

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

Introduction – Statutory Duty

Under the Environment Act 2021, public authorities (including town and parish councils) operating in England **must** consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Elm Parish Council has formally adopted this Policy in response to the requirement to consider/improve biodiversity across the parish and will take the subject into account in its decisions and actions moving forward.

Biodiversity is the collective term for the variety and abundance of forms of life found in an area, including; animals, plants, fungi and micro-organisms such as bacteria. Each of these species and organisms work together in eco-systems to maintain, balance and support life. Biodiversity supports everything in nature that we need to survive including, food, oxygen, clean air and clean water.

Government guidance (published on 17 May 2023) clarifies that; as a public authority; 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 policies and achieve their objectives.

To comply with the guidance, parish councils should, as a minimum;

- Include biodiversity as an agenda item.
- Note what action is already being taken to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Agree what further steps need to be taken to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

According to the legislation, a number of strategies need to be considered in order to comply with biodiversity duty, including;

- Local nature recovery strategies.
- Species conservation strategies.
- Protected site strategies.

Councils need to understand how; or if; the above strategies affect land that is owned or managed by Parish Council.

The actions included in this Policy should be reconsidered after five years (as a minimum) or, more frequently if Council chooses to do so.

Commitment

As a landowner (including; Begdale playing field/car park, Canal Towpath [jointly owned with Emneth Parish Council], Elm Cemetery, Pocket Parks, Allotments, Maltmas Drove playing field [leased]), the Council will consider how biodiversity can be supported and improved on the land that it owns and manages.

Elm Parish Council ('The Council') will;

1. Consider the impact on biodiversity in decisions it makes in Council, committees, and working party/group meetings. It will seek to minimise adverse impacts on biodiversity

as a result of the Council's activities and, will identify opportunities to increase biodiversity where practicable.

2. Encourage practices and projects beneficial to biodiversity through local groups (FEET for example).
3. Communicate information and raise awareness of biodiversity via its website.
4. Work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity across all areas of the parish.
5. 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. It will support protection of sensitive habitats from development and will consider whether a development would result in loss of important habitats for wildlife.
6. Monitor its internal policies and procedures to enhance biodiversity.
7. Proactively remove invasive and non-invasive species as required under appropriate legislation in order to prevent harm to native species.
8. Avoid the use of pesticides and herbicides except in exceptional circumstances.
9. Properly scale and time grounds maintenance work or removal of vegetation such that the impact on biodiversity is minimised. Maintenance practices that are beneficial to biodiversity will be taken into consideration when contracts are placed.
10. Create dedicated spaces to attract and enhance wildlife. Leave standing and fallen dead wood as a habitat for invertebrates (as happens along the Canal Towpath for example). Leave sections of un-cut grass where practical. Sow wild flowers.
11. Provide grant funding for local groups/organisations whose actions are supporting biodiversity (FEET for example).
12. Ensure that any hedge cutting and tree pruning takes place in accordance with tree and hedgerow management policies (Elm Cemetery, for example).
13. Improve buildings and land it owns/manages to enhance biodiversity (for example; tree planting projects at Begdale field and along the Canal Towpath, installation of owl nesting box along Towpath).

Date of Adoption: 11th September 2024.

Review due May 2025.