



## FULFORD PARISH COUNCIL: BIODIVERSITY DUTY

### INTRODUCTION - 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.

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 already taking to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- agree what further steps they should take to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Some steps being taken by other authorities (not necessarily applicable to Fulford) 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.

As a minimum Fulford Parish Council should ensure it addresses biodiversity concerns when commenting on planning applications.

The following pages are based on guidance published by South Gloucestershire Council, adapted to local needs. Links to developing a [local nature action plan](#) as well as a [field guide](#) for those with little or no ecological background have been provided.

## **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, Fulford Parish Council (hereinafter referred to as the Council or as FPC) must from time to time consider what action the authority can properly take, consistent with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective.

This duty also means that the Council 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, purification of our water and 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 Council and any committees and working groups 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 consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife in respect of all applications.

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- consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.
- include policies in support of biodiversity within the neighbourhood plan.

## **Land and property management**

The Council will:

- 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.

## **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 **xx** (Minute reference **yy**) and will be reviewed each year at the annual parish meeting\*. A summary of how the policy has been implemented will be published annually, with reference to the original biodiversity audit to show progress.



Site	Objective	Action	Desired outcome	Target date	Reporting/publicity
Whole council area and nearby	Raise local awareness, especially amongst landowners.  Protect and support biodiversity	Encourage suitable planting to support biodiversity.  Connect and diversify habitats	Gain local support for action	ongoing	Newsletter social media, website, GCF meetings and events
Cemetery - natural burial area	Enhance wildlife potential and improve demand for natural burials	Consult specialist cemetery advisors	More natural burials encouraged by more nature.		
Cemetery - rough ground to north	Maintain rough ground but potential for pond and footpath along Germany Beck	Feasibility study for pond and footpath	Incorporated into Germany Beck footpath		
Cemetery - conventional burial ground	Look for less formal layout	Replacement of some conifers by native species. Wild flower planting in selected areas	Greater biodiversity		
Allotments	Enhance the biodiversity potential of plots	Encourage tenants to use sustainable techniques			

Site	Objective	Action	Desired outcome	Target date	Reporting/publicity
Fordlands Road playing field	Enhance the biodiversity of non-playing surfaces, especially along bank of Germany Beck	Increase tree planting areas, reduce grass cutting except of playing surfaces			
Village Green	Protect area for tansy beetles, and maintain hay meadow habitat. Cooperate with St Nick's wildlife corridor project.	Annual cutting and removal of hay in select areas. Ensure PROW cut appropriately			
School Lane playing field - existing area					
School Lane extension					
Social Hall					
Pinfold					
Fulford Ings – multiple private land owners					
School pond					

Site	Objective	Action	Desired outcome	Target date	Reporting/publicity
Germany Beck & ponds					
Carstairs					
Community orchard and Designer Outlet woodland					
Explore area south A63/east A19	Assess biodiversity potential of private agricultural and wooded land				
Planning consultations	Biodiversity, particularly biodiversity net gain to be a major consideration in responding to applications				
Community awareness	Make community aware of FPC's commitment in all forms of publicity, such as website, Fulford Show, posters in Social Hall and notice boards				
Support community projects					

Site	Objective	Action	Desired outcome	Target date	Reporting/publicity
River Ouse					
Germany Beck					

**FULFORD PARISH - GENERAL DESCRIPTION**