

STOCKTON PARISH COUNCIL

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

1. Introduction

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 there is a duty on public authorities in England, including Parish Councils to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of their policy or decision making.

This was further strengthened by the Environment Act 2021 so public authorities must now consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. This means a public authority must:

- Consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration.
- Act to deliver policies and achieve objectives.

2. 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.

3. The Local Area

Stockton Parish Council is a rural village, with a considerable number of natural areas including hedges, ditches, and farmland.

4. Parish Council responsibilities

The Parish Council owns the following land - the cemetery and extension, Memorial Green at Jubilee Fields, The Pound and the Village Green.

In addition, it manages the land occupied by Stockton Community Playing Fields Committee and children's play area at the rear of St. Michaels Crescent.

The Parish Council is also responsible for the grass in parts of the village.

5. Aims and Objectives.

The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Council's area. The Parish Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

6. Actions

The Parish Council's action so far include delaying the trimming of hedges until after 31 August each year to protect nesting birds and leaving most of the grassed area in the Cemetery Extension un-mowed until late summer to allow wild flowers to grow and insect life to develop.

In future it will aim to improve the biodiversity of the area in the following ways:

- Consider the impact on biodiversity in the decisions made through the Parish Council, especially 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.
- Manage its land and property using environmentally friendly practices that will promote biodiversity:
 - Take care in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment
 - Review how it manages the land at the Playing Field, War Memorial Garden. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - Leaving some standing and fallen dead wood as a habitat for invertebrates
 - Leaving some leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible as a habitat for invertebrates
 - Removing invasive and non-invasive species that are detrimental to native flora or fauna as required.

7. Monitoring and Review

This policy was adopted on 18th August 2025 and will be reviewed in two years or sooner should legislation dictate