

WESTON COLVILLE PARISH COUNCIL – BIODIVERSITY POLICY

Review May 2026

BIODIVERSITY POLICY BACKGROUND

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, Weston Colville Parish Council (hereinafter referred to as the Council) which has any functions exercisable in relation to England 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 OF BIODIVERSITY

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 Council's area. The Parish 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 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 parish 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.

Land management

The Council will:

- consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity with regard to the management of its limited open space. 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.
- 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

Local community

The Council will:

- raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website 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.

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 onand will be reviewed in two years or sooner should legislation dictate.

ACTION PLAN

| SITE / OBJECTIVE | ACTION | OUTCOME | TARGET (Years) | REPORTING / PUBLICITY |
|----------------------------------|---|---|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Whole council area | Raise local awareness of biodiversity | Gain local support for promoting biodiversity | Ongoing | Newsletter, social media, website |
| Protect and support biodiversity | Encourage suitable planting to support biodiversity | Connect & diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species | Ongoing | As necessary |
| Churchyard Handled by PCC | Additional planting | Increased diversity of habitats and food sources | Ongoing | |

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| | <p>Adopt a plan to support wildlife and diversity whilst maintaining the site in a way which enables visitors to experience quiet and calm remembrance.</p> <p>Leave leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible as a habitat for invertebrates.</p> | <p>Increased cover for invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals.</p> <p>Encouraging insects particularly butterflies and bees</p> | | |
| Recreation grounds | <p>Sympathetically maintain hedging</p> <p>Leave some areas unmown</p> <p>Only use environment friendly pesticides where absolutely necessary and only in ideal weather conditions</p> | <p>Food sources and cover</p> <p>Encourages insects</p> <p>Sustain and enhance natural habitats</p> | | |
| Open space/village pond area/verges | <p>Manage in an environmentally sensitive manner</p> <p>Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs</p> <p>Work with the county council on verge management, favouring biodiversity but noting which areas may need cutting for highway safety.</p> <p>Encourage residents to adopt areas to look after, making it clear what is expected e.g. peat free compost and no chemicals</p> | <p>Sustain and enhance natural habitats.</p> <p>Protecting/enhancing habitats</p> <p>Regular attention.</p> | | |
| The Built Landscape | Ensure that planning consultations | Protecting/enhancing habitats | Ongoing | |

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| | <p>are considered against the biodiversity policy</p> <p>Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries</p> <p>Encourage reduction in pollution from light and sound</p> | <p>Extending habitats.</p> <p>Reduction in environmental damage due to light and noise.</p> | | |
| Increase community awareness of biodiversity | <p>Ask residents for their views on what they would like to be done to conserve biodiversity within the parish.</p> <p>Raise awareness of the importance of gardens as habitats for wildlife, with possible actions highlighted in the parish newsletter</p> <p>Create a page on the parish council website for photographs / information / links</p> <p>Encourage local farmers to contribute.</p> <p>Provide seed bombs / bulbs etc. for residents' use.</p> <p>Discourage floodlighting.</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> | Ongoing | Newsletter/ website |
| Support Community Projects | <p>Support hedge /tree planting in any appropriate areas. Consider opportunities to support biodiversity, working with local organisations.</p> | <p>Extending habitats.</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p> | | |

BACKGROUND TO POLICY AND STATUTORY DUTY

Under the 2021 Environment Act, public authorities (including town and parish councils) operating in England must consider what they can do 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.

To comply with the guidance, town and parish councils could as a minimum:

- have biodiversity as an agenda item for a meeting (if not already, as soon as possible).
- note what action they are already taking to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- agree what further steps they should take to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Steps taken may include:

- reviewing what biodiversity or nature recovery plans are already in place from other local authorities, e.g. potential for jointly-supported wildlife corridors.
- making contact with local voluntary groups working on nature conservation.
- carrying out a biodiversity audit of council landholdings and/or the whole council area, potentially involving residents in a “BioBlitz”
- gathering expert advice on possible actions in support of biodiversity, such as from Caring for God's Acre and the Eco Church initiative in respect of churchyards
- drafting an action plan that covers action that the council will take itself as well as support for the actions of other local bodies.

Whatever action is agreed, as a minimum local councils could ensure they address biodiversity concerns when commenting on planning applications.

In any consideration relating to biodiversity that the Parish Council might make, it is important that this is made in the context of biodiversity policies from Cambridgeshire County Council (<https://cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/libraries-leisure-culture/biodiversity-and-greenspaces/protecting-and-providing-green-space>) and South Cambridge District Council (<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/media/6675/adopted-biodiversity-spd.pdf>)