



STRATEGIC PLAN 2014 – 2019

Saving the Sound of Summer

This is the Bumblebee Conservation Trust's first strategic plan. It has been written to inform our staff, volunteers, members, partners and funders about what we aim to achieve by 2020 to address the crisis affecting our bumblebees and other pollinating insects.

BBCT was established in 2006 to address the decline of the UK's bumblebees. There are currently 25 species of bumblebee in the UK, representing approximately 10% of the world's bumblebee species. Two UK species have become nationally extinct in the last 70 years, although one of these - the Short-haired bumblebee (*Bombus subterraneus*) - is in the process of being reintroduced after an absence of 25 years.

Of our UK bumblebee species, 11 are listed as being of conservation importance and BBCT's work to date has focused on supporting seven of these. Two British species are listed as vulnerable - the Great yellow bumblebee (*Bombus distinguendus*) and the Shrill carder bee (*Bombus sylvarum*) - as their distribution is now limited to only a handful of locations. In addition, we do not wish to see any of our more common species declining in either their geographical range or abundance.

The need to focus on both the very rare and more common species represents a major step change for BBCT as we move forward with the implementation of this strategic plan and the next phase of our development.



The decline of these iconic and charismatic insects can be attributed to multiple pressures including climate change, pathogens, increased use and toxicity of pesticides and loss of habitat. Since the Second World War more than three million hectares (98%) of lowland meadow have been converted to intensive agriculture and urban development, or have simply been neglected.

The concern about this decline is now so widespread, because of the threat to food security, that governments have started to take action. In 2013, the Welsh Government launched an Action Plan for Pollinators in Wales - the first countrywide strategy of its kind. This was followed by the development of a National Pollinator Strategy for England in 2014. BBCT has been involved in both of these strategies. Working with other conservation charities, BBCT will encourage the governments of Scotland and Northern Ireland to follow suit.

Our new strategic aims are 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.

RATIONALE FOR DEVELOPMENT

Our vision is to ensure that our communities and countryside will be rich in bumblebees and colourful wildflowers, supporting a diversity of wildlife and habitats for everyone to enjoy.

In May 2012, BBCT launched its first major, national project called **Bees for Everyone (BfE)**. Funding for this flagship initiative was made available until November 2014 thanks to support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Scottish Natural Heritage, Natural Resources Wales, the Redwing Charitable Trust and BBCT members. BfE's aims were to raise awareness about bumblebees and to undertake conservation work where it was needed most. At the heart of BfE were three fundamental principles – learning, engagement and action.

The project has achieved this by:

- Encouraging active participation in conservation measures to benefit bumblebees - working directly with landowners and farmers.
- Engaging the general public in wildlife gardening to provide and improve all-year-round habitat for bumblebees.
- Enabling people to identify bumblebees to help monitor their abundance and distribution.

All project targets were met, highlighting an overarching enthusiasm and need for BBCT's work. As we move forward we need to capitalise on this success to achieve even more benefits for our bumblebees.

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 members of 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.

We will measure whether we are achieving our strategic aims by:

- The amount and type of good quality habitat we help to create and how effective this is for supporting healthy populations of bumblebees.
- The number of landowners we advise and the conversion rate of those who take up our habitat management recommendations.
- The number of events we run, the level of attendance and the quality of feedback received from participants.
- A year-on-year increase in information relating to the abundance and distribution of all bumblebee species throughout the British Isles.
- The strategic partnerships we build and what we can achieve from collaborative working.
- A year-on-year increase in new members and volunteers.
- The number of people we engage with, including the popularity of our website, social media and traditional media presence.
- A high customer satisfaction rating for the services and products we provide.
- A year-on-year increase in unrestricted income necessary to sustain our core work.

BBCT NOW AND IN FIVE YEARS' TIME

BBCT is one of the youngest conservation charities operating nationally across the UK. We have come a long way in our first eight years and have raised an impressive £2 million towards bumblebee conservation. At the time of writing this strategy, our turnover has just exceeded £600k per annum, supporting the work of 16 staff and the contribution of more than 500 volunteers. We also have 8,000 members with their annual subscription of £128k playing an essential role in enabling us to deliver our charitable objectives.

