

BioDiversity – Parish Council Policy and Action Plan

The Parish Council is considering what it can do to contribute to Biodiversity through the development of a Biodiversity Policy and Action Plan.

What is Biodiversity

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. It 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

What can the Council do?

Immediate actions could 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 within the village, 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
- considering how the actions of residents and other village organizations could be integrated with its own planning.

The Council will also draw as appropriate on work being carried out by Buckinghamshire Council which one of five areas in the country to trial the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy ([LNRS](#)).

LNRS are a new way of helping nature by identifying which characteristics are most important at a local level to focus action and investment.

The aim is to help nature and people flourish together.

The LNRS draws on work already done locally, such as through the [Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership](#)

A Parish Council Policy

The object of a Council Biodiversity Policy would be to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity within the Council's area. Possible items for inclusion within a Council Policy/Action Plan are:

- to consider the potential impact on biodiversity represented by planning applications.
- to manage village land (e.g. verges and common land) using environmentally friendly practices that will promote biodiversity, e.g. only essential cutting and removal of vegetation, unnecessary application of chemicals and careful timing of maintenance work.
- to encourage and support businesses and other organisations within the village to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind.
- to support residents' activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.
- where feasible, to involve the community in biodiversity projects on its land including for example tree planting, wildflower meadows, birdbox making.

An example of what might be included in such a Policy is shown in the table below, along with ideas for an associated Action Plan.

Input from the Village

Developing a realistic, manageable Biodiversity Policy and Plan requires support from the village. As a minimum understanding that it might involve some additional expenditure, but more importantly ideas and active input from village residents and organizations.

If you have any ideas or interest in this important subject, or would like to get involved with the Council's work in this area, please contact us at chearsleypc@chearsley.com. Or speak to [any Councillor](#) or come along to a [Parish Council meeting](#) and tell us your ideas.

POSSIBLE STRUCTURE FOR A BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

| SITE / OBJECTIVE | ACTION | OUTCOME | TARGET (Years) | REPORTING / PUBLICITY |
|----------------------------------|--|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Whole council area | Raise local awareness of biodiversity. | Gain local support for action. | Ongoing | Newsletter, social 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 Maintain and renew bird boxes as required. Adopt a plan to support wildlife and diversity whilst maintaining the site in a way which enables visitors to experience 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. | | |
| Recreation ground | Sympathetically maintain hedging. Leave some areas unmown. Only use environment friendly pesticides where absolutely necessary and only in ideal weather conditions. | Food sources and cover Encourages insects. Sustain and enhance natural habitats. | | |
| Common / other open spaces | 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 highway safety. | Sustain and enhance natural habitats. Protecting habitats Protecting/enhancing habitats Regular attention. | | |

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| | Encourage residents to adopt areas to look after, making it clear what is expected e.g. peat free compost and no chemicals. | | | |
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| The Built Landscape | <p>Ensure that planning consultations are considered against the requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan</p> <p>Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries</p> | <p>Protecting/enhancing habitats</p> <p>Extending habitats.</p> | Ongoing | |
| 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>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>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> | Ongoing | Neighbourhood plan consultation |
| Support Community Projects | <p>Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas.</p> <p>Work in 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> | | |