



Saffron Walden Town Council

Biodiversity Statement - Adopted Full Council July 2024

This statement does not seek to detract or duplicate the adopted action plan, this statement should be read in conjunction with the climate action plan.

Under the 2021 Environment Act, public authorities (including town and parish councils) operating in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Government guidance published on 17 May 2023 clarifies that, as a public authority, town and parish councils must¹:

- *consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.*
- *agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration.*
- *act to deliver their policies and achieve their objectives*

SWTC supports and is committed to increasing biodiversity. This means taking necessary actions wherever practicable and demonstrating measurable improvements to evidence that a targeted biodiversity net gain has been achieved year to year, in dialogue and partnership with residents.

In practice SWTC will enact the following actions, supporting biodiversity:

1. Managing and developing the built environment:

- a. Protect, enhance, and create green spaces ensuring land remains publicly accessible (where practical to do so allowing for private hirings in order to effectively continue the bookings function and hirings of council).
- b. Continue its established policy in adopting public open spaces from new housing developments, subject to a case-by-case evaluation which will review the proposed land for adoption and any commuted sums payable to SWTC from the developer
- c. Continue reducing plastic usage and seek to review its plastic charter.
- d. Complete a biodiversity audit of its landholdings.
- e. take special care in the specification of contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment.
- f. Where feasible source sustainable materials when procuring supplies for the Council's use, where these are available and a balance against cost-efficiency has been conducted.
- g. Whilst managing buildings any structural changes will consider its impact to biodiversity.

2. Managing and creating sources of renewable energy:

- h. Continue appointing 'green' energy providers.
- i. Identify assets suitable for solar panels installation*.
- j. Identify sites suitable for LED lighting installation*.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complying-with-the-biodiversity-duty#when-to-meet-your-biodiversity-duty>

3. Managing sites for biodiversity:

- a. Conserve and promote local biodiversity regarding the management of its open spaces where suitable and appropriate to do so. This will include adopting beneficial practices regarding cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work, paying attention to the Government's regulations for plant protection products.

More specifically:

- b. Establish suitable and appropriate wildflower areas
- c. Reduce grass cutting where suitable and appropriate
- d. Distribute wildflower seeds where suitable and appropriate
- e. Identified areas for wilding will be appropriately mapped alongside identifying tree planting initiatives, in partnership with other agencies.
- f. Management of roadside verges to be fully considered (those managed by SWTC).

The above will be managed and co-ordinated by the SWTC operations team, with advice from third parties (for example but not limited to; Uttlesford District Council, Essex County Council and Essex Wildlife Trust).

4. Managing council operations including transport:

- g. Continue to operate using electric vans where feasible and review the effectiveness of the vehicle fleet to ensure its sustainability and environmental impact.
- h. Review of journeys (such as to and from the depot) to achieve reductions in journeys wherever practicable.
- i. To monitor the grass cutting regimes and frequency, supporting biodiversity where feasible and/or known rare plants are to be in situ.

In completing the above, SWTC will work with third parties in identifying third party grant funding available (for example but not limited too; Uttlesford District Council).

Throughout all projects SWTC will seek to raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, through its website, press releases and social media, (in line with SWTC's adopted community engagement policy).