

## **RESPONSE TO THE BIODIVERSITY DUTY**

### **December 2023**

#### **Introduction - Statutory Duty**

Under the 2021 Environment Act, public authorities (including town and parish councils) who operate in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England.

Government guidance published on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023 clarifies that, as a public authority, town and parish councils must:

- Consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration.
- Act to deliver their policies and achieve their objectives.

Town and parish councils, unlike other authorities, are not obliged to publish a report on their actions, but the Government guidance requires all public authorities to complete their first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity by 1 January 2024. They must agree their policies and objectives as soon as possible after this and may reconsider the selected actions within 5 years of completing their previous consideration, or more frequently if they choose.

To comply with the guidance, town and parish councils could as a minimum:

- Have biodiversity as an agenda item for a meeting before the end of 2023.
- Note what action in respect of biodiversity is already taking place locally.
- Agree what further steps to take at this stage.

Such steps may include:

- Reviewing what biodiversity or nature recovery plans are already in place from other local authorities.
- Making contact with local voluntary groups working on nature conservation.
- Carrying out a biodiversity audit of council landholdings and/or the whole council area
- Gathering expert advice on possible actions in support of biodiversity.
- Drafting an action plan that covers action that the council will take itself as well as support for the actions of other local bodies.

Whatever action is agreed, as a minimum local councils could ensure they address biodiversity concerns when commenting on planning applications.

All these steps may inform an agreed biodiversity policy for which a model example is attached.

Guidance for town and parish councils on developing a [local nature action plan](#) has been published by South Gloucestershire Council, as well as a [field guide](#) for those with little or no ecological background.

# **BIODIVERSITY POLICY**

## **PREAMBLE**

In accordance with the duty imposed on town and parish councils by Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, updated by Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021, **Longford Parish Council** (hereinafter referred to as the Council) will in exercising all its functions have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.

This duty also means that town and parish councils can spend funds in conserving biodiversity.

## **DEFINITION**

According to Defra (Biodiversity 2020), biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants – everything that is alive on our planet.

Biodiversity is important for its own sake and has its own intrinsic value. A number of studies have shown this value also goes further. It is the building block of our 'ecosystems'. These provide us with a wide range of goods and services that support our economic and social wellbeing. These include essentials such as food, fresh water and clean air, but also less obvious services such as protection from natural disasters, regulation of our climate, and purification of our water or pollination of our crops. Biodiversity also provides important cultural services, enriching our lives.

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The object of this policy is to work towards enhancing and protecting the biodiversity of the Council's area.

The Full Council and any committees/working groups of the Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

In particular, the Council will aim to improve the biodiversity of the area in the following ways:

- consider the potential impact on biodiversity represented by planning applications.
- manage its land and property using environmentally friendly practices that will promote biodiversity.
- support local businesses & council operations in the adoption of low impact / nature positive practices.
- encourage and support other organisations within the parish to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind.
- support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

## **ACTIONS**

### **Planning applications**

The Council will:

- when commenting on planning applications, will support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats.
- support protection of sensitive habitats from development and will consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife in respect of all applications.
- consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.

### **Land and property management**

The Council will:

- carry out a biodiversity audit of its landholdings.
- consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity with regard to the management of its open spaces. This will include adopting beneficial practices with regarding to cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work.
- take special care in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment.
- source sustainable materials when procuring supplies for the Council's use.

### **Local community**

The Council will:

- raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website and social media.
- engage with local businesses and residents regarding biodiversity in the community and how members of the community can assist and make a difference.
- where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects on its land including for example tree planting, wildflower meadows, birdbox making.

### **Partners**

The Council will work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the council area.

It will review any local nature recovery strategies, species conservation strategies, or protected site strategies in respect of local Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and consider how it may become more involved in implementing the strategies' recommendations.

This policy was adopted on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023 (Minute reference 6d) and will be reviewed in two years or sooner should legislation dictate / each year at the Annual Meeting. A summary of how the policy has been implemented will be published annually, with reference to the original biodiversity audit to show progress.

## ACTION PLAN

SITE / OBJECTIVE	ACTION /How	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	REPORTING / PUBLICITY
<p>Whole council area</p> <p>Protect and support biodiversity</p>	<p>Raise local awareness of biodiversity.</p> <p>Encourage suitable planting and management to support biodiversity.</p>	<p>Gain local support for action.</p> <p>Connect &amp; diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Social Media, website</p> <p>Mapping</p>
<p>Playing Field</p>	<p>Sympathetically maintain hedging.</p> <p>Leave some areas unmown</p> <p>Additional planting wildflowers etc</p> <p>Maintain and renew bird boxes as required.</p> <p>Adopt a plan to support wildlife &amp; diversity.</p> <p>Only use environment friendly pesticides where absolutely necessary and only in ideal weather conditions.</p> <p>Work with football club.</p>	<p>Food sources &amp; cover</p> <p>Encourages insects</p> <p>Increased diversity of habitats and food sources</p> <p>Increased cover for invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals.</p> <p>Encouraging insects particularly butterflies &amp; bees.</p> <p>Sustain &amp; enhance natural habitats.</p>		
<p>Allotments</p>	<p>Adopt a plan to support wildlife &amp; diversity.</p> <p>Encourage plotheolders to only use environment friendly pesticides where absolutely necessary and only in ideal weather conditions.</p> <p>Work with plotheolders.</p>	<p>Encouraging insects particularly butterflies &amp; bees.</p> <p>Sustain &amp; enhance natural habitats.</p>		

<p>Sivell Close wildflower area</p>	<p>Leave some areas unmown</p> <p>Additional planting wildflowers etc</p> <p>Maintain and renew bird boxes as required.</p> <p>Adopt a plan to support wildlife &amp; diversity.</p> <p>Only use environment friendly pesticides where absolutely necessary and only in ideal weather conditions.</p>	<p>Encourages insects</p> <p>Increased diversity of habitats and food sources</p> <p>Increased cover for invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals.</p> <p>Encouraging insects particularly butterflies &amp; bees.</p> <p>Sustain &amp; enhance natural habitats.</p>		
<p>Common / other open spaces</p>	<p>Adopt a management plan.</p> <p>Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs.</p> <p>Work with the county council on verge management, favouring biodiversity but noting which areas may need cutting for highway safety.</p>	<p>Sustain &amp; enhance natural habitats.</p> <p>Protecting habitats</p> <p>Protecting/enhancing habitats</p>		
<p>The Built Landscape</p>	<p>Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries</p>	<p>Extending habitats.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	
<p>Increase community awareness of biodiversity</p>	<p>Ask residents for their views on what they would like to be done to conserve biodiversity within the parish.</p> <p>Raise awareness of the importance of gardens as habitats for wildlife, with possible actions highlighted in the parish communications, eg Bee Squared initiative</p>	<p>Engagement/ownership of biodiversity</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Include in Social Media posts</p>

	<p>Create a page on the parish council website for photographs / information / links</p> <p>Provide seed bombs / bulbs etc. for residents' use.</p>	Promote biodiversity.		Separate Biodiversity Page.
Support Community Projects	<p>Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas.</p> <p>Work in partnership with the school to develop young people's awareness of the environment around them.</p> <p>Consider events and offer volunteering opportunities to support biodiversity, working with local organisations.</p>	<p>Extending habitats.</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p>		