

Sedlescombe Parish Council Wildlife, Biodiversity and Environmental Policy.

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”*.

This was further strengthened by Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021, a landmark UK law that provides a framework for environmental protection post-Brexit, introducing new legally binding targets for air quality, water, biodiversity, and waste. Public authorities must now consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. Guidance published 17th May 2023 clarifies that, as a public authority, town and parish councils must:

- Consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration.
- Act to deliver policies and achieve objectives

Sedlescombe Parish Council is a rural village with a considerable number of natural areas, including hedges, ditches, farmland, the River Brede and Ancient Woodland and has declared a Climate Emergency. By making this declaration the Council has acknowledged that it needs to seek to act on the causes and impacts of climate change.

Biological Diversity (Biodiversity) is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants – everything that is alive on our planet according to Defra (Biodiversity 2020). 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 is recognised as an essential, but diminishing, resource and its loss can have considerable consequences for communities and habitats.

Rates of extinction in the last five decades have accelerated much faster than in the past. The red squirrel, natterjack toad, and turtle dove are all in peril in our countryside, alongside many insects that we rely on.

The largest impact on ecosystems that people depend on for food, clean water and a stable climate is converting and managing wild land for agriculture and development. Biodiversity and climate change are inseparable, and combined, present a threat to our countryside. 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.

Sedlescombe is in the National Landscape (formerly the ANOB) which is protected and has a conservation area in the middle of the village. As a community we can make a difference and reverse some of the loss of biodiversity.

Policy aims:

To enhance, protect and raise the profile of biodiversity within the Parish. To make biodiversity an integral part of all decision making. To “do no harm” and encourage the whole community to join us. The Parish Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

Objectives

- Protect and support the biodiversity of the land that Sedlescombe Parish Council owns.
- Protect and support the biodiversity of land that Sedlescombe Parish Council can influence.
- Support the Sedlescombe Parish Neighbourhood Plan (which can be found on our website)
- Increase community awareness of biodiversity issues.
- Support local biodiversity projects

Methodology

To achieve the aims and objectives of this policy the following Action Plan has been created. This is a working document which will be monitored, evaluated and updated on regular basis.

ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	REPORTING METHOD
<p>Whole Parish</p>	<p>Carry out a biodiversity audit of parish council owned land.</p>	<p>Understand the start point.</p>	<p>1-3</p>	<p>Full Council</p>
	<p>Consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing its buildings.</p>	<p>Improved outcomes</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Communication with contractors</p>
	<p>Obtain community support for planting to encourage biodiversity. Raise awareness of biodiversity and overcome a perception of untidiness and disrespect</p>	<p>Connect & diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Communication</p>
	<p>Work with and support Community Groups who are committed to wildlife & biodiversity</p>	<p>Improved outcomes</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Communication</p>
	<p>Ensure biodiversity is considered in any responses to planning applications</p>	<p>Improved outcomes</p>		<p>Planning Committee</p>
	<p>Develop links with outside bodies such as ESCC, Woodland Trust, High Weald National Landscape Team and Rother District Council, to work with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.</p>	<p>Increase nature recovery</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Parish Council</p>

Increase Community awareness of biodiversity	Raise awareness of the importance of gardens as habitats for wildlife	Engagement/ownership of biodiversity	Ongoing	Website and bulletins
	Create a page on the parish council website for photographs/information/links	Engagement/ownership of biodiversity	Ongoing	Communication
	Provide articles in the Parish Bulletins about how to make your garden more wildlife friendly.	Engagement/ownership of biodiversity	Ongoing	Clerk/Councillors
	Encourage local farmers to contribute.	Engagement/ownership of biodiversity	Ongoing	Clerk/Councillors/ Local Farmers
	Encourage individuals/groups to take responsibility	Engagement/ownership of biodiversity	Ongoing	Communication
	Provide seed bombs/bulbs etc for residents via 'make your own' instructions	Increase diverse habitats	1	Communication
	Discourage lighting through dark skies policy	Protect habitats	Ongoing	Communication
	Encourage individual responsibility not to litter continue to support local litter picking.	Protect biodiversity	Ongoing	Communication
	Install information boards where appropriate	Engagement	Ongoing	Full Council
	Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas	Protecting/enhancing habitats	Ongoing	Full Council
	Ask residents for their views on what should be done to conserve biodiversity within the parish.	Engagement/ownership	Ongoing	Full Council

