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Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council Wildlife, Biodiversity and Environment Policy

This policy was approved at Full Council on the 14th December 2023

Introduction

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 introduced a duty for all public authorities to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity. Section 40 of the Act states: "Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity". The duty affects all public authorities and aims to raise the profile and visibility of biodiversity. Conservation of biodiversity requires an all-inclusive approach, integrating it into a wide variety of activities.

Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council (IFPC) has declared a Climate Emergency. By making this declaration the Council has acknowledged that it needs to seek to act on the causes and impacts of climate change.

What is Biodiversity and why is it important?

Biological Diversity (Biodiversity) refers to the variety of life on Earth at all its levels, from genes to ecosystems, and can encompass the evolutionary, ecological, and cultural processes that sustain life. Biodiversity includes not only species we consider rare, threatened, or endangered but also every living thing – from humans to organisms we know little about, such as microbes, fungi, and invertebrates.

Biodiversity = Nature.

Biodiversity is important as it boosts ecosystem productivity where each species has an important role to play, for example:

- Greater species diversity ensures natural sustainability for all life forms
- Healthy ecosystems can better withstand and recover from a variety of disasters.

Biodiversity itself is recognised as an essential, but diminishing, resource and its loss can have considerable consequences for communities and habitats.

Biodiversity is a scientific measure of the variety of species, habitats, and ecosystems across the planet. It's essential for human existence and a flourishing countryside. As well as underpinning the food we eat and the air we breathe, we depend on it for protection from other threats, like pollution, flooding and climate breakdown.

Rates of extinction in the last five decades have accelerated hundreds of times faster than in the past. The red squirrel, natterjack toad, and turtle dove are all in peril in our countryside,

alongside many insects that we rely on. But why? What is driving our living world to the brink? And, most importantly, what can be done?

The largest impact on ecosystems that people depend on for food, clean water and a stable climate is converting and managing wild land for agriculture and development. We've all heard about the destruction of the rainforests and the extinction of the dodo. However, on our own doorstep our own biodiversity is suffering a similar fate. For example, since the 1930's 97% of our flower rich meadows have been lost and in the six-years to 1990 20% of the UK's hedgerows were destroyed. As habitats are destroyed, so too are the plants and animals which depend on them. The song thrush has declined by 50% over the last 25-years and the common house sparrow and starling often referred to as pests in the past, are now considered to be of national conservation concern.

Restoring nature is critical to reversing the loss of biodiversity. Ecosystems don't need to be lost forever; it's possible to restore them by planting trees, shrubs, wildflower meadows. It is so important that local communities take the lead in conservation projects, with benefits for people as well as nature.

Biodiversity and climate change are inseparable, and combined, present the greatest threat our countryside has ever faced. Restoring nature is our primary defence against climate breakdown, and climate breakdown will continue to accelerate the decline of nature. Natural ecosystems suck up 60% of our carbon emissions, and nature-based solutions, like planting trees, nurturing soils, and restoring ecosystems, can provide significant climate solutions.

As a community we can make a difference and reverse some of the loss of biodiversity. We can embrace the natural habitats around us and set the right example to future generations.

Aim

To enhance, protect and raise the profile of biodiversity within the Parish. To make biodiversity an integral part of all decision making. To "do no harm" and encourage the whole community to join us.

Objectives

- Protect and support the biodiversity of the land that IFPC owns.
- Protect and support the biodiversity of land that IFPC can influence.
- Support the IFPC Neighbourhood Plan vision.
- Increase community awareness of biodiversity issues.
- Support local biodiversity projects

Vision

Given the rural nature of Ingatestone & Fryerning Parish, consideration was given to biodiversity throughout the creation of the Neighbourhood Plan. The vision is:

In 2033 precious green open spaces and ancient habitats have been conserved and enhanced. A network of footpaths, cycleways and bridleways have been created and improved in our countryside to foster health, fitness and parish cohesion.

The Neighbourhood Plan has five main chapters, of these four make particular reference to wildlife and biodiversity:

Chapter 1

Provide planting and landscaping on the housing development sites to contribute towards the attenuation of traffic noise from the A12.

Provide street tree planting as recommended with the Essex County Council Street Material Guide: Design and Good Practice 2012(1), together with proposals for the satisfactory long-term maintenance of newly planted trees.

Developments should contribute positively towards green infrastructure within the parish and protect and enhance important features of the natural environment and biodiversity of the site and its surrounding.

Chapter 2

Preserve views of local landmarks, open space, green infrastructure and the wider rural landscape, which contribute to the rural character and appearance of the area.

Policies 1 and 2 – IFPC Housing, Design of new developments

- To promote quality residential development that creates places for people which are attractive, locally distinctive and appropriate to their surroundings, safe, convenient, adoptable and easy to maintain.
- Respects and enhances features of value and local character and promotes diversity.
- Provide planting and landscaping on new development sites incorporating noise attenuation measures for dwellings adjacent to the A12 and to the railway line; contributing positively towards green infrastructure within the parish.

Chapter 5

Where possible, protect and enhance public right of way, pedestrian and cycle routes and bridleways throughout the parish.

Not detrimentally impact air quality and public health within the parish as a result of increased traffic flows and congestion.

