

WORTWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Environmental & Biodiversity Policy

Adopted: January 2024

Next Review Due: January 2025

Introduction

Wortwell Parish Council is committed to carry out its activities with environmental efficiency, recognising the importance and value of the local area, and actively seeking to conserve, enhance and protect the local environment and biodiversity within its area of operation whilst endeavouring to ensure wider adverse environmental impact does not occur as a result.

Background

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 there is a duty on public authorities in England to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of their policy or decision making. Conserving biodiversity can include restoring or enhancing a population or habitat. This duty has been reinforced under the Environment Act 2021 and government guidance, requiring councils to complete their first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity by 1 January 2024 and agree policies and objectives as soon as possible after this.

English public authorities, including parish councils, need to check if a number of strategies affect how they comply with their biodiversity duty, including when they: -

- Develop policies and strategies and put them into practice.
- Manage the planning system.
- Manage their:
 - Land and buildings
 - Woodlands and nature reserves
 - Gardens, parks, and public open spaces
 - Community amenities e.g., sports grounds and cemeteries
 - Waste and pollution
 - Energy and water
 - Wood and plant products
- Develop infrastructure such as roads, buildings, or flood defences.
- Make decisions about procurement.
- Implement economic, environmental, and social programmes.

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, Wortwell Parish Council will, in exercising all its functions, have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. This duty also means that town and parish councils can spend funds in conserving biodiversity.

Biodiversity means the variety of life around us. It includes every species of plant and animal, the genetic material that makes them what they are, and the communities that they form. Biodiversity is essential to sustaining the living networks, or 'ecosystems', that provide us all with health, wealth, food, fuel, and the vital services our lives depend on. It is a core component of sustainable development, underpinning economic development and prosperity.

Commitment

In carrying out its own activities and decision making, where practical and economical, the Parish Council, and any committees of the Council, will consider sustainability, environmental impact, and biodiversity, as a result of its own activities, and through its influence over others, and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

Promoting Environmental Approaches

Minimising waste and pollution

- reduce, re-use and recycle resources and materials.
- eliminate unnecessary use of energy.
- provide information electronically as much as possible.
- minimise environmental impact of travelling on Council business.
- Maintain and promote the use of the village recycling centre on The Knoll.
- Provide and maintain litter bins on The Knoll and playing fields

Procurement

When purchasing services and goods, where practical and economical:

- give preference to local suppliers.
- procure products that are manufactured from recycling materials.
- procure options that are environmentally friendly.

Contractors and Maintenance

Encourage contractors, suppliers, and volunteers, acting on the Council's behalf, to

- take a responsible attitude towards the environment and minimise their impact on the environment.
- minimise the use of harmful pesticides and chemicals.
- undertake the work that, where practicable, benefits wildlife and the environment
- use locally sourced plants grown in the UK.

Highways and Sustainable Transport

- encourage the environmental benefits of walking and cycling.
- support initiatives which improve sustainable transport, such as car sharing, bus links and providing recharging points for electric cars.
- encourage biodiversity in Public Rights of Way routes, whilst still meeting the legal requirements for them to be kept clear to the required widths.

Decision Making Approaches

Planning Applications

The Council will, when commenting on planning applications:

- consider the environmental impact of every planning application and/or development proposal and favour those with the most sustainable construction and lowest impact e.g., wildlife friendly, carbon neutral/low energy designs.
- when commenting on planning applications, will 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.

Land and Property Management

The Council will:

- maintain our assets (buildings and other property) to the highest environmental standards, where feasible, including energy efficiency.
- consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity with regards to the management of its open spaces. This will include using environmentally friendly practices with regards to cutting e.g., No Mow May, rotational mowing, 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 and minimises disturbance to wildlife.
- consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing its buildings.

Natural Habitats

The Council will:

- give consideration of need to conserve and improve natural habitats, protect vulnerable and protected species and conserve green spaces.
- inspect trees regularly, remove dead, dying or dangerous trees/limbs, endeavour to replace trees with similar species.
- create dedicated spaces and enhance existing ones to attract wildlife and enhance biodiversity e.g., plant native trees and shrubs, plant wildflowers for pollinators, install nest boxes.
- encourage allotment holders to use wildlife-friendly techniques such as growing vegetables organically.
- ask landowners to consider biodiversity on their land to encourage wildflowers and areas of long grass.
- recognise the importance of hedgerows as an essential corridor for the movement of wildlife which may support many animals and plants.
- discourage all forms of littering, particularly dog fouling and single use plastics.

Emergency Planning

Wortwell Parish Council has an Emergency Plan which has contingencies in place to cater for extreme circumstances that might prevent the emergency services from reaching the scene immediately. The plan triggers include severe weather occurrences that have been impacted by climate change e.g., heatwave, flooding. The primary refuge venue is Wortwell Community Centre, which can also be used by villagers as a cool hub and warm hub, as required.

Energy Saving Measures

Wortwell Parish Council encourages local energy efficiency, energy saving and renewable energy actions which will benefit the community of Wortwell, by way of reducing carbon footprint and promoting sustainable practices. These actions include:

- Converting streetlights to lower energy LED lamps.
- Renewable energy - proposing sites for renewable energy generation, including PV solar panels and/or wind turbines.
- Encourage sustainable transport - identify safe walking and cycling routes, supporting electric car charging facilities and encouraging a car sharing scheme.

