



Wissett Parish

Biodiversity Statement

Wissett Parish Council

January 2024

Introduction

Under the 2021 Environmental Act, public authorities (including parish councils) must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Further guidance published in May 2023 clarifies that, as a public authority, the parish council must:

- consider what they can do to preserve and enhance biodiversity,
- agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration, and
- act to deliver their policies and achieve their objectives.

Wissett Parish Council has for some time now been carrying out surveys and mapping of the local wildlife and habitats in order to better understand how to protect and enhance it going forwards.

Public consultations have also been carried out to engage and inform the local community of the potential opportunities for biodiversity.

This ongoing assessment and recording of our local landscape will inform a parish wide biodiversity strategy which is currently in development.

The following statement highlights the key objectives of the parish council in relation to the above guidance.

Biodiversity Statement

The parish council will protect, manage and enhance the biodiversity within the parish through the following core strategies. These will be integrated within the developing parish wide biodiversity strategy and reviewed regularly to ensure they remain up to date and relevant with our changing environment.

GENERAL

Wissett Parish Council will:

- manage public land in a way that promotes habitat creation and provides access to nature for local residents,
- provide resources to local residents on how they can manage their gardens, meadows and woodlands in a wildlife friendly way,
- map local habitats to maximise the opportunity of connecting them up through wildlife corridors,
- review mowing regimes of verges and public areas, cutting later in the season where appropriate, to maximise their biodiversity potential,
- review areas currently mown to identify if, in some instances, they can be left to grow up and cut only once annually,
- minimise the use of herbicides, pesticides and water in the establishment and management of public areas,
- cut/lay hedges outside of the bird nesting season,
- seek areas where additional tree, hedge and wildflower planting could be established,

- protect existing habitats, particularly mature native trees and established hedgerows,
- seek locations within the parish for habitats such as bird boxes, hibernaculums and hedgehog houses,
- support local biodiversity initiatives and working groups.

PLANNING

The parish council reviews and provides comment on all planning applications within Wissett. Through this process the parish council will:

- consider the sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity of a proposed scheme,
- protect existing hedgerows and trees,
- promote the planting of new trees and hedgerows which reflect the character and habitats existing in the parish, and,
- seek greater biodiversity net gain where possible (the current system by which planning policy assesses biodiversity of a development requires a minimum of 10% net gain).

Next Steps

The above statement sets out the parish council's key objectives by which it will protect and enhance the local biodiversity.

These objectives will feed into the developing parish wide biodiversity strategy which will involve further public consultation, with the ambition of being formerly adopted by the parish council in due course.

This approved biodiversity strategy will become part of the emerging neighbourhood plan which is a community-led series of policies responding to locally relevant issues and which is recognised within the current planning process. The aim of which is to provide additional protection and positive long-term strategies for future generations of the village.

Both the biodiversity strategy and emerging neighbourhood plan of which it will form a part, will be developed over the next 2-3 years.

