Dear Secretary

The purpose of this message is to update you on some progress made in relation to a planned expansion of the wildflower trials that have taken place this year and proposed changes for the Floral Gateway Awards.

We are extremely keen to obtain your feedback on both these topics, and have supplied further information below on the progress made and the ways you can engage with us.

**Floral Gateway Awards Proposals**

We have been considering ways in which the Floral Gateway Awards could be improved to better promote community collaboration, whilst still recognising the huge amount of volunteer effort, time and talent that goes in to keeping our towns and villages looking vibrant and well cared for. We have consulted with In Bloom groups across the region and listened to their feedback.

Below we have set out details of two new proposals that we believe can improve the Awards going in to the future and recognise more of the great work being achieved across the Borders.

We would greatly appreciate any feedback on these proposals before progressing with them and are inviting you to provide your comments to us by 31st January.

**Proposal 1: Awards programme** - We are proposing to move to a programme of Gold, Silver and Bronze awards, more aligned with the Keep Scotland Beautiful programme. This enables recognition of the many community groups and various initiatives, without being limited to the category ‘winners’. We welcome your thoughts on this.

**Proposal 2: Online sharing forum** - We propose setting up a dedicated online forum for community groups involved in the Floral Gateway programme which will allow member groups to communicate, share best practice and resources with each other.

This method is already being used by other community engagement groups and is a useful resource for sharing information between like-minded people and has proven extremely successful.

Before we trial anything, we would like to know if this is something that would be of interest. We would be happy to demonstrate how it works to you via an online meeting if this was helpful?

**Wildflower Consultation**

As promoted in June this year (see link; [Wildflower areas to help promote biodiversity across Scottish Borders | Scottish Borders Council (scotborders.gov.uk)](https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/news/article/4101/wildflower_areas_to_help_promote_biodiversity_across_scottish_borders)) the Council has undertaken trials of wildflower sites across the region. Each trial site was prepared and seeded with one of 3 different seed mixes. This enabled us to monitor the successful establishment, and feedback received, to plan for further expansion of this approach. A full list of sites across the Borders where wildflower mixes have been trialled this year can also be found on our website <https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/20013/environment/849/grasscutting_and_bedding_plant_provision_faqs/2>

The feedback has been on the whole hugely supportive, and the sites have generally established very successfully. As a result of these successes, we are developing this approach for 2022 and beyond, looking at additional locations that lend themselves to wildflower cultivation. The aim is to positively contribute to the biodiversity of the Borders and promote more sustainable ways of managing green space, to help pollinators including bees and butterflies thrive.

This will be a phased approach over several years and we would really appreciate your input and ideas for potential new areas that may lend themselves to wildflower planting. In order to enable us to prepare for the year ahead we would request any feedback by the 31st of January, however as this is a phased approach we will be developing this beyond 2022 so your input is always welcomed even if it’s after this date.

You can do this by submitting feedback to us via our website <https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/neighbourhoodservices>

Many thanks

Kind regards,

Craig Blackie