
Kirkbymoorside Town Council

Information for the meeting on Monday 16 February 2026

7. Biodiversity and grass verge management

- a. To consider and agree that being mindful of the Council's legal responsibility regarding biodiversity, Kirkbymoorside Town Council will seek to restore and enhance precious habitat within the town
- b. To receive feedback from the public meeting on 4 February 2026, facilitated by the Town Council

COLLATED OBSERVATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC MEETING DATED 4TH FEBRUARY 2026

Main body of text, in black, provided by Kirkbymoorside In Bloom

Additional comments provided by Kirkbymoorside Environment Group (in blue) and Holly Ramsden, NYMNPA (in orange).

The In Bloom group, and Kirkbymoorside Environment Group, welcomed the facilitation of this meeting by the Town Council and the presentation by North York Moors National Park (NYMNP) representative Holly Ramsden. This scheme is in essence very laudable.

There was consensus of opinion that the scheme affecting the grass verges within the town had not been welcomed by the a number of the general public on the grounds of safety and aesthetics, and KiB, Mr Gospel and the Town Clerk had taken the brunt of these complaints. There has been a general misconception that the scheme was solely a cost cutting exercise. The views of differing wildflower schemes and their respective success and failures from the highly experienced RHS National judge attending the meeting were very informative and should be used as a beneficial guide moving forward with a modified and therefore different project scope for biodiversity enhancement and for managing expectations.

For the biodiversity enhancement scheme to move forward there needs to be modification, potentially as a compromise, evidenced by our neighbouring market towns of Helmsley and Pickering. Many residents are proud that Kirkbymoorside is a Transition Town, and we think they will support and create more biodiversity and floral colour throughout the town, if we can get the look right, and this will depend on long-term and joined-up planning and communication, between organisations and individuals in the town.

Kirkbymoorside In Bloom's (KiB) preferred option of retaining the scheme within the rural areas immediately outside the town boundary met with a mixed reception from this meeting. Another option would be to reduce the physical area of the scheme on the verges to a strip in front of existing hedges with a clear cutting line denoted. A string of "islands" of biodiversity could look quite creative and make it more obvious that the uncut areas are deliberate, not unkempt? The views of individual residents near to any proposed areas should be sought beforehand and recognised. The expertise of Holly Ramsden (NYMNPA) and Sam Newton (NYMNPA & Ryedale Naturalists) should be sought, to check any changes still result in nurturing enough of the valuable plant species to be of significant benefit.

KiB Group and KMEG felt the input of the grass cutting contractor to the discussion to be very pertinent and would wish to empathise, support and congratulate him in his role, especially during the last challenging season. Mr Gospel is at the forefront of delivery of service, and as such is best placed to make assessments regarding lines of safety and potential areas of dog fouling. We would strongly recommend that he is allowed significant discretion, without impunity, to adjust cutting lines as he sees fit. Some small neat signs "no dog fouling please –this wildflower area will be mown" might help – KMEG could provide signs. The blue hearts with added QR codes that explain the scheme will also help.

There was discussion around corridors for pollinators. A horticultural fact is that the most robust and varied of these corridors are those from one garden to another, not grass verges adjacent to busy A roads and junctions.

A horticultural fact is that gardens can be very beneficial to many pollinators, and Kirkbymoorside is blessed with many lovely gardens and keen gardeners, giving the potential of valuable pollinator corridors. There are some species of pollinators that are not served by the cultivars in many gardens. There are over 40 different varieties of plants in the A170 verge, and some of the less well known of these are crucial for pollinators. Some pollinators only feed on one plant species, this is why we need a wide diversity of bio.

It would be worth adding in here that road verges are important wildlife corridors because of their linear connection and unimproved and undisturbed soils – meaning there's a greater potential for naturally occurring wild flowers and grass to establish. The key definitely is good management i.e. a very thorough cut and collect of the year's growth once flowers have gone to seed. This isn't about show, it's about supporting niche pollinators in travelling through the landscape. The wider the variety of native plant species, the more invertebrate species can be supported.

Kirkbymoorside is not a bio-diversity desert; there is much to acknowledge and celebrate within the town already, as evidenced by the wealth of interest and expertise within the town and by the very wide variety, size and planting schemes showcased by the many private gardens that partake in the annual In Bloom Open Gardens event. **Kirkbymoorside Primary school have an active environment club, and many of the younger generation are learning about pollinators and biodiversity, which bodes well for future projects in our town.** This of course does not preclude further expansion in very carefully selected areas and we would particularly welcome areas dedicated to the NYMNP scheme within the considerable landscape of the playing field, and the two play areas owned and maintained by the Town Council, together with interpretation and explanation boards targeting **both** the younger generation **and other residents**. The area left undeveloped south of the Waind's Field housing has also been put forward as a current eyesore that could be addressed by the proposed project without detracting from the well maintained, litter free grass verges running through and within the town area. However, we would stress the importance of suitable and sufficient ongoing management. The argument that areas will improve over the years is not a convincing one in the eyes of the public, **but it is the case that biodiversity (and colour mix) improves as time goes by, with good management, and communication to the public of what to expect will reduce stress for KiB, KMEG and Mr Gospel** and we strongly maintain horticulturally that the removal of some invasive weeds such as Docks etc, is essential to maximise any future success, **and we would welcome the advice of Holly and Sam as to which invasive species need to be removed.**

An annual cut and collect of growth at the end of summer/ early autumn will reduce nutrients in the soil. Pernicious weeds and coarse grasses thrive on high nutrients so over time, with this management, they will start to struggle. Wild flowers are very tolerant of low nutrients, and without the competition, more of the delicate species of wild flowers will be able to establish.

