

COMBE PARISH COUNCIL

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

BACKGROUND

Under the 2021 Environment Act, all public authorities in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. This duty means that parish councils can spend funds on conserving biodiversity.

According to DEFRA (Biodiversity 2020), biodiversity is the variety of all life on earth. It includes all species of animals and plants, and their habitats.

Biodiversity has its own intrinsic value and is the building block of our 'ecosystems'. It underpins a wide range of goods and services that support our economic and social wellbeing. These include sustainable food production, fresh water, and clean air, as well as the mitigation of natural disasters and climate change. Biodiversity also plays a role in enriching lives through our engagement with nature.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This policy aims to work towards conserving and enhancing biodiversity in the area for which Combe Parish Council is responsible. The Council will seek to improve biodiversity in the following ways:

- consider the potential impact of planning applications on biodiversity;
- manage its land and property using environmentally friendly practices;
- encourage local businesses to adopt low impact/nature positive environmental practices;
- encourage other organisations within the parish to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind;
- support residents in enhancing and promoting biodiversity.

This policy sits within the guiding principles on biodiversity and green spaces outlined in the Combe Village Design Statement, and the objectives of the WODC Biodiversity Action Plan, 2023-2030.

ACTIONS

Planning applications

When commenting on planning applications, the Council will:

- support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation of existing habitats and/or provision of new habitats, in line with the guiding principles in the Combe Village Design Statement;
- support the protection of sensitive wildlife habitats from development;
- consider whether proposed developments might contribute to biodiversity net gain.

Land and property management

The Council will:

- consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity in the management of its open spaces, for example, through beneficial practices with regarding to cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and the timing of maintenance work;
- work with the County Council on verge management, favouring biodiversity but noting which areas may need cutting for highway safety;
- take 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, wherever possible, when procuring supplies for the Council's use;
- consider biodiversity issues when managing physical infrastructure.

Local community

The Council will:

- aim to raise public awareness of biodiversity issues through its website and other communications;
- raise awareness of the importance of gardens as habitats for wildlife;
- where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects, including, for example, tree planting, wildflower areas, birdbox making.

Partners

The Council will work in partnership with other organisations, as appropriate, to protect and enhance biodiversity, and promote nature recovery strategies within the local area.