



SAXMUNDHAM TOWN COUNCIL

WILDLIFE, BIODIVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

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Minute Item: 120/24TC



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.

The Town Council has declared a Climate Emergency. By making this declaration, we have acknowledged that we need to act on the causes and impacts of climate breakdown.

The Town Council’s Biodiversity Duty Statement made a commitment for the Town Council to adopt a Biodiversity and Environment Policy which will support the Suffolk County Council Local Nature Recovery Strategy (currently in consultation, completion by mid-2025).

The local Nature Recovery Strategy will:

- Agree priorities for nature’s recovery
- Map the most valuable existing areas for nature
- Map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals.

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 defence 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.

Policy Aim

To enhance, protect and raise the profile of biodiversity within Saxmundham.

To make biodiversity integral to all Town Council decision making.

To ensure the environment of Saxmundham is a more biodiverse and resilient place to live for future generations.

To encourage the whole community to join us.

Objectives

1. Protect and support the biodiversity of land that the Town Council owns and manages.



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.

2. Protect and support the biodiversity of land that the Town Council can influence.

Support and influence the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan.

Support and influence Town Council's Strategic Objectives.

Divest from fossil fuels and invest in ethical financial products.

When commenting on planning applications, support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats and provision of new habitats.

Support protection of sensitive habitats from development and consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife in respect of all applications.

3. 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.

Communicate information and raise awareness of biodiversity through decision making, website, social media, events, newsletters and local press.

4. Support local biodiversity projects.

Make grants or funding available to local projects that protect and enhance biodiversity.

Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan

Vision for 2036

'A safe and healthy town with well used green open spaces and an enhanced network of green infrastructure providing access to nature and improvements to biodiversity'

Of eleven objectives in the Neighbourhood Plan only one makes explicit mention of protecting green space. Protection of wildlife and biodiversity appear in the policy SAX13 of the Neighbourhood Plan.



Objective 6: To protect and enhance the conservation area, the town's heritage, green spaces, natural features and rural setting, and to address the challenges of climate change.

SAX13: Protection and enhancement of natural assets.

Development proposals will be expected to protect and enhance existing ecological networks and wildlife corridors.

Proposals should retain existing features of biodiversity value, associated with the Rolling Estate Claylands and Rolling Estate Sandlands Landscape Character types, where possible to do so, (including ponds, trees (including veteran trees), woodland, hedgerows, and verges).

Development proposals will be supported where they provide a minimum 10 per cent net gain in biodiversity through, for example:

- a. The creation of new natural habitats.
- b. The planting of additional trees and hedgerows.
- c. The restoration and reparation of fragmented ecological networks.

Development proposals should conform to the mitigation hierarchy and seek initially to retain existing features and avoid loss or damage of biodiversity.

Where loss or damage is unavoidable, the development shall provide for appropriate replacement planting or appropriate natural features on site together with a method statement for the ongoing care and maintenance of that planting.

Where development proposals cause damage to identified natural features, wildlife corridors around the interruption will be constructed.

Proposals for new buildings (including non-residential development) should incorporate measures to protect and enhance wildlife species including the incorporation of wildlife friendly measures e.g., bat, swallow and swift boxes, hedgehog doors and insect bricks etc, new garden hedgerows and trees.

Consideration should also be given to the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) which can provide considerable benefits to wildlife.

Proposals to enhance and increase the biodiversity of important spaces, including green spaces will be supported as will proposals to restore or enhance traditional hedgerows in the parish.

Methodology

To meet the aims and objectives of this policy, refer to the following Action Plan. This is a working document which will be monitored, evaluated and updated on a regular basis and as required.



Community engagement will be crucial to the success of this policy. To encourage participation and engagement, the launch of this Action Plan will coincide with a town wide survey to raise awareness and support. Residents and stakeholders are encouraged to suggest amendments and updates.

Action Plan

This plan falls under [Objective 2.1 in the Councils Strategic Objectives 2023-24](#) and [Objective 6 in the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan](#).

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	REPORTING METHOD	
Whole Town	Raise awareness of biodiversity and overcome perception of untidiness	Connect and diversify habitats to meet the needs of a greater variety of wildlife species	Ongoing	Communication	
	Work with and support community groups who are committed to wildlife and biodiversity (3.3)	Improved outcomes	Ongoing	Communication	
	Build and install bug hotels, bird and bat boxes (2.2)	Additional habitats	Achieved	Photographic documentation/ communication	
Memorial Field	Protect, enhance and support biodiversity	More accurate undertaking of our sympathetic management plan and mow schedule	1	Tender	
		Maintain Orchard (2.2)	Sustain and enhance natural habitats	Ongoing	Environment Coordinator/ Volunteers
		Encourage wild flowers (2.2)	Sustain and enhance natural habitats	Ongoing	Contractor /Environment Coordinator/ Volunteers



	<p>Maintain and renew bird boxes as required (2.2)</p> <p>Use signage, notice board and opportunities for citizen science</p> <p>Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs</p>	<p>Sustain and enhance natural habitats</p> <p>Improved outcomes</p> <p>Protecting habitats</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Environment Coordinator/ Volunteers</p> <p>Town Council /Environment Coordinator</p> <p>Communication</p>
<p>Seaman Avenue Play Park</p> <p>Raise awareness of biodiversity</p> <p>Protect, enhance and support biodiversity</p>	<p>Create the Wildlife Walk and encourage residents and wildlife to use the space.</p> <p>Plant early season bulbs (2.2)</p>	<p>Sustain and enhance natural habitats</p> <p>Additional habitats</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Amenities and Services Committee/ Environment Coordinator/ Volunteers</p> <p>Environment Coordinator/ Volunteers</p>
<p>Chantry Road Play Park</p>	<p>Encourage wild flowers</p> <p>Plant early season bulbs</p> <p>Bulk up the native hedging (2.2)</p> <p>Provide signage to protect and raise awareness of harmless Colletes' bee colony</p>	<p>Additional habitats</p> <p>Additional habitats</p> <p>Sustain and enhance natural habitats</p> <p>Preserve habitats</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p>	<p>Contractor /Environment Coordinator/ Volunteers</p> <p>Environment Coordinator</p>
<p>Gannon Bed</p>	<p>Plant for wild flowers, naturalizing bulbs</p> <p>Create bug hotel</p>	<p>Additional habitats</p> <p>Additional habitats</p>	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p>	



