



**Bumblebee  
Conservation  
Trust**

# HLF evaluation report

**Bees for Everyone – saving the sound of summer**



## Contents

Project infographic .....	3
Introduction - three transformational years .....	4
Aims and achievements .....	6
Learning and participation aims .....	6
Conservation aims .....	13
Quantitative monitoring summary .....	17
Qualitative feedback .....	18
Project profile and publicity .....	19
Lessons learned .....	20
Future opportunities .....	22

### **Katy Malone – Conservation Officer, Scotland**

*I think less in terms of what I have done for bees but far more of what bees have done for me.*

*I've met some extraordinary, inspiring people up and down the country who are passionate about supporting their local bee populations - land owners and farmers, teachers and administrators, primary age kids and those who remember 'better days' in our countryside, amongst many others. I've been energised by the commitment all these diverse people have made in their own way. All the evidence points to this fact: that individuals really can make a difference - separately, together, and as part of a far wider community.*





# Bumblebee Conservation Trust

2014

Project finishes ahead of target! 3,078 hectares of bee-friendly habitat has been restored or created and over 40,000 people have engaged with BBCT.

Summer  
2012

First three volunteer training days delivered. 253 events attended. Website visited by over 85,000 people.

Winter  
2011

Bees for Everyone funding starts and project staff recruited.

2015  
onwards

BfE inspired many new project ideas and partnerships, many of which we hope will receive funding in 2015.

2013

BBCT calendar created featuring winners of Bee kind garden competition. 409 events attended. Website visited by over 273,000 people. BeeWalk funding secured.

Spring  
2012

BfE launches new website and materials at events in London and Edinburgh. BBCT CEO appears on BBC coverage of Chelsea Flower Show.



# Introduction - three transformational years

By Lucy Rothstein, Chief Executive Officer

In 2011 the Bumblebee Conservation Trust (BBCT) was delighted to be granted £340,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) towards the delivery of our three-year Bees for Everyone (BfE) project. The project has been hugely successful and has acted as a spring board for BBCT. Before the project BBCT was a small organisation of only seven staff members, a handful of volunteers and a relatively unprofessional website. Now we have a staff of 14, over 500 volunteers delivering nearly 500 events, a fresh and engaging website and a turnover of over £600,000 per annum. During the period we have raised over £470,000 in memberships and donations and we would like to thank HLF for allowing us this opportunity.

At the heart of BfE were three fundamental principles – learning, engagement and action. When we set out we were motivated to engage with anyone who would listen; to inspire positive emotions, love, wonder and respect for bumblebees, and to explain why things were going wrong for them. We wanted to nurture an empathy which would ultimately turn into action.

Stories can be a powerful vehicle for inspiration. Case studies and examples give a real context to an issue, and can convey complex messages through simple narratives. There are some scary statistics about the decline in bumblebees, but what we have tried to do throughout the BfE project is to pair that message with inspiring examples of action.

Our transformational years include stories of farmers and landowners enthusiastically taking on board advice from conservation officers and changing their practices to include bee friendly habitat.

## **Sinead Lynch – Conservation Officer, Wales**

*I would say I'm most proud of meeting the target to deliver 350 hectares of bumblebee habitat in Wales. When I started in post the target seemed insurmountable – 350ha! That's the size of Central Park! (No really, it is).*

*However, I've been able to deliver the target one enthusiastic, generous, eccentric, bee-friendly landowner at a time. The real revelation has been the generous landowners who are willing to do whatever they can to help bumblebees – from a landowner with a 'bee field' to the farmer who diligently cut around a small patch of knapweed in the middle of a field to leave it for the bees.*







There are also stories of volunteers - our lifeblood. They have provided an enormous amount of support and help, enabling us to achieve our goals. They have gained new skills and transformed the way we have developed as an organisation. The stories they have to tell are simply brilliant:

*"I always have something to talk about and have made lots of friends in the process of BeeWalking. I get introduced as "The bumblebee lady" and people ask my advice about plants for their gardens, etc. I am pleased to have a hobby that is worthwhile and allows me to learn more at my own pace."*

**BBCT volunteer**

*"My first talk for my local garden club led to a number of others, I now give talks on various subjects. My interest in bumblebees has led on to FSC courses on both bumblebees and solitary bees, purchase of a microscope to aid ID and involvement with the development, from scratch, of a local nature reserve. It has also led to a tie up, and developing friendship, with a progressive beekeepers association, promoting bumblebees to their members."*

**BBCT volunteer**

It has been an exceptional three years. BfE has transformed BBCT, the way we work, the passion we feel, and our enthusiasm to do yet more. There is a maxim that says a project is complete when it starts working for you, rather than you working for it. BfE has achieved that, creating a nationwide buzz. I am exceedingly proud of the BfE team and what it has achieved for our bumblebees, and I hope this report inspires you to join us on our next journey to save the sound of summer.

