

## Seasonal Bedding and Floral Decorations

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Report of: Development Manager

Report to: Chief Officer Parks and Countryside

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

### **What is this report about?**

#### **Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions**

- This report outlines proposed changes to seasonal bedding displays and city centre floral decorations in response to climate change issues.
- To help achieve climate change objectives as well as contribute to the medium-term financial plan, proposals were approved at Executive Board in December 2020 to save £134k on the cost of seasonal bedding.
- Following a consultation exercise earlier this year there is now a proposal to create over 1 hectare of new pollinator friendly wildflower areas in place of traditional bedding displays.
- The intention is to replace some bedding primarily with wildflower displays but also to include where appropriate the removal of beds, reduction in size of existing beds or perennial planting.
- Similarly, a proposal for a 50% reduction in floral decorations in the city centre (with a cost saving of £16k) was also approved at Executive Board subject to consultation. This proposal does not affect displays outside the city centre or support for 'in bloom' activities.
- The intention is to retain floral decorations at key gateways, civic buildings and cultural areas whilst areas proposed for removal are in retail and legal/business areas, however these could be retained if local businesses wished to fund them
- Reconfiguration of beds will take place over autumn/winter ready for wildflower displays in spring/summer 2022. Those beds that are to be retained with seasonal bedding will be planted out in autumn as usual. Revised arrangements for floral decorations within the city centre will be put in place late May/June 2022.

### **Recommendations**

The Chief Officer Parks and Countryside is recommended to approve the following:

- a) To reconfigure seasonal bedding displays and introduce around 1 hectare of wildflower displays in parks and green spaces as set out in paragraph 4 of this report.
- b) To prioritise floral decorations within the city centre in line with paragraph 10 of this report.

## Why is the proposal being put forward?

- Seasonal bedding displays are contained in defined flower beds in various parks and green spaces throughout the city designated for this purpose. Whilst these displays provide colour, they have limited benefits to biodiversity and broader climate change issues. Summer displays are planted in late May / early June once the risk of frost has gone and provide displays until October when these are replaced with autumn varieties which remain until the end of spring the following year. These plants are grown in the Arium and planted by gardening teams who also conduct visits to remove weeds and the plants that are replaced. Some of these displays particularly on roundabouts and key gateways already attract sponsorship from local businesses.
- The following table indicates the historic proportion of bedding displays for each type of setting before disruption during the coronavirus pandemic:

Setting	Percentage
Roundabouts	25.0%
Community parks	22.7%
Major parks (Golden Acre, Kirkstall Abbey, Lotherton Estate, Middleton Park, Roundhay Park and Temple Newsam Estate)	17.6%
City centre	13.5%
Highway verges	9.4%
Cemeteries, crematoria and war memorials	8.3%
Local green spaces and recreation grounds	3.5%

## What impact will this proposal have?

### Wards Affected:

Have ward members been consulted?       Yes       No

- To help achieve climate change objectives as well as contribute to the medium-term financial plan, proposals were approved at Executive Board in December 2020 to save £134k on the cost of seasonal bedding. Following a consultation exercise earlier this year there is now a proposal to create over 1 hectare of new pollinator friendly wildflower areas in place of traditional bedding displays.
- The intention is to replace some bedding primarily with wildflower displays but also to include where appropriate the removal of beds, reduction in size of existing beds or perennial planting. The following table sets out how this will be achieved based on the table in 2 above.

Setting	Current Proportion of Bedding	Proposed Wildflower Replacement	Comment
Roundabouts	25.0%	25%	Replace with wildflower displays
Community parks	22.7%	12.7%	Mix of bedding and additional wildflower displays
Major parks	17.6%	3.6%	Largely retain bedding with additional wildflower displays
City centre	13.5%	5.8%	Mix of bedding and additional wildflower displays

Setting	Current Proportion of Bedding	Proposed Wildflower Replacement	Comment
Highway verges	9.4%	9.4%	Replace with wildflower displays
Cemeteries, crematoria and war memorials	8.3%	0%	Retain bedding
Local green spaces and recreation grounds	3.5%	3.5%	Replace with wildflower displays as appropriate
	<b>100%</b>	<b>60%</b>	

- 5 The key difference is the removal of seasonal bedding on roundabouts and highway verges (often large traffic islands) and to replace them with wildflower displays. The following images illustrate how traditional geometric beds will be replaced by more naturalistic annual wildflower displays which provide colour as well as benefit pollinating insects.



- 6 It is proposed that signage will be introduced to accompany the new wildflower areas as illustrated below.