Policy 5 IFPC Transport

- The approach to transport planning within the parish should reflect the need to reduce CO2 emissions to support climate change mitigation.
- Create safe and accessible environments particularly for those with limited mobility.

Chapters 6 & 7

All developments should seek to deliver net biodiversity gain, in addition to protecting existing habitats and species.

Development proposals which would result in the net loss of green infrastructure or areas of open space will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the benefits outweigh any identified harm created by the loss with any compensatory wildlife habitat is created as close as possible to the development site and should be ecologically functional in advance of any loss.

Policy 6 IFPC Environment

- There are 15 wildlife sites located throughout the parish, consisting predominantly of woodland areas. The woodland open field provide good habitat for fauna and

flora. There are large tracts of agricultural land, predominately arable farming, which are listed as Grade 2 and 3 agricultural land. Fields are separated by hedgerows which in themselves provide valuable habitats.

- Where human development impacts on upon the ability of wildlife to survive we have a responsibility to current and future residents of the parish and beyond to protect out natural environment.
- Where possible and appropriate, new development proposals should seek opportunities to create wildlife corridors and improve access to the countryside for recreation.
- To support the environment IFPC will seek opportunities to plant new trees within the parish and will encourage new developments to include tree planting.

Policy 7 IFPC Wellbeing, Leisure and Community Facilities

- Periodic residents' questionnaires identify that proximity to the countryside, the attractiveness of the village environment, public open space and conservation areas within the parish are considered to be important and contribute to the quality of life for local residents.
- Development proposals which would result in the net loss of existing community facilities or public open space will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the benefit of the project outweighs any identified harm created by the loss.

Methodology

In order to achieve the aims and objectives of this policy the following Action Plan has been created. This is a working document which will be monitored, evaluated and updates on a regular basis. Community engagement will be the focus on the launch of the document with the aim to raise awareness and encourage participation and interest / support. Residents and stakeholders are encouraged to suggest amendments / updates on an ongoing basis.

Action plan

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	REPORTING METHOD
Whole Parish	Obtain community support for planting to encourage biodiversity. Raise awareness of biodiversity and overcome a perception of untidiness and disrespect.	Connect & diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species	Ongoing	CEWG to develop and communicate plans
	Work with and support Community Groups who are committed to wildlife & biodiversity	Improved outcomes	Ongoing	Communication
	Undertake an annual tree survey for the areas under the control of IFPC and maintain the trees as per the recommendations	Protect the Trees.	Ongoing	Monitoring by grounds contractor and staff
Fryerning Cemetery Protect and support biodiversity	Update the Cemetery Plan to support wildlife and diversity whilst maintaining the Cemetery in a way which enables visitors to experience quiet and calm remembrance	Increased diversity of habitats and food sources.	Ongoing	Monitoring of grounds contractor by staff
		Connect & diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species.	1 year	Communication
	Create a Green Burial Site within the churchyard.	Choice of burial for residents	1 year	
Ingatestone Churchyard	Maintain the tidiness of the closed churchyard.	Provision of a space for residents to use.	Ongoing	Communication Eco-church plan.
	Preserve the wooden seating in the contemplation area.	Closer working with the Church, Horticultural Society and Schools to increase the diversity of habitats for insects and small mammals.	Ongoing	Maintenance contract for grounds.
	Encourage the planting of bulbs, flowering trees and bushes.			
Fairfield Recreation Ground	Adopt a management plan for the field and children's playground and skate park.	Sustain & enhance natural habitats.	1 year	Maintenance contract for grounds and liaison with the Cricket Club.

	<p>Sympathetically maintain hedging</p> <p>Leave some areas unmown.</p> <p>Only use environment friendly pesticides where absolutely necessary and only in ideal weather conditions.</p> <p>Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs.</p> <p>Work with the Cricket Club on all actions listed above.</p>	Regular attention.	Ongoing	
Seymour Field	Upkeep the football pitches to the required standard for club play.	Enable the sports field to be used by local clubs and societies.	Ongoing	Monitoring by grounds contractor and staff
Mill Green Common	Adopt a maintenance plan with the land owner.	Sustain and enhance natural habitats.	1 year	Reports prepared by Parish Council
Other Open Spaces	<p>Map spaces across the Parish</p> <p>Aspire to purchase land. Target areas for asset transfer to the parish council</p> <p>Encourage residents to adopt areas to look after by planning how and where this would be feasible.</p>	Identify ownership and negotiate management plans for the sites.	Ongoing	Communication
Support Community Projects	<p>Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas</p> <p>Work in partnership with the schools to develop young people's awareness of the environment around them.</p>	<p>Extending habitats</p> <p>Promoting biodiversity</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	

The Built Landscape	Ensure that planning consultations are considered against the requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan.	Protecting/enhancing habitats.	Ongoing	
	Promote the Neighbourhood Plan to potential developers.	Extending habitats.	Ongoing	
	Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries			
Increase community awareness of biodiversity	Continue to canvass residents for their views on what they would like to be done to conserve biodiversity within the parish	Engagement/ownership of biodiversity	Ongoing	
	Raise awareness of the importance of gardens as habitats for wildlife, with possible actions highlighted in the parish magazine.	Promote biodiversity	Ongoing	
	Create a page on the parish council website for photographs / information / links			
	Encourage local farmers to contribute.			