*"I have always loved bumblebees and was shocked when I found out about the problems they were facing. I searched the internet for more information and for advice on what I could do. I found the BBCT website and found it so inspirational and helpful I joined immediately."*

**BBCT member**

# Aims and achievements

BfE aimed to raise public awareness of the threats bumblebees face, inspire gardeners of all ages to get planting, and provide opportunities for people to learn more about these hard-working pollinators. Additionally, the project team aimed to help rare bumblebees through active conservation work to safeguard, restore and create habitats for them.

In this section we review our activities under two headings – learning and participation, and conservation.

## Learning and participation aims

### 1. Produce stimulating resources that are accessible to everyone and help to spread the word without our direct involvement.

- 23 new resources developed: one project leaflet, one bumblebee factsheet, one gardening factsheet, three posters, one bumblebee ID guide, one gardening booklet, ten land management factsheets, four volunteer guides and a pledge card.
- Over 100,000 factsheets downloaded from our website.
- Over 120,000 resources distributed at events by our staff and volunteers.



*“Excellent source of knowledge but not treated as an idiot or professor.*

*The balance is correct.”*

*“Lively, bright and attractive presentation of high quality information.”*

**Anonymous survey respondents**

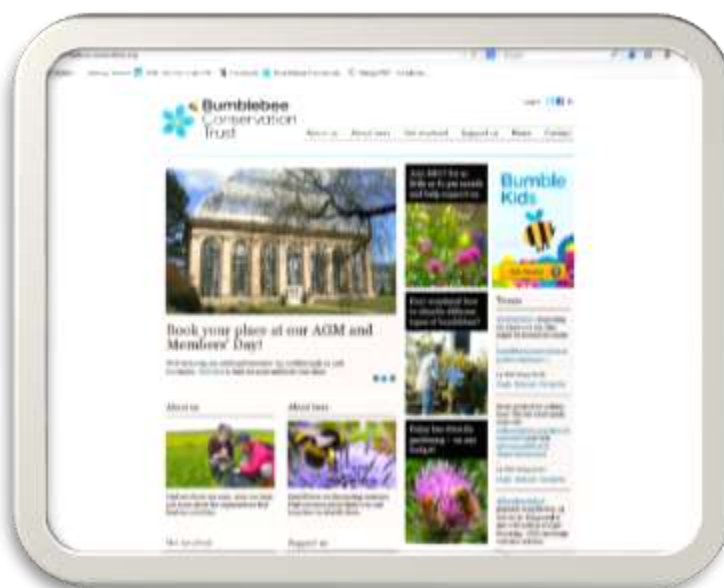
## 2. Create and launch a new website which engages, educates and entertains.

*““Love the new website!”*

*“Attractive information, interesting activities and an engaging approach that stimulates general interest in bumblebees.”*

*“Educating the general public, in easily understandable terms about the life, variety and plight of the bumblebee.”*

Anonymous survey respondents



- Our new-look website was launched in May 2012 and has had over 580,000 unique visitors and over 4 million page views since then.
- The most popular area of the website is the identification section within 'About bees', which has been visited over 230,000 times.
- To keep the website fresh we regularly update our blog, news and frequently asked questions areas. Nearly 49,000 people have viewed our bumblebee blog.
- Our online forum has been viewed by 86,552 users who discuss everything from bee-friendly gardening, to bumblebee identification, nests and habitat creation.

## 3. Develop and launch Bee kind, a national wildlife garden scheme.



<http://beekind.bumblebeeconservation.org>

*“The bee kind tool for gardens is very useful and I had a lot more bee friendly plants and flowers than I thought I did!”*

Our Bee kind tool provides users with a bee-friendliness score for their garden and a tailored list of plants that they can add to improve their score. The tool can be used to filter plants by shape, colour and month of flowering so is ideal for planning a bee-friendly garden. The tool proved to be an excellent way of engaging with gardeners at events as it can be accessed on tablets and mobile devices. Over 44,500 people have used the tool to date.



**4. Make effective use of media (including social media) to communicate the project's messages and engage with people who might not normally have an interest in wildlife.**

Our e-newsletter and social media platforms have gone from strength to strength during the three years of the project.

One campaign which was particularly successful, and massively increased our social media following, was a competition to give away 950 packets of wildflower seeds via Facebook. This resulted in us gaining over 13,000 new followers on Facebook and will support bumblebee conservation by adding wildflowers to the UK landscape next season.



