

SOUTHWATER PARISH COUNCIL

BIODIVERSITY POLICY



Reviewed: n/a

Approved: 19th February 2025 (F&GP Committee)

Review period: 3 years

Next review date: February 2028

INDEX

Contents

1. Background.....	2
2. Definition.....	2
3. Aims and Objectives.....	2
4. Actions.....	3
4a. Planning applications.....	3
4b. Land and property management.....	3
4c. Local community.....	3
4d. Partners.....	3
5. Monitoring.....	4

1. 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, Southwater Parish Council (hereinafter referred to as the Council) which has any functions exercisable in relation to England, must from time to time consider what action the authority can properly take, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective.

This duty also means that town and parish councils can spend funds in conserving biodiversity.

2. 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. Biodiversity is the building block of our ‘ecosystems’ that in turn 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.

3. Aims and Objectives

The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of Southwater Parish.

The Council and any relevant committees of the Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

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 / nature positive practices.
- Encourage and support other organisations within the parish to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind.
- Support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

The following actions be read in conjunction with the Council’s Planning Policy Statement, Parish Design Statement, Climate Action Plan and Tree Management Policy.

4. Actions

4a. Planning applications

The Council will:

- When commenting on planning applications, take a more supportive view of site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats.
- Take a more supportive view of 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.
- Consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.
- Consider and reference the Parish Design Statement.

4b. Land and property management

The Council will:

- Carry out a biodiversity audit of its land and buildings upon implementation of this policy.
- 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 timing of maintenance work, paying attention to the Government's regulations for plant protection products.
- Take special care in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment.
- Continue to participate in 'No mow may'.
- Source sustainable materials where possible when procuring supplies for the Council's use.
- Consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing its buildings.

4c. Local community

The Council will:

- Raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website and newsletters.
- Engage with local businesses and residents regarding biodiversity in the community and how members of the community can assist and make a difference.
- Where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects on its land including for example tree planting, wildflower meadows, birdbox making.

4d. Partners

The Council will work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the council area.

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.

5. Monitoring

This policy was adopted at the Finance & General Purpose Committee on 19th February 2025 and will be reviewed in three years or sooner should legislation dictate.