



Biodiversity Policy

Approver:	Full Council
Date approved:	June 2024
Date of next review:	May 2027

Background

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 requires that every local authority must have regard, so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of its functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. This policy sets out the approach of Stowmarket Town Council in fulfilling this duty to protect wildlife and ecosystems.

Approach

The Town Council will aim to improve the biodiversity of Stowmarket in the following ways:

1. Spatial Development

The Planning & Development Committee will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when commenting on planning applications and making representations in respect of the creation of local planning and environmental policies. It will seek to influence decision-makers so that the local environment is protected and to ensure that where development does take place it is done in such a way that there is a net gain in terms of biodiversity when sites are developed.

2. Direct Measures

The Town Council will undertake the following specific measures:

a. Develop a Biodiversity Action Plan

Implement a Biodiversity Action Plan as part of the Council's Environmental Protection and Carbon Reduction Plan identifying a strategy for conserving, protecting and enhancing biological diversity in the local area, in relation to property, land and activities that are within the Town Council's control, and work positively to promote diversity as part of partnership working in respect of identified sites and areas such as the Biodiversity area adjacent to the Gateway 14 development and the river courses of the River Gipping and River Rat (Rattlesden).

b. Adopt Responsible Practices

Manage the use of pesticides and herbicides, and ensure that these and any other noxious chemicals (including chemical fertilisers) are not used near ponds or water courses. In particular, utilise only the selected use of glyphosate and other chemical weed-killers where a systemic weedkiller is required and there is no other option.

Ensure that mowing operations that are not required for reasons of safety, maintenance of rights of way, or to promote the primary purpose of a site (i.e. sports or leisure areas), will either cease or be significantly reduced over part or all areas.

c. Managed Rewilding

Engage with partners such as the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Suffolk County Council and Mid Suffolk District Council to identify areas for the introduction of rewilding in the town. It is recognised that the creation of a network of "mini-nature reserves" can help protect

and preserve wildlife and help the decline in many species that has occurred in recent years.

d. Planting Trees and Hedgerows

Implement an annual programme of tree planting in conjunction with Mid Suffolk District Council which will be supplemented by planting of new hedgerows where suitable locations can be identified to do this.

e. Erecting Bird Boxes, Bat Boxes and Bug Hotels

Support the provision of habitats for wildlife to improve the diversity of Town Council land through the provision of bird boxes, bat boxes and bug hotels.

f. Natural Resources

Identify and adopt practices through managed retention of leaf litter, moss, piles of stones and dead vegetation which can be used as micro-habitats for invertebrates to feed, breed and shelter.

Remove non-native invasive species that are detrimental to native flora or fauna for example invasive species such as Himalayan Balsam.

g. Funding

Provide financial support from the Town Council's Environment Fund towards conservation projects within the town.

h. Benchmarking

Investigate ways of benchmarking biodiversity to provide a benchmark against which the impact of future development and future biodiversity initiatives can be measured.

3. Community Engagement

Whilst the Town Council commits to undertake practical measures either itself, or in conjunction with local stakeholders to support biodiversity, it recognises that the involvement of the local community is required to achieve a step-change in approach to conservation. Therefore, the Town Council will seek to share information with local people and engage with them over practical measures that they can take to promote conservation in their own gardens and how they can get involved with projects and initiatives in the wider community.

Review

The three-stage process identified above, provides a clear overview of the ways in which the Town Council will seek to promote the consideration of biodiversity through its work and decision-making. The policy will be updated from time to time by the Town Clerk and shall be subject to formal review by the Council every 3 years.