*“A new thing I never heard of before highlighting a problem I never knew existed.”*

**56 magazine articles**

**21k**

Twitter followers

**67 newspaper articles**

**25k**

Facebook likes

**19 Radio interviews**

**60 blog posts**

*“I was completely Bee ignorant before I discovered BBCT.”*

Our social media followers and e-newsletter subscribers come from a variety of backgrounds, demonstrating that our reach has extended beyond traditional entomologists and gardeners. For example, our Twitter audience includes scientists, manufacturing professionals, teachers, designers and authors, as well as a high concentration of photographers.

Similarly, our activities have been featured in print media publications that are read by people who might not normally have an interest in wildlife. These include the Caravan Club magazine, Woman's Weekly, Waitrose Kitchen magazine and parenting magazine Gurgle. Many of these new audiences were reached thanks to the support of a PR agency and the recruitment of a temporary Communications Officer during the final year of the project.

*“My children love to use my iPad and will happily sit and read the BBCT Newsletter online, increasing their knowledge and interest in bumblebees. Hopefully this interest will continue for years to come and be passed down to their children.”*

**Anonymous survey respondent**



## 5. Inspire local people to become champions of bumblebees.

Provide the support and training needed for people to get involved.

It would have been impossible for us to achieve our aims without the support of so many volunteers. During the course of the project we recruited more than 500 bumblebee champions and delivered 14 volunteer training days across the UK.

These dedicated individuals have delivered 192 bumblebee talks, inspired others on 44 guided walks, educated their neighbours by writing articles for local newsletters and donned bumblebee costumes to raise money for bumblebee conservation. They have supported BBCT staff at events and delivered 249 event exhibits independently, and many have spent hours chatting to likeminded souls on our online forum.

We have estimated that this equates to an in-kind value of £34,600, which is equivalent to 1,730 individual Bumblebee Conservation Trust memberships! We cannot thank these people enough for their time, energy and support.

*“As I work from home, it gives me a chance to meet like-minded people and enjoy our lovely down land countryside. I have found that people are very positive about bees and have plenty of questions and BBCT has armed me with all the responses I need!”* **BBCT volunteer**



### **Anthony McCluskey – Outreach Officer**

*“A lot of the things that I have achieved for bumblebees have been done by our volunteers, with a bit of my support. So, while I’m sure that I’ve helped by providing gardening advice, things in my blog and new content for the website, I am most proud when I see our volunteers have really thrown themselves into helping bumblebees, therefore doing more work than I ever could.”*



*“I really enjoy it, and I’m getting more knowledgeable about bumblebees. I had to give up work because of poor health, so volunteering for something I think is important is especially satisfying. I also like the personal contacts with BBCT staff - they are so knowledgeable and encouraging.”*

**BBCT volunteer**



## 6. Develop materials that can be used in schools, or in other learning environments.

One of our new resources was a Teacher/ Youth Leader membership pack. This links to the Primary curriculum in Scotland, England and Wales and contains activity sheets and presentation slides for use in the classroom. 104 packs have been requested during the project.

*“As a Primary teacher, I used your resources (and those on the BBC) to talk to my class about the decline in bumblebees. My class decided to carry out an audit of the school garden, inputting the results in the Bee kind tool. We planted most of the ten suggestions to improve biodiversity.”*

*“As a teacher I use a lot of your resources to raise awareness of the decline of bees. This has helped the children to recognise what plants to put around the school’s wildlife area and we have carried out many bee surveys.”*

We also created a dedicated area on our website called Bumble Kids, which contains information about bumblebees and hosts a selection of downloadable activity sheets and games to help children learn about bumblebees. During the project, over 50,000 users visited the Bumble Kids pages and over 25,000 activity sheets were downloaded.

These free resources are also available to teachers via the Times Educational Supplement website.

*“My daughter used some online information from the website as part of a bee project that she submitted to Blue Peter to obtain an environmental badge.”*

Furthermore, we worked to encourage children to get outdoors and spot bumblebees through our work at events such as the Royal Highland Show, Eco-school events and Open Farm Sunday events.

*“The thing that I am most proud of seems quite trivial. I was leading a bumblebee walk, and along the way I was explaining some important aspects of bumblebee behaviour to a small child. About half an hour later I overheard that same small child explain what I had taught him to another small child.*

*This might not seem like much, but all it takes is one little spark to ignite a child’s imagination, and help foster a lifelong interest in these amazing creatures.*

**Aoife O’Rourke, Conservation Officer, South East**






## 7. Promote BeeWalk and BeeWatch – provide a learning pathway.

BeeWatch is a citizen science tool which allows people to upload photographs of bumblebees that they have seen, and then helps them to identify the species. BeeWatch allows people to engage on an ad hoc basis but is also helping people to improve their bumblebee identification skills as a stepping stone towards greater participation through our BeeWalk survey scheme. Since the launch of BfE, over 10,000 photographs have been submitted to BeeWatch.

