



# Wickham St Pauls Parish Council

## BIODIVERSITY POLICY

Statutory Duty Under the 2021 Environment Act, public authorities (including town and parish councils) who operate in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. Government guidance published on 17th 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 may reconsider the selected actions within 5 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 in respect of biodiversity is already taking place locally.
  - Agree what further steps to take at this stage. Such steps may include:
    - Reviewing what biodiversity or nature recovery plans are already in place from other local authorities.
    - Making contact with local voluntary groups working on nature conservation.
    - Carrying out a biodiversity audit of council landholdings and/or the whole council area
    - Gathering expert advice on possible actions in support of biodiversity.
    - 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.

**BIODIVERSITY POLICY PREAMBLE** 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, Wickham St Pauls 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.

**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. It is the building block of our 'ecosystems'. These 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 enhancing and protecting the biodiversity of Wickham St Pauls Parish Council. The council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required. In particular, Wickham St Pauls Parish 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 & council operations in the adoption of low impact practices.
- support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

## **ACTIONS**

### **Planning applications**

- The council, 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.
- It will 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.
- It will consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.
- It will include policies in support of biodiversity within the neighbourhood plan. Land and property management
- The council will carry out a biodiversity audit of its landholdings.
- The council will consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity with regard to the management of its open spaces. This will include adopting beneficial practices with regard to cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work.
- Special care will be taken in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment.
- The council will 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.
- The council will engage with local businesses and residents regarding biodiversity in the community and how members of the community can assist and make a difference.
- It will, where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects on its land including for example tree planting, wildflower meadows, bird boxes.

### **Mission Statement**

Parish Councils are encouraged to develop Mission Statements by consultation and engagement with residents and village organisations, promoting schemes and devising projects which encourage people to maintain their local neighbourhood.

#### **Wickham St Pauls Parish Council Mission Statement:**

- To promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the Parish.
- To protect and improve open spaces, conserving and enhancing the natural environment within the Parish.
- To promote sustainable development within the Parish, protecting the rural aspect of the Parish.

**Spring Bulbs** Councillors and volunteers have planted spring bulbs 3000 in total, around the area near the village hall, pounds and village green also in Chapel Yard area (closed burial ground).

**Litter Picking** takes place by Councillors and volunteers. Litter picking dates are advertised on the two noticeboards, the website, and Look out Magazine. Volunteers are requested to contact the Parish Clerk if they wish to join the Councillors litter picking.

**Grass Cutting** is carried out from March to October, two cuts per month, location:-

1. Strip of land adjacent to 'Mansards' facing The Green
2. Area immediately in front of the Pavilion
3. Around the oak posts on the Green and around benches

4. Chapel Yard (in strips)
5. Brambles on Chapel Yard pathway
6. Set aside three areas for wildflower meadows on the village green

The Parish Council would refrain from hedge cutting in the bird nesting season. (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Chapter 69)

(An Act to repeal and re-enact with amendments the Protection of Birds Acts 1954 to 1967 and the Conservation of Wild Creatures and Wild Plants Act 1975; to prohibit certain methods of killing or taking wild animals; to amend the law relating to protection of certain mammals; to restrict the introduction of certain animals and plants; to amend the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976; to amend the law relating to nature conservation, the countryside and National Parks and to make provision with respect to the Countryside Commission; to amend the law relating to public rights of way; and for connected purposes).

### **Public Footpaths**

The parish council works in partnership with Essex County Council, Public Rights of Way Officer, to ensure that the public footpaths within Wickham St Pauls are maintained and accessible to the community. Wickham St Pauls Parish Council have a Footpath Working Group who walk the footpaths twice a year and regularly report defects via the ECC website. The working group undertakes maintenance of the footpaths, cutting back vegetation, improving signage, installing steps and handrails with voluntary groups and representatives from Essex County Council.

### **Partners**

- Wickham St Pauls Parish Council will work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within area of Wickham St Pauls.
- 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.

### **Re-Adopted**

Date 27<sup>th</sup> May 2025

Minute reference 25/60 Item D

Signed .....

Review Date: May 2026