



Weasenham Parish Council

Weasenham Parish Council Bio-Diversity Policy

Last reviewed December 2023

Adopted 19th December 2023

Next review December 2025

Weasenham Parish Council Bio-Diversity Policy 2023

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.*

*Town and parish councils, unlike other authorities, are not obliged to publish a report on their actions, but the [Government guidance](#) requires all public authorities to complete their first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity by 1 January 2024. They must agree their policies and objectives as soon as possible after this and must reconsider the selected actions within five years of completing their previous consideration, **or more frequently if they choose.***

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

- *have biodiversity as an agenda item for a meeting before the end of 2023.*
- *note what action they are taking to conserve and enhance biodiversity.*
- *agree what further steps they should take to conserve and enhance biodiversity.*

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

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 (and with reference to Section 103), **Weasenham 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.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

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 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 **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.*
- *include policies in support of biodiversity within any neighbourhood plan.*

Land and property management

The Council 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 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 care in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does minimal harm to the natural environment.*
- *If practicable and cost effective, source sustainable materials when procuring supplies for the Council's use.*
- *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.*
- *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.*

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 of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and consider how it may become more involved in implementing the strategies' recommendations.

MONITORING

*This policy was adopted on **19th December 2023** (Minute reference _____) and will be reviewed in two years (or sooner should legislation dictate) at a Parish Council Meeting. A summary of how the policy has been implemented will be reported annually at a Parish Council Meeting.*

ACTION PLAN

Site / Objective	Action	Outcome	Target	Reporting / Publicity
<p>Whole council area</p> <p>Protect and support of biodiversity.</p>	<p>Raise local awareness of biodiversity.</p> <p>Encourage suitable planting to support biodiversity.</p> <p>Limits on grass cutting in May.</p> <p>Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries.</p> <p>Maintain and renew bird boxes as required.</p>	<p>Gain local support for action.</p> <p>Spreading of wildflower meadows.</p> <p>Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas.</p> <p>Encourage local insects and wildlife.</p> <p>Extending natural habitats.</p> <p>Encourage the maintenance and growth of the natural wildlife populations.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Newsletter, social media, website.</p> <p>Meetings with public in attendance.</p> <p>Annual public meeting.</p>
<p>Cemetery / churchyard</p>	<p>Additional planting</p> <p>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 supportive habitat.</p>	<p>Increased diversity of plant habitats and food sources</p> <p>Encouraging insects particularly butterflies and bees. Use of wild meadow flowers.</p> <p>Increased cover for invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, including small mammals.</p>		
<p>Recreation ground</p>	<p>Sympathetically maintain hedging.</p> <p>Leave some areas unmown.</p>	<p>Seasonal cutting to support food sources and cover.</p> <p>Encourages wildflowers and insects.</p>		

	Only use environment friendly pesticides where necessary.	Sustain and enhance the natural habitats.		
Common / other open spaces	<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.</p>	<p>Sustain and enhance the natural habitats.</p> <p>Protecting habitats</p> <p>Protecting/enhancing Habitats.</p> <p>Protecting/enhancing Habitats.</p>		
Site / Objective	Action	Outcome	Target	Reporting / Publicity
The Built Landscape	Ensure that planning consultations are considered against the requirements of any neighbourhood plans.	<p>Protecting/enhancing habitats</p> <p>Extending habitats.</p>	Ongoing	Council meetings
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 magazine.</p>	<p>Engagement/ownership of biodiversity</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p>	Ongoing	Create a page on the parish council website for photographs / information / links

	<p>Encourage local farmers to contribute.</p> <p>Provide seed bombs / bulbs etc. for residents' use.</p> <p>Discourage floodlighting.</p>	<p>Promote biodiversity.</p> <p>Extending habitats.</p> <p>Protect nocturnal animals.</p>		
	<p>Consider events and offer volunteering opportunities to support biodiversity, working with local organisations.</p>			