



**Yorkshire
Wildlife Trust**



#TeamWilder Communities in Action

CASE STUDY: Friends of Barmby Moor Wildlife Areas

Tell us a bit about your group/community

Barmby Moor is a village of around 1,200 people, 2 miles from the market town of Pocklington and around 12 miles from York. We have a local primary school, a pub and a post office within the village.

We currently have around 10 regularly active members of Friends of Barmby Moor Wildlife Areas, plus 30+ who are in contact via social media and help out with occasional seasonal tasks and events. All of these people reside within Barmby and Pocklington.

What prompted you to come together as a group, and how did you get started on your wildlife journey?

My neighbour Katie had seen wildflowers growing on roundabouts and verges in Bridlington and thought it could be a good idea for us to try something similar on Becksides, which forms part of our village greens. This was in the run-up to the London Olympics, when wildflower meadows were also being created at the Olympic village, so this idea was prominent in the news at the time. Back in Barmby Moor, we were watching bluebells being mown down in their prime each year and thought, "something has to change here!". I then read in our local paper about the East Riding of Yorkshire Council/EU Leader project called 'Country Mile', which was a new initiative at the time aimed at fostering a greater appreciation of the wildlife value of Verge Nature Reserves, so all this came together to give us the impetus to get started. We banded together and sought the views of the people who live on Becksides about our ideas. Nobody objected, and some were even prepared to help!



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Friends of Barmby Moor Wildlife Areas (FBMWA) started up in 2011; the idea was for local people to take over one of our local grass verges and alter the way they were managed in order to improve plant diversity. Having obtained permission to do this by the Parish Council, we kick-started things by joining the 'Country Mile' project, which included support from a paid member of staff. This project ran until April 2013, and during that time we joined forces with our local church, who had similar aims and had started managing some of their churchyard for wildlife in the early 1990s. After the Country Mile Project ended, we decided to carry on our work independently, both in the churchyard and on Becksides – so since 2013 we have been managing both sites for wildlife; Becksides is part of the village greens, with wide grassy verges surrounding a beck; the churchyard is said to be the largest in East Yorkshire, at around one hectare.

What actions have you taken for wildlife in your community and why?

Our main achievement has been to convert a large patch of gang mown amenity grass to thriving meadow, where native wild orchids now grow. We have done this largely by following the principles learned via the Country Mile Project – i.e. reduce the soil fertility by removing cut grass and see what naturally turns up. We have worked with the Parish Council to take over responsibility for the management of the area; mowing now



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doesn't take place at all through spring and summer, though we do mow regularly through the autumn after the main summer cut – this further reduces fertility and gives wildflowers the best chance of getting a head start the following spring, without being outcompeted by the grasses. We also manage part of the churchyard for wildlife, applying the same meadow-management principles there in pursuit of the best outcomes for wildlife.

We have augmented some of the areas we manage by adding native wildflower plug plants, growing these ourselves from seed collected in the churchyard or local verges, and we have planted bulbs in the two wildlife areas to add colour and increase early-season pollen.

More recently, we have undertaken a planting project to establish a patch of tansies, in the hope of creating an 'Ark' site for endangered Tansy beetles. We were aware that nearby York was one of the very few locations left in the UK where Tansy beetles could be found, and one of our members, Will, heard about the vulnerability of the Ouse tansy beetle colonies to flooding. He thought Becksideside could be a suitable location to attempt setting up a new tansy beetle colony and so set about growing over 600 plug plants on his allotment! We then worked as a group, with support from Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and Greener Pocklington, to prepare a suitable patch of ground near to the beck and plant all of these out. Around a dozen volunteers helped with the digging over of the area and the planting, and the plants have since grown on very quickly, with most flowering in their first season. The plan is now to split these and create other smaller areas up and down Becksideside, hopefully establishing enough suitable habitat to allow Tansy beetles to be introduced into the area. "If you build it, they will come" as they say! We have very recently been in contact with York University and the Tansy Beetle Action group to let them know about our work and are hopeful that our village can have a real impact in supporting this rare native species.

What resources or support have you used?

We have had a lot of help from Greener Pocklington – this is a local group formed to help combat the climate crisis and habitat loss through supporting practical action in and around Pocklington- www.facebook.com/groups/319897665596314 They have assisted us in terms of providing extra people-power

for action days and also helping us to link in with other local organisations to help build our network of support.

