



BOUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL BIODIVERSITY POLICY

Reviewed Nov 2025

INTRODUCTION & NALC PREAMBLE - 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:

- 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.

Whatever action is agreed, as a minimum local councils could ensure they address biodiversity concerns when commenting on planning applications.

All these steps may inform an agreed biodiversity policy for which a model example is attached.

Guidance for town and parish councils on developing a local nature action plan has been published by South Gloucestershire Council, as well as a field guide for those with little or no ecological background.

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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, Boughton Parish Council (hereinafter referred to as the Council) which has 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 Full Council and any committees 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 Boughton 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.
- 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 regarding 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 9th January 2024 (min ref 7/24) and will be reviewed each year or sooner should legislation dictate. A summary of how the policy has been implemented will be published annually, with reference to the original biodiversity audit to show progress.

BOUGHTON BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

SITE / OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	REPORTING / PUBLICITY
Whole council area	Raise local awareness of biodiversity. Specifically: Organise 1 – 2 events per year with the aim of raising awareness about Boughton's wildlife. Examples include (i) Boughton bat survey (annually or biannually) (ii) making habitats for local wildlife (e.g. hedgehog house or bird box making events); (iii) run a community bio-blitz around the pond. Provide information on local wildlife through <i>ad hoc</i> information sharing on the noticeboard and/or the local newsletter (G4news). This could include information on recent wildlife sightings (e.g. who's visiting the pond this month?); or tips on what to feed the ducks (i.e. not bread) / what to do in case of finding an injured duck, or a duckling without parents, <i>etc.</i> Encourage community participation in national wildlife events such as Big Garden Birdwatch, Big Butterfly Count, <i>etc.</i>	Gain local support for action. Build local understanding of Boughton's biodiversity.	Ongoing	Newsletter, social media, website, local noticeboard.
Protect and support biodiversity	Encourage suitable planting to support biodiversity. Consider introducing more native wildflowers in any verges or green spaces that are maintained by the council.	Connect & diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species	Ongoing	Mapping
Cemetery / churchyard	Any actions are to be decided by the Boughton Parochial Church Council and Diocese.	Sustain and enhance natural habitats.		

Playground	Sympathetically maintain hedging. Ensure no pesticides or herbicides are used.	Food sources and cover Encourages insects. Sustain and enhance natural habitats.		
The Green / other open spaces	Ensure that the pond's management plan is adhered to, including by residents. Maintain the open spaces in line with biodiversity principles, including additional planting of natives. Carry out a plant audit (possibly through NWT) to identify plants of interest and to identify opportunities for more planting of native pollinators. 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		
The Built Landscape	Ensure that planning consultations are considered against the requirements of the Council's Planning Policy Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries	Protecting/enhancing habitats Extending habitats.	Ongoing	
Increase community awareness of biodiversity	Ask residents for their views on what they would like to be done to conserve biodiversity within the parish. Raise awareness of the importance of gardens as habitats for wildlife, with possible actions highlighted in the parish magazine. Create a page on the parish council website for photographs / information / links Discourage floodlighting.	Engagement/ownership of biodiversity Promote biodiversity. Promote biodiversity. Protect nocturnal animals.	Ongoing	