Highway News Bulletin 5 March 2021
Highways giving nature a fighting chance

Good afternoon,

This week I have been out in our beautiful countryside finding out a bit more about what the Highways team do for nature in the county to consider the environment and ecology.

I'm sure you will all agree as you travel about that we have some fantastic areas. When I have a hard day of back-to-back Zoom meetings, the place I head out to is the country with Barney, my black Labrador (he's the one swimming in the background of my photo).

Just getting out into nature and fresh air clears my head, gives my brain a boost, and does wonders for my wellbeing.

It was a timely trip as Wednesday was **World Wildlife Day** celebrating the theme of "Forests and Livelihoods: Sustaining People and Planet**".**

Although celebrating forest-based livelihoods and ways to promote forest and forest wildlife globally, we play our part here in Northamptonshire and in the last couple of years, on our major schemes, have planted over 46,000 trees along the A45 Daventry Development Link Road and the A43 alone.

As I mentioned last week, construction is not often thought to be that considerate to the planet and local environment but you should not underestimate the work that goes into mitigating our impact.

I got the chance to catch up with Hayley Percival one of the Senior Consultant Ecologists on the contract.

Hayley has an obvious passion for the environment and a recent highlight has been the ecology work alongside the **A43 improvement** works to dual this important connection between Northampton and Kettering.

It sounds like ecology is no easy task but something that is a major feature of big infrastructure projects supporting growth and connecting communities in Northamptonshire.
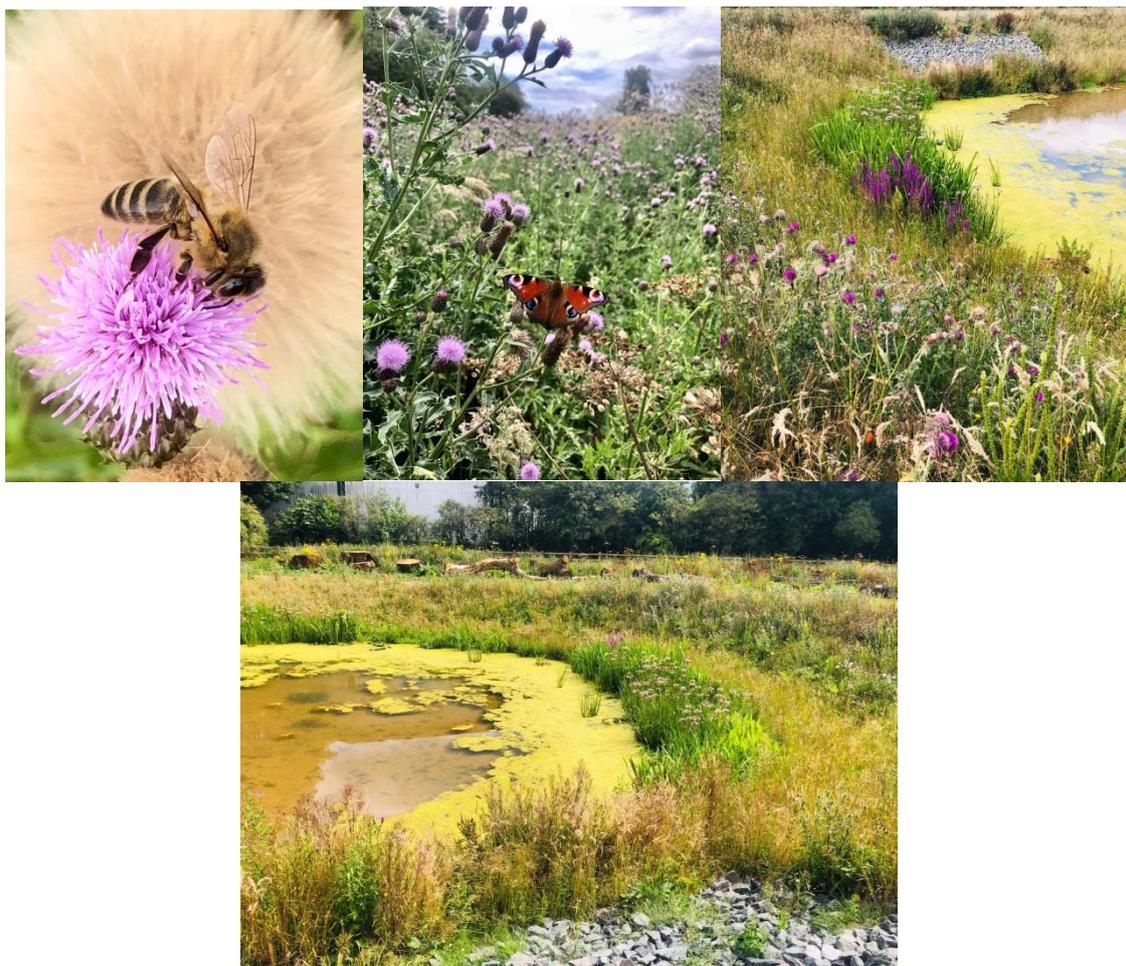
Hayley said 'It can be a challenging journey. Nature does not need much, but when you see it on paper, often in construction it's easily written off. KierWSP have fought tooth and nail to ensure that nature has a home and that Northamptonshire Highways has a legacy to be proud of as part of the A43 scheme.