When BfE was launched, the BeeWalk survey scheme, which measures the distribution and abundance of bumblebees, formed a small part of the work of BBCT. However, it soon became apparent that there was a real desire from the public to get involved and a hunger for bumblebee identification training. As a result, BeeWalk has been catapulted into the fore and, thanks to funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the scheme has grown in professionalism and participant numbers. BeeWalk now has 193 volunteer recorders and forms an integral part of everything BBCT does.

The following quotes provide a flavour of the public's enthusiasm for bumblebee recording:



"I was keen to get involved with bumblebees, and searched Google for potential work or projects of interest. I signed up as a volunteer to count bumblebees each month, read up all the information on the BBCT site, downloaded some of the pictures and hints on identifying them, and set out in late Spring on my first count.

The first site I chose was not particularly good for bumblebees, and at that time of year there were not many about, but this gave me the time and confidence to learn about the different kinds of bees when I saw them, and to realise that you don't need to know all the rare ones at first. Mostly you only see the common ones, so it is simply a case of distinguishing the workers from the males and from the queens.

I feel reasonably confident that, with the pictures provided by BBCT, I am identifying them correctly. This year was about building confidence - and finding more appropriate walks with more bees.

I do hope funding continues for this worthwhile site. It has provided me with a new interest and a feeling that I am putting something back into the environment."

**BBCT volunteer**

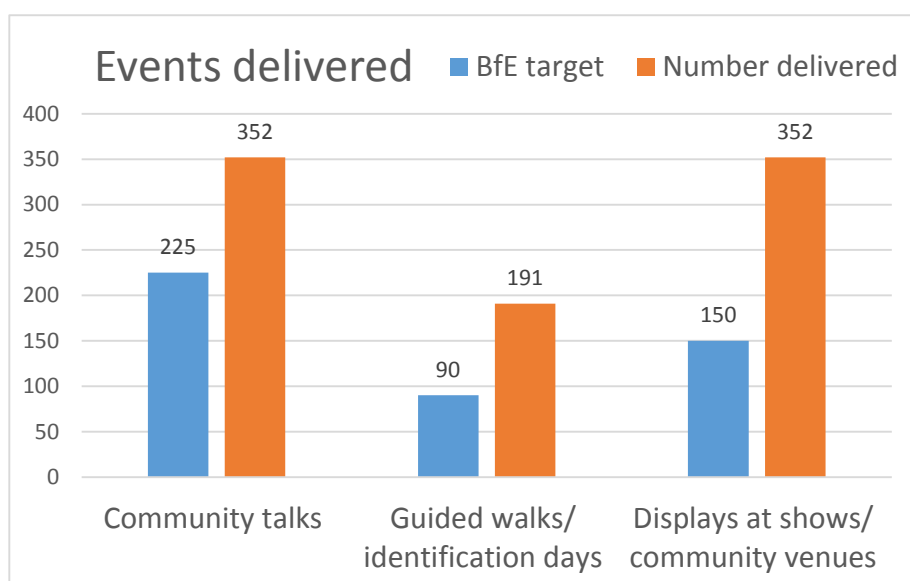
"I had been thinking about bumblebees in my garden and then heard about a bumblebee identification day in Dorset. It was fascinating - identification skills in the morning and then a practical session in the field in the afternoon, when we caught and identified 9 kinds of bumblebee and cuckoos. Fantastic first introduction. Since then I've been much more able to identify bees in the garden and on walks and have helped with a Shril carder bee survey in Somerset (we didn't find Shril carder bees but did see Moss carders which was great). Lovely knowledgeable staff too."

**Event attendee**



## 8. Increase the number and geographic distribution of the events we provide.

The launch of BfE saw an explosion in the number of events we were able to deliver across the UK, from just 18 events nationwide in 2010 to 253 in 2012, the first year of the project, and 409 in 2013.



At the beginning of the project, the majority of our events were delivered by BfE staff members.

However, as our volunteer base grew, more and more talks, walks and event exhibits were delivered by volunteers, helping us to exceed all of our event targets and allowing us to reach out to new geographic locations.

We estimate that this has allowed us to engage with at least 40,000 people during the three years of the project.

NB. The map above shows staff-led events only.





## Conservation aims

Good conservation management is all about choosing the right measures, putting them in the right place, and managing them in the right way.

