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Dear Mr Steele,

Thank you for your letter regarding Nottingham in Bloom and Nottingham City Council Parks and Open Spaces.

The television series you mention was indeed impressive, and a significant way of raising the importance and relevance of biodiversity and wildlife-friendly spaces in towns and cities. However, we were disappointed that Nottingham was not represented in the series, as the city has been at the national forefront of improving biodiversity by planting wildflower meadows in city parks over the past few years.

Since 2009, areas of diverse, colourful wildflower meadows have been sown on the following nine sites in the City, totalling about 2.7 hectares.

1. Queen's Walk Recreation Ground
2. Strelley Recreation Ground
3. King George V Playing Fields
4. Woodthorpe Park
5. Victoria Park and St. Mary's Rest Garden
6. King Edward Park
7. St Leodegarius' Rest Garden
8. Western Boulevard playground
9. Heathfield Park

It is planned to plant another six wildflower meadows in Nottingham parks this year.

East Midlands in Bloom judges who visited Nottingham in 2011 specifically commented in their report that: "The wildflower project in parks across the city was a success, encouraging wildlife, and challenging residents' perception of management and maintenance of grassland in semi formal settings."

The Sarah Raven programme perhaps did not reflect fully the current judging criteria for Britain in Bloom, which has been in place for the past couple of years. This includes a specific section for Conservation and Biodiversity (wildlife areas and natural habitat) and 25% of the total marks being allocated to Environmental Responsibility. The Royal Horticultural Society through its Bloom campaign is a strong advocate for biodiversity and has the theme of 'Wild about Wildflowers' for its Bloom groups and 'It's Your Neighbourhood' groups this year, with free wildflower seeds and advice

available to participants. These will be sown as part of a nationwide Bloom celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

In Nottingham, sustainability is always an important consideration. The amount of seasonal bedding on traffic islands and parks is being reduced and is now used mostly with permanent planting to create sustainable and attractive displays that are better for wildlife and long-term will also help us cut costs.

Over the past few years we have given increasing priority to biodiversity while planning the bedding schemes for the parks. For example, the displays for the flower garden at Woodthorpe Park this summer have been specially designed as a bee-friendly habitat by a member of the Nottingham in Bloom Design Group who has training in beekeeping. The mix of plants will include Verbena Waterfall Mix,

Antirrhinum Classic White, Verbena Bonariensis, Eryngium Blue Glitter, Thunbergia Lemon and Borridge Borago Officinalis. In addition, bedding displays at the other parks include wildlife-friendly species such as Dahlias (Arboretum and Wollaton Park), wallflowers (on various traffic islands), Salvias (Arboretum) and Antirrhinum Rudbeckia (Broadgate).

Another important step for the City has been to establish 'Wildlife in the City,' a three-year partnership project with Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust to encourage people to engage with parks and green spaces. Over the past few weeks this has enabled Nottingham in Bloom to run a series of free workshops for the local community, delivered by Wildlife in the City, on the subject of 'Wildlife Gardening.' The workshops were specifically aimed at domestic gardeners and community groups and explored the ways in which they can introduce more wildlife (including bees & pollinators) into their own gardens and green spaces. Participants included members of tenants' and residents' associations, Neighbourhood Bloom groups, the Allotment Society at the University of Nottingham, and individuals.

Within the Nottingham in Bloom Garden Competition we have a category sponsored by Notts Wildlife Trust called 'Space for Nature' to recognise and reward gardens that encourage nature and breeding habitats as well as wildlife friendly plants.

We have also developed an effective partnership with Nottinghamshire Beekeeping Association. Over the past few years they have publicised their work with displays at high-profile events run by Nottingham in Bloom and the Parks and Open Spaces Service, and this will continue this year. For instance, they will be at the 'Behind the Scenes' event on 12th May & our 'Grow Your Own' event on 16th September, both to be held at Woodthorpe Nursery.

I hope you will agree that we have made significant progress over the past few years and I can assure you that we will continue to do so. We appreciate your interest and hope your concerns have been allayed.

Yours sincerely



Eddie Curry
Head of Parks and Open Spaces