

Council to cut back mowing grass in some areas

A more “ecological and wildlife friendly” approach to maintenance will see a small number of parks and green spaces being mowed less often in the city.

The change in approach to mowing, under a new biodiversity pilot scheme, will also see more wild flowers and pollinator-friendly plants planted in grassy spots, as well as “greater use of perennial plantings and insect encouraging plans within flower and shrub areas”.

Councillors welcomed the idea at a meeting of the Culture and Communities Committee on Thursday, February 29.

A report said routine mowing has a “negative effect on wildlife, eliminating habitats, reducing the number of pollinators and reducing biodiversity”.

Dubbed ‘Edinburgh’s Flowering Lawns’ the project will seek to “encourage a more diverse mix of grass species which in turn supports a wider range of animals and insects,” it added.

It is not yet known which sites will be included in the pilot.

At the meeting Cllr Ed Thornley, Lib Dems, said similar schemes in the past had been interpreted by some people as the council “giving up maintaining an area rather than taking a different approach”.

Officials said in response there would be “more engagement”

with residents and community groups to spread awareness about the changes.

Less frequent grass cutting will be considered “on a site by site basis” taking account of health and safety considerations, particularly maintaining sight lines at junctions and roundabouts, the council said.

“In 2024, it is proposed to pilot this approach in a small number of sites. This will allow development of the concept, and will help to identify what works and what doesn’t,” the report added.

“It will also allow time for machinery to be updated, for staff training and for communication on the changes. There will also be a focus on improving the accuracy of the data held and to development of mapping tools to help with planning and future development

“In addition to reducing mowing frequencies, features to improve biodiversity will also be introduced. This will include greater use of wild flowers in grass areas (e.g. use of clover, yellow rattle, common knapweed, must mallow) and increasing the use of pollinator-friendly plants (e.g. field scabious, teasel, meadow cranesbill, cowslip and meadow buttercup) and greater use of perennial plantings and insect encouraging plants within flower and shrub areas.”

The outcome of the pilot is due to be reported back to councillors in “autumn/winter”.

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter



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