BBCT's work falls into five distinct areas; our targets in each area are:

1. Building Evidence

- To make our citizen science initiative BeeWalk a sustainable and popular bumblebee monitoring project - with over 500 volunteers covering all of the UK.
- To invest in developing and training future bumblebee experts – a 5% increase in training sessions year on year and the promotion of the importance of bumblebees in schools and colleges.
- To work with other recording groups and experts in order to substantially increase the data available on bumblebee abundance and distribution.
- To commission our own research, or support that of others, to build evidence and aid understanding about the importance of bumblebees and other pollinators.

2. Building Influence and Advocacy

- To continue to play an active role in the development and implementation of national pollinator plans and work with others to raise the profile of bumblebees and other pollinating insects.
- To ensure our policy work focuses on the areas of priority for bumblebee conservation and that resources are available to achieve this.

3. Fostering Habitat Provision

- To establish best practice for habitat creation and management in order to help create and / or restore 10,000 hectares of habitat for bumblebees in urban areas as well as the broader countryside.
- To continue to support the successful reintroduction of extinct bumblebee species, continue our efforts for our two flagship species so they are no longer a conservation concern and begin efforts to assist other UK bumblebee species.

4. Fostering Public Engagement

- Develop our range of outreach materials and launch new innovative schemes to engage more people across the UK in bumblebee conservation.
- Engage with over 300 community groups from across the UK.

5. Building Capacity

- Build our membership base so that we are supported by at least 25,000 members by 2019.
- Recruit more volunteers to help deliver key conservation objectives.
- Improve the quality of our services and ensure our operations are efficient and effective.
- Increase our unrestricted income and ensure more of our work is sustainable.



CHALLENGES AND KEY DRIVERS

If BBCT is to be successful in its vision to achieve a positive change for UK bumblebees then understanding external influences and addressing challenges is just as critical as harnessing our strengths.

Examples of conservation and development projects across the country

Bee with Us Volunteering project: BBCT relies on its 400 volunteers to help deliver events, walks and talks as well as collect data about bumblebees as part of our BeeWalk scheme. We are currently developing a strategy to build the numbers and provide better support for our volunteers.

Bee Wild Wales: This project is in the development stage and will aim to engage with communities, facilitate volunteers and BeeWalkers, and develop educational resources for schools and young people. It will be a Wales-wide project and will include funding for a project officer.

Bumblebee surveys (Northern Ireland): We aim to promote our BeeWalk surveys and raise awareness in Northern Ireland. As Ireland is home to both the Shril carder and Great yellow bumblebees, we also hope to have some staff working there within the next five years.

Making a Buzz for the Coast (Kent): An ambitious landscape-scale project to increase habitat for wild pollinators, especially bumblebees, along 300 miles of the Kent coastline. This will help strengthen and safeguard rare bumblebee populations, as well as aiding the reintroduction of the Short-haired bumblebee.

Pollinating the Peak (Derbyshire): This is a pilot project which aims to increase awareness of bumblebees by engaging communities in pollination conservation, creating bumblebee-friendly habitat and generating more BeeWalkers.

Shrill Carder Bee Project (Somerset Levels): To establish the presence of Shrill carder populations and distribution following extensive flooding in the winter of 2013-14 and to review current records, as well as establishing long-term monitoring transects.

Thurso, Gateway to the Great Yellow (Scotland): A community-focused project to inspire the people of Thurso - one of the last remaining strongholds for the Great yellow bumblebee – to create bumblebee-friendly habitat.

A final message to our members

The work we do would not be possible without the support of our members. One of our aims is to build our membership to make sure our work has long-term sustainability. We would like to conclude this report by saying a huge Thank you! for everything you have done for us over the years. We hope you will continue with us as we journey into the future and look forward to keeping you up-to-date on our progress.

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