

Small Biodiversity Grant Report

2025/26

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FOREWORD

I am very pleased to welcome you to this report looking back at our successful second round of biodiversity grants, awarded during 2025/26.

As you will see below, the first round of grants the year before proved to be very popular, so we expected there would be plenty of interest when we opened them back up for bids in June 2025.

And we were not disappointed! Groups and organisations from around the district came forward with a variety of projects and schemes that would boost biodiversity in their communities.

One of the best things about these grants is that you don't have to spend huge amounts of money to make a big environmental difference.

Relatively simple projects such as a bug hotel, a wildlife pond or a tree planting scheme can really help to support biodiversity. You can see the birds, bugs and bees benefitting from them right in front of your eyes.

In 2025/26, we were very happy to fund 8 local initiatives via our biodiversity grants.

This report sets out which ones we chose, what they all did and how it all went, evidenced through before and after photos for each one.

It's a great little read and we hope you find it interesting and inspiring.

Councillor Mel Dawkins
Cabinet member for biodiversity and environment
Canterbury City Council



INTRODUCTION

In November 2024, Canterbury City Council opened the first round of the biodiversity grant fund to the public, allowing interested local organisations engaged in biodiversity and community action around the Canterbury district to submit applications outlining their project aims and plans.

Projects eligible for funding needed to meet the prescribed criteria of:

- being deliverable within the boundary of the Canterbury district;
- leading to an improvement in local biodiversity/natural environment;
- demonstrating a five or more-year maintenance plan; and
- taking a bottom-up / community led approach and empowering residents or engaging with disadvantaged communities.

They also needed to show a fully costed plan.

The total amount of funding on offer was £15,000 and bids were welcomed up to a value of £7,500, with all spend having to be made by the close of the same financial year. A cohort of seven local community organisations were successful out of a total of 10 bids in the first year, with final spend totalling £13,726.39.

In July 2025, Canterbury City Council commenced a second round of applications. The scheme's second cohort were shortlisted from 13 applications whose bids came to £33,375. This round consisted of eight successful projects undertaken by churches, parish councils, wildlife conservation groups, and Friends of groups. There was a final spend of £10,676.75 across all eight projects.

This report documents a summary of each of the projects delivered by the 2025/26 grant winners and where possible images of before, during and after the project have been supplied.

Council officers continue to visit and monitor all the biodiversity projects from both years and have also helped project leads to exchange and share learnings and ways of working with each other.

STURRY AND DISTRICT UNITED CHURCH

Memorial Garden improvements

BEFORE



DURING



AFTER



Sturry and District United Church submitted a bid to refurbish the Milner Memorial Ground located at the front of their landholding. The ground was given to the parish council by Lady Milner in memory of her husband, Lord Milner, and for the enjoyment of the people of Sturry. The council were successful in their application because they were proposing to transform an open green space into a public garden for the enjoyment of all and at the same time enhance the biodiversity and wildlife found in it. Their grant allowed them to purchase and install bird nestboxes, a bug hotel, planting material for raised herb beds, bee borders, and apple trees to plant as an avenue through the garden. Pupils from the local school helped them set up the bug hotel and plant a hedge along the southern boundary of the site.

The project aligned with the grant criteria very well as it considered a balance of biodiversity areas and public amenity. It also demonstrated an awareness of how different biodiversity enhancements could interconnect with each other.

STURRY PARISH COUNCIL

Centenary Woodland and Cemetery improvements

Sturry Parish Council were successful in their biodiversity grant application for bird, bat, and owl boxes, and bluebell bulbs for the woodland. They have installed these items across the two sites, while also engaging the local community and school.

This project is part of a wider work to clear and open wooded areas in their parish, which enhances biodiversity at ground level and works to bring nature closer to people.

There is more to do including dead hedging, pond creation, general woodland management, and reptile and amphibian surveyance.

AFTER



ICKHAM VILLAGE HALL

Community Garden improvements



Having extensively refurbished and repaired the village hall, as well as created a small woodland area and flowerbeds and borders around it, Ickham Parish Council wanted to build on the work and create a public garden for all to enjoy. They successfully applied to purchase and install bird boxes, bug hotels and colourful butterfly stations.

