

### BIODIVERSITY DUTY

#### Introduction

Under the 2021 Environment Act town and parish councils must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Conserving biodiversity can include restoring or enhancing a population or habitat.

According to Defra, biodiversity is the variety of all life on earth. It includes all species of animals and plants - everything that is alive on our planet.

Town and parish councils 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<sup>st</sup> January 2024. They must agree their policies and objectives as soon as possible after this and must reconsider the selected actions within five years of completing their previous consideration, or more frequently if they choose.

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

To comply with guidance, they could:

- note what action they are already taking to conserve and enhance biodiversity
- agree what further steps they should take to conserve and enhance biodiversity

Such steps could include:

- making contact with local voluntary groups working on nature conservation
- carrying out a biodiversity audit of council landholdings, potentially involving residents in a survey to find and identify as many species of plants, animals, fungi and other organisms as possible
- drafting an action plan that covers action that the town council will take itself as well as support for the actions of other local bodies
- ensuring the council addresses biodiversity concerns when commenting on planning applications

#### Background

In accordance with 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, Kilmington Parish Council (hereinafter referred to as the council) 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 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 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
- so far as is reasonably practicable 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 and nature positive practices
- encourage and support other organisations within Kilmington 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 any neighbourhood plan

#### **Land & Property Management**

The council will, so far as is reasonably practicable:

- 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 regard to cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work, paying attention to the government's regulation for plant protection products

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- 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, social media and Kilmington News pink paper.
- 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, bird box making

### Partners

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

### Monitoring

This policy was adopted on 25 March 2024 and will be reviewed in two years or sooner should legislation dictate. 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	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	REPORTING/ PUBLICITY
Whole council area	Raise local awareness of biodiversity	Gain local support for action	Ongoing	Kilmington News, website
Protect and support biodiversity	Encourage suitable planting to support biodiversity	Connect and diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species	Ongoing	Mapping
Recreation ground and playground areas	Sympathetically maintain hedging  Where reasonably practicable, leave some areas unmown  Only use environmentally friendly pesticides where absolutely necessary and only in ideal weather conditions	Food sources and cover  Encourages insects  Sustain and enhance natural habitats		
Other open spaces	Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs	Sustain and enhance natural habitats		

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	<p>Work with Wiltshire Council on verge management, favouring biodiversity but noting which areas may need cutting for highway safety</p>	<p>Protecting habitats</p> <p>Protecting/enhancing habitats</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 Kilmington parish</p> <p>Raise awareness of the importance of gardens as habitats for wildlife, with possible actions highlighted in e.g. Kilmington News</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 or, where it is necessary, mitigate the impact of floodlighting by ensuring that the majority of the light emitted is directed at the desired target.</p>	<p>Engagement/ownership of biodiversity</p> <p>Promote biodiversity</p> <p>Promote biodiversity</p> <p>Promote biodiversity</p> <p>Extending habitats</p> <p>Protect nocturnal animals</p>		
<p>Support community projects</p>	<p>Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas</p> <p>Work in partnership with Wessex Lodge Primary 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>		

To be reviewed March 2026