Over the last three years our Conservation Team has worked hard to develop best practice guidance for bees for different habitats throughout their specific Zone A work areas (shown in red on the map to the right).

It has been a steep learning curve for us all, but the success of our work has been overwhelmingly positive and is well documented in case studies and survey feedback.



### 10. Create or enhance at least 1,200 hectares of high quality habitat for bumblebees across the UK.

At the start of the project 1,200 hectares seemed like an enormous hill to climb and we discussed at great length how we would define habitat that had been created or enhanced. We could provide advice and guidance, but if the landowner did not take the advice or they did and it did not work for one reason or another then we would not have created habitat. We established a principle early on that we would only count genuine, sustainable habitat hectares and that part of year three of the project would be devoted to monitoring the habitat we had given guidance on, checking, supporting, enthusing and helping landowners to achieve good quality bumblebee habitat.

We estimate that the area of land for which we have provided habitat management advice for bumblebees over three years is **3080 hectares**.

This figure does not include hectares that may have been created for bumblebees outside of Zone A (the priority areas of work for the project). Advice has been given by email, phone and face to face to numerous landowners throughout the UK. These include solar farms, small holders, local authorities, housing developers, quarry owners and independent schools, as well as owners of small paddocks or large gardens who wanted to create a wildflower haven for bees.

Although difficult to estimate, this could amount to as much as an additional **900 hectares**.



## 11. Engage with over 300 farmers/ land managers

During the three years of the project our team engaged with 1,996 farmers and land managers through a variety of activities.

We carried out over 100 site visits to individual farmers and landowners in Zone A and a further 30 site visits outside of Zone A to quarries, free range chicken farms, solar parks and reserves.

We exhibited at or attended 18 agricultural shows in the project areas, meeting with and talking to farmers and landowners, providing face to face advice and enthusing them about bumblebees.

Our Conservation Manager delivered presentations at events including the National Association of Agricultural Contractors (NAAC) annual conference in Peterborough, the National Allotment Society Officers Forum in London and the Mineral Products Association's annual award ceremony.

Partnerships developed with Campaign for the Farmed Environment, Conservation Grade, Natural England's land management teams and other NGOs, leading to successfully joined-up action and advice to farmers.

Overall we gained a real insight and understanding of what influences farmer and landowner attitudes and behavioural intentions towards biodiversity which will help us with our conservation work in future.





## 12. Run at least 30 farm based events.

Partnership working proved to be the most effective vehicle for delivering this aim and organisations requesting BBCT presence at their farm days included the National Farmers Union, Campaign for the Farmed Environment, Conservation Grade Farmers, Kings Crops and other NGO's.

Overall 31 farm days were held over the three year period. These events allowed our Conservation Officers to understand land management issues from the farmers' point of view, to see first-hand how agri-environment schemes worked in different areas and to learn about the challenges farmers faced in providing bee-friendly habitat. Over the years of the project our expertise grew and we were able to provide a balanced approach to creating habitat for bees on farm land, offering a tailored method with easy to understand management guidance which helped inspire action.

*"The farm day event which was held last June turned out to be a fantastic day. The support, guidance and management from the Bumblebee Conservation Trust helped create and establish habitats for us and helped a wider audience to have a greater understanding and enjoyment of bees. It has been a wonderful experience and I hope BBCT will be able to continue to give us and many others this vital support - Thank You!"*

To complement the events, a series of ten useful and concise factsheets were developed to aid farmers in delivering bumblebee habitat.





### 13. Run a bumblebee conservation workshop in each of England, Scotland and Wales.

Each of our conservation workshops adopted a different format in order to meet local requirements.

Our **Scottish Conservation Workshop** was the first to be delivered in 2012 and was very action oriented, with 20 delegates attending a practical workshop in the Scottish Highlands on wild flower seed collection.

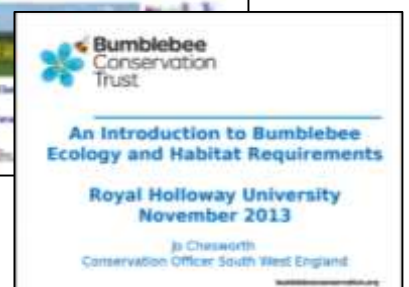
Four seed information factsheets have been developed as a follow up to this conference and BBCT has since developed a policy on promoting the use of local provenance seed.

Our **Welsh Conservation Workshop** took place at Newport Wetlands Reserve in June 2013 and had a more formal feel. The objectives of the event, which was attended by 38 delegates, were to bring together stakeholders from a range of sectors/backgrounds who had a direct or indirect stake in bumblebees and allow them to share differing perspectives; to discover any successes in habitat provision that could be developed into best practice, and to raise the profile of the Welsh Pollinator Action Plan. Welsh Assembly Member Lindsay Whittle attended and subsequently took questions back to ask in the Assembly.