One bird box was also fitted with a camera that would allow a live feed to their website. The project not only enhances biodiversity to the site, but also engages the community in protecting, maintaining and using the natural environment around them at the site.

CANTERBURY SWIFTS GROUP

Creation of Swift Neighbourhood in Herne Bay

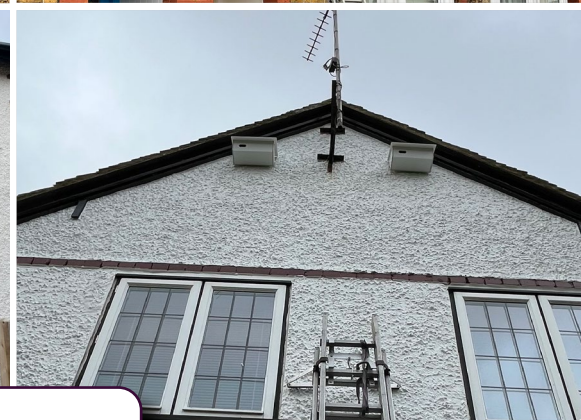
The newly formed Canterbury Swifts Group were successful in their grant application to create a swift neighbourhood in Herne Bay for several reasons. Their project addresses a worrying decline in swift numbers through the sourcing and installation of swift boxes, together with 'callers' - devices that emit swift calls to attract individual swifts to the new boxes. The group has had marked successes elsewhere in the district over recent years with similar projects. This new project was to focus on Herne Bay, an area which had not previously had any biodiversity grants awarded. Finally, there was a strong engagement element to the project, involving a significant number of residents and schools, the aim of the project being to create a 'swift neighbourhood'.

After a strong start engaging local stakeholders, the group has done well and installed 17 boxes in residential streets near each other which includes five at Herne Bay Infant School, which is an especially good site as the school is located opposite a natural swift nest. The group also bought ten callers which they have loaned to householders and the school. The group has further plans to expand and replicate the neighbourhood in other parts of the district and have already collaborated with The Wildwood Trust on a display to help educate more of the public about Swifts. This is obviously a project that requires longer-term monitoring and so, in spite the inclusion of callers, the success rate for each box is yet to be determined.

