

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, updated 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 biodiversity.

This duty also means that we can spend funds for this purpose. To note we have received two biodiversity awards in relation to the Community Wood, runner up in the “Spaces for Nature Award” category at the Norfolk Biodiversity Awards 2023 and a highly commended award from CPRE Norfolk Awards in 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 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 the parish.

We will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

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 what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.
- 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 fittings)
 - 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 LED’s*) 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 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 unduly harm the natural environment.

Local community

- We will raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website, social media accounts and articles in local magazines.
- 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.

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

ACTION PLAN

SITE / OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	REPORTING / PUBLICITY
Whole council area	Raise local awareness of biodiversity	Gain local support for action	Website and at annual parish council meeting
Protect and support biodiversity	Encourage suitable planting to support biodiversity	Connect & diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species	
Community Wood	<p>To continue to sensitively manage the area, without changing its character. To maintain the native trees, hedges and bulbs which have been planted and regularly review future planting requirements.</p> <p>To maintain the existing bird, bat, hedgehog and owl boxes.</p> <p>To maintain existing bug hotel.</p> <p>Adopt a plan to support wildlife & diversity whilst maintaining the site in a way which enables visitors to experience quiet and calm remembrance</p>	<p>Connect & diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species</p> <p>Offering increase protection and encouraging wildlife.</p> <p>Encouraging insects/bugs.</p> <p>Encouraging insects particularly butterflies & bees</p>	Website, social media and at annual parish council meeting
The built landscape	<p>Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries</p> <p>Discourage external lighting where not needed for security purposes</p>	<p>Extending habitats</p> <p>Protecting nocturnal habitat</p>	Website and social media accounts

SITE / OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	REPORTING / PUBLICITY
Increase community awareness of biodiversity	<p>Raise awareness of the importance of gardens as habitats for wildlife</p> <p>Create a page on the parish council website for photographs / information / links</p> <p>Encourage local farmers and landowners to contribute</p> <p>Discourage floodlighting</p>	<p>Engagement/ownership of biodiversity</p> <p>Promote biodiversity</p> <p>Promote biodiversity</p> <p>Protect nocturnal habitat</p>	Website and social media accounts
Litter picking	Undertake litter picking of parish	Improved habitat condition for wildlife. Safer public open space. Improved resilience of nature. Gain local support for action.	Standing item on meeting agendas
Support community projects	<p>Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas</p> <p>Consider events and offer volunteering opportunities to support biodiversity, working with local organisations and residents.</p>	<p>Extending habitats</p> <p>Promote biodiversity</p>	Website and social media accounts
Hedgehog recovery programme	Share the link to Hedgehog Highways online via website alongside key information for their treatment and care	Increased biodiversity. Help prevents a species from becoming extinct.	Website and social media accounts

Policy amended and amended version adopted at Parish Council meeting on 2nd September 2025.