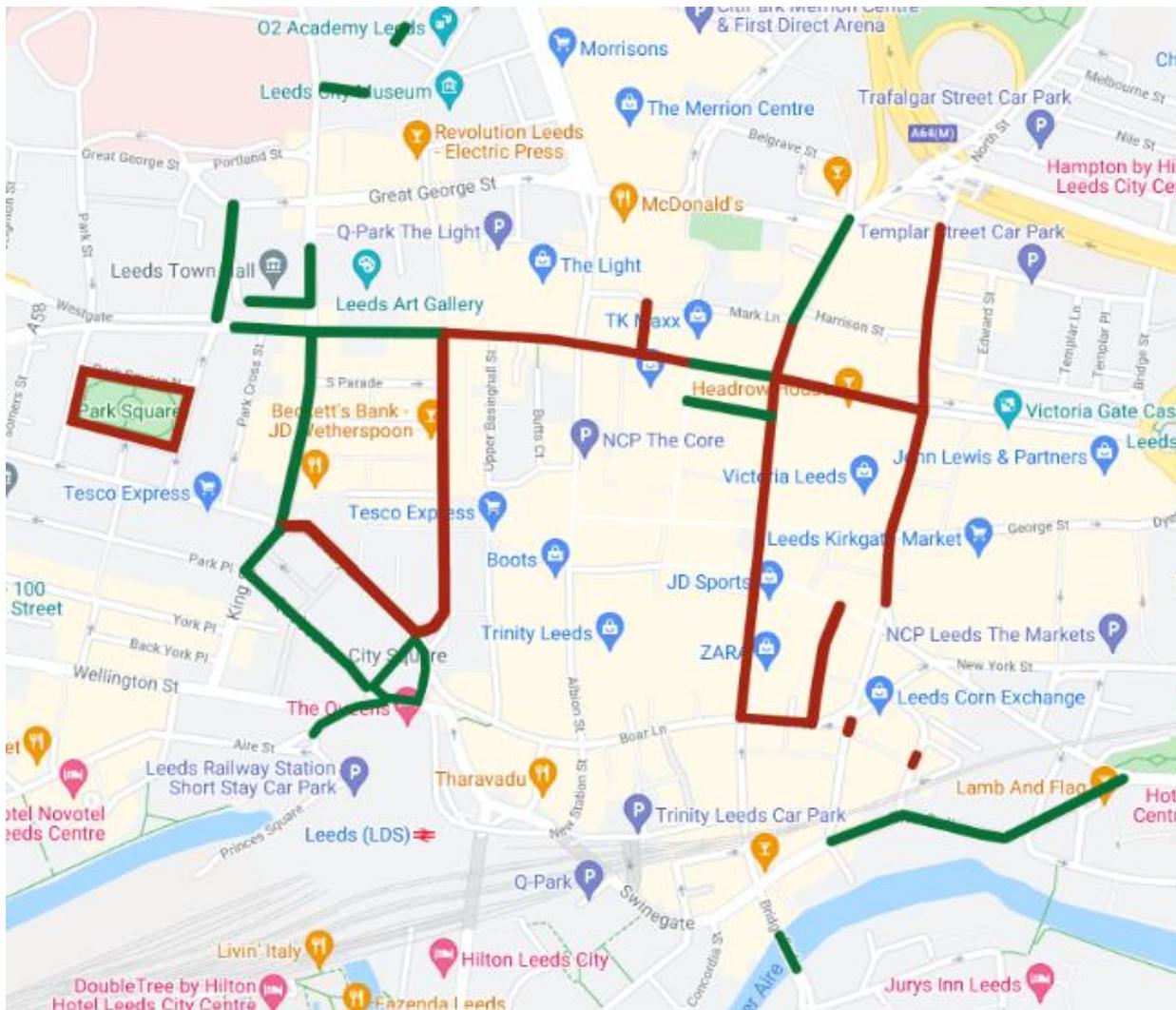
- 7 This signage will replace existing signs, as beds are reconfigured during autumn following the removal of existing bedding displays. Where a wildflower display is introduced a space will be included below for a separate panel to enable a sponsor to include their information.
- 8 During the past year in community parks, wildflower areas have been sown in beds that would have contained seasonal bedding due to resource issues associated with coronavirus. Many of these beds will revert to seasonal bedding, but where appropriate these beds will be replaced with a prominent drift of wildflowers as illustrated below.