We are fortunate to have support from a local tool hire company who loan us the power scythe that we need for our main annual meadow cut at no cost- www.elvingtonplantire.co.uk

Our local parish council have been supportive in allowing us to take on management of part of our village greens, and have also added our group to their public liability insurance policy, which has been really helpful - www.barmbymoornet The Country Mile project, sadly now defunct, was integral to our whole project getting started and Michael Newton who was our main contact on that project still keeps in touch and visits occasionally.

We are very grateful to receive a small cash donation each year from a local family; this money is raised from craft items they create and sell at local events during the year and allows us to cover the cost of basic resources such as fuel and compost. And of course, we are hugely grateful to our group members and other volunteers from the village who come together for our planting and meadow management days of action.

In terms of text-based resources, we have found *Meadows* by Christopher Lloyd and *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?* by Charles Flowers really useful, and would recommend Emorsgate as a seed supplier and source of information about specific species and sowing recommendations - www.wildseed.co.uk

How have you empowered or involved others?

We have arranged wildlife-themed talks from a range of different speakers in the church and held FBMWA open days, which have included learning walks and teaching of observation and surveying techniques, including practical small mammal and moth surveying events; through these friendly, informal activities we have brought local people together socially, and also helped them to learn practical conservation skills which some have been able to implement in their own gardens and green spaces. One of our members has a teaching background and has worked to create interpretation boards around the village, which help people to understand more about the species around them and basic information about how we can do more to support them;

these have been really well received by local residents.

What are some of the things you're finding are working well/ proving rewarding?

Since we started, we've had austerity, Brexit, global warming becoming much more of a problem, the Covid pandemic, wars...All of these are huge and depressing events, which we as ordinary folk don't feel we can have any real influence on. But we have changed one small village for the better and this has been solely down to our actions. It has brought people together and continues to bring people together and has made the village a better place for wildlife; being part of this has given us a really rewarding sense of achievement.

What differences have you noticed as a result of your actions?

Our work has definitely led to a huge increase in the frequency and diversity of wildflowers in the village; the recent appearance of common spotted, pyramidal and northern marsh orchids has been especially exciting for us! Invertebrate species such as hoverflies and butterflies have increased due to the meadow areas providing more sustenance; we now have meadow brown and green-veined whites visiting the village greens, and in just the last two years marbled whites have been spotted in the churchyard. We also see hedgehogs in the churchyard, presumably making the most of the increased forage among the longer grass. We also encounter lots of field voles when we mow, which again are benefitting from the fescues and other longer grasses in the meadows.

We are also conscious that some species, such as bats, seem to be declining; we're keen to start doing more monitoring and liaise with local conservation groups to better understand the reasons for this, and to see what we might be able to do in the village to help reverse these trends.

In terms of changes for people, it's great to know that people have been directed here by members of Greener Pocklington who have recommended our village greens and churchyard as good examples of areas managed for wildlife. We have had feedback from local people that they never used to visit the churchyard, but now it's a highlight of their evening walks as they follow the mown paths through the wildlife areas and pause to watch butterflies feeding.

Have you faced any challenges or barriers in taking your action for wildlife?

During the period 2014-16 we had complaints from a small number of local residents who felt the wildlife areas looked 'untidy' and wanted to see the village greens revert to a more intensive mowing regime. These complaints eventually led to the



Parish Council convening a meeting to consider removing the Becksidewildlife area. We spoke to people within the village to gauge their feelings, and fortunately large numbers of residents backed the wildlife area and turned out at the meeting to show their support for our work and the area was saved! This was a very upsetting period, especially in light of all the hard work the group had put in over the years, but I took inspiration from my dad, who was in the final stages of his life at this point, and who had been a massive lifelong advocate for wildlife – this gave me the resolve to carry on.

Going right back to 2008/9, before the formation of FBMWA, it was depressing to watch the bluebells in the village be mown down before they had chance to flower properly. But looking back now, it was these moments of despair that spurred us into greater action – without these challenges we would not have been inspired to act and so we hold onto that thought now when things get tough – disappointments, mistakes and injustices are often the wellsprings of future action, change and success!

Has becoming part of #Team Wilder had any positive impacts for your group?

