

WEST WICKHAM PARISH COUNCIL 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, West Wickham 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

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.
- support policy *WWK/7 Biodiversity and green infrastructure* in our 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](#).

Local community

The Council will:

- raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website and Village Voice newsletter..
- 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 the Village Hall Management Committee, West Wickham Gardening Club and the Devana Center for Environmental Recovery and 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 and consider how it may become more involved in implementing the strategies' recommendations.

MONITORING

This policy was adopted on 20 May 2025 (Minute reference 13) and will be reviewed in five years or sooner should legislation dictate / each year at the Annual Meeting. A summary of how the policy has been implemented will be published annually.

ACTION PLAN

SITE / OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	REPORTING / PUBLICITY
Increase community awareness of biodiversity	Raise local awareness of biodiversity through funding the Village Voice Newsletter which includes the regular 'Nature Notes' feature. Discourage floodlighting.	Gain local support for action.	Ongoing	Village Voice news letter, in print and via the village website.
Recreation ground	Sympathetically maintain hedging. Manage the 'wildlife area' near the allotments with a focus on nature and biodiversity.	Food sources and cover Encourages insects. Sustain and enhance natural habitats.		
Common / other open spaces	Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs. Identify and maintain suitable areas for wildflowers. Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas.	Sustain and enhance natural habitats. Protecting habitats		
The Built Landscape	Ensure that planning consultations are considered against the requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan	Protecting/enhancing habitats	Ongoing	

Based on model policy from [RESPONSE TO THE BIODIVERSITY DUTY 30 October 2023 INTRODUCTION - STATUTORY DUTY Under the 2021 Environment Act, public authority](#)