Additional tree planting would be welcomed by many, but cognisance of root damage to existing paved surfaces needs to be considered. Carefully selected varieties of trees can be planted in large planters, but again, these will require watering and continuing maintenance, especially in the early stages, and there needs to be a clear line of responsibility for that. Most tree species will after several years outgrow the planters and need to be removed and replanted into the ground in a new home as they will otherwise outgrow the planters and eventually perish. **There are probably also places, within in the Kirkbymoorside parish boundary, where appropriate varieties of trees can be planted in the ground.**

In Bloom planting schemes are developed and adapted to location, with colour, visual and sensory impact, attraction to pollinators, and increasingly, drought resistance being considered factors. We are professionally guided in this. Our planting scheme for summer 2026 was decided upon and ordered before the end of last year and is grown locally specifically to order for KiB.

Following on from the In Bloom community award KiB have been directly invited by RHS to partake in the Golden Rose Initiative. A unanimous decision has already been taken by KiB to accept this invitation based on our existing connections and partnerships. We would see it as a positive step forward were the Town Council to also support us in this. We would suggest that a very quick and easy initial gesture of support would be to reimburse Kirkbymoorside In Bloom the modest cost of entry of £55.

Some discussion took place around community ventures such as scarecrow trails and business involvement. We fully acknowledged and highlighted at the meeting the considerable support KiB already receive from some 40 businesses within the town, for which we are indebted. The Open Garden event is now a major and continually developing aspect of Kirkbymoorside's calendar attracting hundreds of visitors and residents, providing a real showcase of bio-diversity within the town. Whilst acknowledging the suggestion of extending this over a weekend there must be recognition of what can be reasonably expected from an existing intensely loyal and hardworking group of volunteers. **KiB** continue to be disappointed in the perceived lack of interest and attendance **at Open Gardens** from our councillors; perhaps this coming year is an opportunity to rectify that and enjoy an uplifting horticultural and social experience.

KiB **and KMEG** look forward to being part of a solution that whilst benefiting the environment does not detract from the equally important need to encourage visitors into the town, that in-turn supports our town centre businesses to thrive, which will make the town a wonderful place to want to live and work in, now and into the future.

There has been an alarming national decline in pollinator numbers. These creatures are often unseen, but are vital for farming and food production, and for the gardens we love. It is essential that Kirkbymoorside, and other communities, take more steps to conserve and protect them, by providing plentiful local native varieties of vegetation, and providing corridors for essential movements, so they can survive climate change events. We hope that Kirkbymoorside can set a great example of doing this well.

Gaynor De Barr - Chairman, Kirkbymoorside in Bloom (black text)

Helen Gundry & others from Kirkbymoorside Environment Group (blue text)

Holly Ramsden, North York Moors National Park "Grubs Up" project (orange text)

