

Supporting the humble bumblebee

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What have St James's, Piccadilly; Holy Trinity, Barrow upon Soar; St Mary the Virgin, Saffron Waldon and All Saints, West Alvington along with 70 churches in the Chichester diocese and hundreds of others around the country in common?

They are all on B-Lines and they can all play a part in a nationwide project which is creating vital transport routes for bees, butterflies and other pollinators.

B-Lines are a network of routes running through our countryside and towns linking the country's best wildlife sites.

The project is being organised by Buglife and the Church of England's national environment programme Shrinking the Footprint. It is encouraging every church on a B-Line to play its part by ensuring that bee friendly plants and trees are growing in their churchyards, church land, flower beds or tubs.

Buglife is in the process of mapping B-Lines across large areas of the UK and is encouraging the restoration and creation of wildflower-rich areas across the network.

Why do this? One out of every three mouthfuls of our food, and eight out ten of our wildflowers, depend on insect pollination. However, there's a problem – our pollinators are in serious decline due to habitat loss.

We probably all know of somewhere when we were young where we would see butterflies but which has since been built upon.

In recent years much of our flower-rich meadow land has been lost which means that our church yards are becoming more and more important, and so making sure that they become spiritual service stations for our friends the pollinators as they travel the land bringing life to our plants and agriculture.

Church land in urban areas is particularly important and that is why a scheme funded by the Mayor of London to provide free bee-friendly trees for London churches to plant on their land or nearby schools and community gardens is particularly important. These trees will have two benefits - not just for London's pollinators, but they will also help to reduce air pollution.

This month will see many churches taking part in Cherishing Churchyards Week (3 -11 June). What a great time to cherish our pollinators too and make sure our churchyards have what it takes to play their part in ensuring they are playing their part by ensuring the country's B-Lines provide non-stop pollinating traffic lanes.

There is plenty of advice and help available. Buglife is working with local communities, council, businesses, wildlife trusts, landowners and farmers and some of our diocesan environment officers.

www.buglife.org.uk.

<http://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/index.php/cherishing-churchyards-week/cherishing-churchyards-week-2.html>

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