The **English Conservation Workshop** was the last of the workshops to be delivered and took place at Royal Holloway University in November 2013. It hosted a variety of speakers from BBCT and our partner organisations and covered topics such as bumblebee ecology and the management of differing land types for bumblebees. 91 delegates attended and of those who completed our feedback form, 100% said that they were more motivated to help bees as a result of attending the conference.

Delegate quote:

*"Great venue, well thought out and planned programme of talks and presentations. Having had limited awareness of BBCT before today I am leaving with a very good impression of a professional organisation."*





## Quantitative monitoring summary

### Agreed targets

Target agreed with HLF	Actual numbers achieved
Provide at least 1,200 hectares of high quality habitat for bumblebees across the UK.	3,078.44
Engage with > 300 farmers/land managers.	1,996
Deliver 30 farm days.	31
Deliver 3 bumblebee conservation workshops.	3
Engage directly with at least 20,000 people.	41,867
Deliver 12 volunteer training workshops.	14
Deliver 225 community talks (125 staff-led, 100 volunteer-led).	352 (160 staff-led, 192 volunteer-led)
Deliver 90 guided walks/ identification days (65 staff-led, 25 volunteer-led).	191 (147 staff-led, 44 volunteer-led)
Deliver 150 displays at shows/ community venues (36 staff-led, 144 volunteer-led).	352 (103 staff-led, 249 volunteer-led)

### Website and communications successes

	Actual numbers
Website visitors	587,237
Website page views	4,192,708
Bee kind users	44,571
E-newsletter subscribers	28,200
Forum users	17,700
Facebook likes	25,145
Twitter followers	21,577



## Qualitative feedback

Continuous evaluation and improvement formed a key component of BfE. Feedback forms were used to evaluate staff-led events and at the end of each year we conducted an electronic survey which informed the actions that we took in the following year of the project, for example the development of new resources or delivery of events in new areas. All survey responses and feedback forms were anonymous.

The quotes below are taken from our surveys and highlight many of the project's successes.

*"The BBCT in its short history has become a vitally important organisation, raising awareness and promoting the conservation of bumblebees, at the same time engaging the public in appreciating the key role bumblebees play in pollination and a healthy environment."*

*"Regarding the value of the project, I have to say the input, including advisory material and site visits, and your presentation to the Campaign for the Farmed Environment Boost your Bees Pollinator event, were both first rate, in the level of detail and knowledge and its practical application to farmers and growers."*

*"Many thanks for your reply - very helpful with lots of detail and advice. I will join the Trust – it's a very worthwhile organisation and doing a vital job. I will let you know how I get on implementing my plans. Once again, many thanks for your great help."*

*"I have developed skills in identifying species that I previously had not even noticed and taking part in the BeeWalk is a valuable addition to my CV as I am trying to develop a career in ecology/conservation."*

*"The Bee kind thing, to see how bee friendly your garden is, seemed to engage several of my friends who have previously shown little interest in wildlife, or in gardening! Good work."*

*"I have found the BBCT website and publications to be excellent sources of information, especially as it is delivered at a level that is easy to understand, not full of science and biological Latin! I feel much more confident about understanding bumblebees."*

*"The advice and enthusiasm of BBCT staff has been outstanding and we have really enjoyed working with them."*

*"This is fantastic information in its detail and practical application to the farm, also the steer on use of commercial bumblebees."*

*"Wow, you did an awesome job. People commented afterwards how infectious your energy and enthusiasm was and I think that all those who attended went away with a new and well informed appreciation of our bumbles."*

When asked whether volunteering with BBCT has had a positive impact on their life, one respondent said:

*"Yes! It keeps my ageing brain active learning all these new facts about bumblebees and honey bees. It has given me more confidence to talk to strangers/ friends about something I am interested in and given me access to likeminded people face to face and via the Forum on BBCT's website. It has also sharpened my photo skills, introduced me to a digital camera and made me more PC literate as a result of interaction with online recording for BeeWalk."*



## Project profile and publicity

BfE launched in May 2012, with events in London and Edinburgh kicking off a hunt for the UK's most bee-friendly garden. We were delighted to welcome Richard Benyon MP, then Minister for the Natural Environment and Fisheries, and Stewart Stevenson MSP, then Scottish Minister for Environment and Climate Change, as well as George Anderson from BBC's Beechgrove Garden to these events. A few days later our website was flooded with visitors when our then CEO, Ben Darvill, was interviewed by Alan Titchmarsh about our Bee kind tool on BBC's coverage of the Chelsea Flower Show.

