

Sylvawood Seeds Impact Case Study

Boosting local business in the South West, that enhances biodiversity and delivers health and wellbeing benefits.

What was the need?

Exeter-based [Sylvawood Seeds](#) was established in early 2002 by Matt O'Connell. His vision was to develop a high quality, UK sourced, seed business. With the UK having lost 97% of lowland meadows since World War II, a key driver for the business is to expand planting of wildflower areas helping to boost biodiversity, support greater wildlife and deliver health and wellbeing benefits. Matt was keen for his products and services to embody these ambitions and for this to be reflected in his business messaging.

How did SWEEP help?

Matt worked closely with two of the SWEEP teams. The SWEEP Pollinator team provided expertise to ensure Matt's seed mixes were balanced to deliver optimal flower growth to boost biodiversity and attract plentiful bumblebees, butterflies and birds.

The SWEEP Investing in nature for health team reviewed a wealth of academic and non-academic literature and worked with Sylvawood Seeds to develop a bespoke report to meet its needs. This report enabled Matt to communicate more clearly and confidently about the growing evidence linking wildflower seeds with wild flowers, increased biodiversity, greater wildlife, enhanced pollination, and improvements in human physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Outcomes and impact

Enhancing knowledge, changing perceptions and attitudes

SWEEP provided Matt with a greater evidence-based knowledge about optimal seed mixes, and associated health and wellbeing and biodiversity benefits, which boosted his ability to improve his seed mixes and deliver on his vision. It has also boosted Matt's confidence in talking about his products and services with his customers.

*'SWEEP's advice and expertise has been invaluable. This has allowed me to adapt and diversify some of my wildflower seed mixes which has helped to strengthen my business. SWEEP's involvement adds credibility to what I do and has increased my confidence and success in talking about, and selling, my products to customers'. **Matt O'Connell, Owner of Sylvawood Seeds.***

Operational efficiencies and boosting business

Stronger business communications – backed by science, SWEEP has lent academic credibility to Sylvawood Seed's messaging and the brand is rapidly gaining popularity. Business communications have been strengthened including pitches, informal conversations and website content. SWEEP developed a new section for [Sylvawood Seed's website](#) linking the business's USPs to key evidence that supports the connection between wildflowers, health and wellbeing, biodiversity and wildlife benefits. This has helped to attract new business.

Attracting business support – Sylvawood Seeds secured c£5k in-kind support from UKRI for business development support, and has benefited from an association with the University of Exeter's MSc Business Analytic students.

Business expansion – SWEEP has played an important role in the growth and development of Sylvawood Seeds business over the last two years helping to set the business apart from its competitors. It has contributed to:

- **The growth of overall business sales** – which is forecast to increase by 20% by the end of 2022, representing a 38% increase in revenue from sales.



- **A three year partnership deal with the RSPB** - this is already increasing seed sales (both in-store and [online catalogue](#)) from 8000 packs in 2021, to 50,000+ packs in 2022. It is anticipated this will rise to 75,000-100,000 packs in 2023.
- **A new deal with the National Trust (NT)** – currently stocking Sylvawood seeds in 50 of its shops with the expectation that this will rise to 80 NT shops nationally.

*‘Working with SWEEP has helped me forge new business deals, such as our three year partnership with the RSPB. Being endorsed by a charity of this standing, and having the RSPB logo to our packaging, has been a real game changer’. **Matt O’Connell.***

Business diversification – SWEEP’s input has informed Matt’s strategic thinking, inspiring him to take his business into new areas, securing further customers. These include new ideas for product (such as developing sensory grass seed mixes that could create therapeutic landscapes) and customer segments (such as farm shops, hospitality businesses, health trusts, spas, hospitals and the farmers to support the new Environmental Land Management Schemes).

One recent new example is Sylvawood Seeds collaboration with Lambeth Council community group. Mental wellbeing is key to the work of this group and Matt’s wildflower seeds now form part of the food parcels being given out to children/families as well as the gardening project being run for children and young people.

*‘SWEEP has opened up a whole new arena for me. The reputation and growth of my business has benefitted from the scientific evidence SWEEP has provided. Without this, I wouldn’t now be communicating so confidently about how my seed mixes help to boost biodiversity and deliver health and wellbeing benefits or have started thinking more strategically about new product ideas such as sensory grasses’. **Matt O’Connell.***

Environmental enhancement and health and wellbeing

Increasing sales of Matt’s wildflower seeds will lead to greater benefits for people and the environment.

Evidence shows that planting and tending wildflowers, and spending time in wildflower areas, is linked to positive health and wellbeing. We also know that these wildflower areas offer high levels of biodiversity, supporting a great number of birds, insects and butterflies as well as delivering a raft of ecosystem services such as improved soil and air quality. Still in its first few years of trading, Matt calculates that his seed sales to date equate to 27ha of wildflower area.