WEST HANNINGFIELD PARISH COUNCIL
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# BIODIVERSITY POLICY

**Re-Adopted with amendments – 13th April 2026**

## 1. BACKGROUND

In accordance with the duty imposed on town and parish councils by Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, as strengthened by Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021, West Hanningfield Parish Council (hereinafter referred to as "the Council") must, in the exercise of its functions, have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing biodiversity.

This means that, when carrying out its responsibilities, the Council will consider how its decisions and activities may affect biodiversity and will seek, where appropriate and practicable, to conserve and enhance biodiversity within the Parish.

This duty also enables the Council to take positive action and incur expenditure, where appropriate, in support of biodiversity conservation and enhancement.

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## 2. DEFINITION

According to Defra (Biodiversity 2020), biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants and the ecosystems that support them.

Biodiversity is important both in its own right and for the essential services it provides, including food production, clean air and water, climate regulation, flood protection and the enrichment of people's health and wellbeing.

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## 3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this policy is to ensure that the Council has regard to conserving and enhancing biodiversity in the exercise of all its functions and, where practicable, takes opportunities to improve biodiversity within the Parish.

The Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will seek to integrate biodiversity considerations into its policies, projects and day-to-day activities.

In particular, the Council will:

- consider biodiversity impacts when determining planning responses and support development that conserves, enhances or creates habitats where appropriate;
- manage Council land and property using environmentally responsible practices that promote biodiversity;
- seek to minimise negative environmental impacts arising from Council operations and encourage nature-positive approaches;
- encourage and support local organisations, contractors and partners to incorporate biodiversity considerations into their activities where appropriate;
- support community initiatives that enhance biodiversity and raise awareness of local natural habitats.

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# 4. ACTIONS

## 4.1 Planning Applications

The Council will:

- consider biodiversity impacts when commenting on planning applications;
- support development that protects, restores or enhances habitats and ecological networks where appropriate;
- seek to protect sensitive habitats and species from avoidable harm or loss;
- take account of Biodiversity Net Gain principles where relevant to planning proposals.

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## 4.2 Land and Property Management

The Council will:

- maintain a biodiversity audit of its landholdings and review it periodically;
- manage open spaces in a way that promotes biodiversity, including appropriate timing of maintenance works and sensitive vegetation management;
- avoid, where practicable, the unnecessary use of harmful chemicals, in line with relevant legislation and guidance on plant protection products;
- ensure grounds maintenance contracts include consideration of environmental and biodiversity impacts;
- consider biodiversity opportunities when maintaining or improving Council buildings and assets;
- seek to procure sustainable and environmentally responsible materials where reasonably practicable.

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## 4.3 Local Community

The Council will:

- raise awareness of biodiversity issues through its communications, including its website and newsletters;
- engage with residents and local organisations to encourage participation in biodiversity initiatives;
- support community-led biodiversity projects where resources allow, such as tree planting, wildflower areas, and habitat creation.

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### 4.4 Partners

The Council will work with relevant organisations and stakeholders to support biodiversity enhancement within the Parish.

It will have regard to relevant strategies, including Local Nature Recovery Strategies and other applicable conservation or habitat protection frameworks, where appropriate.

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# 5. MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Council will record biodiversity-related actions where appropriate and will review this policy every two years, or sooner if required by changes in legislation or guidance.