

Gawcott with Lenborough 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, Gawcott with Lenborough 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

Our objective is to protect and enhance biodiversity within the Parish by raising awareness and supporting the local community whilst encouraging active participation.

We have a responsibility to maintain and improve the local area for birds, small mammals, invertebrates, reptiles and amphibians by conserving their habitat both in built and natural features. Interacting with nature has been shown to improve mental wellbeing and a sense of community.

Actions

- The Parish Council when commenting on planning applications will support site selection and building design that benefits biodiversity by integrating existing habitats and providing new ones.
- We will raise public awareness through our website and village newsletter
- We will encourage environmentally friendly land management
- Local businesses will be supported in the adoption of low impact practices
- Local groups and residents will be encouraged to manage their land and events sympathetically
- This policy will be reviewed at the Annual Meeting and a summary produced to record progress

Considerations

In implementing this plan the following must be taken into account:

- Resources available – financial
- Manpower – monitoring progress
- Areas of responsibility
- Targets and timescales
- Equipment
- Permissions
- Land ownership
- Health and Safety

Location	Action	Outcome/Target
Entire parish	Raise local awareness of biodiversity	Increased support Ongoing
Churchyard	Erect bird and bat boxes Leave unmown areas Create areas for compost and dead vegetation	To encourage birds and bats Preserve habitat for invertebrates To encourage insects Ongoing
Richard Roper Playing Fields	Minimum cutting of hedges Leave edge areas unmown Use only environmentally friendly pesticides where necessary	Habitat for birds Habitat for butterflies and moths Ongoing
Hodding Wood	Erect bird and bat boxes Create a wetland area Plant new tree species and manage existing trees and understory sympathetically	To provide additional habitats To encourage amphibians and reptiles To encourage small mammals and insects
Allotments	Work with allotment holders to encourage environmentally friendly practices and planting	To improve diversity of species To eliminate peat based substrate
Solar Farm	Increase diversity of planting, especially round margins Create/maintain wildlife corridors by increasing gaps in/under fencing Ensure drainage is adequate to avoid erosion	To improve the site for biodiversity
Verges	Only mow as much as necessary for highway safety	To maintain ground cover
Gardens	Encourage residents to leave unmown areas, create ponds, hedgehog highways, compost heaps and log piles, erect swift boxes, hang bird feeders	To create connectivity for wildlife and encourage butterflies and bees
Hedgerows and trees	Only cut after the nesting season Leave hedges as high as possible Replant trees to fill gaps	Preserve and enhance habitat for birds
Lighting and noise pollution	Sympathetic low level lighting Continue monitoring of traffic	Liaise with Buckinghamshire Council. Liaise with police enforcement
The Built Landscape	Ensure planning applications are in line with the Neighbourhood plan Liaise with developers to incorporate swift and bat bricks	Ongoing New developments to provide compensation for habitat loss

Location	Action	Outcome/Target
Open Spaces	Encourage local farmers to engage with residents Maintain footways and bridle paths	Website/newsletter to ask dog walkers/ramblers to report issues
School and Community Groups	Work in partnership to encourage young people to explore opportunities, furthering awareness of local biodiversity	To facilitate the formation of a local Nature Group to survey and monitor open spaces

Actions Required for Implementation:

1. Publish the Biodiversity Policy on the Parish Council website
2. Use the village newsletter to encourage participation and update residents with progress
3. Purchase and erect bird and bat boxes and insect hotels
4. Liaise with the Chairman of the PCC and church mowing team
5. Liaise with the management team of Hodding Wood
6. Liaise with Allotment Committee
7. Liaise with Gawcott Fields Solar Farm
8. Contact Roundwood School
9. Scrutinise planning applications
10. The formation of a Natural History Group so people (dog walkers, horse riders, cyclists, etc.) can report observations, suggestions, survey areas, thus providing ongoing monitoring

Adopted at May 2026 meeting