Nature has never stopped or delayed our works and has continued to thrive alongside because of measures put in by the site team and me. Now that this stage of the scheme is complete, it's fantastic for everyone to see nature blooming. We are so proud to have been able to give it a fighting chance and the area really is one of outstanding natural beauty.'

The nearby housing development is going up fast, but the southeast end of the scheme now links to the local nature reserve and the wider environment.

The fact is, a picture or four, paints a thousand words………..

As we head into spring, you might be thinking of getting the mower out.

We cut grass for safety, that is the main reason and not for aesthetics. Certain verges must be cut regularly to maintain clear lines of visibility – this is particularly crucial at junctions where a 'visibility splay' has to be maintained.

Rural highway verges are often overlooked for their ecological and biodiversity value, but offer a high level of diversity and habitat for our wildlife.

Safety comes first but with the size of most verges, there should be no conflict with conservation. For many verges, a regular late summer cut and removal of clippings will keep the verge open, safe and thriving with interesting wildlife.

There are currently 32 verges located around the whole of Northamptonshire that are designated as Protected Wildlife Verges. These are surveyed on a 5-year rolling programme and are cut later in the year to allow flowering plants to continue to thrive, providing nectar during the summer for butterflies and bees.

Although it may appear the verges have been forgotten it is important for the successful management of the verge that they are left until late summer to be cut.

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As much of the verge as possible will be left to rejuvenate over this period. Visibility and sight lines will always be cut to ensure road safety, regardless of the designation

So, when you are out later in the year look out for the markers which highlight these beautiful verges that encourage flora and fauna to make them their home.

I am sure we all want to play our part in protecting the environment, and planting a tree is a great idea. And, if you can't get out to dig there is always **Ecosia**, a green search engine, if you want to play your part in reforesting our world. If like me, you are wary of other search engines other than the big players it is legitimate and one with an environmental mission. Instead of the profits going to shareholders, they go to reforestation projects.

Ecosia.org is a certified B Corporation. It is a for-profit company. The "B" stands for the fact that Ecosia got its certificate from B Lab, which is a non-profit organisation. This certification means "rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency."

It just goes to show that it can be done with the right people behind it. A wide variety of species, are thriving across our county, including some new and welcome residents. So next time you need to take a breather you will probably not be too far from an area that Highways has played a part in to help nature flourish.

This week we

- **Received 458 Street Doctor reports**
- **Repaired 441 carriageway defects**
- **Inspected 2557 gullies (100% of our weekly target) and cleansed 2446 (95.7% as some gullies were accessible due to parked cars or other issues)**

If you, or any of your constituents, do have highway issues please use our Street Doctor service to ensure any enquiries are dealt with correctly. This process ensures issues are recorded and dealt with appropriately. Once reported you will be issued with a unique reference number and be able to follow the progress of your enquiry.

Website:
www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/streetdoctor
Telephone: **0300 126 1000**
For information and transport and highway updates, follow us on **Twitter @nnhighways**
To view all works and diversions, including Utilities, on the highway visit **one.network**