	Bin cover/planters for edibles (2.2)		1	Mens' Shed/ IP17 GNS/ Environment Coordinator/ Volunteers
Mural Strip	Planting for pollinators, wild flowers and naturalizing bulbs (2.2)	Sustain and enhance natural habitats	Achieved	Environment Coordinator/ Volunteers
Town House	Plant naturalizing bulbs Plant for pollinators in new wall protecting planters (2.2)	Additional habitats Additional habitats	Achieved 1	Mens' Shed / Environment Coordinator/ Volunteers
Other Open Spaces	Seek out opportunities for habitat creation-log piles, hedges, orchards, allotments, Blue Spaces Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs Aspire to acquire land (2.4)	Additional habitats Protecting habitats Protecting /enhancing habitats	Ongoing Ongoing 1-5	Communication Communication Town Council
The Built Landscape	Ensure that planning consultations are considered against the requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan. Ensure East Suffolk Council takes full account of the Neighbourhood Plan when considering all planning applications Install Swift boxes Maintain and enhance Town planters (2.2)	Protecting/enhancing habitats Protecting/enhancing habitats Additional habitats Additional habitats	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing	Planning and Development Control Committee Communication Town Clerk/Caretaker Environment Coordinator/Volunteers



	<p>Investigate rainwater harvesting</p> <p>Encourage hedgehog highways/small animal highways with permeable boundaries (2.2)</p> <p>Increase resilience by encouraging, for example, flood proofing measures such as swales, French drains, water butts and rain gardens</p>	<p>Flood mitigation/water saving</p> <p>Protecting/enhancing habitats</p> <p>Additional habitats/flood mitigation/water saving</p>	<p>1-2</p> <p>1-2 Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Town Clerk/ Environment Coordinator/Blue Spaces</p> <p>Town Council/ Environment Coordinator/ Volunteers</p> <p>Communication/ Planning and Development Control Committee</p>
Increase Community Awareness	<p>Raise awareness of the importance of gardens as habitat for wildlife (3.5)</p> <p>Provide funding for biodiversity projects in town (3.3)</p> <p>Discourage flood lighting</p> <p>Discourage littering</p> <p>Install information boards</p> <p>Seek public consultation, ask residents for their views on what they would like done to conserve biodiversity in town (2.1)</p> <p>Support tree and hedge</p>	<p>Connect and diversify habitats to meet the needs of a greater variety of wildlife species.</p> <p>Protecting /enhancing habitats</p> <p>Protecting /enhancing habitats</p> <p>Protecting /enhancing habitats</p> <p>Improved outcomes</p> <p>Improved outcomes</p> <p>Additional habitats</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>1-2</p> <p>1</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Communication</p> <p>Town Council</p> <p>Communication/ Planning and Development Control Committee</p> <p>Communication</p> <p>Town Council</p> <p>Community Survey</p> <p>Communication/ Planning and</p>



	planting in appropriate areas			Development Control Committee
Support Community Projects	Work with the local schools to develop environmental awareness	Improved outcomes	Ongoing	Environment Coordinator/ Blue Spaces/ Communication
	Work with other local Parish Councils and organisations to support and promote biodiversity	Improved outcomes	Ongoing	Communication
	Look favourably on grant applications which support enhanced biodiversity	Protecting /enhancing habitats	Ongoing	Resources Committee
The Environment	Create a way to harvest rainfall for the Town Council's watering needs	Protect the environment	1-2	Town Clerk/ Environment Coordinator/ Blue Spaces
	Reduce fertilizer and pesticide use by using in exceptional circumstances only	Protect the environment	Ongoing	Contractor/ Environment Coordinator
	Work towards becoming a carbon neutral Council	Protect the environment	1-5	Town Council
	Consider renewable energy solutions and localized energy networks	Protect the environment	Ongoing	Town Council
	Review procurement to ensure sourcing from the most environmentally friendly options and avoid waste	Protect the environment	Ongoing	Town Council/Town Clerk
	Invest only in ethical financial products	Protect the environment	Ongoing	Town Council/Town Clerk



	Encourage reduce/reuse over recycling	Protect the environment	Ongoing	Town Council/All Staff
	Support local producers and businesses when possible. Ask suppliers about their environmental credentials	Protect the environment	Ongoing	Town Council/All Staff
	Seek to install electric charging points in town (2.3)	Protect the environment	Ongoing	Town Council
	Improve energy efficiency ratings for Council buildings (2.5)	Protect the environment	Ongoing	Town Council and Charitable Trusts

Monitor, Evaluate, Update

It is intended that this Action Plan will be monitored regularly by all staff and Councillors. It will also be evaluated, and updated, annually by the Environment Coordinator and the Town Clerk.

Future Goals

Should time and funding become available it would be ideal to incorporate mapping biodiversity hotspots and recording our biodiversity. Planting street trees and acquiring allotments would also be greatly beneficial.