

BECKLEY AND STOWOOD PARISH COUNCIL BIODIVERSITY POLICY

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, **Beckley and Stowood 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.

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. 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.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Council's area.

The Full Council and any 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 / town** to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind.
- support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

ACTIONS

Development planning

The Council has a biodiversity policy in its made Neighbourhood Plan -

POLICY E 1. BIODIVERSITY

Development proposals which show a biodiversity net gain and conserve and enhance the environmental and landscape assets, including areas of designated Ancient Woodland, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, RSPB reserves, Conservation Target Areas, Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats and Local Wildlife Sites (including BBOWT reserves) will be supported.

Development proposals should demonstrate how they will conserve local assets such as mature trees, hedgerows, grass verges along the roads and woodland edges, and where possible secure the provision of additional habitat areas for wildlife.

Proposals which encourage and promote additions and enhancements to wildlife corridors and air quality improvements as identified within the treescape project map will be supported.

The parish has considerable biodiversity. Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre has produced a very detailed report on Beckley and Stowood Parish and this can be found in Appendix 10. It shows detailed lists of protected and notable species found in the parish.

These include –

- Amphibians – great crested and other newts, toads and frogs
- Over 100 species of birds
- Nearly 100 species of "higher flowering plants"
- 14 invertebrates – see, ants, sawflies and wasps
- 27 beetles
- Over 60 species of butterflies and moths and many other invertebrates
- 6 species of bats
- Mammals including hedgehogs, polecats, otters and badgers
- Water voles, brown hares, lizard, slow-worm and grass snake

The Council will:

- when commenting on planning applications, and generally influencing planning decisions, support site and building design that benefits biodiversity including 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, including any potential for adding unwanted further nutrients to waterways.
- check that development proposals include proper drainage management off soils and hard surfaces to reduce the risk of local flooding which can impact wildlife and wildlife habitats
- consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.
- include policies in support of biodiversity within the neighbourhood plan and other similar planning documents

Land and property management

The Council will:

- consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity with regard to the management of its open spaces. This will include adopting beneficial practices with regarding 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 **[see a case study example from Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council at Appendix A]**.
- source sustainable materials when procuring supplies for the Council's use
- consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing its buildings.

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,

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.

