

SEVERN STOKE AND CROOME D'ABITOT PARISH COUNCIL - WORCESTERSHIRE

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

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Adopted by Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Council adopted in principle Oct 2023 and fully adopted Jan 2024.

Introduction by WCALC – explaining the Statutory Duty of parish councils.

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.

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.

Our biodiversity policy is overleaf.

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

LEGAL

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, **Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot 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 **the parish**.

All committees of **Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Council** consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

In particular, **Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Council** aims to improve the biodiversity of the area in the following ways:

- consider the potential impact on biodiversity represented by planning applications.
- 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.

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 including for example tree planting, wildflower meadows, birdbox making.

Partners

- **Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot 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 will be reviewed each year at the Annual Meeting.

MODEL ACTION PLAN

SITE / OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	NOTES
Whole council area	Raise local awareness of biodiversity.	Gain local support for action.	Ongoing	Copy of this plan distributed to Kempsey Parish Council and the National Trust October 2023
Protect and support biodiversity	Encourage suitable planting to support biodiversity.	Connect & diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species	Ongoing	
Cemetery / churchyard	Additional planting Maintain and renew bird boxes as required.	Increased diversity of habitats and food sources Increased cover for invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals. Encouraging insects particularly butterflies & bees.		Not parish council owned but parish councils now have the power to assist with grants and funding towards churchyard maintenance.
Common / other open spaces	Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs. Work with the county council on verge management	Protecting habitats Protecting/enhancing habitats		
The Built Landscape	Ensure that planning consultations are considered against the requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries	Protecting/enhancing habitats Extending habitats.	Ongoing	

SITE / OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	NOTES
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 in the parish magazine.</p> <p>Create a page on the parish council website for photographs / information / links</p> <p>Encourage local farmers to contribute.</p> <p>Provide seed bombs / bulbs etc. for residents' use.</p> <p>Discourage floodlighting.</p>	<p>Engagement/ownership of biodiversity</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p> <p>Extending habitats.</p> <p>Protect nocturnal animals.</p>	Ongoing	
Support Community Projects	<p>Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas.</p> <p>Work in partnership with the school 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>		
<p>Feed into County Council Biodiversity consultation/s</p> <p><i>Added Jan 2024</i></p>	<p>Worcestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy Issues and Options Consultation (consultation database reference 646 - This consultation paper sets out a range of potential opportunities for nature recovery in the county)</p>	<p>Agree priorities for nature's recovery.</p> <p>Map the most valuable existing areas for nature</p>		<p>Potential to encourage the flood bund area to be included in this strategy and long term maintenance of this bund site. Copy of WCC consultation sent to National Trust, Croome Savills and the EA.</p>