



Public Perception of Pollinators Survey 2021 Summary

In May 2021, a public perception survey was undertaken in Kent to gauge the public's understanding of pollinators, their importance and the issues that this particular group of insects face. The survey also aimed to determine how they feel about action that could be taken to address the conservation of Kent's pollinators. The results of this survey could then be used to inform future public engagement activities and also provide a suggestion to how potential future action taken by the authority may be perceived.

People from across Kent were asked to complete the multiple-choice survey and a notable 4,655 participants took part. The responses were analysed, and the conclusions drawn are outlined below.

Many are interested in, and supportive of, the pollinator agenda

From the number of people that engaged with the survey, it would seem that many are interested in, and supportive of, the pollinator agenda. In the first question where the public were asked how images of wilder verges made them feel, the majority answered positive or very positive (97.89% positive or very positive, compared to 2.11% neutral, negative, or very negative). This result was replicated when participants were asked again at the end of the survey how they felt, with a slight increase towards positive (98.24% of responses).

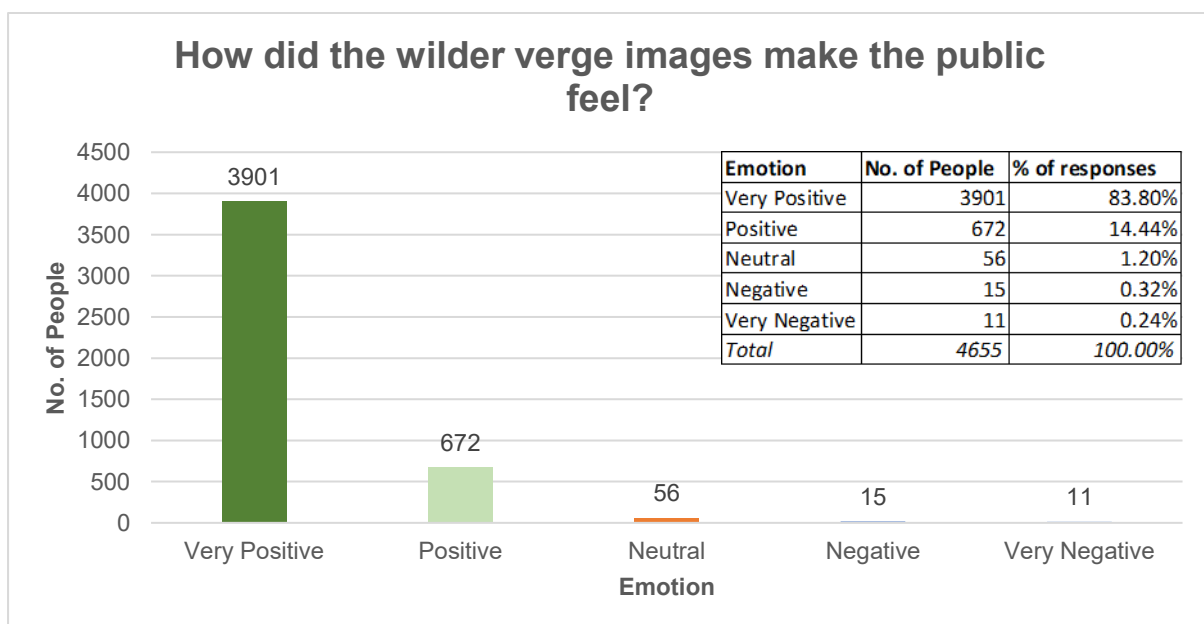


Figure 1 – at the second time of asking, “Very Positive” was overwhelmingly the most popular answer when asked “how do wilder verge make you feel?”.

Good general understanding of pollination

There is good general understanding of pollination and the majority of people were able to recognise some if not all groups of pollinators. In fact, 83.31% of respondents correctly identified some of the UK’s pollinators, without picking incorrect answers. There is also a very strong understanding of the causes of pollinator decline and the possible consequences of such a decline.

