

STIFFKEY PARISH COUNCIL – BIODIVERSITY POLICY

1. Background

- 1.1 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, Stiffkey 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.

2. Definition

- 2.1 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.

3. Aims and Objectives

- 3.1 The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Council’s area. The Full Council and any committees of the Council will aim to 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 of 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 parish/town to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind.
- support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

4. Actions

4.1 Planning applications the Council will aim to:

- when commenting on planning applications, support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provisions 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.
- Include policies in support of biodiversity within the neighborhood plan.

5. Land and Property Management

5.1 The Council will aim to:

- 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 regard 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.
- consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing its buildings.

6. Local Community

6.1 The Council will aim to:

- 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.

- Where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects on its land including for example tree planting, wildflower meadows, birdbox making.

7. Partners

- 7.1 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 of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), nature reserves etc. and consider how it may become more involved in implementing the strategies' recommendations.

8. Monitoring

- 8.1 This policy was adopted on Monday 29th July, 2024 Minute reference 16.1 and will be reviewed in three years or sooner should legislation dictate. A summary of how the policy has been implemented will be published annually, with reference to the original biodiversity audit to show progress.

Model Action Plan

SITE/ OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET	REPORTING/ PUBLICITY
Whole Council area.	Raise local awareness of biodiversity.	Gain local support for action.	Ongoing.	Website/ Noticeboard.
Protect and support biodiversity.	Encourage suitable planting to support biodiversity.	Connect and diversify habitats to meet the needs of wildlife species.	Ongoing.	Mapping.
Open Spaces.	Adopt a management plan. Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs. Work with County Council on verge management, favouring biodiversity but noting which areas may need cutting for safety. Encourage residents to adopt areas to look after.	Sustain and enhance natural habitats. Protect habitats/enhance habitats. Regular attention.	Ongoing.	Email/ Website.
The Build Landscape	Encourage hedgehogs/small animals highways with permeable boundaries.	Extending habitats.	Ongoing.	Website
Increase community awareness	Ask residents for their views on what they would like to be done to conserve biodiversity. Raise awareness of the importance of gardens as habitats for wildlife. Encourage local farmers to contribute. Discourage external lighting.	Engagement/ Ownership of biodiversity. Promote biodiversity. Protect nocturnal animals.	Ongoing.	Website/Email/ Noticeboard.
Support Community Projects	Support hedge/tree planting. Offer volunteering opportunities to support biodiversity, working with local organisations.	Extending habitats. Promote biodiversity.	Ongoing.	Website/Email/ Noticeboard.

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