

WOODBIDGE TOWN COUNCIL - BIODIVERSITY POLICY

INTRODUCTION - STATUTORY DUTY

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, Woodbridge Town Council must from time to time consider what action it can take, consistent with the proper exercise of its functions, to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Government guidance published on 17 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.

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 Woodbridge Town Council 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 town to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind.
- support residents and local organisations in activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.
- Offer and fund educational opportunities for young people through partnerships with organisations such as the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, and through its own gardening staff.

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 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:

- 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, paying attention to the Government's [regulations for plant protection products](#).

- Propose and implement actions to enhance the biodiversity of its estate
- take special care in grounds maintenance specifications (whether for in-house work or external 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 when managing its buildings.

Local community

The Council will:

- raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website, social media 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 (for example - tree planting, wildflower meadows, birdbox making).
- ensure that residents have convenient access to nature, and allocates this primary purpose to Fen Meadow and Broomheath public open spaces

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 with statutory designations (such as Site of Special Scientific Interest , Special Protection Area, Ramsar Site) and consider how it may become more involved in implementing the strategies' recommendations.

MONITORING

This policy was adopted on 18.02.26 (Minute reference 18) and will be reviewed every 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.