



Wildlife Ways Update - Issue 15

Welcome to the Wildlife Ways Stay Connected bulletin, giving you all the latest news about this exciting £16.8 million programme.



Keeping safe in the cab

[Balfour Beatty Living Places](#) (BBLP), the highways contractor for our Wildlife Ways project, has been working to ensure more of their team members can work safely on the fast-growing routes during the current Covid-19 period.

The BBLP vehicle cabs have been fitted with special safety dividers that allow two people to travel to and from work sites. The clear screens

have been produced by [S&M Fleet UK](#).

During Covid-19 BBLP staff have only been able to work to one person per vehicle. The screens will allow more teams on-site to help get this crucial part of the project completed.

Photo: Cllr Ken Hawkins, Cabinet Portfolio Holder - Environment & Highways joins BBLP in trying out the new safety screens.

How wildflowers make a difference

We've been busy planting wildflowers in the borough and had a range of feedback from residents. Some think it's beautiful and can see how it's beneficial to wildlife and others have asked why the wildflowers have not appeared in their area yet.



In some cases the benefits have been immediate. The meadow turf used by our landscape

contractor [idverde](#) (pictured) has been inspired by nature, but designed to give an instant effect of colour and good structure. It has been liked by many who have seen it, as responses to our turf along Monkspath Hall Road and on Station Approach has shown. Other actions we've taken include cutting narrow strips around some verges, framing and tidying the flower areas and signage.

Our wildflower seeded areas follow a longer and more deliberately managed process. However they eventually bring the same visual and ecological benefits as turf. Whilst they might not always flower in the first year and sometimes not until the second or third year it is still a natural key environment for many plant species. We experienced delays due to waterlogging over winter (the wettest February on record) and an exceptionally hot spring (the driest May in 124 years) which led to inconsistent seed growth in some locations.

We continue to monitor growth and will be maintaining any areas which have become unkempt, prioritising careful management of them over the remainder of this year and next. These verges will be cut in July or August to about four inches in height, leaving the cuttings temporarily and removing them after flower seed has fallen.

Our project manager Danny Hodson talks more about the wildflowers in an [interview](#) on the Wildlife Ways website.

Route D rolls to its next phase

Route D is next moving to Coleshill Heath Road, between Bickenhill Road and Chester Road. The works will start with management of existing foliage followed by widening and resurfacing of the footway.

All contractors brief their operatives on Health and Safety for Covid-19. Solihull Council is monitoring the works to ensure that both our and HM Government's standards are adhered to and will constantly review the ongoing situation and alter our working practices to suit.

You can see the latest plans for Route D on the [area page](#) on our website.

Primroses by our paths

Primroses grown especially for the Wildlife Ways project have started to appear along our routes (as pictured right). The primroses pictured are on Streetsbrook Road and the signs show you where they are.



This autumn the primroses will be joined by crocus and snowdrop bulbs planted by our contractor idverde, all of which will flower next spring.



Our story so far

Wildlife Ways continues to make rapid progress as we reach the halfway point of the project.

Over 740 of the 800 planned semi-mature trees for the project have been planted and the borough has benefitted from 41,500m² of wildflower turf, 2.7 million bulbs and 32 hectares (64 football pitches!) of wildflower seeding.

As well as this we've built 22,374 m² of paths lengthening and joining up existing routes and pathways. The bulk of these have been built using porous materials, helping to future proof the borough against any potential flooding incidents climate change might bring. By the end of the project we will have invested £5.9 million in developing paths for walking and cycling.

We're doing all that we can to boost support for local habitats with a range of grants to encourage wildlife beyond Solihull too. To date the grant element of the project has allocated £621k to seven projects which between them will improve nearly 180 hectares of land. And there are several more in the pipeline. We've also been working closely with 26 local businesses to advise them on sustainable travel options for staff including more walking and cycling.

Keep up to date at our [website](#) and in future editions of these bulletins.



New zebra crossings bring better access

Two new zebra crossings have been added on Cornyx Lane and Yew Tree Lane as part of works for [Route C](#).

These crossings will smoothly connect up this important Wildlife Ways route that runs from Union Road in Solihull town centre up to the A45 via Damson Parkway, where a new path is under construction.

The crossings will also provide safe local access for residents needing to access shops, schools and other local amenities.

Ward updates

Bickenhill – Route D

Our works between Elm Farm Avenue and Lyndon Croft along Bickenhill Road are almost complete. Take a look at the plans for Route D at the [area webpage](#).

Elmdon – Route C

Work continues on widening the footpath along Damson Parkway. Plans for this part of the route can be viewed [here](#)

About Wildlife Ways

Wildlife Ways is a £16.8 million programme – part-funded by the [European Regional Development Fund](#) (ERDF) – to improve the borough for the benefit of people and wildlife alike.

The programme will include tree, bulb and wildflower planting. It will also make it easier for people wanting to walk and cycle across the borough by widening and connecting paths and cycle routes with green spaces.

There's more on our website www.wildlifeways.co.uk - and if you've any comments or questions, please email us at wildlifeways@solihull.gov.uk



For more information about Council services, please see our [website](#).

