

Pollinator paradise created along the River Great Ouse

Biodiversity and boaters are benefiting from wildflowers, bird boxes, bee hives, bee hotels and shrubbery, which have been installed along the river.

A rowing boat filled with flowers planted by the Environment Agency.

In total, the Environment Agency has introduced:

- 7,000 bulbs
- 1,000 metres squared of wildflower strips – the equivalent of 4 tennis courts
- 600 metres of native hedging
- 120 lavender plants
- 60 bird boxes
- a bee hive with more than 40,000 bees
- 2 large bee hotels

A stretch of wildflowers in Bedford.

Boaters and passers-by have written to the Environment Agency to compliment the work.

Ian Wilson, a leisure boater who has cruised England, said:

The wildflowers at your locks on the River Great Ouse look amazing and have increased my enjoyment of cruising the river.

Besides being so beautiful and calming, they are a great contribution for butterflies and other insects.

Hoverflies on and near a poppy planted by the Environment Agency.

Matt Yallop, Waterways Workforce manager for the Environment Agency, said:

I am really proud of my team's hard work and commitment to help increase the bee and bird population on our navigation sites.

It's very pleasing to see people enjoying the explosion of colour and increased wildlife. We have reduced the areas of grass we cut to encourage nature, and this also helps lower the overall river maintenance costs.

The boat filled with flowers and the other wildflowers at the lock.

Dick Milthorp, a member of the Waterways Workforce who has been instrumental to this project, said:

Our work doesn't end here. We are planning to add more wildflower strips to Eaton Socon landing stage, Godmanchester and Brownhill. We have also got more hedging to plant as well as bluebells, wild garlic and more.

A close up of some of the flowers.

During the autumn the Environment Agency plans to plant wildflowers across approximately 3 acres of the Denver complex of sluices, near Downham Market. The plants will be a combination of flowers suitable for shady and dry conditions.

The work is part of the Environment Agency's long-term ambition of creating a nation resilient to climate change; healthy air, land and water; green growth and a sustainable future.

On the ground this involves improving more than 4,000 kilometres of river, creating nearly 1,200 hectares of habitat and being on track to be carbon-neutral by 2030.

A bee enjoying the wildflowers.