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LETTER TO ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT & SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Dear Geoff,

I am submitting the following letter under Council Procedure Rule 23.3 to be included on the agenda for the Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee meeting of 29th Sep 2020.

In Hollingdean and Stanmer, like many other of the residential areas in Brighton and Hove, there is a large proportion of grass verges which separate the road from the homes and the path where pedestrians walk. As such they are an important safety buffer, but they also improve the look of the area as well as a number of other benefits. However, for a number of reasons they often end up being an underused patch of land or alternatively become abused by car owners, who use the verges to park on.

I'm glad to see that the restrictions for parking on grass verges exists in some parts of the city including in the Surrenden Road area and the trial use of TROs seems like a sensible option which could be extended across the whole city. However, a possibly more pragmatic way of reducing people parking on the grass verges and also of utilising the space better would be to plant wildflowers along the verges. This has been proven to put drivers off parking on them as they are less likely to drive over flowers. Furthermore, the wildflowers create corridors for important insects and pollinators to travel along and therefore increases the biodiversity of the area and addresses the ecological emergency that we sadly find ourselves in, and which the council acknowledged at the end of 2018 but is yet to really take forward initiatives to make a significant difference to this.

I have already been in communication with the Head of Operations at Cityparks who confirmed that they are willing to discuss the feasibility of certain streets, but the process remains unclear about what the assessment will look at. Therefore, I am requesting that a short report is brought to the next ETS committee which would set out a clear and transparent procedure for getting wildflowers in other parts of the city and which discusses the issues that might restrict this. I know that this is something that a variety of other groups are interested in as well as other councillors, so this report can be used to refer to for any groups that wish to plant wildflowers on their grass verges.

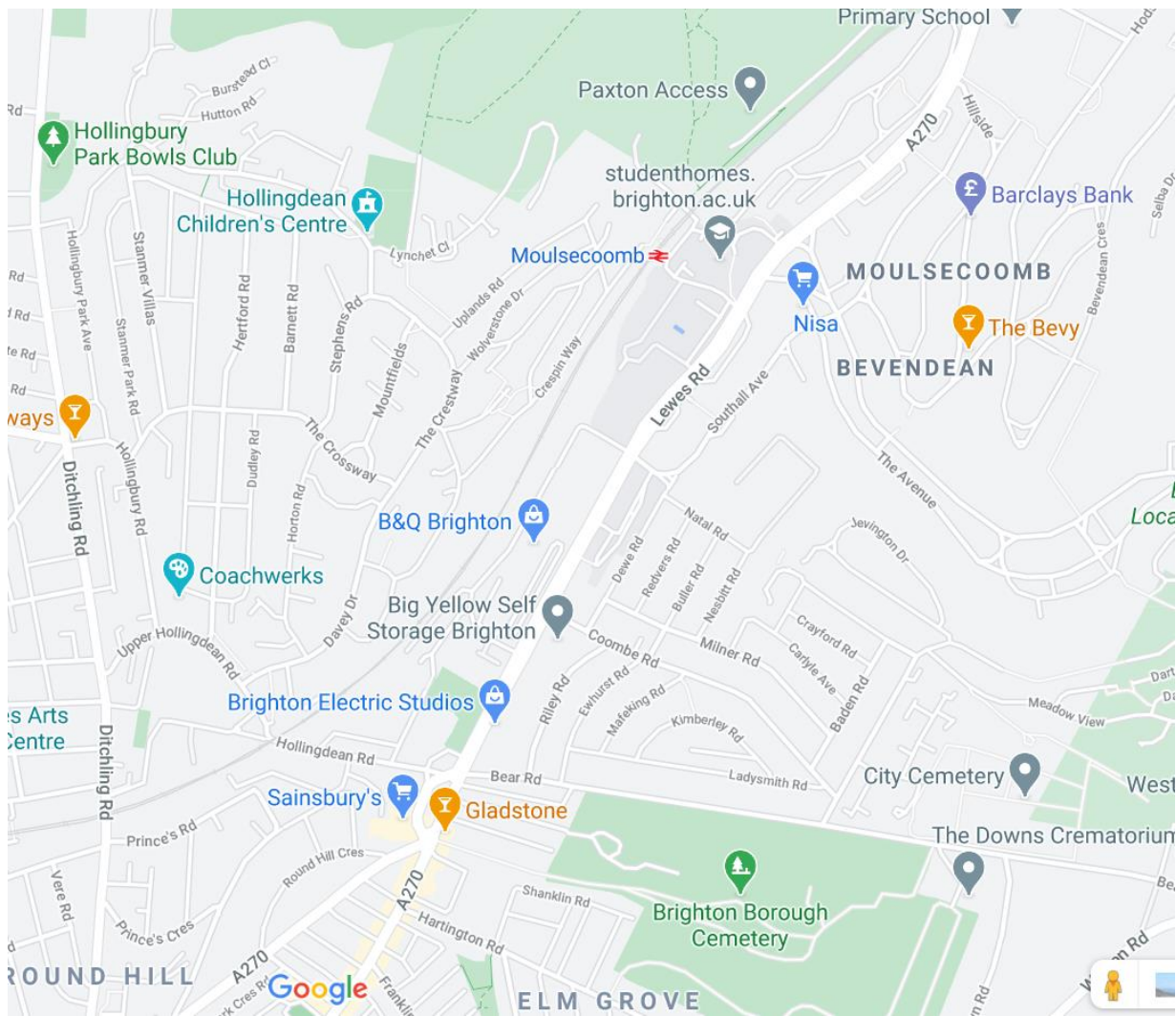
In addition, I'm asking that the ETS Committee supports the idea of Hollingdean and Stanmer becoming a trial 'Wildflower Ward' starting with the grass verges along the bus route up Davey Drive and The Crestway, see map [1], but hopefully expanding

to as many parts of the ward as possible in the future. As part of this trial, the financial implications of such a project could be fully assessed; there are projected costs to purchase the wildflowers and to distribute and subsequently monitor their progress, but there would be savings in terms of less mowing which according to my previous enquiries normally happens 8-10 times per year but could be reduced, which is something that was supported by the Big Conversation Consultation where 70% stated that we should be cutting the grass less [2]. Furthermore, in terms of sustainability implications, the biodiversity gains could be calculated using net biodiversity gain calculations similar to which are used to calculate the gains for particular housing developments.

If committee agree to Hollingdean and Stanmer becoming a trial 'Wildflower Ward' I ask for officers to meet with me, other ward councillors and local residents who have previously expressed interest to me such as those involved in the Growing Hollingdean project, to discuss the project further, including timescales for such a project, and for a report to be scheduled to return to committee next year updating on the progress of the project and highlighting the implications noted above, in addition to any other relevant factors. This could then be used to decide on the wider rollout of wildflower verges across Hollingdean and Stanmer and beyond to the rest of the city and be added as an update to the open spaces strategy "small grassed areas" section.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Martin Osborne



[1] Map of Hollingdean with streets to start with wildflowers in yellow

[2] Open spaces strategy 2017 (update from 2006): <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/2017%20FINAL%20Approved.pdf>

