

COLNEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

- ✉ **Postal Address:** Highfield Park Visitor Centre, Hill End Lane AL4 0RA
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2024-25 Item 86a Report and Draft Policy Biodiversity

14th January 2025

Report on the Need for a Biodiversity Policy

1. Background

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, updated by Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021, imposes a statutory duty on parish councils to consider actions that further the general biodiversity objective. This objective emphasises conserving and enhancing biodiversity as part of sustainable development. For a rural parish like Colney Heath, biodiversity not only supports local ecosystems but also contributes to residents' quality of life and community resilience.

2. Why a Biodiversity Policy is Necessary

a) Legal Compliance

The Council is legally obligated to consider biodiversity within its functions. Developing a formal policy ensures that all decisions and actions align with these legal requirements.

b) Environmental Stewardship

Biodiversity is critical for maintaining healthy ecosystems, which provide essential services like air and water purification, flood mitigation, and pollination. A policy would formalise the Council's role as a steward of the local environment.

c) Community Wellbeing

Green spaces and rich biodiversity enhance physical and mental wellbeing for residents. Encouraging biodiversity can lead to increased recreational opportunities and a stronger connection to nature.

d) Climate Change Mitigation

Biodiversity supports natural processes that help mitigate climate change, such as carbon sequestration and temperature regulation. A policy focused on biodiversity would complement the Council's broader sustainability efforts.

e) Funding Opportunities

A clear biodiversity policy can strengthen applications for grants and funding from environmental organisations or governmental programs, enabling the Council to implement meaningful conservation projects.

f) Community Engagement

Promoting biodiversity provides an opportunity to involve residents, schools, and local businesses in environmental initiatives, fostering a sense of community pride and responsibility.

3. Conclusion

Adopting a biodiversity policy demonstrates Colney Heath Parish Council's commitment to environmental stewardship, legal compliance, and community leadership. By embedding biodiversity considerations into its activities, the Council can ensure sustainable development and enhanced quality of life for its residents.

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Draft Biodiversity Policy

1. Introduction

This policy outlines how Colney Heath Parish Council ("the Council") will fulfil its duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity within its area, consistent with Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 and the Environment Act 2021.

2. Definition

Biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth, encompassing species of animals, plants, and microorganisms. It is vital for ecosystem health, providing services essential to human wellbeing and environmental stability.

3. Aims and Objectives

The Council aims to:

- Conserve and enhance biodiversity across the parish.
- Integrate biodiversity considerations into all decisions, policies, and practices.
- Promote awareness and active involvement of the community in biodiversity conservation.

4. Actions

4.1 Planning Applications

The Council will:

- Support designs and developments that conserve or enhance habitats.
- Advocate for biodiversity net gains in all planning applications.
- Protect sensitive habitats and species from harmful developments.
- Incorporate biodiversity-focused policies within the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

4.2 Land and Property Management

The Council will:

- Manage its open spaces to support diverse habitats using eco-friendly practices.
- Specify biodiversity-friendly requirements in maintenance contracts.
- Use sustainable materials and practices in building and land management.
- Reduce the use of harmful chemicals and adopt natural pest control methods.

4.3 Community Engagement

The Council will:

- Raise awareness of biodiversity issues via its website, newsletters, and events.
- Collaborate with schools, businesses, and community groups on biodiversity initiatives.
- Facilitate community involvement in projects such as tree planting, creating wildflower meadows, and installing bird and bat boxes.

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4.4 Partnerships

The Council will:

- Work with conservation organisations to enhance local biodiversity.
- Engage with Hertfordshire County Council and other relevant bodies to implement local nature recovery strategies and conservation plans.
- Support initiatives that align with the goals of national biodiversity strategies.

5. Monitoring and Review

The policy will be reviewed annually or as required by legislative changes. Progress in implementing the policy will be summarised and made publicly available.

6. Adoption

This policy is adopted by Colney Heath Parish Council on [23rd January 2025] and will guide the Council in promoting a biodiversity-rich parish for current and future generations.