# 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

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| **Location** | **Action** | **Outcome/Target** |
| Entire parish | Raise local awareness of biodiversity | Increased supportOngoing |
| Churchyard | Erect bird and bat boxesLeave unmown areasCreate areas for compost and dead vegetation | To encourage birds and batsPreserve habitat for invertebratesTo encourage insectsOngoing |
| Richard Roper Playing Fields | Minimum cutting of hedgesLeave edge areas unmownUse only environmentally friendly pesticides where necessary | Habitat for birdsHabitat for butterflies and mothsOngoing |
| Hodding Wood | Erect bird and bat boxesCreate a wetland areaPlant new tree species and manage existing trees and understory sympathetically | To provide additional habitatsTo encourage amphibians and reptilesTo encourage small mammals and insects |
| Allotments | Work with allotment holders to encourage environmentally friendly practices and planting | To improve diversity of speciesTo eliminate peat based substrate |
| Solar Farm | Increase diversity of planting, especially round marginsCreate/maintain wildlife corridors by increasing gaps in/under fencingEnsure 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 seasonLeave hedges as high as possibleReplant trees to fill gaps | Preserve and enhance habitat for birds |
| Lighting and noise pollution | Sympathetic low level lightingContinue monitoring of traffic | Liaise with Buckinghamshire Council. Liaise with police enforcement |
| The Built Landscape | Ensure planning applications are in line with the Neighbourhood planLiaise with developers to incorporate swift and bat bricks | OngoingNew developments to provide compensation for habitat loss |

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| **Location** | **Action** | **Outcome/Target** |
| Open Spaces | Encourage local farmers to engage with residentsMaintain 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 June 2024 meeting