

Draft Biodiversity Plan.

9th June, 2024

Introduction – WMPC 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.

Such steps may include:

- Working with Anne Westover's report on Biodiversity dated 12.02.2024. (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1taogsGjfyj92HEI6aULRnjt2fQ9TocjwgtkeuzBPhcw/edit?usp=sharing>).
- Reviewing what biodiversity or nature recovery plans are already in place from other local Authorities too, 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 in the future to involve residents in a "BioBlitz"; a fact finding mission, using our new biodiversity map, to find out what is thriving and what needs help. This could include but not be limited to part of 'Wild About Wickham' and could enlist the help of parishioners and their children.
- Gathering expert advice on possible actions in support of biodiversity, such as from the Greenprint Forum, Transition Woodbridge and our supporters of 'Wild About Wickham'.
- Drafting an action plan that covers action that the council will take itself as well as support for the actions of others.

Whatever action is agreed, as a minimum local councils could ensure they address biodiversity concerns when commenting on planning applications. (We have achieved this thanks to our Neighbourhood Plan).

A proposal was put to the last environment and Leisure meeting which was agreed. As a result, I would like to propose that a Biodiversity Action Plan should be adopted by WMPC and be discussed at each Full Council Meeting, as per Government guidance, and enclose a draft action plan. Everyone's input will be most welcome. Cllr. Niki Fowler.

DRAFT ACTION PLAN

SITE / OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	REPORTING /PUBLICITY
Whole council area	Raise local awareness of biodiversity.	Gain local support for action.	Ongoing	Parish magazine, 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	Mapping
Cemetery / churchyard	Additional planting. Anne Westover already has this in hand. Maintain and renew bird boxes as required. Sonya Exton handling. Adopt a plan to support wildlife and biodiversity whilst maintaining the site in a way which enables quiet and calm remembrance. Leave leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible as a habitat for invertebrates.	Increased diversity of habitats and food sources. Increased cover for invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals. Encouraging insects, particularly butterflies and bees.		
Village Hall Playing Field, The Pightle and other open spaces.	Sympathetically maintain hedging. Leave some areas unmown. Only use environment friendly pesticides where necessary and only in ideal weather conditions. Adopt a management plan. Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs. Work with the county council on verge management, favouring biodiversity but noting which areas may need cutting for safety. Encourage residents to adopt areas to look after, making it clear what is preferred such as peat free compost and no chemicals. To create wildlife ponds.	Food sources and cover. Encourages insects. Sustain and enhance natural habitats. Sustain and enhance natural habitats. Protecting habitats. Protecting/enhancing habitats. Regular attention. Enhancing habitat.		
Allotments.	Meetings to discuss ways they can further increase biodiversity. Using more eco friendly options such as peat free compost and no chemicals. To offer support to find less harmful pest control options. Keeping Hazel coppice/hedges.	Keeping biodiversity in focus, Protecting/enhancing habitats. Protecting/enhancing		

		habitats.		
SITE / OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	REPORTING /PUBLICITY
Increase community awareness of biodiversity	<p>Ensure that planning consultations are considered against the requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan (we do this).</p> <p>Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries.</p> <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 each edition of the Parish magazine.</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>Protecting/enhancing habitats</p> <p>Extending habitats.</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>		
Support Community Projects	<p>Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas.</p> <p>Work in closer partnership with the school to develop young people's awareness of the environment around them.</p> <p>Consider events and offer volunteering opportunities to support biodiversity, working with local organisations.</p>	<p>Extending habitats.</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p>		