

NORTH LODGE PARISH COUNCIL

Report to Council on 20 September 2022

Subject: Environmental and Biodiversity Policy

Chairman's Report

Prepared by Dennis Hall (Chairman)

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1. This Report recommends for approval the Environmental and Biodiversity Policy set out in the Schedule. It is the practice of many Parishes to adopt a general environmental policy statement. The Council also has obligations with respect to biodiversity and it is considered necessary to put in place a Policy whose terms correspond with the extent and nature of the Council's activities within the Parish.

2.0 DETAIL

- 2.1. **Background and Issues:** Members of the Horticultural Subgroup have drawn attention to the need for a suitable policy statement to be put in place to reflect the Council's determination to adopt appropriate environmental practices and to have proper regard to biodiversity across the range of its functions.
- 2.2. The Parish Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications, it manages land and facilities in the public realm and manages horticultural and grounds maintenance contracts. It is therefore considered right and proper that a suitable policy is put in place to guide decision making in these important public service areas.
- 2.3. **Advice and Guidance from Others:** Both NALC and Friends of the Earth offer comprehensive guidance on the role of local Councils on Climate Change generally and biodiversity issues in particular. That advice has been taken into consideration in developing the Policy in this Report.
- 2.4. Durham County Council have in place the Durham Biodiversity Partnership and the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan. It is considered that the proposed Policy supports both these initiatives.

2.5. **Consultations:** The Clerk, members of the Horticultural Subgroup and the Planning Portfolio Holder have been consulted in the preparation of this Report.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. The Council is invited to consider and approve the proposals in this Report.

3.2. If approved, it is recommended that the Policy be placed on the Council website and included in its social media channels.

Background Papers:

NALC Report 2021: What can Local Councils do on Climate Change?

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/our-work/climate-change/3598-what-can-local-councils-do-on-climate-change-2021/file>

Friends of the Earth: 20 actions parish and town councils can take on the climate and nature emergency | Policy and insight

<https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/reports/20-actions-parish-and-town-councils-can-take-climate-and-nature-emergency>

Durham County Council: Durham Biodiversity Partnership; Durham Biodiversity Action Plan

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/3918/Biodiversity>

SCHEDULE

North Lodge Parish Council Environmental and Biodiversity Policy

Environmental Policy Statement

North Lodge Parish Council recognises that it has many roles including:

- consumer of goods and services
- opinion leader
- public watchdog
- provider of services
- landowner
- employer

Many of the decisions and actions of the Parish Council affect the environment either directly or indirectly. In recognition of this, the Parish Council will seek to promote the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources and to minimise environmental pollution in all of its own activities and through its influence over others.

Aims

In all its activities the Parish Council will aim to:

- Minimise the consumption of all resources used in its operations, particularly in respect of the administration of its activities.
- Seek, wherever possible, to use only contractors and suppliers who have their own environmental policy, one which is continually reviewed, updated, and measured against recognised, contemporary best practice examples.

Principles

The Parish Council will: -

1. Meet all relevant environmental legislation and regulations.
2. Regularly update and improve standards in light of increased understanding and knowledge.
3. Recycle and reuse waste materials where possible.
4. Dispose of all waste through safe and responsible methods and arrange that its contractors do likewise.
5. Encourage the responsible use of energy.
6. Respect and protect natural resources by practising conservation and good management.

7. Encourage contractors and suppliers to minimise their impact on the environment.
8. Encourage its Members and employees to take responsibility for ensuring that the best environmental policy is used and adhered to at all times.
9. Purchase products and services which are energy environmentally benign and sustainable where these are available competitively in terms of quality and price.
10. Aim to minimise the environmental impact in the use of land, treatment of the land and any building projects upon the land. It will seek to conserve and improve both the natural and built environment as appropriate, and to carry out environmental improvements to all areas within its ownership and control. Such improvements, once achieved, will be monitored, and promoted for maximum public benefit.

Biodiversity Policy Statement

1. **Commitment:** In accordance with the duty imposed on parish councils by Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, North Lodge Parish Council will in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.

2. **Meaning of Biodiversity:** Biodiversity means the variety of life around us and includes every species of plant and animal, the genetic material that makes them what they are, and the communities that they form. Biodiversity is essential to sustaining the living networks, or 'ecosystems', that provide us all with health, wealth, food, fuel and the vital services our lives depend on. It is a core component of sustainable development, underpinning economic development and prosperity.

3. **Approach to Planning Applications:** The Parish Council, when commenting on planning applications, will support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats. It will support protection of sensitive habitats from development and will consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife in respect of all applications.

4. **Land Management:** The Parish Council will, as far as is possible, conserve the biodiversity of the land it manages. It will adopt beneficial practices with regarding to cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work.

5. **Grounds Maintenance:** Special care will be taken in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment. The Parish Council undertakes to work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within areas of the Parish.

6. Publicity and Awareness: The Parish Council will, wherever possible, raise public awareness of biodiversity issues. It will, where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects on its land including for example tree planting, wildflower meadows, and birdbox making. The Parish Council will communicate information and raise awareness of biodiversity through its website, social media, and newsletters.

7. Conformity with other Plans Policies and Guidance: The Parish Council will endeavour to ensure that its actions are in conformity with the environmental and biodiversity plans and policies of Durham County Council, and advice and guidance produced by the National Association of Local Councils and the County Durham Association of Local Councils.