

HOLME VALLEY PARISH COUNCIL

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

BACKGROUND

Under the 2021 Environment Act, public authorities (including town and parish councils) operating in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

This duty also means that town and parish councils can spend funds in conserving biodiversity.

Holme Valley Parish Council declared a Climate Emergency in March 2019, pledging that the Holme Valley would become carbon neutral by 2030. In December 2023, the Council adopted a new set of strategic objectives. The fourth objective is to *Address the climate emergency*.

There is a section in the Neighbourhood Development Plan, which was fully made in December 2021, devoted to Biodiversity.

All the Council's actions will be underpinned by a desire to address the climate emergency. This applies to the Council's own actions and that of grant recipients. Proposed actions will be measured against their impact on the natural environment and climate change.

DEFINITION

According to the Department of Food and Rural Affairs (*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

The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Holme Valley, in line with the provisions of the Kirklees Local Plan, 2019-2031, Policy LP30. In doing this we will work closely with other local organisations, particularly the Holme Valley Climate Action Partnership.

The Full Council and any committees of the Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

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

- consider the potential impact on biodiversity represented by planning applications
- manage its land and property using environmentally friendly practices that will promote biodiversity.
- support local businesses in the adoption of low impact / nature positive practices
- encourage and support other organisations within the parish to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind, by finding their initiatives.
- support residents and local organisations in enhancing and promoting biodiversity, by funding their initiatives.

ACTIONS

Planning applications

The Council will:

- when commenting on planning applications:
 - support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats
 - support protection of sensitive habitats from development
 - consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife in respect of all applications.
- consider what each proposed development might achieve in terms of biodiversity net gain.
- express a preference for the provision of new habitats to be on site, rather than a carbon off-setting elsewhere

Land and property management

The Council will:

- consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity with regard to the management of its open spaces. This will include adopting beneficial practices with regarding to cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work, paying attention to the Government's regulations for plant protection products.
- take special care in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment.
- source sustainable materials when procuring supplies for the Council's use
- consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing its buildings.

Local community

The Council will:

- raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website and newsletters.
- engage with local businesses and residents regarding biodiversity in the community and how members of the community can assist and make a difference.
- where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects on its land including, for example tree planting, wildflower meadows, birdbox making.
- publicly applaud local growing initiatives
- assist with biodiversity initiatives, through the Council's grants programme

Partners

The Council will work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the council area, in particular with Holme Valley Climate Action Partnership (HVCAP).

MONITORING

This policy was adopted on **xx** (Minute reference **yy**) and will be reviewed in two years or sooner should legislation dictate.