Support Community Projects	Work in partnership with the School to develop young people's awareness of the environment around them	Promote biodiversity	1-3	Governing Body/Parish Council
	Work in partnership with all Parish organisations to support/promote biodiversity	Promote biodiversity	Ongoing	Communication
	Consider events and offer volunteering opportunities to support biodiversity.	Promote biodiversity	Ongoing	Full Council

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	REPORTING METHOD
Red Barn Field Protect, enhance & support biodiversity	Adopt a management plan	Sustain & enhance natural habitats	1	Full Council
	Planting of native marginal plants in new areas Removal of “thug” plants and grass using grazing sheep. Flail mow if necessary before germination.	Sustain & enhance natural habitats	1-2	Volunteer group with support of Full Council and Groundsman
	Maintenance of butterfly patch	To create a new wildlife community Sustain & enhance natural habitats	Annually 5-yearly	Volunteer group with support & assistance of Full Council
	Creation of a log pile	Sustain & enhance natural habitats	Annually	Full Council
	Enhance the fruiting hedge. Prune and thin as required to maintain healthy growth	Sustain & enhance natural habitats	Ongoing	Volunteer group with support & assistance of Full Council.
	Leave areas unmown	Sustain & enhance natural habitats	Ongoing	Clerk with grounds maintenance

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	REPORTING METHOD
Riverside Recreation Ground and playground	Protect and support biodiversity	Important food sources & cover additional habitat	Ongoing 1-3	Full Council/ Public Playing Field and Recreation Ground Trust
	Raise awareness of biodiversity	Protecting habitats	Ongoing	Full Council/ Public Playing Field and Recreation Ground Trust
	Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs	Protecting habitats	Ongoing	Communication
Other open spaces	Protect and enhance biodiversity	Protecting habitats	Ongoing	Communication
	Develop a Management Plan. Targeted areas for asset transfer to the parish council.	Protecting/enhancing habitats	1-5	Full Council
	Work with ecologists to develop wild flower verges and ensure they are adopted for protection.	Protecting/enhancing habitats	1-2	Full Council
	Encourage residents to adopt areas to look after by planning how and where	Protecting/enhancing habitats	Ongoing	Communication

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	REPORTING METHOD
The Built Landscape Protect and support biodiversity	Ensure that planning consultations are considered against the requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan considering the impact on biodiversity.	Protecting/enhancing habitats	In place & ongoing	Planning Committee
	Ensure RDC/New planning authority takes full account of the Neighbourhood Plan when considering all planning applications.	Protecting/enhancing habitats	In place and ongoing	Communication
	Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries if possible sites identified.	Protecting/enhancing habitats	Ongoing	Communication
	Work with developers to support wildlife & diversity of all open spaces where appropriate.	Protecting/enhancing habitats	Ongoing	Full Council
The Environment	Strive to become a carbon neutral Council and encourage the same of local businesses.	Protect the environment	Ongoing	Clerk/Full Council to consider this with each purchase/contract
	Only use pesticides where absolutely necessary and only in ideal weather conditions. Insecticides to be used in exceptional circumstances only	Protect the environment	In place	Clerk & grounds maintenance company.
	Consider places in the parish for the installation of charging points	Protect the environment	Ongoing	Full Council
	Strive to consider sustainable energy solutions	Protect the environment	Ongoing	Full Council/Community

Adopted	Reviewed	Next Review
October 2025		October 2027