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| **Resolved** | **Date** |
| FC2425/31.4 | 22 July 24 |
|  | Next review date: Environment Committee by May 2025 |

**BAILDON**

**TOWN COUNCIL**

**Biodiversity Policy**

Adopted Date: 22nd July 2024

Next Review due: July 2025

**Baildon Town Council formally adopted this policy on 22nd July 2024 in response to the strengthened ‘biodiversity duty’ placed on local authorities introduced by the Environment Act 2021. Baildon Town Council will take biodiversity into account in all its decisions and actions.**

**1. Introduction**

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 there is a duty on public authorities in England, including Town and Parish Councils to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of their policy or decision making.

This was further strengthened by the Environment Act 2021 so public authorities must now consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. This means a public authority must:

* Consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
* Agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration.
* Act to deliver policies and achieve objectives.

Town Councils must also check if a number of strategies affect how they comply with their biodiversity duty including:

* Local nature recovery strategies
* Species conservation strategies
* Protected site strategies

Town Council’s must agree their policies and objectives and must reconsider the selected actions within five years of completing their previous consideration, or more frequently if they choose.

**2. 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 everywhere, in gardens, fields, hedgerows, mountains rivers and the sea.

Biodiversity is important for its own sake and has its own intrinsic value. Biodiversity is the collective term for the variety and abundance of forms of life found in an area and includes animals, plants, fungi and microorganisms. Each of these species and organisms work together in ecosystems to maintain, balance and support life. Biodiversity supports everything in nature that we need to survive including food, oxygen, clean air and clean water.

A number of studies have shown this value also goes further. Biodiversity is the building block of our ‘ecosystems’ that in turn 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.

**3. The Local Area**

Baildon Town Council’s boundaries cover a considerable number of natural areas, including, farmland, moorland, rivers, woodland and allotments. Many of the areas surrounding Baildon have similar features

**4. Aims and Objectives.**

The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Council’s area. The Town Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and

strategies as required.

**5. Actions**

The Town Council will aim to improve the biodiversity of the area in the following ways:

* Consider the impact Council decisions and activity may have on biodiversity and seek to minimise adverse impacts on this as a result. The Council should also identify opportunities to increase biodiversity where practicable.
* Consider the impact on biodiversity in the decisions made through the Town Council, especially when commenting on planning applications. Support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats. 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. They will consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.
* Consider the impact on biodiversity in the decisions made by partners including BMDC and work in partnership with those agencies to protect promote and enhance biodiversity.
* Communicate information and raise public awareness of biodiversity issues within the Council area through the website, newsletter and social media.
* Manage any land and property owned, leased or cared for by the Town Council using environmentally friendly practices that will promote biodiversity. 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. This is applicable to Bracken Hall Countryside Centre, a property which Baildon Town Council leases.
* Take care in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not unnecessarily harm the natural environment. This is applicable to all works completed under the Baildon Green and Clean contract.
* When managing land leased to Baildon Town Council or instructing contractors, Baildon Town Council will make efforts to proactively remove invasive species as required under legislation in order to protect native species, as well as avoiding the use of herbicides except in exceptional circumstances.
* Urban footpath maintenance takes place regularly through the spring and summer and is very much a balancing act as the Town Council endeavours to keep these open for walkers, while also maintaining the natural environment.
* Baildon Town Council will seek to set consistent policies to protect green spaces and other designations which support bio-diversity through developing a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

**6. Monitoring and Review**

This policy was adopted on 22nd July 2024 and will be reviewed by May 2025 or sooner should legislation dictate.