

Quarnford Parish Council

Response to the Biodiversity Duty - DRAFT

October 2025

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 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 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 require all public authorities to complete their first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity by the **1st 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 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 landholding 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 a 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 form 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.

Adopted: Draft October 2025
Next review date: May 2026

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, Quarnford 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 on 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 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 objective of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of Quarnford Parish.

In particular, Quarnford 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 and council operations in the adoption of low impact practices.
- Support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

Actions

Planning applications (reminder that the parish council is a consultee not a decision maker in planning application).

- 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 (if applicable).

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 timings of maintenance works, paying attention to the Government's regulations for [plant protection products](#).
- 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, birdbox making.

Partners.

- Quarnford Parish Council will work in partnership with other organisations to protect promote and enhance biodiversity within areas of the parish.
- 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.

This policy was adopted on xx (Minute reference yy) and will be reviewed 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.

Action Plan

Site / Objective	Action	Outcome	Target (years)	Reporting / publicity
Whole council area	Raise local awareness of biodiversity	Gain local support and action	Ongoing	Social media, website, Newsletter (if available)
Protect and support biodiversity	Encouraging suitable planting to support biodiversity	Connect and diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species	Ongoing	Mapping
Recreation Grounds	Sympathetically maintain hedging Leave some areas unmown. (the PC leaves at least 1 metre on the border of each play area uncut) Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs Only use environment friendly pesticides where absolutely necessary and only in ideal weather conditions. (Consider using alternatives*)	Food sources and cover Encouraging insects Sustain and enhance natural habitats Not causing any damage to insects or rashes / burns to skin	Ongoing	
Common / other open spaces	Adopt a management plan (if appropriate) Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs Work with Staffordshire County Council on verge management Encourage residents to adopt areas to look after	Sustain and enhance natural habitats Protecting habitats Protecting / enhancing habitats Regular attention	Ongoing	

Site / Objective	Action	Outcome	Target (years)	Reporting / publicity
The built landscape	Ensure that planning consultations are considered against the requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries	Protecting / enhancing habitats Extending Habitats	Ongoing	
Increase community awareness of biodiversity	Ask residents on their views on what they would like to be done to conserve biodiversity within the parish Raise awareness of the importance of gardens as habitats for wildlife, with possible action highlighted in the parish newsletter etc Create a page on the parish council website for photographs / information / links Encourage local farmers to contribute Provide seed bombs / bulb etc for residents' use Discourage floodlighting	Engagement / ownership of biodiversity Promote biodiversity Promote biodiversity Promote biodiversity Extending habitats Protect nocturnal animals	Ongoing	Consultation Newsletter (if available), Social Media, Website
Support community projects	Support hedge / tree planting in any appropriate areas Work in partnership with the schools to develop young peoples awareness of the environment around them	Extending habitats Promote biodiversity	Ongoing	

Site / Objective	Action	Outcome	Target (years)	Reporting / publicity
	Consider events and offer volunteering opportunities to support biodiversity working with local organisations	Promote biodiversity		

***Alternatives methods to the use of Pesticides include:**

- Hot foam systems, like hot water systems, kill plants using heat, but can be used in all weather conditions. This gives them a major advantage over chemical herbicides which can only be sprayed under ideal weather conditions.
- Hand weeding is an option particularly for smaller areas such as playgrounds and on paths running through parks.
- Acetic acid dilutions have been used very effectively to control weeds on hard surfaces in a variety of situations. Acetic acid is biodegradable and poses no risk of bioaccumulation.
- Various types of manual approaches are available in the form of differing types of mulching. This is a particularly useful approach in ornamental beds and in parks.
- Flame treatment has been used successfully to eliminate weeds.
- Steel brushing can be used for large scale areas such as pavements and roads and in combination with the use of acetic acid spraying can be a very effective alternative.
- High pressure hot water treatments can be particularly effective and also have other uses such as chewing gum removal.
- Electronic control systems that kill stems and roots instantly and are particularly suited to dealing with invasive species are also available.

Parish Council Owned assets:

1. Former Flash Village Primary school playing field