cut some of the areas where yellow rattle had been sown.

In July 2025 a survey of the areas near West Lund Lane was carried out. This was led by Holly Ramsden from the NYMNPA, assisted by me and five volunteers. The survey identified 41 species including 3 yellow rattle plants on the bank and another to the right of the In Bloom planter. The Town Clerk has a copy of this if anyone is interested.

I do not feel that the project failed but accept that some people found the uncut verges unsightly.

I feel that the above demonstrates that:

- Town Councillors have been keen to encourage biodiversity for several years.
- There was appropriate preparation at the start of the project
- The correct seed was purchased
- There has been ongoing evaluation of the project
- There are people in Kirkbymoorside who are ready to volunteer, to assist with biodiversity projects

I hope that a way forward can be found that does not undo the increase in biodiversity that the project has achieved so far.

Chris Dowie
15.10.2025