

BETCHWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

Introduction

1. 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. Section 40 of the 2006 Act places a duty on Parish Councils to from time to time consider what action the authority can properly take to further the general biodiversity objective.
2. The general biodiversity objective is the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity so all Parish Councils must take biodiversity into account in all their decisions and actions. Conserving biodiversity can also include restoring or enhancing a population or habitat. Biodiversity is also important in maintaining the resilience of the services nature provides to us, such as carbon sequestration.
3. This duty has been reinforced under the Environment Act 2021, and Parish Councils should complete their first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity by 1 January 2024.

Policy

1. Betchworth Parish Council will show their duty to have regard for conserving biodiversity if we have identified ways to integrate biodiversity when we develop policies and strategies and put them into practice.
2. Betchworth Parish Council recognises this value and is aware of its legal duty to conserve and increase biodiversity and therefore commits to conserve and increase biodiversity throughout the parish of Betchworth. Betchworth Parish Council will ensure its compliance with these laws by keeping in sight the following where possible:
 - Consider the impact on biodiversity in the decisions we make by seeking to minimise adverse impacts on biodiversity of activity and identifying opportunities to increase biodiversity when practicable.
 - Decisions in Council meetings will have consideration to the impact of biodiversity in mind and where these matters have been discussed they will be minuted. Delegated decisions to the Clerk and Councillors will also make consideration to the impact on biodiversity.
 - Support Surrey County Council's Blue Heart scheme programme, by informing and consulting residents and by identifying verges to plant wildflowers and bulbs (which are to be UK bulbs only) which help biodiversity.
 - Avoid the use of herbicides except in exceptional circumstances.
 - When approving precept and budget annually, consideration will be given to the impact on biodiversity and how Betchworth Parish Council can affect these proportionately with funds available and the size of the parish population.
 - Support, where possible, Partner organisations, local groups and charities wishing to positively impact biodiversity.