

RESPONSE TO THE BIODIVERSITY DUTY

30 October 2023

INTRODUCTION - 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.

Windermere & Bowness Town Council

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, Windermere & Bowness Town 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 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 Town 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.
- consider the impact of the proposal on water quality in Windermere Lake.
- include policies in support of biodiversity within the neighbourhood plan should one be created.

Land and property management

The Council will:

- begin planning to 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.
- Where practicable, source sustainable materials when procuring supplies for the Council's use
- consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing its buildings.

Resources

The Council will:

- Aim to reduce waste eg through water and power saving initiatives
- Aim to consider environmental impact when purchasing eg recycled paper or renewable power.

Local community

The Council will:

- raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website and social media.
- 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, litter picking, 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.

The council will use its membership of the Lake Administration Committee to push for improvements to water quality and encourage biodiversity.

MONITORING

This policy was adopted on **7/3/2024** (Minute reference _____) and will be reviewed in two years or sooner should legislation dictate. A summary of how the policy has been implemented will be published as part of the annual report, showing progress on action plan areas.

**Windermere & Bowness Town Council
ACTION PLAN**

SITE / OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	REPORTING / PUBLICITY
Whole council area	Raise local awareness of biodiversity.	Gain local support for action.	Ongoing	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
Elleray Woods and Orrest Head	<p>Encourage native species through plant management.</p> <p>Maintain and renew bat and bird boxes as required.</p> <p>Work with Red Squirrel Trust to encourage the spread from St Catherine's Wood</p> <p>Adopt a plan to support wildlife and diversity whilst maintaining the site in a way which enables visitors to experience the woodland and fell top</p>	<p>Increased diversity of habitats and food sources</p> <p>Increased cover for invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals.</p> <p>Encouraging insects particularly butterflies and bees</p>	Ongoing	Social media, website, leaflets
Langrigge and Longlands Recreation grounds	<p>Sympathetically maintain hedging.</p> <p>Sympathetically maintain hedging. Leave leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible.</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>	Ongoing	Social media, website, signage
Gardens, allotments and planters.	<p>Adopt a biodiversity friendly management plan.</p> <p>Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs.</p> <p>Work with Westmorland & Furness council on verge management, favouring biodiversity but noting which areas may need cutting for highway safety.</p>	<p>Sustain and enhance manmade habitats.</p> <p>Protecting habitats</p> <p>Protecting/enhancing habitats</p>	Ongoing	Social media, website, allotment holder's agreement

SITE / OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	REPORTING / PUBLICITY
The Built Landscape	<p>Ensure that planning consultations are considered against the requirements of the Biodiversity duty particularly in relation to trees, habitats and water/ sewerage management.</p> <p>Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries</p>	<p>Protecting/enhancing habitats</p> <p>Extending habitats.</p>	Ongoing	Social Media and website
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 on website and social media.</p> <p>Create a page on the parish council website for photographs / information / links</p> <p>Encourage local farmers, landowners and businesses to promote biodiversity.</p> <p>Discourage floodlighting.</p>	<p>Engagement/ownership of biodiversity</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p> <p>Protect nocturnal animals.</p>	Ongoing	<p>Website and social media.</p> <p>Cumbria in Bloom and Windermere in Bloom competitions</p>
Support Community Projects	<p>Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas.</p> <p>Work in partnership with the school and youth groups 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>	Ongoing	Grant applications, website and social media