Throughout the BfE project we have been thrilled by the public's interest in bumblebees and in our activities. As a result, media interest has been high and articles about bumblebees have been featured by a variety of online and traditional media sources. Our team has also been successful in raising awareness through radio interviews on BBC Radio Wales, BBC Radio Scotland, Radio Solent, Dorset Radio, Insight Radio, Radio Orkney and BBC Radio 4's Farming Today programme.

This media interest resulted in a large increase in public enquiries about bumblebees and necessitated the recruitment of a dedicated Information Officer to respond to the information requests. This also helped to inform the development of new information resources for our website.

In the final year of the project we worked with a PR agency to produce a short video to raise awareness about the importance of bumblebees. In the clip Ben Fogle, Valentine Warner, Martha Kearney and even Sabrina the Teenage Witch, Melissa Joan Hart, highlighted some of the more important reasons as to why we need the bumblebee to exist and what losing the bumblebee would really mean. This video can be viewed on our YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1JGPjhEI0ik>



## Lessons learned

BfE has been extremely successful for BBCT: it exceeded targets, broadened and deepened our partnerships, and strengthened the position of BBCT nationwide. Over the period of the project we have worked hard to engage new audiences, widen our geographical spread and increase awareness about bumblebees and pollination generally. By raising the profile of bumblebees we have helped to draw attention to the need for national pollinator strategies and we are proud to have been involved in the development of the National Pollinator Strategy for England and the Welsh Action Plan for Pollinators.

Many more people have now heard about Bumblebee Conservation Trust than before we started in 2011 and we have learned a lot from our experience of delivering a large project. The success of BfE has demonstrated that BBCT's strengths are:

- Targeted advisory work – creating local pride and involvement in creating habitat for bumblebees.
- Delivery of an innovative programme of activities for volunteers and the public.
- Specialist training events, farm days and workshops specifically aimed at other NGOs, academics, businesses and amateur naturalists.
- Online resources (bumblebee ID guide, Bee kind garden accreditation scheme, factsheets).
- An enthusiastic and dedicated team of volunteers, staff, members and trustees.

In this section we summarise some of the key lessons we have learnt over the past three years.

### **Building a website in just six months requires some compromises.**

The BBCT website is one of our main engagement tools and has been enormously successful at helping us to reach a wide and varied audience with our message. The website was designed and built during the first six months of the project, which was a very tight timescale and resulted in some compromises being made in terms of functionality. While reaction has been overwhelmingly positive about the site we know from some user feedback that we have lost out on new membership subscriptions due to frustrations with our online membership signup process. Over the duration of the project we have made a number of 'fixes' to improve this process, as well as low level content changes to the site, however we hope to make some major improvements to the website in the near future to further improve the user experience.

### **Working in partnership is more efficient and provides new opportunities.**

Working with people who have previously achieved success helped to guide us through unfamiliar processes and enabled us to meet our objectives efficiently. We found that working with other NGOs to help them to deliver their own project objectives achieved mutually beneficial results, saved both time and money, and often provided a great source of inspiration. Partnerships with NGOs or businesses with dedicated media departments and expertise also helped us to reach new audiences, such as schools, or key government departments.

During the project we developed very good relationships with scientists from universities in the UK. Scientists working on different fields of research helped to complement and expand our understanding of many different topics, from pesticides to commercial bumblebees and disease risk management. This added another dimension to our work that interested our audiences.

Overall, working in partnership has helped us to deepen and strengthen relationships and it has introduced us to new people and new ideas. Crucially this will lead to other projects in the future.



### **Managing existing habitat differently can be as effective as creating new habitat.**

Sometimes land management only needs to be tweaked slightly to favour pollinators, at very little cost. Learning to be open minded, to listen to a landowner's challenges and then adapt rigid management advice to something more flexible and appropriate is essential. Being able to provide cost-benefit information for the changes in land management regimes is also vital. Good conservation management is all about choosing the right measures, putting them in the right place and managing them in the right way that is appropriate for the farmer or landowner.

Also, where land is managed by a contractor, as in the case of solar parks or utility companies, keeping management advice simple is important. This does, however, limit management options. For example the ideal situation might be too complex to expect contractors to implement. Meeting with contractors, inspiring, educating and enthusing them is crucial to achieve the right outcome on the land. In some cases the main issue was not having someone on site constantly to monitor the situation. This meant we were unable to be responsive to things on ground and tweak management plans accordingly. We are looking at how we can address this in future projects.