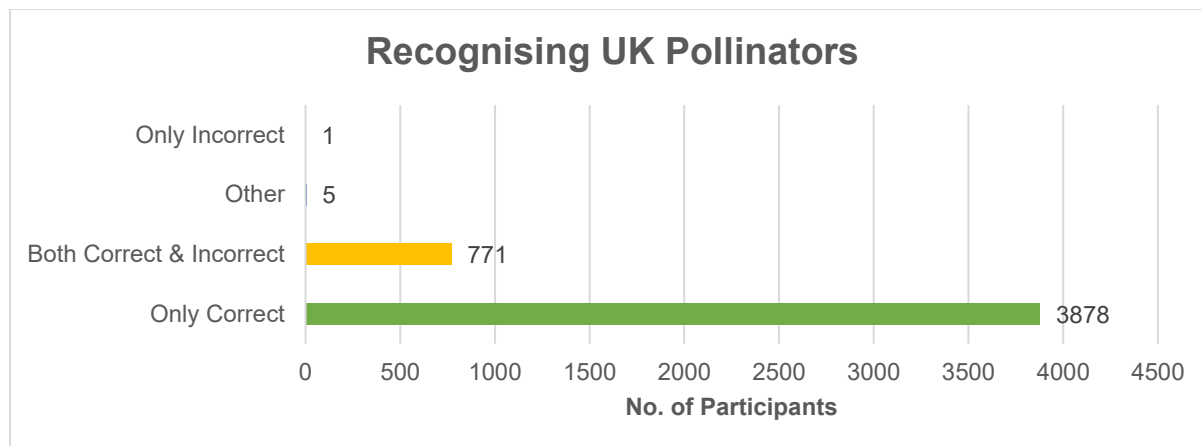


Figure 2 – when selecting pollinators from a list of animals, although there were some incorrect answers, most participants were able to select at least one correct pollinator.

Strong support for pollinator friendly grass management

Respondents showed a strong preference for less-frequently cut grassland in public spaces and road verges, with both long and intermediate lengths coming out on top, making up 98% of votes. A much smaller group did highlight concerns about issues relating to weeds, driver-visibility, tidiness, and litter. In response to further information provided about the recommended best-practice for species-rich grassland for pollinators, the majority of respondents supported a twice-yearly cut. This was an increase from 33% of participants originally selecting a twice-yearly cut, to 85% after being presented with the best practice information. Furthermore, there was strong support shown (98% of participants) for wilder verges, wild spaces generally and flower-rich grassland in urban as well as rural settings, managed for pollinators and wildlife.

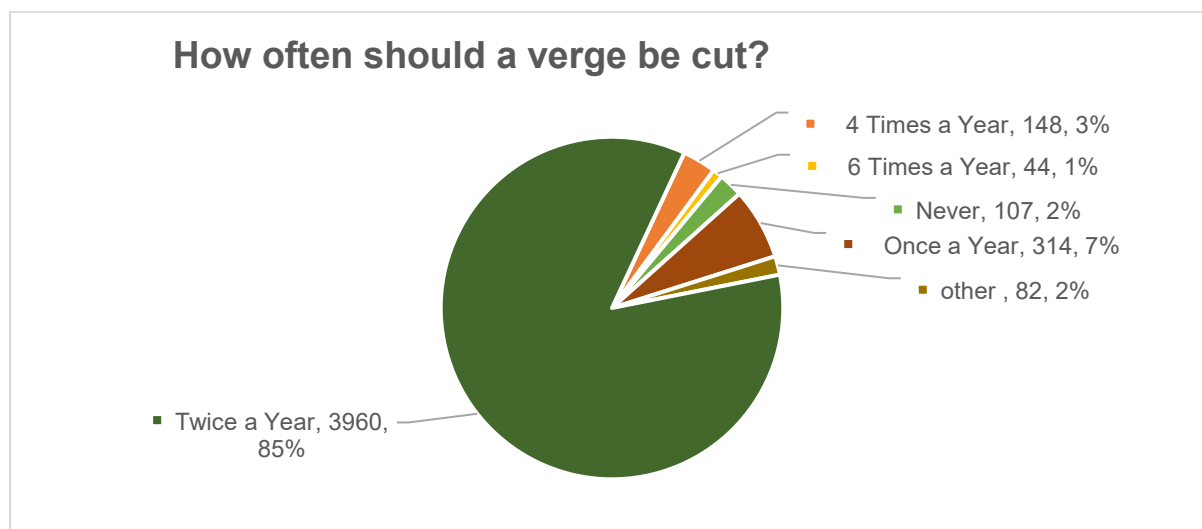


Figure 3 – when asked how many times a year a verge should be cut after being presented with management best practice, the majority changed their original answers to twice-yearly cuts.

On analysis of the survey reports, the following recommendations are made:

1. Wide dissemination of this report to partners, interested bodies and the general public.
2. Well-planned public communications and awareness-raising to continue, which reaches wider audiences and a greater understanding of the importance and needs of Kent's pollinators, their habitats and conservation management requirements. Emphasis includes communicating the benefits and significance of introducing a twice-yearly cut for the management of wilder verges and public grassland.
3. Where widespread changes to grassland management is planned or being considered, ensure this is accompanied by clear communications that includes why the change is being made, the benefits it will bring and addresses some of the public concerns about wilder verges that the survey has identified.
4. Use the findings of this survey for designing and planning subsequent similar survey work in the future.

On the basis of the above, Kent County Council will be taking the next steps:

- Make the results of the survey available in a short and easy to digest summary, which includes the key messages from the survey and what we will do next in light of these results.
- Review our social media campaign plans to ensure it picks up on all the areas of knowledge and understanding identified as needing attention by the survey; and consider what else we could do outside of our social media work to address this.
- Within our communications work, look to address some of the misconceptions and concerns relating to wilder verges.
- Use the evidence which suggests public support for wilder verges and green space management to facilitate a move towards more widespread adoption of this practice within our own estate and verge management; and share with district partners and others.
- Work with Highways, as required, on public engagement work (and potentially additional surveys/consultations) in support of introducing further wilder verges throughout the county.