*Alliance Mix at Bedquilts and Brookfield*

- 9 Seasonal bedding in major parks will largely be retained with some additional wildflower areas. Bedding in cemeteries, crematoria and war memorials will remain unchanged. The proposal is to replace seasonal bedding on local green spaces and recreation grounds with additional wildflower areas as appropriate.

- 10 In December 2020 Executive Board approved a proposal for a 50% reduction in floral decorations (with a cost saving of £16k) in the city centre subject to consultation. Please note that this does not include any floral decorations provided in connection with ‘in bloom’ activities throughout the wider Leeds area. Priorities identified in the consultation results were clear with a preference for civic areas, gateways and cultural areas. The following map illustrates how this will be achieved with the lines in green proposed to retain and the lines in red to remove.



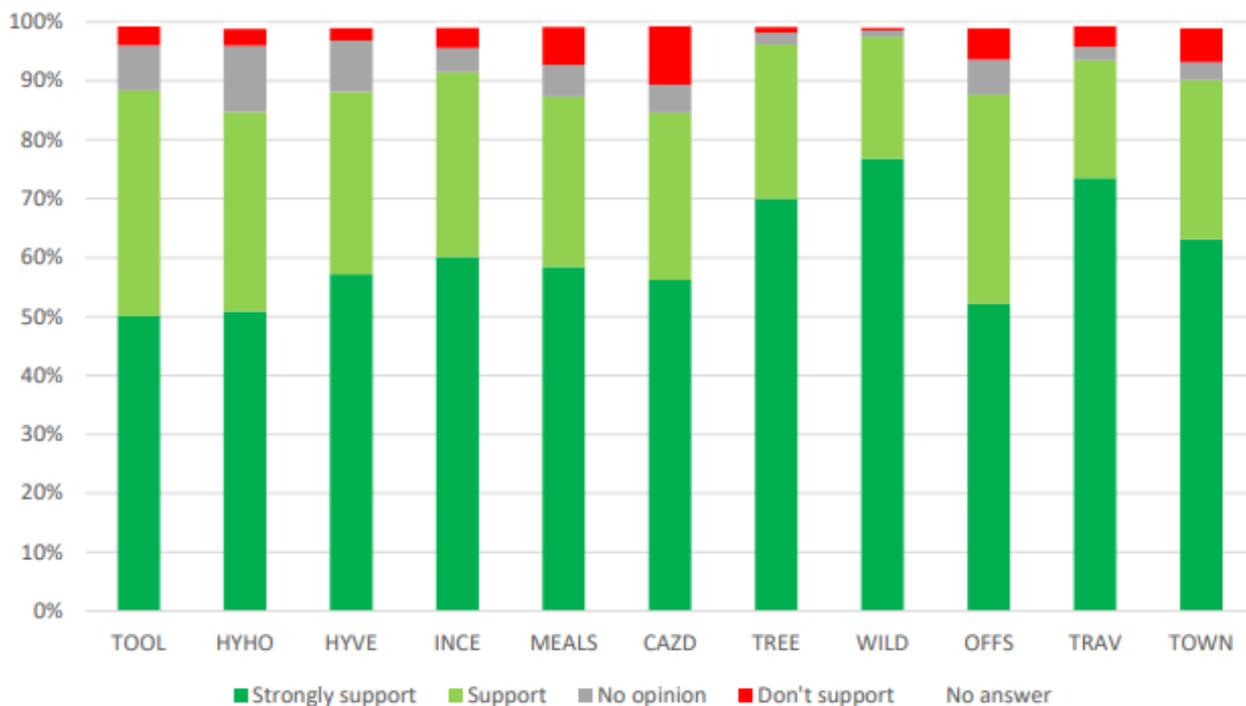
- 11 The areas in green include The Loop, Leeds Bridge, outside the railway station and City Square along with outside the Town Hall, Art Gallery, Civic Hall, City Varieties and the Grand Theatre. The areas proposed for removal are in retail and legal/business areas, however these could be retained if local businesses wished to fund them.

### What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 12 In December 2019 the findings of the Big Climate Conversation were published which saw council officers and volunteers engage with residents about the climate emergency. A mixed-method approach was taken that included online questionnaires, in-person conversations, focus groups and social media. In total, 7,835 individuals participated and Almost all residents (97.1%) agreed with the scientific consensus that the climate is changing and that the earth’s warming is due to human activity (93.4%). More than nine out of ten residents agreed they are worried about wildlife loss (97.3%), biodiversity loss (96.3%), and the frequency of extreme weather events in the future (93.3%). Four out of five respondents strongly agreed that they are worried about the effects of climate change on future generations (82.7%).

