

Document Control

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WOODTON PARISH COUNCIL 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, as strengthened by Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021, Woodton Parish Council (hereafter “we”) will in exercising all its functions have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing biodiversity. This duty also means that we can spend funds for this purpose.

We have received recognition for our work to enhance biodiversity within the parish, including:

- Runner-up in the Spaces for Nature category at the Norfolk Biodiversity Awards 2023 for the Community Wood.
- Highly Commended in the CPRE Norfolk Awards 2021.

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 contributes to people's health, wellbeing, recreation and sense of place.

Aims and Objectives

The object of this policy is to work towards enhancing and protecting the biodiversity of the parish.

We will consider biodiversity, sustainability, climate resilience and environmental impact when making decisions and when developing policies, projects and strategies.

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

- Consider the potential impact on biodiversity represented by planning applications.

- Manage our land and property using environmentally friendly practices that will promote biodiversity.
- Support local businesses & council operations in the adoption of low impact practices.
- Support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.
- Endeavour to maintain and promote a dark sky environment

Actions

Planning applications

- When commenting on planning applications, we will support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats.
- We will 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.
- We will consider whether proposed developments seek to achieve appropriate Biodiversity Net Gain and protect existing habitats wherever possible.
- Agreed to adopt the CPRE Norfolk standard light pollution clause, as follows.
“National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Clause 191c and Norfolk County Council's Environmental Lighting Zones Policy both recognise the importance of preserving dark landscapes and dark skies. In order to minimise light pollution, we recommend that, if this application is permitted, any outdoor lights associated with the proposed development should be:
 - 1) Fully shielded (enclosed in full cut-off flat glass fitments)
 - 2) Directed downwards (mounted horizontally to the ground and not tilted upwards)
 - 3) Switched on only when needed (no dusk to dawn lamps)
 - 4) White light low-energy lamps (preferably LEDs*) and not orange or pink sodium sources.”

Land and property management

- We will consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity with regard to the management of our open spaces. This will include adopting beneficial practices with regard to the cutting and removal of vegetation, the application of chemicals and the timing of maintenance work.
- Special care will be taken in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not unduly harm the natural environment.
- We will seek opportunities to create and connect wildlife habitats on land owned or managed by the Council.

Local community

- We will raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through the website, social media accounts and articles in local magazines.
- We will encourage residents to manage gardens and green spaces in ways that benefit wildlife and will promote national initiatives such as No Mow May,

Hedgehog Awareness Week and local tree planting schemes where appropriate.

- We will 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, we will involve the community in local biodiversity projects, including for example tree planting, wildflower meadows, birdbox making.

Partners

- We will work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within areas of the parish.
- We 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.
- We will work with neighbouring parish councils, landowners, Norfolk County Council, South Norfolk Council, local environmental organisations and volunteer groups where opportunities arise.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, together with a brief summary of how the policy has been implemented in the previous twelve months.

ACTION PLAN

SITE / OBJECTIVE	ACTION	DESIRED OUTCOME	REPORTING / PUBLICITY
Whole parish	Promote biodiversity through the Parish Council website, social media and meeting(s)	Increased public awareness and support for biodiversity.	Website, social media and meeting(s).
	Encourage residents to plant native trees, hedgerows and pollinator-friendly flowers.	Improved habitats and food sources for wildlife.	Website and newsletters.
	Encourage wildlife-friendly gardening and reduced pesticide use.	Increased biodiversity across the parish.	Website and social media.
	Consider biodiversity and habitat protection when commenting on planning applications.	Protection and enhancement of wildlife habitats through development.	Council minutes
Community Wood	Continue to manage the Community Wood sensitively whilst maintaining its peaceful character.	Healthy woodland habitat supporting a diverse range of wildlife.	Website and meeting(s)
	Inspect and maintain native trees, hedgerows and seasonal planting, replacing losses where appropriate.	Long-term resilience of woodland planting.	Meeting(s)
	Maintain bird, bat, owl and hedgehog boxes and monitor their condition annually.	Increased nesting and roosting opportunities.	Website and meeting(s)
	Maintain bug hotel and create additional invertebrate habitats where appropriate.	Increased insect diversity and pollinator populations.	Website and social media.
	Review management practices annually to maximise biodiversity while preserving the site's remembrance function.	Balanced habitat management for both wildlife and visitors	Annual policy review
Built Environment	Encourage permeable garden boundaries and	Improved habitat connectivity for hedgehogs and other small mammals.	Website and planning responses.

SITE / OBJECTIVE	ACTION	DESIRED OUTCOME	REPORTING / PUBLICITY
	Hedgehog Highways in new and existing developments. Encourage sensitive outdoor lighting that protects dark skies.	Reduced light pollution and protection of nocturnal wildlife.	Website and planning consultations.
Community Engagement	Promote wildlife-friendly gardens through seasonal advice and local campaigns Maintain biodiversity page on website with photographs, useful links and practical guidance. Encourage local farmers, landowners and businesses to participate in biodiversity initiatives where opportunities arise.	Greater community involvement in biodiversity enhancement. Improved access to local biodiversity information. Stronger partnership working across the parish.	Website, newsletters and social media. Website. Meeting(s)
Litter picking	Organise or support community litter-picking events.	Cleaner habitats, improved wildlife health and increased community engagement.	Standing agenda item and website.
Community Projects	Support hedge, tree and wildflower planting projects on suitable land. Support volunteer biodiversity projects with local organisations and residents.	Creation and extension of wildlife habitats. Increased community participation and biodiversity improvements. Extending habitats	Website and social media. Meeting(s)
Hedgehog Recovery	Promote the Hedgehog Highway initiative and provide links to recognised guidance on hedgehog conservation and care.	Improved movement of hedgehogs between gardens and greater public awareness.	Website and social media.