VESPA (Village Energy Sustainability Project Analysis)

Parish Councils can use their own buildings and land to develop local, clean energy projects. The VESPA project, co-ordinated by Wortwell Parish Council and Wortwell Community Centre Board of Trustees, is an energy solution which supports community infrastructure while delivering community services using a sustainable energy supply from renewable sources; solar PV panels on the roof the community centre, LED lighting and Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP) in the car parking area.

Community Engagement

The Council will, wherever possible:

- raise public awareness of biodiversity through its website and newsletters.
- encourage the local community, including through the Wortwell Nature Recovery Community Group, to enhance and promote their environment and biodiversity contribution in their own gardens by providing such things as nest boxes and bird feeders, holes in fences for hedgehogs and amphibians to pass, planting for butterflies and bees, wildlife ponds, corners of the garden and areas of grassland and wildflowers left to nature, etc.
- 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 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.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Wortwell Parish Council is committed to supporting the local Nature Recovery strategy. The strategy includes creating habitats for wildlife and 'nature/wildlife corridors' that connect existing habitat which allows species to move between habitats, maintain or increase populations and be more resilient to climate change.

Wortwell Nature Recovery Community Group

In partnership with the Parish Council, the scope of Wortwell Nature Recovery Community Group's priorities and activities will include:

- Map what biodiversity is already taking place.
- Carry out a biodiversity audit of council landholdings.
- Hold a household survey.
- Hold walking workshops.
- Gather expert advice on possible actions in support of biodiversity.
- Identify potential issues and opportunities.
- Draft an action plan to take new initiatives forward and agree what further steps to take.

Adherence to Policy

It is the responsibility of the Clerk to notify and provide copies of this policy to contractors and councillors.

Review

Wortwell Parish Council will re-consider their actions annually and update the action plan with details of how the policy has been implemented in the previous twelve months.

ACTION PLAN
to protect and support environment and biodiversity in Wortwell

Site/Objective	Action	Outcome	Target (years)	Reporting/ Publicity
Whole council area	Raise local awareness of biodiversity. Encourage suitable planting to support biodiversity.	Gain local support for action. Connect and diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species.	Ongoing	Newsletter Website Mapping
Playing fields	Adopt a management plan. Sympathetically maintain hedging. Leave some areas unmown. No Mow May Only use environment friendly pesticides, where absolutely necessary, and only in ideal weather conditions.	Sustain and enhance natural habitats. Food sources & cover. Encourages insects. Protecting/ enhancing habitats. Sustain & enhance natural habitats.	Ongoing	Newsletter Website Mapping
Other open spaces – The Knoll, Orchards etc	Adopt a management plan. Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs. Work with the county council on verge management No Mow May Additional planting Maintain and renew bird boxes as required.	Sustain and enhance natural habitats. Protecting habitats. Protecting/ enhancing habitats. Protecting/ enhancing habitats. Increased diversity of habitats and food sources Increased cover for invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, and	Ongoing	Newsletter Website Mapping

	Adopt a plan to support wildlife & diversity whilst maintaining the site.	small mammals. Encouraging insects particularly butterflies & bees.		
Allotments	Encourage allotment holders to use wildlife-friendly techniques such as growing vegetables organically. Adopt a plan to support wildlife & diversity whilst maintaining the site. Only use environment friendly pesticides where absolutely necessary and only in ideal weather conditions.	Promoting local produce, healthy eating and reducing food miles. Encouraging insects particularly butterflies & bees. Sustain & enhance natural habitats.	Ongoing	Newsletter Website Mapping
The Built Landscape	Ensure that planning consultations consider the environment. Encourage hedgehog/ small animal highways with permeable boundaries.	Protecting/ enhancing habitats Extending habitats.	Ongoing	Newsletter Website Mapping
Increase community awareness of biodiversity	Raise awareness of the importance of gardens as habitats for wildlife, with possible actions highlighted in the village magazine. Create a page on the parish council website for photographs, information, and links. Encourage local farmers to contribute. Provide seed bombs / bulbs etc. for residents' use. Discourage floodlighting.	Promote biodiversity. Promote biodiversity. Promote biodiversity. Extending habitats. Protect nocturnal animals.	Ongoing	Newsletter Website Mapping

<p>Priorities of Wortwell Nature Recovery Strategy Community Group</p>	<p>Map what biodiversity is already taking place and carry out a biodiversity audit of council landholdings.</p> <p>Ask residents for their views on what they are doing in their own gardens to protect and enhance biodiversity, and what they would like to be done to conserve biodiversity within the village.</p> <p>Map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals, seeking expert advice where possible.</p> <p>Identify potential issues and opportunities and agree priorities for nature's recovery.</p> <p>Draft an action plan to take new initiatives forward and agree what further steps to take.</p> <p>Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas.</p> <p>Consider events and offer volunteering.</p> <p>Encourage residents to adopt areas to look after.</p>	<p>Identify existing natural habitats.</p> <p>Sustain & enhance natural habitats. Protecting habitats</p> <p>Engagement/ownership of biodiversity.</p> <p>Protecting/enhancing habitats.</p> <p>Regular attention. Promote biodiversity.</p> <p>Promote biodiversity. Sustain & enhance natural habitats.</p> <p>Promote biodiversity. Sustain & enhance natural habitats.</p> <p>Engagement/ownership of biodiversity.</p> <p>Engagement/ownership of biodiversity.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Newsletter Website Mapping</p>
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