

Ilmington 2020 Wildlife Group Evaluation Report re Wildflower Sowing Projects for Ilmington Parish Council

July 2025

1. Introduction:

At the request of Ilmington Parish Council, this report reviews the work of the Ilmington 2020 Wildlife Group in relation to wildflower sowing, highlighting achievements, including various spin-off projects that have come out of the work, as well as key lessons learned. It also outlines the priorities and aspirations for enhancing wildlife and habitat value across Ilmington

2. Initiative Implementation:

- The group has successfully developed wildflower areas at various locations in Ilmington such as Upper Green, Playing Fields and Dum's Piece. This has been achieved with the support of partners such as the Ilmington Parish Council and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.
- The development of wildlife-friendly plans for the churchyard has expanded the impact and reach of the initial project and was done in collaboration with Ilmington Parochial Church Council.

3. How Easy or Difficult it was to Carry Out

- Preparing the ground and sowing the seeds was relatively easy, with the help of Olivia Williams from Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.. As an example, a group of eight of us did the work on Upper Green between us. Two people used their own grass cutting machines and mowed the grass at the lowest setting; two people used two scarifying machines across the areas to be sown. Four people raked up and removed all the thatch. Spreading the seed and stamping it into the soil was the final stage. The process took eight people two half days to complete the work.
- This process was repeated in the playing fields.
- In the pond and wooded area in the playing fields, the process was slightly different. The terrain wasn't suitable for mowing and had to be cleared by hand. A small team of four people made low hazel fencing around the sown areas to mark them. Unfortunately, the fencing was destroyed when a contractor inadvertently mowed over the fencing! It's more difficult to be certain where the wildflower areas are now in the wooded area, apart from when they are in flower.

- One area of the playing fields sown with wildflower seeds was, we later learned, where people walked their dogs. This was alongside the hedge that runs from the children's play area up into to top hand corner. It was also the area that the grass cutter mowed during the summer, so the seeds didn't grow anyway.
- We realised our mistake and sowed another stretch along the hedge at the top of the playing fields, the hedge that is roughly parallel to the Mickleton Road. We've marked this area with wooden steaks and a couple of signs saying, "Wildflower Area"



Close mowing



Scarifying



Seed sowing

4. **Impact on the Environment:**

- A wide variety of wildflowers and grasses have been seen in the planted area on Upper Green, including:
Red campion, White campion, Hedge nettle, Hedge vetch, Red clover, Ribbed wort plantain, Common vetch, Meadow buttercup, Hedgerow cranesbill, Cow parsley, Ox eye daisy, Self heal, Common dock, Wild carrot, Wood aven, Primroses, Leaf cut geranium, Mouse ear grass and Fox tail Cocksfoot There may well be more!

Other outcomes:

- Arguably, the biggest outcome from the wildflower project is that it gave the Wildlife Group the confidence and ambition to take on more projects and do more for wildlife in the village.
- Since the wildflower projects Ilmington 2020 Wildlife Group has: organised and delivered a successful series of talks on bees,

hedgehogs and swifts, which were well attended and well received by the community; and raised local awareness about the importance of dark skies and reducing light pollution.

- In addition, the Wildlife Group has undertaken significant work on the pond in the playing fields and the surrounding wooded area, with the help of a local tree surgeon and a local environmental professional, both of whom undertook the work pro bono.
- Work already completed includes:
 - Reducing the tree canopy to improve light levels
 - Removing unsafe or dead trees while leaving some as standing 'totems' to benefit wildlife
 - Clearing scrub and planting wildflowers under expert direction
 - Conducting pond water testing, which showed healthy nitrate levels
 - Commissioning an ecological survey
 - Monitoring pond life and finding signs of activity, including tadpoles, moorhens and mallards.
- The Wildlife Group has also developed links with wider conservation networks, including SWAN (South Warwickshire Area Network for Wildlife) and SAFE (Stourvale Area Forum for the Environment), gaining access to expertise, knowledge and support.

4. **Community Involvement:**

- 2020 Wildlife Group started life as a 'Green Street Challenge' instigated by Ilmington 2020. Residents in each street were asked if they would take on any green project they liked with their neighbours. Two residents in Grump Street were interested in sowing wildflower seeds in Grump Street. Ilmington Parish Council members were interested in doing the same. 2020, members brought the two parties together. Out of their first meeting, at the tail end of 2021, the 2020 Wildlife Group was formed. Since then, a collaborative team has developed, bringing together:
 - Practical habitat management skills
 - Organising skills
 - Ecological knowledge
 - Different interests and external networks
 - A consistency and persistence in delivering long-term projects.

- An openness to learning
- A willingness to seek external expertise
- From our various projects over the last four years we have built and maintained databases of residents interested in key wildlife topics (e.g. hedgehogs, bees, swifts). We have also shared updates and information with residents through the 2020 Circulation, the village weekly newsletter.

6. **Future Directions:**

- We have identified the following next steps for the Wildlife Group to take to enhance biodiversity and habitat quality to the pond and the wooded area surrounding it.
 - Remove accumulated rubbish from the pond (e.g. tyres, traffic cones)
 - Dredge the pond to reduce silt and dead organic matter
 - Restore the inflow pipe to improve water quality and circulation
 - Create wildlife-friendly pond banks and areas of varying depth to support a wider range of species e.g. water voles
 - Plant suitable marginal plants around the pond
 - Install a range of bat and bird boxes, including barn owl boxes
 - Leave piles of leaves and wood to create habitats for hedgehogs and invertebrates
- Other things the Ilmington 2020 Wildlife Group could do include:
 - Running a talk or awareness campaign on the impact of light pollution.
 - Increasing focus on underexplored topics such as butterflies and moths, and fungi and frogs.
 - Develop wildlife corridors within Ilmington and to neighbouring villages to support species movement and biodiversity.
 - Identify expertise from within the village to complement existing knowledge and skills.
 - Raise funds to support our activities.
 - Use social media and the 2020 Circulation newsletter more actively.
 - Arrange informal meetings at the community café and collaborate with their communications team.

7. **Recommendations:**

That the Ilmington 2020 Wildlife Group:

- Continues to restore the pond and environs.
- Gets new wildlife projects off the ground

That the Parish Council:

- Ensures that contractors responsible for grass cutting protect wildflower areas by only cutting the flowering areas after all the flowers have seeded, and removing the cuttings from the site
- Completes the development of a Biodiversity Plan for the village, including focusing on wildlife corridors, pollinator-friendly practices, pesticide-free environments, and dark sky conservation.

The Parish Council and Ilmington 2020 Wildlife Group:

- Continue to apply for funding projects as needs arise.