

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

Background

Public authorities who operate in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. This is the strengthened ‘biodiversity duty’ that the Environment Act 2021 introduces.

This means that, as a public authority, a parish council must:

1. consider what it can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity
2. agree policies and specific objectives based on its consideration
3. act to deliver its policies and achieve its objectives

Parish councils are not obliged to publish a report on their actions, but Government guidance does require them to comply with the [biodiversity duty](#)¹.

Definition

Biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth². It includes all species of animals and plants and is the building block of our ecosystem that in turn provide us not only with essentials such as food, fresh water and clean air, but also protection from natural disasters, regulation of our climate and pollination of our crops.

Objectives

The objective of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing biodiversity within the parish. The Full Council and any committees of the Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity with making decisions, and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

The Council will aim to improve the biodiversity of the area in the following ways:

1. **Planning:** Consider the potential impact on biodiversity with reviewing planning applications
2. **Land/Property:** Manage its land and property using environmentally friendly practices that will promote biodiversity
3. **Community:** Support local groups and organisations to promote diversity in the community and encourage other organisations within the parish to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind

¹ GOV.UK Complying with the biodiversity duty

² Defra (Biodiversity 2020)

Actions

1. Planning

In line with the UK Environment Act 2021 and the GBC Climate Change Policy, the Council will:

- support design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation of existing habitats and the provision of new
- support the protection of sensitive habitats from development and will consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife
- consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain
- review its Neighbourhood Plan

2. Land/Property Management

The Council will:

- carry out a biodiversity audit of its land and property
- make sure that its grounds maintenance works follow beneficial practices with regard to cutting and removal of vegetation, the use of pesticides, and the timing of maintenance works
- encourage suitable planting to support biodiversity
- consider biodiversity when making any changes to its land and property

3. Community

The Council will:

- raise public awareness of biodiversity issues through its website, newsletters and noticeboards
- support local groups, including The Horsleys CAN and West Horsley Youth Council, to promote biodiversity in the community, including how residents and local groups and businesses can make a difference
- where feasible encourage biodiversity projects on its land, such as the planting wildflowers, native trees and shrubs, and installing nest boxes for birds, bats and other animals

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Next Review: October 2025