

TOSTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

Adopted 2024-05-14

1 Introduction

- 1.1 In accordance with the duty imposed on parish councils by Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, updated by Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021, the Council must consider what it can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Government guidance published 17 May 2023 clarified that, as a public authority, parish councils (necessarily including Tostock) must:
- ◆ consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity;
 - ◆ agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration; and
 - ◆ act to deliver their policies and achieve their objectives.
- 1.2 Parish councils, unlike other authorities, are not obliged to publish a report on their actions, but the Government guidance required all public authorities to complete their first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity by 1 January 2024. Policies and objectives are required to be agreed by councils as soon as possible after that and selected actions must be reconsidered within five years of completing the previous consideration, or more frequently if they so choose.
- 1.3 To comply with the guidance, the Council will:
- ◆ have biodiversity as a frequent agenda item;
 - ◆ note what action it is already taking to conserve and enhance biodiversity; and
 - ◆ agree what further steps it should take to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- 1.4 Such steps include:
- ◆ reviewing what biodiversity and/or nature recovery plans are already in place within other local authorities;
 - ◆ making contact with local voluntary groups working on nature conservation;
 - ◆ undertaking a biodiversity audit of Council landholdings and/or the whole Council area;
 - ◆ gathering expert advice on possible actions in support of biodiversity; and
 - ◆ drawing up a plan (based upon the model forming part of this policy) that covers action that the Council will take itself as well as in support of the actions of other local bodies.

2 Definition

- 2.1 According to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) - *Biodiversity 2020: a Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services* - biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants - everything that is alive on the planet.
- 2.2 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 'ecosystems' which, in turn, provide a wide range of goods and services that support economic and social wellbeing. These include essentials such as food, fresh water and clean air, but also less obvious services such as protection from

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natural disasters, regulation of the climate, and purification of water or pollination of crops. Biodiversity also provides important cultural services, enriching lives.

3 Aims and Objectives

- 3.1 The object of this policy is to work towards enhancing and protecting the biodiversity of the parish of Tostock.
- 3.2 The Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.
- 3.3 In particular, the 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; and
 - ◆ support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

4 Actions

4.1 Planning Applications

The Council will:

- ◆ 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 the 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; and
- ◆ consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.

4.2 Land and Property Management

The Council will:

- ◆ carry out a biodiversity audit of its landholdings;
- ◆ consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity with regard to the management of its open spaces - including adopting beneficial practices with regard to the cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work;
- ◆ take care in the specification of any grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment;

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- ◆ source sustainable materials when procuring supplies for Council use;
- ◆ appoint officers as needed, especially a Footpaths Officer and Tree Officer, to deal with and advise on specific biodiversity matters;
- ◆ consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing any buildings and property, and supporting or helping to fund buildings and property.

4.3 **Local Community**

The Council will:

- ◆ raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through the village website and Tostock Chronicle;
- ◆ engage with local businesses and residents regarding biodiversity in the community and how members of the community can assist and make a difference; and
- ◆ where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects on Council and common land including for example tree planting, wildflower meadows, birdbox making.

4.4 **Partners**

The Council will:

- ◆ work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the Tostock Parish Council area;
- ◆ in particular, it will support as far as possible, the Mid Suffolk District Council Biodiversity Action Plan and other related policies and programmes promoted by the District Council; and
- ◆ it will take advantage of the Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service.

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Model Action Plan

Site/ Objective	Action	Outcome	Target
Whole Council Area	Raise local awareness of biodiversity	Gain local support for action	Ongoing
Protect and Support Biodiversity	Encourage suitable planting to support biodiversity	Connect and diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species	Ongoing
The Green, The Leys and Other Open Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Adopt a management plan - to support wildlife and diversity ◆ Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs ◆ Work with the County Council on verge management, favouring biodiversity but noting which areas may need cutting for highway safety ◆ Encourage residents to adopt areas to look after, making it clear what is expected, e.g. peat-free compost, no chemicals ◆ Consider leaving some areas unmown ◆ Only use environment-friendly pesticides where absolutely necessary and only in ideal weather conditions ◆ Install/maintain/renew bird boxes ◆ Leave leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible as a habitat for invertebrates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Sustain and enhance natural habitats ◆ Protecting habitats ◆ Protecting and enhancing habitats ◆ Regular attention ◆ To encourage insects ◆ Sustain and enhance natural habitats 	
Built Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ensure that biodiversity implications are properly taken into account when planning consultations are considered ◆ Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Protecting and enhancing habitats ◆ Extending habitats 	Ongoing
Increase Community Awareness of Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ask residents for their views on what they would like to be done to conserve biodiversity within the Council area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Engagement/ownership of biodiversity 	Ongoing

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Discourage floodlighting or similar ◆ Raise awareness of the importance of gardens as habitats for wildlife, with possible actions featured in the Tostock Chronicle ◆ Create a page on the village website for information, photographs, links etc. ◆ Encourage local farmers, landowners etc. to contribute ◆ Provide seed bombs/bulbs etc. for residents' use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Protect nocturnal animals ◆ Promote biodiversity ◆ Promote biodiversity ◆ Promote biodiversity ◆ Extending habitats 	
Support Community Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Support hedge/tree planting in any and all appropriate areas ◆ Work in partnership with children and young adults to develop their awareness of the environment around them ◆ Consider events and offer volunteering opportunities to support biodiversity, working with local organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Extending habitats ◆ Promote biodiversity ◆ Promote biodiversity 	