

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

BACKGROUND

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, Stewkley Parish Council (hereinafter referred to as the Council) which has any functions exercisable in relation to England must from time to time consider what action the authority can properly take, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective.

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. Biodiversity is the building block of our 'ecosystems' that in turn 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 conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Council's area.

The Full Council and any committees 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 and council operations in the adoption of low impact/nature.
- positive practices.
- encourage and support other organisations within the Stewkley 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, 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.
- include policies in support of biodiversity within the neighbourhood plan.

Land and property management

The Council will:

- 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, paying attention to the Government's regulations for plant protection products.
- 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.
- consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing its buildings.

Local community

The Council will:

- raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website and newsletters.
- 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.

MONITORING

This policy was adopted on Monday 8th January 2024.

ACTION PLAN

SITE / OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	REPORTING/ PUBLICITY
Whole council area	Raise local awareness of biodiversity with the assistance of the Stewkley Enterprise Agency	Gain local support for action	Ongoing	Grapevine, social media, website
Protect and support Biodiversity	Encourage suitable planting to support biodiversity	Connect & diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species	Ongoing	
Lawn Cemetery	<p>Additional planting and consideration of bird boxes as required</p> <p>Adopt a plan to support wildlife and diversity whilst maintaining the site in a way which enables visitors to experience quiet and calm remembrance</p> <p>Leave leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible as a habitat for invertebrates</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 and bees</p>		
Recreation Ground	<p>Sympathetically maintain hedging and consider leaving some areas unmown</p> <p>Only use environment friendly pesticides where absolutely necessary and only in ideal weather conditions.</p>	<p>Food sources and cover encourages insects</p> <p>Sustain and enhance natural habitats</p>		
Bike Shelter at Recreation Ground	Adjacent to our wonderful wildlife area, where better to place a living roof bike shelter and to improve our Biodiversity. The bike shelter now provides a safe location for anyone to secure their bike away from weather but it is so much more than that. The living roof is made up of drought tolerant native wildflowers and other nectar-rich species that will provide a food source for bees, butterflies, moths and other invertebrates. It has external wildlife habitat panels providing space for solitary bees, birds may nest in carefully integrated boxes and it will provide refuge, forage and overwintering spaces for invertebrates.	Promote biodiversity		
New Community Garden	This planned garden will act as both a jubilee and memorial tribute to her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth and will also incorporate planted trees by both the Parish Council and the Stewkley WI.		Anticipated to get underway in Spring 2024	
New Wetland and Tree Project	The creation of a wetland and tree project at an identified site which forms part of the well-established Stewkley Five Mile Walk.	Increased cover for invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians and small Mammals	Anticipated to get underway in Spring 2024	
Common / other open spaces	Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs, and work with the Unitary Council on verge management, favouring biodiversity, noting which areas may need cutting for highway safety, working closely with the Stewkley Enterprise Agency.	Encouraging insects particularly butterflies and bees		

SITE / OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	REPORTING/ PUBLICITY
The Built Landscape	<p>Ensure that planning consultations are considered against the requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan</p> <p>Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries</p>	<p>Protecting/enhancing habitats</p> <p>Extending habitats.</p>	Ongoing	
Increase community awareness of biodiversity	<p>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 Grapevine</p> <p>Create a page on the parish council website for photographs/information/ links</p> <p>Encourage local farmers to contribute</p> <p>Discourage floodlighting</p>	<p>Engagement/ownership of biodiversity</p> <p>Promote biodiversity</p> <p>Promote biodiversity</p> <p>Promote biodiversity</p> <p>Protect nocturnal animals</p>	Ongoing	Neighbourhood plan consultation
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 and promoting biodiversity</p> <p>Promote biodiversity</p>		

Adoption date: 8th January 2024
Review date: January 2025, or as necessary