A church with a steeple and trees

Description automatically generatedNorthiam Parish Council

Parish Office, Village Club, Main Street

Northiam, East Sussex TN31 6LP

Telephone: 01797 253990 Email: clerk@northiamvillage.co.uk www.northiamvillage.co.uk

**BIODIVERSITY DUTY**

**January 2024**

**Introduction - Statutory Duty**

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

Government guidance published on 17th May 2023 clarifies that, as a public authority, town and parish councils must:

* Consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
* Agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration.
* Act to deliver their policies and achieve their objectives.

Town and parish councils, unlike other authorities, are not obliged to publish a report on their actions, but the Government guidance requires all public authorities to complete their first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity by 1 January 2024. They must agree their policies and objectives as soon as possible after this and may reconsider the selected actions within 5 years of completing their previous consideration, or more frequently if they choose.

Such steps may include:

* Reviewing what biodiversity or nature recovery plans are already in place from other local authorities.
* Contacting local voluntary groups working on nature conservation.
* Carrying out a biodiversity audit of council landholdings and/or the whole council area
* Gathering expert advice on possible actions in support of biodiversity.
* Drafting an action plan that covers action that the council will take itself as well as support for the actions of other local bodies.

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**BIODIVERSITY POLICY**

**PREAMBLE**

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, ***Northiam Parish Councill*** will in exercising all its functions have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.

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. Several studies have shown this value also goes further. It is the building block of our ‘ecosystems’. These 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 enhancing and protecting the biodiversity of ***Northiam*** **Village**.

All committees of ***Northiam Parish Council*** will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

***Northiam Parish 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 & council operations in the adoption of low impact practices.
* support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

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**ACTIONS**

# Planning applications

* The council, when commenting on planning applications, will support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats.
* It will support protection of sensitive habitatsfrom development and will consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife in respect of all applications.
* It will consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.

# Land and property management

* The council will carry out a biodiversity audit of its landholdings.
* The council will consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity regarding 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.
* Special care will be taken in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment.
* The council will consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing its buildings.
* This will include, St Francis Fields, Workhouse Pond, Beacon field and other open spaces owned by Northiam Parish Council.

# Local community

* The council will raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website and newsletters.
* The council will engage with local businesses and residents regarding biodiversity in the community and how members of the community can assist and make a difference.
* It will, where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects on its land including for example tree planting, wildflower meadows, birdbox making and Hedgehog Highways.

# Partners

* ***Northiam Parish Council*** will work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within areas of our parish*.*
* It will review any local nature recovery strategies, species conservation strategies, or protected site strategies in respect of local sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) and consider how it may become more involved in implementing the strategies’ recommendations.
* Partnerships that will be invited will include, Rother District Council, CIC, Northiam Naturally, Conservation Society, Great Dixter House & Gardens, Horticultural Society, Southern Housing, Northiam C of E Primary School, and St Mary’s Church

Tony Wadie