13 Residents were also asked to indicate their support for eleven different proposals ('big ideas') that the council could explore to help reduce the carbon footprint in Leeds. There was widespread support for each of these proposals. Notably, every proposal was supported by at least 84% of respondents. The results are summarised in the following bar chart extracted from the report. **'WILD'** is the most popular choice, referring to planting more wildlife-friendly species in parks, verges and flower beds. This includes choosing to plant more species that better support wildlife and pollinating insects as well as to help beautify the council's parks, verges and flower beds.

Figure 22: Public support of proposed big ideas



14 A consultation exercise specific to the proposal to reduce seasonal bedding and floral decorations was undertaken commencing on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021 for a 3-week period to the 1<sup>st</sup> February. The survey outlined the council budget position and the proposed reduction in seasonal bedding and floral decorations along with the information highlighted in the table on the setting for each display. The survey was available online with the option of filling in a paper copy if required.

15 There were 383 responses to the questionnaire with 72% who supported retaining some seasonal bedding displays, and 58% supported retaining some floral decorations in the city centre. Those who stated 'no' to seasonal bedding altogether were mainly due to the need to make savings, regarding them as 'nice to have' with the need for more sustainable planting to benefit pollinators and wildlife as an alternative. Those who stated 'no' to floral decorations were mainly due to the need to make savings and that floral features are better experienced in a natural setting.

16 Those who stated that they do wish to have seasonal bedding displays were asked to prioritise settings in order of importance:

**Please rank which areas are most important to the city in order of preference with 1 the most important down to 7 the least important.**

Item	Total Score <sup>1</sup>	Overall Rank
Major parks (Golden Acre, Kirkstall, Lotherton, Middleton, Roundhay and Temple Newsam)	1479	1
City centre	1409	2
Community parks (there are 63 with a range of facilities throughout the city)	1324	3
Cemeteries, crematoria and war memorials	1106	4
Local green spaces and recreation grounds	927	5
Roundabouts	718	6
Highway verges	625	7
<sup>1</sup> Score is a weighted calculation. Items ranked first are valued higher than the following ranks, the score is a sum of all weighted rank counts.	answered	271
	skipped	112

17 Similarly, those who stated they wished to retain floral decorations set preferences as follows:

**Please rank which areas are most important to the city in order of preference with 1 the most important down to 5 the least important.**

Item	Total Score <sup>1</sup>	Overall Rank
Civic areas such as outside Leeds Town Hall	817	1
Gateways to the city centre such as Leeds Railway Station or the Loop road	716	2
Cultural areas outside the Grand Theatre and Leeds City Varieties	657	3
Retail area such as Briggate and Vicar Lane	592	4
Legal/business areas such as Park Square and East Parade	323	5
<sup>1</sup> Score is a weighted calculation. Items ranked first are valued higher than the following ranks, the score is a sum of all weighted rank counts.	answered	207
	skipped	176

### What are the resource implications?

18 To help achieve climate change objectives as well as contribute to the medium-term financial plan, proposals were approved at Executive Board in December 2020 to save £150k on the cost of seasonal bedding and a proposal for a 50% reduction in floral decorations subject to consultation.

### What are the legal implications?

19 There are no specific legal implications identified. The decision is not subject to call in.

## What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

20 There are no significant risks identified with this decision.

## Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth

Health and Wellbeing

Climate Emergency

21 In March 2019 the council declared a climate emergency with a commitment for Leeds to be carbon neutral by 2030. In September 2019 Executive Board approved a series of changes to the way parks and green spaces are managed under the title: Adapting Parks and Green Spaces for Climate Change. The recommendations were approved and included intensified action to expand the natural potential of areas of grass land to become pollinator friendly habitats.

## Options, timescales and measuring success

### a) What other options were considered?

22 The priorities for determining which seasonal bedding displays are to be retained and where wildflower displays are to be included are in line with those identified during consultation. Similarly, options for where floral decorations within the city centre should be prioritised were in line with the priorities identified above in the consultation results.

### b) How will success be measured?

23 Implementation of the decision in line with the timetable identified below.

### c) What is the timetable for implementation?

24 Reconfiguration of beds will take place over autumn/winter ready for wildflower displays in spring/summer 2022. Those beds that are to be retained with seasonal bedding will be planted out in autumn as usual. Revised arrangements for floral decorations within the city centre will be put in place late May/June 2022.

## Appendices

25 None.

## Background papers

26 None.