

Leaffield Parish Council Biodiversity Duties

Adopted by Leaffield Parish Council on 08 November 2023

Overview

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 and decision making. This was further strengthened by the Environment Act 2021, so that public authorities must now consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England.

This means a public authority must:

- Consider what it can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity;
- Agree policies and specific objectives based on this consideration;
- Act to deliver the policies and achieve the objectives.

Biodiversity refers to the variety of life on earth¹.

Leaffield Parish

Leaffield is a small parish in rural West Oxfordshire within the Cotswold AONB, with one village and scattered dwellings. A large section of Leaffield village is in the Leaffield Conservation Area.

Much of the surrounding area is agricultural land and open landscape, with many hedges and stone walls. There are some areas of woodland, including two areas of Ancient Woodland, two woodland corridors (Natural England), and part of the parish borders the Wychwood Forest.

Parish Council responsibilities

The Parish Council is responsible for a playground, playing field, new burial ground, a closed churchyard, Village Greens and a community building.

What the Council will do

- Consider the impact of biodiversity when making Council decisions
- Consider the impact of biodiversity when commenting on planning applications
- Promote biodiversity via the Parish Council website
- Investigate the purchase and installation of bird boxes on suitable Parish Council owned land
- Consider the Environment Act local nature recovery strategy when created and how the Council can contribute
- Review how the Council manages the playground. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - Not using pesticides or herbicides
- Review how the Council manages the playing field. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - Reduce the area of mowing to allow a margin of longer grasses and flowers to grow
 - Leaving standing and fallen dead wood as a habitat for invertebrates
 - Not using pesticides or herbicides

¹ As defined in “Biodiversity 2020: a strategy of England’s wildlife and ecosystems” by DEFRA

- Review how the Council manages the car park. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - Cutting the hedges outside of the bird nesting season.
- Review how the Council manages its open spaces. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - Not using pesticides or herbicides
 - Managing the mowing to allow a more diverse range of flora to flourish
- Review how the Council manages the burial ground and closed churchyard. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - Leaving leaf litter and dead vegetation in suitable areas to provide a habitat for invertebrates
 - Removing invasive and non-invasive species that are detrimental to native flora or fauna
 - Allowing areas of longer grasses and flowers to grow where appropriate
 - Managing the swale to encourage a wide range of flora to flourish
 - Leaving standing and fallen dead wood as a habitat for invertebrates
 - Leaving areas of brambles to encourage butterflies and bees
 - Not using pesticides