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BIODIVERSITY POLICY

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 there is a duty on public authorities in England to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of their policy or decision making. Conserving biodiversity can include restoring or enhancing a population or habitat.

English public authorities including town and parish councils should be able to show their duty to have regard for conserving biodiversity if they have identified ways to integrate biodiversity when they:

- Develop policies and strategies and put them into practice.
- Manage the planning system.
- Manage:
 - their land and buildings
 - woodlands and nature reserves
 - gardens, parks and public open space
 - community amenities e.g., sports grounds and cemeteries
 - waste and pollution
 - energy and water
 - wood and plant products
- Develop infrastructure, such as roads, buildings or flood defences.
- Make decisions about procurement.
- Implement economic, environmental and social programmes.

What is Biodiversity?

“Biodiversity is all the different kinds of life you'll find in one area—the variety of animals, plants, fungi, and even micro-organisms like bacteria that make up our natural world. Each of these species and organisms work together in ecosystems, like an intricate web, to maintain balance and support life.”

What does this mean for councils?

“The appropriate management of statutory and non-statutory sites, other non-designated land (such as parks and school grounds) and buildings, provides extensive habitat for wildlife and creates opportunities to enhance the area for biodiversity and local communities.”

- Consider what you can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity
- Agree policies and specific objectives based on your consideration
- Halt overall biodiversity loss
- Support healthy well-functioning eco-systems
- Establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.

What can be done?

Green Infrastructure can deliver essential ecological services to ensure we live within environmental limits.

improve health and well-being through leisure and cultural experience; and help conserve biodiversity by creating and connecting important habitats.

- Parks and public open spaces offer excellent opportunities for biodiversity conservation and enhancement that can be easily enjoyed by local people. Management operations must also take account of protected species, such as great crested newts, in ponds. Encourage people to use open spaces for exercise and relaxation and also improve these sites for biodiversity through volunteering.
- The grounds of many cemeteries can be sympathetically managed to also benefit a wide range of biodiversity.
- Many council-owned historic buildings provide homes for important biodiversity, such as breeding birds and bats.
- Local authorities should provide leadership in establishing and maintaining partnerships to identify and manage Local Wildlife/Geological Sites.
- Council-owned common land offers opportunities for biodiversity management and Enhancement.

Practical ideas

- Installing bird and bat boxes, green roofs and walls and sympathetic management of grounds and open space.
- Using wood products for fencing and gates from sustainable sources and using peat-free compost.
- Management of trees and hedgerows must have regard for the nesting season and breeding birds.
- Create habitat piles – deadwood and piles of leaves are good for a range of species.
- Promoting Biodiversity in all formal areas, whether Flower Beds, or Hanging Baskets, pollinator-friendly species, whether shrubs, annual or perennial plants which will provide food for pollinators from spring to Autumn.
- Discourage using pesticides which are harmful to pollinators and other invertebrates.
- Relax the grass cutting schedule on selected areas of designated common land and all countryside areas that are already being retained for the benefit of biodiversity. Identify the areas to cut less or more plants to flower. Grass grows at different rates dependant on the weather and the growing season.
- Raise the mower blade to 5 to 6 cm, which allows low growing species like daisies and clover to flower.
- Collect up the “mowings” which will encourage more flowering plants. Alternatively rake into a pile to provide a habitat.
- Sow locally sourced wildflower and grass seed.
- Introduce wildflower plants; choose locally sourced seed of species appropriate for the site.
- Introduce yellow rattle, a herbaceous wildflower which stunts the growth of aggressive grasses, opening up the sward to give more delicate species a chance.

Areas

- The grounds of residential care homes can be landscaped and managed to maximise opportunities for a wide variety of biodiversity.

- Highway verges can be managed to protect and enhance a wide variety of wildlife – including many rare and protected species.
- Maintenance works of footpaths and bridleways must be timed to avoid harming protected species.
- ‘Wildways’ – reducing grass cutting on verges, allowing wildflowers to grow, reduce carbon emissions, provide habitat and nectar for bees, butterflies and other insects.
- No Mow May – “Consider not cutting your grass for the month and let the wildflowers in your lawn bloom.” Encouraging the public to be involved.
- Illegal or non-regulated waste disposal is identified.
- Develop partnerships - Essex Wildlife Trust etc.

WEST MERSEA TOWN COUNCIL – CURRENT BIODIVERSITY MEASURES	
LOCATION	DETAILS
Council Office	planters & hedge
Sensory Garden, Melrose Road	flower beds, shrubs, tree
Barfield Road Cemetery	removal of old dead hedge and seed with wildflowers
St Peter & St Paul’s Churchyard	trees, shrubs, hedges, Eco area
Firs Road Cemetery	trees, hedges,
Feldy View Woodland Cemetery	meadow annual cut, trees, shrubs, wildflowers, bug hotel
Feldy path	trees, hedges
Glebe 1	trees, hedges
Glebe 2	trees, hedges, wild meadow
Allotments	trees, hedges, allotment plots
West Mersea Park	Reymead Wood and additional trees, hedges,
Fairhaven toilets	hedges, flower bed
Changing Place	flower beds and planters
Willoughby toilets	flower bed
Willoughby car park	trees, hedges, meadow annual cut
Seaview car park	trees
Broomhills	hedges, flower beds
Fountain	planter