MONITORING

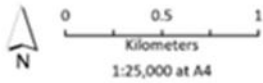
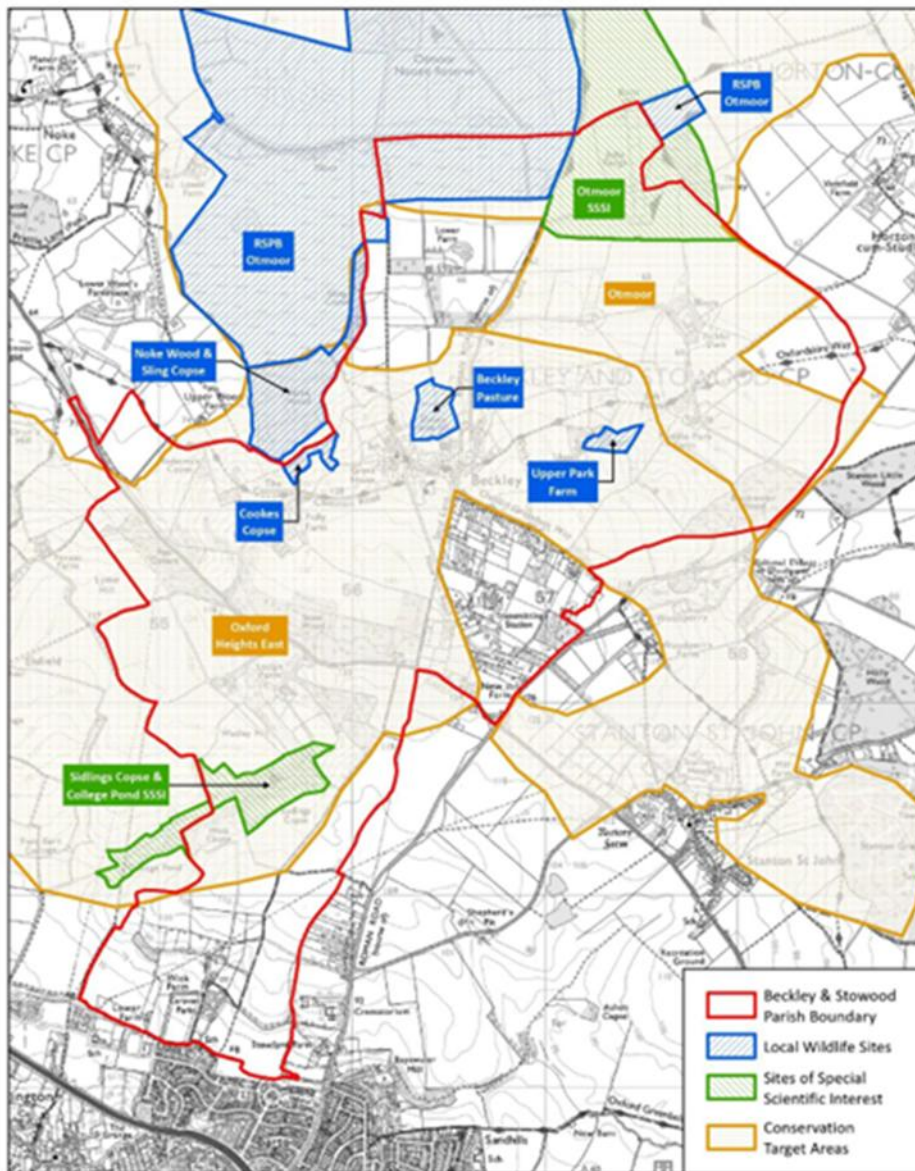
This policy was adopted on **xx** (Minute reference **yy**) and will be reviewed in two years or sooner should legislation dictate **OR** each year at the Annual Meeting. A summary of how the policy has been implemented will be published annually, with reference to the original biodiversity audit to show progress.

ACTION PLAN

SITE / OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	REPORTING / PUBLICITY
Whole council area	Raise local awareness of biodiversity., attempt to recruit and support a local champion	Gain local support for action.	Ongoing	Newsletter, social media, website
Protect and support biodiversity	Encourage suitable planting to support biodiversity.	Connect & diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species	Ongoing	Mapping
Recreation ground	Sympathetically maintain hedging. Leave some areas unmown. Only use environment friendly pesticides where absolutely necessary and only in ideal weather conditions.	Food sources and cover Encourages insects. Sustain and enhance natural habitats.		
Common / other open spaces	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 make it clear what is expected e.g. peat free compost and no chemicals.	Sustain and enhance natural habitats. Protecting habitats Protecting/enhancing habitats Regular attention.		
SITE / OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	REPORTING / PUBLICITY
The Built Landscape	Ensure that planning consultations are considered against the requirements of our Neighbourhood Plan Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries	Protecting/enhancing habitats Extending habitats.	Ongoing	
Increase community awareness of biodiversity	Ask residents for their views on what they would like to be done to conserve biodiversity within the parish.	Engagement/ownership of biodiversity	Ongoing	Neighbourhood plan consultation

	<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>Discourage floodlighting. See NP policy on Dark Skies</p>	<p>Promote biodiversity.</p> <p>See Beckley Design Guide in NP</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p> <p>Protect nocturnal animals.</p>		
<p>Support Community Projects</p>	<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. See Biodiversity Map and wildlife Map below from the Neighbourhood Plan</p>	<p>Extending habitats.</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p>		

Map 11 - Beckley and Stowood Designated Wildlife Sites Map



Beckley and Stowood Designated Wildlife Sites

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Produced by the Corporate GIS Team
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Map 12 – Biodiversity Action Plan Sites in Beckley and Stowood

