

# Saxmundham Town Council – Biodiversity Duty Statement 2024

## Introduction

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 introduced a duty for all public authorities to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity. Section 40 of the Act states:

‘Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.’

The duty affects all public authorities and aims to raise the profile and visibility of biodiversity. Conservation of biodiversity requires an all-inclusive approach, integrating it into a wide variety of activities.

The Town Council has an important leadership role to play in creating a sustainable community environment where biodiversity can thrive. We recognise our existing and future responsibilities both to conserve and promote biodiversity and to take positive action through innovation in the management of open spaces and verges, as well as conservation of our natural areas. We will strive to lead by example by positively managing the town’s treasured and unique habitats.

## What is biodiversity and why is it important?

Thriving biodiversity and sustainable ecosystems are essential for our survival and wellbeing and biodiversity losses are unprecedented. Biological Diversity (Biodiversity) refers to the variety of life on earth at all its levels, from genes to ecosystems, and can encompass the evolutionary, ecological, and cultural processes that sustain life. It includes not only species we consider rare, threatened, or endangered but also every living thing – from humans to organisms we know little about, such as microbes, fungi, and invertebrates. Each of these species and organisms work together in ecosystems to maintain, balance and support life. Biodiversity supports everything in nature that we need to survive including food, oxygen, clean air and clean water. Healthy ecosystems can better withstand and recover from a variety of disasters. Biodiversity itself is recognised as an essential, but diminishing, resource and its loss can have considerable consequences for communities and habitats.

## But Saxmundham sits in the countryside so why worry?

We’ve all heard about the destruction of the rainforests. On our doorstep our own biodiversity is suffering a similar fate. For example, since the 1930’s, 97% of our flower rich meadows have been lost and in the six-years to 1990 20% of the UK’s hedgerows were destroyed. As habitats are destroyed, so too are the plants and animals which depend on them. The song thrush has declined by 50% over the last 25 years and the common house sparrow and starling often referred to as pests in the past, are now considered to be of national conservation concern. Restoring nature is critical to reversing the loss of biodiversity. Ecosystems don’t need to be lost forever. It’s possible to restore them by planting trees, shrubs and wildflower meadows. It is so important that local communities take the lead in conservation

projects, with benefits for people as well as nature. Biodiversity and climate change are inseparable, and combined, present the greatest threat our countryside has ever faced. Restoring nature is our primary defense against climate breakdown, and climate breakdown will continue to accelerate the decline of nature. Natural ecosystems suck up 60% of our carbon emissions, and nature-based solutions, like planting trees, nurturing soils, and restoring ecosystems, can provide significant climate solutions.

### What the Town Council will do to promote biodiversity

The Town Council will adopt an Environment and Biodiversity Policy which will support the Suffolk County Council Local Nature Recovery Strategy (currently in consultation, completion by mid-2025).

Within this policy the Town Council will:

- Protect and support the biodiversity of land that the Town Council manages and can influence and support via the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Adopt beneficial practices regarding cutting and removal of vegetation, avoiding application of chemicals and timing maintenance work appropriately. 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.
- Increase community awareness of biodiversity issues. Work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the town and wider community and support local biodiversity projects. The Town Council will communicate information and raise awareness of biodiversity through its website, events, newsletters and local press.
- When commenting on planning applications, will support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats and provision of new habitats. It will 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.