

## **Holding North Yorkshire Council to account on biodiversity**

Under its recently adopted Biodiversity policy, the Parish Council has committed to routinely commenting on biodiversity when it is consulted on planning applications, and as this example shows, intervention using policy-based arguments gets results.

Rudby Parish Council was consulted on a planning application for the village school. It was a good scheme: improving safety by better separation of children from traffic; encouraging active travel by providing a bike storage area; and providing a safe outside area for active play. The one deficiency in an otherwise excellent scheme was that biodiversity impacts had not been properly considered. In its consultation submission, the Parish Council pointed out to North Yorkshire Council (both the applicant and the planning authority) that although it was a good scheme, it did not deliver a net biodiversity gain, a point raised by the Council's ecologist in their consultation response. The Parish Council suggested that with some minor changes, this could be achieved and argued that under the new biodiversity duty from the Environment Act 2021, North Yorkshire Council as a public body ought to deliver a gain. As a result of the Parish Council's intervention North Yorkshire Council modified the scheme to include an area of wildflower planting at minimal cost which made a good scheme even better.