

WHICHAM PARISH COUNCIL**BIODIVERSITY POLICY**

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, Whicham Parish 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 Whicham Parish.

All committees of Whicham Parish Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

In particular, Whicham Parish 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 practices.
- Support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

Actions

Planning applications

- The council, 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.
- It 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.
- It will consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.
- It will include policies in support of biodiversity within the neighbourhood and community plan.

Land and Property management

- The council will carry out a biodiversity audit of its landholdings.
- The Councils 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.
- Special care will be taken in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment.
- The council will 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.

- The council will engage with local businesses and residents regarding biodiversity in the community and how members of the community can assist and make a difference.
- It will, where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects on its land including for example, tree planting, wildflower meadows, birdbox making.

Partners

- Whicham Parish Council will work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within areas of Whicham Parish.
- It will review any local nature recovery strategies, or protected site strategies in respect of local sites of special scientific interest (SSSI's) and consider how it may become more involved in implementing the strategies recommendations.

This policy will be reviewed each year at the Annual Meeting, together with a summary of how the policy has been implemented in the previous twelve months.

ACTION PLAN

Site/Objective	Action	Outcome	Target (years)	Reporting/Publicity
Whole council area	Raise local awareness of biodiversity	Gain local support for actions	Ongoing	Newsletter
Protect and support biodiversity	Encourage suitable planting to support biodiversity	Connect & diversify habitats to meet the needs of wildlife species	Ongoing	Mapping
Recreation Grounds	Sympathetically maintain hedging Leave some areas unmown Only use environmentally friendly pesticides where absolutely necessary and only in ideal weather conditions	Food sources and cover Encourage insects Sustain & enhance natural habitats		
Common/other open spaces	Adapt a management plan Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs Work with Cumberland Council on verge management Encourage residents to adopt areas to look after	Sustain & enhance natural habitats Protecting habitats Protecting/enhancing habitats Regular attention		

The built landscape	Ensure that planning consultations are considered against the requirements of the Community Plan	Protecting/enhancing habitats	Ongoing	
Increase community awareness of biodiversity	Ask residents for their views on what they would like to be done to conserve biodiversity within the parish. Raise awareness of the importance of gardens as habitats for wildlife, with possible actions highlighted in the parish magazine Create a page in the parish council website for photographs/information/links Encourage local farmers to contribute Provide seed bombs/bulbs etc for residents use. Discourage floodlighting	Engagement/ownership of biodiversity Promote biodiversity Promote biodiversity Promote biodiversity Promote biodiversity Extending habitats Protect nocturnal animals	Ongoing	
Support Community projects	Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas Work in partnership with the school to develop young people's awareness of the environment around them	Extending habitats Provide habitats Promote biodiversity		

	Consider events and offer volunteering opportunities to support biodiversity, working with local organisations			
--	--	--	--	--