Meeting notes shared by Holly Ramsden North York Moors National Park

Comments

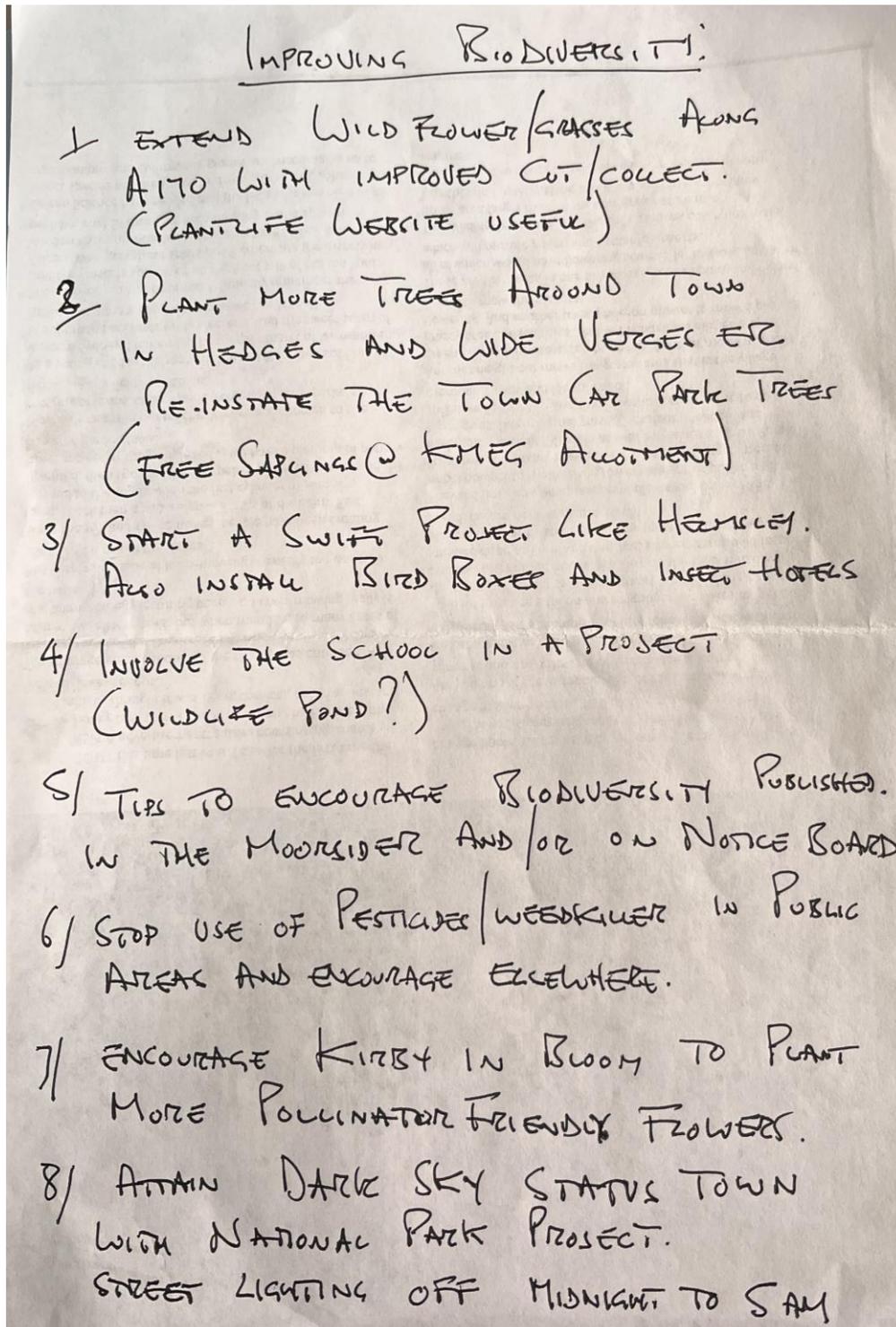
- Add in annuals to the road banks
- No wildflowers in the town, outside in the farmland only. Spoiling the look of the

Ideas

- Blue hearts disappeared on A170 -misconception of areas disappearing
- Ideas
- Enhancing sports centres
- Enhancing play areas
- School involvement – wildflower and grass area in the school. Cold frames for propagating wildflower plants
- In Bloom Golden Rose Award
- New trial areas and just the bank and add yellow rattle.
- More landscape trees
- Dark skies
- Wildlife pond
- Swift homes -great swift population
- Wildflower islands – look managed but close enough for invertebrates to migrate
- Trees in tubs -crab apples

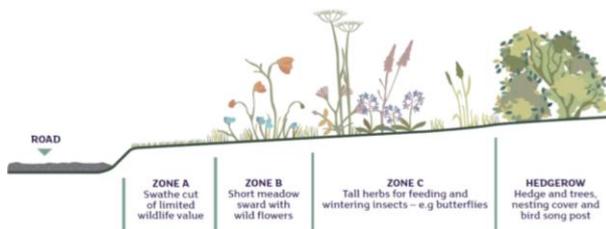
- Trees re-instated in the town car park
- Communication boards – saying doesn't look pretty but this is what we want to do
- Sponsorship from local businesses. Small green spaces in business areas as well as the In-Bloom displays
- Adding native flowers into the In-Bloom displays
- Hedgerow management – hedge-laying around manor vale. Hedges around sports fields and play area.

Meeting Notes shared by Keith Wright, Kirkbymoorside Environment Group



- c. To review the contract for grass verge cutting and consider the proposal to reduce the annual number of cuts from 14 to 9
- d. To consider a stepped approach to some verges as trialled in 2025 by North Yorkshire Council

Biodiversity improvement project 2025.



- County wide project to develop stepped verge approach.
- Swathe reduction from 2.4m down to 1.2m (1st cut only)
- Removed 2.7m square metres from the programme.
- Reduced vehicle movements 850 miles/ saving 1100kg CO₂.

- e. To review the schedule of hedge cutting and consider the proposal to cut each side of the hedges and the top on a two or three year rotation so that blossom and berries are allowed to grow
- f. To consider and agree to designate Nature Areas where native wild flowers will be allowed to grow and management will be to cut and collect in Spring and late Summer
- g. To consider and agree to install Blue Hearts in the above areas with QR Codes giving information about the initiative
- h. To consider and agree to produce a poster showing the 40 native plants identified in 2025 on the bank adjacent to the A170 and West Lund Lane and publication of this information in the Moorsider and displayed on the main Town Council noticeboard
- i. To consider and agree to seek advice from Holly Ramsden (NYMNP) regarding a review of the Town Council's information boards for the Nature Areas
- j. To consider reimbursement of £55 to Kirkbymoorside In Bloom for the cost of application to the RHS Golden Rose initiative