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's #Team Wilder programme has really added impetus to our efforts recently, helping us to connect to more groups, such as Molescroft Wildlife Network (see separate case study for more info), in order to build our network of support and share learning. They have also helped us to bring in more volunteers for task days and have offered guidance about potential future projects to increase biodiversity in the village, and how we can encourage more people to get involved in these. We are looking forward to working with them further in 2024 as we strive to make Barmby Moor even more welcoming for people and for wildlife!

As a result of in being involved in Friends of Barmby Moor Wildlife Areas and/or #Team Wilder do you feel more connected to your local area? Have you formed any new connections or relationships?

Yes, we definitely feel that being part of the group has given us a greater sense of pride in and connection to our village, and has led to us building some great friendships.



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Our work has led to us connecting both in-person and online to other local groups like Greener Pocklington and Weighton Wildlife (a group which engages the nearby Market Weighton community with the natural environment and wildlife – <https://en-gb.facebook.com/groups/1273919892786446/>), which brings with it much learning and a sense of solidarity.

As our meadow management skills have improved this has also allowed us to reach out to others such as Madhyamaka near Pocklington www.madhyamaka.org and Down to Earth in Hull – www.facebook.com/d2ehull as we spread the love, spread the learning and spread the seed, helping others to support wildlife through the creation of wildflower meadows in their own local areas. It is great to have these links – we are stronger together.

What have been your favourite nature moments or encounters with wildlife whilst doing this?

Seeing the orchids first start to appear in our meadow a few years ago was a real thrill. They seem to go in cycles, being really abundant some years and less so others, but spotting and marking them each year remains one of our favourite annual activities. Marbled white butterflies appearing in the churchyard last year, and again this year, was also really exciting and encourages us that what we are doing is making a difference. Other than that, the camaraderie when working together on action days is always a highlight – maintaining wildlife areas to the size that we now have here requires a lot of hard graft, and none of us are getting any younger, but pulling together to get the work done, sharing news and jokes... and lots of tea and cake!... makes the days just whizz by. It really feels quite special when people come together to work towards a shared goal, not because they are being paid, or cajoled – but because they care.

What do you plan to do next?

We plan to carry on doing more of the same, for sure! Managing the Becksides and churchyard wildlife areas keeps us busy and will remain our main focus. We're also hopeful that we can establish a larger colony of orchids on Becksides and are saving seed and researching techniques as to how to go about that, though they are tricky customers! We will hopefully have the tansy beetle project to focus on too, if we get the go-ahead to host a colony here, and we're working with Andy from #TeamWilder to look at the possibility of holding a community bioblitz in 2024 to bring residents together to have fun creating a more formal record of the species that currently make the village their home, or visit it to feed. We're also in discussion with Andy about possible wildlife talks and community habitat creation days, which gives us much to look forward to!

Why do you think it's important that people use their local green spaces and/or do things to help nature?

Very few people have a country estate to manage as they wish, but a lot of us have a small garden where we do have influence, and collectively these small spaces add up to a really significant areas of land, far bigger than any country estate! Making small changes can overall have a huge impact. Beyond our own



gardens, we need to treasure our greenspaces and use them, or else they will be gone. We don't have to accept the status quo – we at FBMWA feel confident that change for the better is now building pace, but if people out there are unhappy with how their local greenspaces are managed they can get involved in making that change happen right now – it just takes a bit of bravery to get started, and a few willing volunteers. If you are unsure where to start, contact your local Wildlife Trust and speak to someone involved in #TeamWilder!

What would you say to any other residents' groups thinking about taking action for nature in their own communities?

Do it! But...

- Don't expect results overnight – it can take years to achieve the results you may be hoping for.
- Be prepared to do some hard work.
- If you are creating meadows, find somewhere to have a large compost heap – you will need somewhere to dispose of the arisings, and compost heaps are fantastic wildlife habitats in themselves!
- Choose the location for your nature area carefully, bearing in mind what is available and what you want to achieve. It is better to work with nature than try to impose your own vision, if that vision is not suitable for the site you have. For example, ideally we would like to have a patch of limestone grassland, a habitat we all love. But in Barmby we've got tree cover, the area floods regularly, the soil is neutral, and the limestone of the Wolds is just slightly too far away. Hence, a little bit of neutral type grassland is the closest we can get – that's what suits this area best, and so that's fine.
- Try not to get too downhearted if you face apathy or conflict, remember the Ghandi quote: "first they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you...then you win". Keep going!