



Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Biodiversity Policy

Introduction

S.40, Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, as amended by s.102, Environment Act 2021, imposes a duty upon parish councils to consider what action the council can take, consistent with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective (*“the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity ... through the exercise of (its) functions”*).

Biodiversity

According to Defra (Biodiversity 2020), biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth and 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 Stratfield Mortimer.

The Council (references to the Council include its Committees as relevant) 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:

- considering the potential impact on biodiversity in relation to its policies (including the Neighbourhood Plan) and planning applications;
- managing its land and property, and undertaking any other operations, using practices that promote biodiversity;
- encouraging and supporting local businesses, organisations and residents to enhance and promote biodiversity.

Actions

Planning

When considering planning applications, the Council will:

- support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats;
- support the protection of sensitive habitats from development and consider whether a proposal would mean the loss of habitats;
- consider what any development proposes in terms of biodiversity net gain.

Land and Property Management

The Council will:

- carry out and keep under review a biodiversity audit of its landholdings;
- consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity with regard to the management of its open spaces (including adopting beneficial practices with regard 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);
- when commissioning grounds maintenance contracts ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment;
- seek where possible to 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 seek to:

- raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website and communications;
- engage with local businesses, organisations and residents:
 - regarding biodiversity in the community and how members of the community can assist and make a difference;
 - to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the parish;
- involve (where feasible) the community in biodiversity projects on its land.