



Swallowcliffe Parish Council

Biodiversity policy

Introduction

Swallowcliffe Parish Council (SPC) has a statutory duty 'to conserve and enhance biodiversity' [[Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 \(NERCA\) Section 40](#)] as extended by the [Environment Act 2021 \(EA\) Section 102](#)].

The government compliance notes [[Complying with the biodiversity duty - GOV.UK](#)] state clearly that:

"Public authorities who operate in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. This is the strengthened 'biodiversity duty' that the Environment Act 2021 introduced.

This means that, as a public authority, you must:

- 1. Consider what you can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.*
- 2. Agree policies and specific objectives based on your consideration.*
- 3. Act to deliver your policies and achieve your objectives."*

The guidance is clear and forms part of SPC's policy.

Further, regions are obliged to develop local nature recovery strategies (LNRS) [[Local nature recovery strategies - GOV.UK](#)]. Wiltshire's has only recently been published [[Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy - Wiltshire Council](#)] (Spring 2026). It provides strategy and guidance to which SPC should adhere. The written policy can be found [here](#)

The LNRS GIS can be helpful; it provides an interactive map [[Wiltshire LNRS Web App 2025](#)] which delineates areas and the strategies to be applied.



Our environment

Swallowcliffe contains several priority habitat types which deserve special attention and consideration when the council makes decisions:

- Broadleaved woodland and copses.
- Chalke valley and downland margins with calcareous grassland fragments. A large area of Swallowcliffe, though farmed, lies within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape, and the associated Chase & Chalke Landscape Partnership
- Mature hedgerows and field boundaries (which act as important stepping-stones between larger habitats).
- Road verges and green spaces (which act as important stepping-stones between larger habitats).
- The Swallowcliffe stream and its associated wildlife corridor, as part of the River Avon catchment.

Our policy

[The following policy is based upon the SLCC Model Biodiversity Policy].

In accordance with the duty imposed on town and parish councils by Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, updated by Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021, SPC will in exercising all its functions have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.

This duty also means that town and parish councils can spend funds in conserving biodiversity.

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. Several studies have shown this value also goes further. It is the building block of our 'ecosystems'. These 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.

Aims and objectives

The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the council's area.

The full council and any committees of the council will consider sustainability, environmental impact, and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

In particular, the council will aim to improve the biodiversity of the area in the following ways:

- consider the potential impact on biodiversity represented by planning applications,
- manage its land and property using environmentally friendly practices that will promote biodiversity,

- support local businesses and council operations in the adoption of low impact / nature positive practices,
- encourage and support other organisations within the parish / town to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind, and
- support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

Actions

Development planning

The council will:

- When commenting on planning applications, and generally influencing planning decisions, support site and building design that benefits biodiversity including through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats.
- Support the 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, including any potential for adding unwanted further nutrients to waterways.
- Check that development proposals include proper drainage management off soils and hard surfaces to reduce the risk of local flooding which can impact wildlife and wildlife habitats.
- Consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.
- Include policies in support of biodiversity within the neighbourhood plan and other similar planning documents.
- Land and property management

The council will:

- Carry out a biodiversity audit of its landholdings.
- Consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity with regard to the management of its open spaces. This will include adopting beneficial practices with regarding to cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work, paying attention to the government's regulations for plant protection products.
- Take special care in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment.
- Source sustainable materials when procuring supplies for the council's use.
- Consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing its buildings.

Local community

The council will:

- Raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website and newsletters.
- Engage with local businesses and residents regarding biodiversity in the community and how members of the community can assist and make a difference.
- Where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects on its land including for example tree planting, wildflower meadows, birdbox making.

Partners

The council will work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote, and enhance biodiversity within the council area.

It will review any local nature recovery strategies, species conservation strategies, or protected site strategies in respect of local Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and consider how it may become more involved in implementing the strategies' recommendations.

Review

This policy will be reviewed each year at the Annual Meeting, together with a summary of how the policy has been implemented in the previous twelve months.

Policy version

Review date:

Approved by:

Date adopted:

DRAFT

Action plan

Site / objective	Action	Outcome	Target	Reporting / publicity
Whole council area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise local awareness of biodiversity. • Encourage suitable planting to support biodiversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain support for local action. • Connect & diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species. 	Ongoing	Newsletter, social media, website
Cemetery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional planting. • Add and maintain bird boxes. • Support wildlife & diversity whilst maintaining the site in a way which enables visitors to experience quiet and calm remembrance. • Leave leaf litter and dead vegetation as a habitat for invertebrates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased diversity of habitats and food sources. • Increased cover for invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals. • Encouraging insects including butterflies & bees. 		

Site / objective	Action	Outcome	Target	Reporting / publicity
Increase community awareness of biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask residents for their views on what they would like to be done to conserve biodiversity within the parish. • Raise awareness of the importance of gardens, hedges and verges as habitats for wildlife. • Create a page on the Council website for photographs / information / links. • Encourage local farmers to contribute. • Provide native wildflower seed mixes / bulbs etc. for residents' use. • Monitor compliance with Dark Sky reserve lighting requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with, learning about, and stewardship of biodiversity. • Promote biodiversity. • Improved habitats. • Protect nocturnal animals. 		

Site / objective	Action	Outcome	Target	Reporting / publicity
Old churchyard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional planting if possible. • Add and maintain bird boxes as required. • Ensure hedges, scrubby areas, and creviced stone wall remain. • Support wildlife & diversity whilst maintaining the site in a way which enables visitors to experience quiet and calm remembrance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased diversity of habitats and food sources. • Increased cover for invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals. • Encouraging insects particularly butterflies & bees. 		
Road verges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect from damage. • Encourage reduced frequency of cutting. • Encourage fewer and smaller areas to be cut. • Diversify population of native plants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved habitats. • Promote biodiversity. 		

Site / objective	Action	Outcome	Target	Reporting / publicity
Support Community Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas. • Support riparian projects • Consider events and offer volunteering opportunities to support biodiversity, working with local organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved habitats. • Promote biodiversity. 		
The built landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that planning consultations are considered against the requirements of the biodiversity policy. • Monitor compliance with Dark Sky Reserve lighting requirements. • Encourage hedgehog / small animal highways with permeable boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting/enhancing habitats. • Improved habitats. • Protect nocturnal animals. 		