



Castle Hedingham Parish Council

Biodiversity & Environmental Policies

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, a Parish 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.

Castle Hedingham Parish Council (hereinafter referred to as the Parish Council) will follow the Biodiversity policy to meet the requirements of this duty. 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 Parish 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 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 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 Parish 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.
- include policies in support of biodiversity within the neighbourhood plan.

Land and property management

The Parish Council will:

- work with partner organisations
- 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 Parish Council's use
- consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing its buildings.

Local community

The Parish 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 Parish 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, based on the SLCC model policy was adopted on 14th July 2025 and will be reviewed at least annually or whenever legislation dictates. A summary of how the policy has been implemented will be reviewed and published annually. Please see Appendix A

Signed.....

Environmental Policy

Introduction

Castle Hedingham Parish Council is committed to protecting the environment and the natural heritage of the Parish. The Parish Council also recognises the need for sustainable development and the provision of quality public amenities and services.

The Parish Council is obliged to consider the impact of its functions on the parish, which includes the village of Castle Hedingham and its conservation area, Hedingham Castle, a Grade 1 scheduled ancient monument and the River Colne and Colne Valley.

Procedures

1. In carrying out its own activities the Parish Council will aim to make a positive contribution to protecting and enhancing the environment by:
 - a. Minimising waste and pollution
 - b. Following a hierarchy of reducing, re-using and recycling
 - c. Eliminating the unnecessary use of energy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
 - d. Providing information electronically and reducing the use of paper
 - e. Avoiding using single-use plastic items
2. When purchasing services and goods, the Parish Council will give preference to:
 - a. Local suppliers who pay at minimum the Living Wage
 - b. Options which are environmentally friendly and/or Fair Trade
 - c. Products which have been manufactured from recycled materials
 - d. Products which can be disposed of in an environmentally sustainable manner
3. The Parish Council will require that contractors and Councillors who carry out maintenance work on behalf of the Parish Council:
 - a. Minimise the use of harmful pesticides and chemicals
 - b. Work in a way that benefits wildlife and the environment
 - c. Use native, wildflower friendly species for planting where possible
 - d. Follow the Parish Council's Biodiversity and Environmental policies
4. In its decision making the Parish Council will take careful consideration of:
 - a. The importance of walking, cycling and public transport
 - b. The need to conserve and improve natural habitats
 - c. The need to protect vulnerable and protected species
 - d. The need to conserve the natural beauty of the parish and surrounding landscape
5. In addition, where possible, the Parish Council will:
 - a. Encourage the protection and enhancement of the unique character, beauty, heritage and biodiversity within the Parish
 - b. Ensure the Parish's natural beauty and heritage are not compromised by inappropriate development
 - c. Ensure the nature conservation value of the River Colne and Colne Valley is maintained and enhanced

- d. Encourage the protection of the integrity of biodiversity sites and sites of geological and geomorphological importance, and those of archaeological and historical value within the Parish
- e. Highlight the importance and value of our local environment and its contribution to our community's quality of life
- f. Encourage local action in support of the environment
- g. Improve the consistency of water quality to maintain a healthy river ecosystem
- h. Discourage all forms of littering, particularly dog fouling and single-use plastics
- i. Encourage the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources
- j. Encourage the reduction, reuse and recycling of resources within the Parish
- k. Encourage the use of materials and systems which improve energy efficiency of developments
- l. Support and encourage actions and initiatives to bring land into proactive conservation management
- m. Recognise the importance of hedgerows as an essential corridor for the movement of wildlife which may support many animals and plants

Monitoring

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Appendix A

Current Parish Council initiatives:

	Activity	Target (and date)	Responsibility
New Park verge (owned by BDC) Wilder Towns Wilder Villages, Essex Wildlife Trust project	Rewilding project commenced spring 2022. 5-year project with Braintree District Council	Monitored August 2023 with Essex Wildlife Trust & BDC De Vere Primary visits to record species Mowing schedule as recommended. Arisings cleared away but left on site	Parish Council rewilding group Forest School leader De Vere Grass cutting contractor & Clerk
Village Greens and other open spaces	Review management in line with rewilding initiatives	Rushley Green mowing schedule All other village greens mowed fortnightly	Village Maintenance Grass cutting contractor & Clerk
Community open space and play area	Village Park established 2020	Map of sponsored trees – 2023? Tree watering Wildflower area	Village Park group Village Maintenance & Community Allotment volunteers Bee hotels, Guides project
Community Allotment	Community Allotment established 2022	Community Allotment group formed, produce available through village shop	Community Allotment leaders & Village Shop volunteers
Benches & seating	Sponsored benches Village Park	Decision on additional bench October 2023	Parish Council
Cemetery Sheepcot Road	Regulations reviewed in line with Environmental Policy March 2022	Monitor effectiveness. Level and seed new graves autumn annually	Burial Board/CHPC Clerk Village Maintenance
Avenue of Hope daffodils Sheepcot Road	Sponsored daffodil planting	Monitor verge maintenance to enhance naturalisation	Village Maintenance Clerk
Remembrance Avenue of Trees Sheepcot Road	Planting completed November 2018. Failed trees replaced 2020/2021	Regular watering Strim verge around trees Check for dead trees	Village Maintenance Tree Wardens
Hedging and commemorative tree planting Churchfields Grove	Tree planting completed 2017	Consider replanting autumn 2023	Village Maintenance Tree Wardens
Recycled material bench installed Churchfields Grove	Installed 2017	Monitor for any cleaning/maintenance	Footpath Wardens Village Maintenance

Management of special verge Delvyn's Lane	Removal from BDC spring cutting schedule. Autumn only cut arranged with BDC contractor	To monitor spring and autumn annually BDC contractor to notify clerk of autumn cut date	Footpath Wardens Tree Wardens Village Maintenance to clear cuttings autumn
Provision of dog waste and litter bins	Monitor effectiveness whole village	Dog poo bag dispensers and notices installed 2021 Replaced with permanent bag dispensers 2024	Clerk Village Maintenance Councillors
Annual litter picks	Volunteer litter picks	Community litter pick 2023 to be arranged Volunteer litter pickers to be co-ordinated with Village Shop as collection and drop off point?	Clerk Village Maintenance Councillors
Weekly litter picks	Monitor litter problem areas for Village Maintenance	Report areas of concern to clerk	Village Maintenance Councillors Clerk
Report fly tipping to BDC	Monitor village for fly-tipping	Report areas of concern to clerk	Clerk to report to BDC
Tree Wardens			
Footpath Wardens			
Monitor and protect the River Colne	Anglian Water River Positive Scheme	Liaise with landowners and Sible Hedingham PC to progress scheme	
Footpath maps	Up to date and available free of charge for visitors Electronic version?	Updated map printed May 2019	
Village Guides	To be considered		
Light pollution	Membership of Wethersfield Airfield Scrutiny Committee 2022	Monitor progress on prison proposals, opposition to light pollution	
Reduce and re-use paper	Avoid printing documents Electronic communication preferred. Use double sided printing. Reuse envelopes		Clerk All Councillors