

# Clifton Hampden Parish Council

## BIODIVERSITY POLICY

### BACKGROUND

Biodiversity can be defined broadly as the variety of life on earth (plants, animals, fungi and micro-organisms) as well as to the communities that they form and the habitats in which they live.

Biodiversity is also incredibly important to humans. Ecosystems provide humans with ecosystem services such as the maintenance of the climate, sources of timber, food, medicine and the removal of pollutants. The greater the number of species present, the more ecosystem services the system can provide. For example, on a global scale, the earth's biosphere provides a major global carbon sink, offsetting a large amount of fossil fuel emissions. Biodiversity ensures maintenance of this system and buffers a rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations.

Without these organisms, ecosystems and ecological processes, human societies could not exist. They supply us with oxygen and clean water. They cycle carbon and fix nutrients. They enable plants to grow and therefore, to feed us, keep pest species and diseases in check and help protect against flooding and regulate the climate.

This loss of biodiversity is concerning because of the growing consensus that it goes hand-in-hand with a reduction in the stability and productivity of ecosystems. The result may be that the services that are critical for our well-being and economic prosperity could be compromised in damaging ways.

### 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](#) required 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.
- note what actions 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](#)
- drafting protocols that cover what actions the council will take itself as well as support for the

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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 below. Guidance for town and parish councils on developing a [Climate Action Plan](#) has been published by South Oxfordshire District Council, as well as a [field guide](#) published by South Gloucestershire Council for those with little or no ecological background.

In addition to the above, the link below gives more information <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/tackling-the-climate-emergency/read-the-latest-climate-and-nature-reports-and-news-from-us/read-our-latest-reports/>

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### **MODEL BIODIVERSITY POLICY**

#### **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, Clifton Hampden Parish Council (hereinafter referred to as the Council) which has any 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 on conserving biodiversity.

#### **DEFINITION**

According to Defra (Biodiversity 2020), biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes everything that is alive on our planet.

Biodiversity is important for its own sake and has its own intrinsic value. Several studies have shown this value also goes further. Biodiversity is the building block of our 'ecosystems' which in turn provides 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 / working parties 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 Clifton Hampden and Burcot 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

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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 their 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 regarding the management of its open spaces. This will include adopting beneficial practices in respect of 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 ground 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.

Clifton Hampden PC 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 20<sup>th</sup> October 2025 and will be reviewed in two years or sooner should legislation dictate and each year at the Annual Meeting. A summary of how the policy has been implemented will be published annually, with reference to the original biodiversity audit to show progress.

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| SITE / OBJECTIVE                             | ACTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | OUTCOME                                                                                                                                                                                         | TARGET (Years) | REPORTING / PUBLICITY |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| 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    |
| Support Community Projects                   | <p>Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas.</p> <p>Work in partnership with the primary 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>                                                                                                            |                |                       |

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| 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                           |
| Recreation ground                | <p>Sympathetically maintain hedging.</p> <p>Leave some areas unmown.</p> <p>Only use environment friendly pesticides where absolutely necessary and only in ideal weather conditions.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                | <p>Food sources and cover</p> <p>Encourages insects.</p> <p>Sustain and enhance natural habitats.</p>                                  |                |                                   |
| Common / other open spaces       | <p>Adopt a management plan.</p> <p>Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs.</p> <p>Work with the county council on verge management, favouring biodiversity but noting which areas may need cutting for highway safety.</p> <p>Encourage residents to adopt areas to look after, making it clear what is expected e.g. peat free compost and no chemicals.</p> | <p>Sustain and enhance natural habitats.</p> <p>Protecting habitats</p> <p>Protecting/enhancing habitats</p> <p>Regular attention.</p> |                |                                   |