### **Providing ongoing support is as important as delivering conservation advice.**

Our ability to continue to provide advice and to revisit farmers and landowners was limited and yet this became vital in *sustaining* the habitat that had been created or restored. Farmers and landowners could quickly become disillusioned if the advice given did not work in practice (largely due to weather conditions). Providing continuing support was essential. We have captured many examples as case studies so that we can demonstrate the challenges and benefits to more land owners in future.

The success of the habitat created or restored also depended upon us understanding whether there had been an increase in pollinators generally and bumblebees in particular. Our BeeWalk data collecting programme relied on us finding volunteers to monitor the land, and this became increasingly difficult as we became more successful at creating habitat. As BeeWalk continues to grow this will hopefully become less of an issue for future projects.

### **Working as a remote team can be challenging.**

The Conservation Team all operated remotely from different parts the UK but they all needed to become a cohesive team very quickly in order to achieve the targets set for the project. Everyone needed to feel part of a team and part of the larger team of BBCT; communication, not just by email but via Skype and face to face at regular meetings was vital to ensure that staff motivation remained high and the project was delivered on time. Ensuring that people had access to effective IT systems was also vital and access to shared filing systems was something that we often struggled with. New processes and infrastructure have now been put in place to improve this situation and we will factor the costs of these systems for new staff into future funding applications.



## Future opportunities

BfE has enabled us to identify clear strategic priorities for the future and has shaped the development of our five-year strategic plan. Our new strategic aims build on BfE's successes and continue its legacy – going forwards we aim to:

- Support the conservation of all bumblebees, rare or abundant.
- Raise awareness and increase understanding about bumblebees and the social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits which they and other pollinators provide.
- Ensure BBCT is sustainable, fit for purpose, and able to respond quickly to challenges and change.

BfE has inspired a new generation and has helped many new audiences to engage with the charismatic bumblebee. The project has already initiated many areas of opportunity, some of which have been developed into follow on projects:

### Building our GIS capabilities

Geographical Information Systems (GIS) software allows data to be presented in a coherent, easily updated form. The ability to analyse data in this way for use in policy work, grant applications, identifying target areas for conservation work, familiarising staff with new sites, and a more focussed approach to fundraising is essential and must be cost effective.

With GIS capability we would be able to use data/layers in conjunction with other conservation organisations to gain a real insight into habitat biodiversity. The ability to share data would also ensure that everything we do is professional and evidence based.

### Making a Buzz for the coast

The Kent coast is a hotspot for rare bumblebees such as the Shrill carder bee (the UK's most threatened bumblebee), Brown-banded carder bee, and the Moss carder bee, as well as several rare solitary bees such as the Sea aster mining bee. These species exist in small, isolated and highly fragmented populations along the coast which leads to inbreeding and a reduction in genetic diversity, making populations even more vulnerable.

One of the primary aims of *Making a Buzz for the Coast* will be to safeguard these rare bee populations by creating and restoring habitat in existing population centres and linking isolated populations through the creation of flower-rich 'stepping stones' and habitat corridors along the coast. The project will span over 300 miles of the Kent and East Sussex coast from Dartford to Rye, where it will focus on restoring and creating habitat for Kent's wild pollinators. Particular focus will be placed on bumblebees and solitary bees, and linking isolated populations through habitat connectivity.

### Thurso: Gateway to the Great Yellow

This project will create a strong sense of community ownership of the enigmatic and rare Great yellow bumblebee and encourage grass roots support for bumblebee conservation. Through education, outreach and interpretation, together with a range of practical measures, BBCT will engage with local communities throughout Caithness so that they are more aware of their unique natural heritage and create and manage habitats for the Great yellow bumblebee and other pollinators. Our vision is to support a vibrant area that is a more attractive place to live, visit and work. We want to involve the communities of Caithness right from the beginning to the end of the project and encourage pride and ownership of the natural heritage which makes Caithness special.



**BfE partners:**

Allmanhall; Bees, Wasps and Ants Recording Society (BWARS); British Bee-keepers Association (BBKA); Burns Pet Nutrition Ltd; Caithness Biodiversity Group; Campaign for Farmed Environment; Central Scotland Green Network Trust; Chesterfield Council; Conservation Grade; Crocus; Emorsgate; Environment Agency; Garden for Life forum; Greater London Authority; Gwent Wildlife Trust; Habitat Aid; Hymettus; Internal Drainage Board; Johnsons Seeds; Kent Wildlife Trust; Kings Crops; Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF); Mineral Products Association; Ministry of Defence; Ministry of Justice; National Farmers Union; The National Trust for Scotland, Natural England; Nectarworks; Plantlife; Pori Natur a Thefadraeth (PONT); Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh; Royal Horticultural Society (RHS); RSPB; Scotia Seeds; Solarcentury; Sustrans; Wildlife Trusts.

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