

Bee Beaches and Wildflower Enhancement – Highgate Common (Part 1)

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust were awarded £3,500 from the 2017-18 PEBBLE fund towards their project to create habitat for solitary bees and parasitic wasps at Highgate Common in Enville.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust used some of the fund to hire a digger to create 0.5 ha of bare earth habitat for the 140 species of bees and wasps populating the Common. The bare earth areas removed the top layer of the soil and disturbed the soil, stripping away the nutrients. This was done in the aim of exposing some of the dormant heather seeds in the soils and promoting the return of heathland species.

Vehicle access was damaging the Common and leaving muddy, rutted tracks in the Heathland. Therefore, using the soil that was excavated for the bare earth areas, a bund was created around the carpark. This stopped vehicle access and the bund was planted with a wildflower seed mix that was specifically chosen to benefit nationally rare bee species found on site.

The benefits of the project are:

- The bare earth banks were being used by bees and wasps within days of them being created and the volunteer monitoring group counted more than 300 bee holes on one created bee beach
- Heather has already started to grow on one of the larger bee beaches and so it is hoped that the heathland species will return to the bare earth areas
- The wildflowers became an unexpected visitor feature once they were flowering, with people visiting the Common to take photos of the wildflower banks
- The Trust were able to collect seeds from their wildflower banks and hope to use this on more car parking areas and around the site



Excavated earth from bare earth areas was used to create a bund around the carpark.



Wildflower areas around the car park.

Photos by kind permission of Staffordshire Wildlife Trust.

Bee Beaches – Highgate Common (Part 2, underspend and delivering additional benefit)

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust approached us with news that their contractor had been able to, not only, create additional scrapes for the bare earth areas than anticipated, but was also able to finish earlier than planned. The contractor kindly agreed to lower the cost for the works completed, meaning that the project had some remaining funds from their Bee Beaches and Wildflower Enhancement Project. They approached us to ask if they could use these funds to further expand their project and deliver additional benefits, and we agreed that the funding could be used.

The extension to this project was to create three flower beds with a false sand wall to be built outside their community building. The sand wall is a perfect habitat for solitary bees and wasps to mine into and, as an added bonus, the adjacent flower beds allow easy access to flowers.

Two students were able to build the flower beds and sand wall as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award. The flower beds were installed outside the community building and quickly became a talking point amongst visitors to the site, giving staff a wonderful opportunity to explain about mining bees and wasps. The flower beds were being used by solitary wasps within two weeks of being installed.



Volunteers building the flowers beds with false sand walls for solitary bees.

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