

## Creating habitats where pollinators can thrive

# Thanet District Council

### The Challenge

- Insufficient habitats for pollinators

### The Benefits

- Strong community engagement in action to support pollinators
- Transparent information about pollinator zones, accessible to everyone
- Effective strategies to improve pollination across entire district
- A platform for other future environmental schemes

Bees, butterflies and beetles have dramatically decreased in number following decades of habitat loss. Now, a local authority in Kent is taking action to create new wildflower meadows where these vitally important pollinators can thrive, using ArcGIS Hub to proactively engage the support of local people, schools and community groups.

### The Challenge

Around 97% of the UK's wildflower meadows have been destroyed or damaged since the 1930s. This shocking loss of natural habitat has led to a substantial decline in almost all species of pollinators – from bees and hoverflies to butterflies and beetles. Consequently, there is now a significant risk that not all plants will be pollinated, reducing commercial crop yields and restricting the biodiversity of our countryside and gardens.

Recognising the need to urgently create new wildflower zones across Britain, Thanet District Council launched an initiative to proactively establish new wildflower meadows in underused areas of land throughout South East Kent. Led by the council's Open Spaces Team, and supported by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, the scheme aimed to engage with schools and other local community groups to create dozens of new habitats where insects could thrive.

### The Solution

All that the Open Spaces Team wanted initially was a map, showing where the first of the new wildflower meadows were going to be established. It put in a request to the council's IT team and was overwhelmed by the response.

Alan Bloor, a GIS developer at the council, realised that he could use the council's existing Esri license to create an ArcGIS Hub for the project, with no additional software costs. This hub would not only show the locations of new wildflower zones on an interactive map, on a publicly-accessible website, but also support the council in engaging with local people and help it achieve many of the project's wider goals.

Digital User Experience Manager, Jessica Seaward, recalls: "We suddenly saw there was a bigger opportunity to create a platform for engaging the general public and sharing information dynamically with local people about the wildflower meadow scheme, as it progressed."

Thanet District Council first digitised information about the project that was in spreadsheets, using Esri's desktop solution, ArcGIS Pro. Then it used ArcGIS Online to style the maps, before publishing them in ArcGIS Hub. Produced entirely in-house, the hub embeds questionnaire forms, created using Survey123 for ArcGIS, allowing people to use the hub to submit information directly to the project team.

One of these online forms allows members of the public to suggest locations for new wildflower meadows and put a 'pin' in the digital map to show a suitable park, verge, roundabout or other patch of council-owned land where a new meadow could be created. Another form allows community groups, schools and youth clubs to submit information about the wildflower meadows that they have created on their own sites, to help the council build up a more complete picture of all pollinator habitats across the region.

“ ArcGIS Hub is helping us to engage the public’s support and transform underused patches of ground around the region into an expanding network of wildflower habitats. ”

Jessica Seaward, Digital User Experience Manager, Thanet District Council



Thanet District Council’s ArcGIS Hub shows the current pollinator zones.

View at:  
<https://biodiversity-and-green-initiatives-thanetdc.hub.arcgis.com>

### The Benefits

#### *Strong community engagement in action to support pollinators*

The use of ArcGIS Hub has enabled Thanet District Council to directly involve the general public in the conversation about pollination and allow people to suggest locations for new wildflower meadows. ArcGIS Hub has also made it possible for community groups and schools to register their own wildflower meadows and work in tandem with the council to help improve biodiversity. “What started with a few wildflower seeds has grown into an ambitious, community-engaged initiative,” Seaward says. “ArcGIS Hub is helping us to engage the public’s support and transform underused patches of ground around the region into an expanding network of wildflower habitats.”

#### *Transparent information about pollinator zones, accessible to everyone*

All the wildflower meadows created by the council, schools, groups and individuals are now displayed on a single, interactive map on ArcGIS Hub, accessible to everyone. Citizens therefore have a transparent view of pollinator zones across the district and can easily monitor how this council-led scheme is progressing over time. “The use of ArcGIS Hub has undoubtedly helped to build awareness of the scheme,” Bloor says. “It shows the positive action Thanet District Council is taking, right now, to support pollinators and improve biodiversity.”

#### *Effective strategies to improve pollination across entire district*

Thanet District Council plans to use the ArcGIS Hub to measure the distance between meadows and prioritise the creation of new habitats in areas where there are none. Ecologists will, for example, be able to use the interactive maps to easily see where there are clusters of meadows and where there are gaps. This information will help to open up conversations with other landowners and farmers to see what they can do to help the council close the gaps and improve pollination across the entire district.

#### *A platform for other future environmental schemes*

Named the ‘Biodiversity and Green Initiatives Hub’, Thanet District Council’s ArcGIS Hub currently just focuses on the pollinator project. However, the council plans to expand the platform in the future to share information about other similar environmental schemes. “We are facing a very real climate emergency, and local authorities have to do what they can to protect and increase biodiversity,” Seaward says. “ArcGIS Hub is a tool that we will be able to use to engage with the public in many future environmental schemes.”

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