BEFORE



DURING

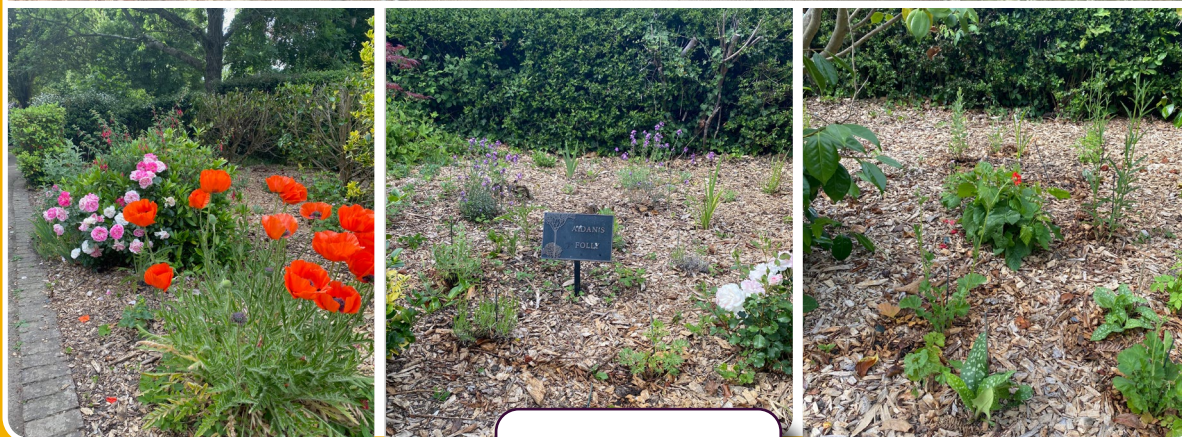


AFTER

FRIENDS OF CANTERBURY CEMETERY

Pollinator-friendly planting in cemetery

DURING



AFTER

The Friends of Canterbury Cemetery wanted to enhance their green city space, which included improving the biodiversity across the site - specifically through increasing pollinators habitat. Collaborating with the Canterbury City Council Cemeteries Manager to identify project areas on site, the Friends group were successfully awarded a grant to purchase pollinator perennials, bulbs and wildflower seed, as well as gardening tools and a hired scarifier. One of the ambitions of their project was the creation of 'The Canterbury Meadow', which would be a green, ecological burial site. The scarifier was selected as the least disruptive option to help groundwork preparation for such a site. The Friends have carefully considered the interplay of biodiversity and human necessity in this project. They also had community and volunteer engagement in mind as they planned the work – they were not solely relying on Canterbury City Council's ground maintenance staff to undertake the work. This project gives strong grounding for future enhancement and use of Canterbury Cemetery, especially as it is prepared to be entered for a Green Flag Award.

WATER MEADOWS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Creation of biodiversity habitats in a forest school type area

The school applied for a Canterbury City Council biodiversity grant as part of a wider school project funded by a Royal Society grant, but with the aim of developing a space for nature on their grounds. Although funding was reallocated from their original application to fund volunteer days with Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership and habitat building materials, the school were successful in achieving this grant because they demonstrated a clear awareness and a sound plan to create and protect biodiversity and improve different habitats on their site. With KSCP, pupils participated in dead hedging a border to their project area, building bug hotels, bird and bat boxes, and seeding a small wildflower area. The project compliments pupils' learning and paves the way for project leads to train staff and develop a formal forest school at Water Meadows Primary School. It also sets a good precedent for other schools in their wider academy school trust potentially seeking similar funding opportunities.

DURING



AFTER

HACKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Pond Restoration at Tyler Hill Meadow Nature Reserve

BEFORE



DURING



AFTER

Hackington Parish Council were successful with their application to restore their existing woodland pond and create a new one, improving habitat provision for aquatic species. The grant paid for the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership to lead volunteer task days to carry out the work. The project clearly met the grant criteria of enhancing biodiversity by creating a natural space where wildlife can thrive and be supported. The project features as part of a wider effort by engaged residents and parish council stakeholders to protect and enhance the nature reserve.

FRIENDS OF WEST CLIFF BANK

Butterfly Wildflower Meadow Project

The Friends of West Cliff Bank wanted to create and develop a habitat for butterflies and other species in a way that complimented other work planned to enhance the natural environment at West Cliff Bank, while creating opportunities for the community to volunteer and learn more about biodiversity. The Friends group had already engaged the Butterfly Conservation Trust to conduct site surveys and make recommendations and had cleared and created a small butterfly bed. This application was for funding to purchase wildflower seed, bulbs and plugs, gardening tools and safety gear, signage for the area, children's 'spotting guides', and a place on a local butterfly training course. Specialist tool training for their brushcutter was removed from their proposed budget, and the Friends received equivalent training from adequately trained volunteers of other Friends groups. This application was successful as it demonstrated good planning and community engagement. The project is a good example of an active Friends group working to enhance the biodiversity of a council-owned site and engaging positively with the local community, including young people, while doing so.

DURING



AFTER

EVALUATION

Following intermediate visits to each of these projects, council officers noted the following and recommend these are considered in the next round of the small biodiversity grant scheme and as these projects continue to be monitored:

1. Following a suggestion from one of the grant recipients, Canterbury City Council will help create a network of Biodiversity Grant recipients by sharing contact details between participating groups (subject to consent). This will enable groups to connect, exchange experience, and share learning and best practice.
2. Although it has been great seeing so many bug hotels and bat, bird, and owl boxes, in future the council would like to fund projects that show clear improvements in local biodiversity and the natural environment on a more significant scale.
3. The biodiversity grant is not simply an opportunity for organisations to comply with statutory environmental legislation.
3. Community and volunteer engagement is seemingly one of the more challenging aspects to this scheme. Applicants should consider and include a deliverable plan to engage the wider community. Canterbury City Council may offer guidance on how to do this effectively. For example, council officers can arrange social media training for project leads.
4. Similarly, there may be resources other than funding that Canterbury City Council can offer applicants. If a project has included dead hedging for instance, they could collect wood from council-owned woodland and would liaise with Martin Thomas as Tree and Woodland Officer.

