

[Press release: A boon for bees as Environment Agency trials pollinator project](#)

The beloved bumblebee is one of dozens of species set to benefit from an Environment Agency project to improve habitat for pollinators.

A pioneering pilot scheme in Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire sees Environment Agency teams adapting their routine work in a bid to boost biodiversity.

The teams, who maintain thousands of kilometres of river and reservoir banks that serve as flood defences, have been experimenting with the frequency and timings of maintenance work, like grass-cutting, on the banks to see what best preserves the wildflowers and herbs bees need.

They have also compared the results of removing the grass-clippings or leaving them in situ – and have found that removing them helps plants like clover, ox-eye daisies, dandelions and buttercups flourish.

Tapping into expert guidance from a consultant botanist and entomologist, the trial aims to increase the native bee population including bufftail, solitary, carpenter, mining and leaf-cutting bees, as well as butterflies, moths, and other pollinators.

This season marks the third year of the 5 year pilot – and also marks the third annual [Bees Needs Week](#), an initiative by government, conservation groups, industry and retailers to raise awareness of simple things anyone can do to support pollinators, like growing more flowers and leaving patches of their garden to grow wild.

At the same time, biodiversity officers have also been making the most of EA-owned buildings like pumping stations and unused land to install bee boxes, hotels and havens made of natural scrap material – many of which were occupied almost immediately.

Nikki Loveday, biodiversity officer with the Environment Agency, said:

It's our mission to protect people and wildlife and this is a brilliant example of how being flexible and innovative can help us achieve more for our environment.

We're adapting how we carry out vital maintenance on our flood defences and looking for any opportunity to support our precious pollinators and the wider ecology.

Ultimately, if we can make small changes at no cost we'll aim to share our learning and inspire others to do the same to have a big

impact.

Meanwhile, a series of workshops for staff are helping them learn more about pollinators and how to identify and create simple habitats. More than 50 staff have already putting this training to use in their daily work – for example, drilling holes in wooden posts for carpenter bees when fixing fences.

Entomologist Steven Falk, an expert in bees, hoverflies and other pollinators, who has delivered the training and advised on the project, said:

Bees and other pollinators put approximately a third of all the food we eat onto our plates, and it's so important we support them by protecting and enhancing their habitat.

We know from experience that doing the right things, like enriching their nesting and foraging spaces, will increase the population of our pollinators. Even small changes can make a big difference of lots of people do them at lots of sites.

The Environment Agency is in a good position to contribute since it oversees so much land and it gives me great pleasure to work with them to give a boost to our bees.

For more on small actions you can take to support pollinators, visit <https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/bees-needs/>.