

High Easter Parish Council

Biodiversity Policy

1. Introduction

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 there is a duty on public authorities in England, including Parish Councils, to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of their policy or decision making. This was further strengthened by the Environment Act 2021 so public authorities must now consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. This means a public authority 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.

2. 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.

3. The Local Area

High Easter is a large rural parish covering 21km² and with a population of 720 (2021 census). The parish contains a considerable number of natural areas, including arable farmland, woodlands, hedges and ditches. Parsonage Brook flows north-east to south-west through the parish, meeting the River Can in the west of the parish.

The parish is served by numerous footpaths, byways and bridleways.

Garnetts Wood is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) as one of the best examples of lime woodland in Essex. It is an ancient coppice woodland owned and managed by Essex County Council and open to the public.

St Mary the Virgin parish church sits in a large churchyard which is open for burials and interments. The churchyard is managed by High Easter Parochial Church Council.

4. Parish Council Responsibilities

High Easter Parish Council (the council) owns the playing field and adjoining village car park which are surrounded by mature trees and hedgerows.

The council is responsible for Jubilee Wood in the Henry Marriage Memorial Meadow, a new woodland at the rear of the playing field, planted by the parish council in 2012. It is surrounded by

hedging and contains numerous maturing trees. In more recent year's native Essex apple trees have been planted in the centre of the wood which contains a circular seat and a central oak tree.

The council is responsible for the war memorial in The Street. It is set in a small area and surrounded by mature hedging.

The council is responsible for Pump Green at the junction of The Street and High Easter Road. This is home to the historic village pump and a lime tree commemorating George Vs coronation, a circular seat surrounds the tree.

5. What the Parish Council will do

The Council will aim to improve the biodiversity of the area in the following ways:

5.1 Consider the potential impact on biodiversity represented by planning applications.

- 5.1.1 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.
- 5.1.2 Support protection of sensitive habitats from development and consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife.
- 5.1.3 Consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.
- 5.1.4 Ensure biodiversity conditions in planning applications are completed.

5.2 Manage its land and the land it is responsible for using environmentally friendly practices that promote biodiversity.

- 5.2.1 Ensure specifications for grounds maintenance contracts do not harm the natural environment, whilst balancing responsibilities to public safety.
- 5.2.2 Trees and hedges that are the responsibility of the parish council will only be cut outside the bird nesting season.
- 5.2.3 Where practical reduce the use of pesticides on parish council owned land.
- 5.2.4 Source sustainable materials when procuring goods or supplies.
- 5.2.5 Consider the introduction of bird boxes on parish council owned land.

5.3 Encourage and support other authorities including Essex County Council and Uttlesford District Council, and organisations within the parish to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind.

- 5.3.1 To positively engage with those who have responsibility for the public spaces in the parish to understand and support their biodiversity activities.

5.4 Support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

- 5.4.1 To provide and promote the bi-weekly weekend green waste service provided by Uttlesford.
- 5.4.2 At least annually arrange a community litter pick.
- 5.4.3 Raise public awareness of biodiversity issues through Parish News and its website.

This policy was approved by High Easter Parish Council on xxxxx and will be reviewed at least annually.