



# Get Britain Buzzing...

## Managing your Community Meadow

### Some more detail on cutting

For the first few years of its life your newly sown meadow will need some careful management to allow the wildflowers to grow, flower and set seed. Every meadow is different and management should be adjusted accordingly, however here are some general recommendations, particularly relevant in the early years of the meadow establishing:

- **Control weeds:** You may need to cut/top tall weeds such as docks and thistles in the early years to prevent them dominating the meadow.
- **The first year's growth:** In the first year you will need to prevent seedlings from getting smothered by vigorous grass growth. This can be achieved by mowing to a height of about 5 cm, or the mower's highest setting and remove the grass cuttings. This may need doing several times over the year.
- **The next few years:** You should be aiming to allow the sward to 'fill-out', i.e. create a good coverage of wildflowers and grasses. The meadow should be cut once a year after it has flowered and the seed has dropped (late September).

### Everything needs somewhere to live

Providing a source of nectar and pollen via wildflowers is only part of the picture, the animals that will move into your meadow also need somewhere to shelter, hunt, feed and breed. Many invertebrates require long grass for egg laying and over wintering as eggs, pupae or larvae in order to complete their life cycles. Grass is the larval food for many species of butterfly and moth, such as the Meadow brown butterfly (*Maniola jurtina*) and the Large yellow underwing moth (*Noctua pronuba*), which lay their eggs in long grass.

Leaving an area of uncut rough grassland can provide nesting areas for bumblebees – undisturbed areas may attract voles whose nests bumblebees often use, these areas can also provide ideal conditions for surface-nesting species such as the Common carder bee (*Bombus pascuorum*).

Leaving a patch of grass to grow long and remain uncut over the winter is the best way to achieve this. Cut these areas every 2-3 years and try to leave a patch of at least 2x5m. The edges of the site are the best places for longer grass patches, connected to a hedgerow. This improves foraging for birds such as song thrushes. House sparrows will use thick bushes as shelter and from there, come to forage in the grass for invertebrates and seeds.



Ringlet  
*Aphantopus hyperantus*  
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Common carder bee  
*Bombus pascuorum*  
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