

GISSING BIODIVERSITY POLICY

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, Gissing 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

The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Council's area. 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.

In particular, 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 and council operations in the adoption of low impact / nature positive practices.
- encourage and support other organisations within the parish / town to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind.
- support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

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 and will consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife in respect of all applications.
- 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.
- 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.

Partners

The Council will work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the council area. 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.

MONITORING

This policy was adopted on 2nd July 2024 and will be reviewed in two years or sooner should legislation dictate / each year at the Annual Meeting. A summary of how the policy has been implemented will be published annually, with reference to the original biodiversity audit to show progress.

ACTION PLAN

SITE/OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET(Years)	REPORTING/PUBLICITY
Whole Council area	Raise local awareness of biodiversity	Gain local support for action	Ongoing	Newsletter, social media, website
Protect and support biodiversity	Encourage suitable planting to support biodiversity	Connect & diversify habitats to mee the needs of a variety of wildlife species	Ongoing	Mapping
Recreation ground	Sympathetically maintain hedging. Leave some areas unmown. Only	Food sources and cover Encourages insects. Sustain and enhance natural habitats.		

	use environment friendly pesticides where absolutely necessary and only in ideal weather conditions.			
Common / other open spaces	Adopt a management plan	Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs. Work with the county council on verge management, favouring biodiversity but noting which areas may need cutting for highway safety. Encourage residents to adopt areas to look after, making it clear what is expected e.g. peat free compost and no chemicals.	Sustain and enhance natural habitats. Protecting habitats Protecting/enhancing habitats	Regular attention.

The Built Landscape	<p>Ensure that planning consultations are considered against the requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries.</p>	<p>Protecting/enhancing habitats Extending habitats</p>	Ongoing	
Increase community awareness of biodiversity	<p>Ask residents for their views on what they would like to be done to conserve biodiversity within the parish</p>	<p>Raise awareness of the importance of gardens as habitats for wildlife, with possible actions highlighted in the parish magazine. Create a page on the parish council website for photographs / information / links Encourage local farmers to contribute. Provide seed bombs / bulbs</p>		

		etc. for residents' use. Discourage floodlighting.		
Engagement/ownership of biodiversity	Promote biodiversity Extending habitats Protect nocturnal animals		ongoing	Neighbourhood plan consultation
Support Community Projects	Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas. Work in partnership with the school to develop young people's awareness of the environment around them. Consider events and offer volunteering opportunities to support biodiversity,	Extending habitats, promote biodiversity		

	working with local organisations			
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Actions to date:

Gissing Support Group:

Village clean up in 2023 when we carried out two litter picks as well as volunteers cleaning road signs and cutting grass weeds around road signs

2024 Litter pick planned for 30th March and planting of bulbs etc later in year.

The Friends of Gissing Church have a working party who regularly maintain the churchyard. Meeting in April with Norfolk Wildlife Trust to bring up to date the conservation plan for the churchyard.

Parish Council:

Natural Flood Management Scheme

The River Waveney Trust (RWT) and Norfolk Rivers Trust (NRT) joined forces, in collaboration with funding partners, landowners and the parish council, to install low-cost natural solutions to make the landscape more resilient to floods. It included the creation of new flood relief channels and water storage areas, reconnecting the floodplain and restoring old, dry river channels.

Steve Walker, nature based solutions officer at the Norfolk Rivers Trust, said the project "demonstrates the effectiveness of low-cost, nature-based measures", which could become increasingly vital as climate change increases the frequency of extreme rainfall events.

The initiative received funding from a partnership between WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) and Aviva, as well as grants from the Environment Agency and Garfield Weston Foundation.

Heart of Gissing Heritage and Habitat Group - This aim of this initiative is to promote knowledge and understanding of our local environment and heritage.

To encourage and involve the local community in the preservation of the natural environment, to help protect local bio-diversity, to enhance local environmental awareness and to involve the community in conservation, sustainability and heritage projects.

To this end, the main areas of interest which the group has developed over the last six years are:

During 2018 /2020 the group was involved in Norfolk Wildlife Trust's "Wildlife in Common" project. With the help of NWT H&H developed a plan to restore the area of common most accessible to the village, known as Mill Green. Together they put in place a management plan for the development of the area. A team of enthusiastic helpers was gathered to clear brambles establish pathways, reinstate a pond, produce a yearly log of the flora and recreate a wild flower area. For the first year the group had expert help to establish best practice and now have in place the necessary skills to manage this project themselves. The NWT funding for this project came to an end in April 2020. Following this the group, now perfectly equipped to continue this excellent and rewarding project, has continued to maintain the area for the benefit of the community. There are mown pathways and a picnic area, a pond and a developing wild flower meadow. The group is now developing other projects of a similar nature.

To summarise the benefits of this initiative:

- equip community volunteers with new skills to carry out comprehensive surveys of wildlife and historic features on our commons and other green spaces.
- celebrate and increase awareness of the unique history of our common land and help to create pride in our local green spaces
- inspire and support our local community to take practical action to protect and conserve the commons and natural areas providing benefit to the wildlife and people of this area
- to allow wildlife and flora to thrive encourage wildlife corridors and to enable more community access

- to help raise awareness of the South Norfolk feature known as the Claylands.
- to maintain areas which provide opportunities for outdoor exercise at various levels.

The group also organises monthly talks and meetings on various topics which are related to heritage and habitat of the area. These talks are open to the general public and cover a wide range of topics which are informative and educational.