

EAST GOSCOTE PARISH COUNCIL

Environmental Sustainability & Biodiversity Policy



Approved by:

Full Council

Date: 20.7.26

Last reviewed:

Environment Policy: 11.3.2024; Biodiversity Element: New

Next review due:

July 2028

Environmental Sustainability & Biodiversity Policy

1. Background – Statutory Biodiversity Duty

East Goscote Parish Council is a public authority for the purposes of Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, as updated by Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021. The Council therefore has a statutory duty to consider, from time to time, what action it can take to conserve and enhance biodiversity while carrying out its functions.

This duty applies across all areas of council activity, including land management, planning responses, procurement, community engagement, and strategic decision-making. The Council will periodically review the actions it can take to further the general biodiversity objective and ensure that biodiversity considerations are embedded into its policies, operations, and long-term planning.

2. Definition of Biodiversity

For the purposes of this policy, biodiversity refers to the variety of all living organisms, including plants, animals, fungi, and microorganisms, and the ecosystems of which they form a part. Biodiversity underpins essential natural processes such as pollination, soil formation, water purification, climate regulation, and flood mitigation.

The Council recognises that biodiversity has **intrinsic value**, as well as providing vital ecological, economic, cultural, and health benefits to the community. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity is therefore fundamental to the long-term wellbeing and resilience of East Goscote.

3. Aims and Objectives

The Council will:

- conserve and enhance biodiversity across the parish
- minimise negative environmental impacts from its operations
- support community, business, and partner-led environmental initiatives
- contribute to climate mitigation and adaptation
- embed sustainability into all council decisions

This is an aspirational, evolving policy that will be reviewed regularly as legislation and best practice develop.

4. Legal and Strategic Context

The Council will meet all relevant environmental and biodiversity legislation, including:

- Environment Act 2021 (biodiversity duty)
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
- Relevant planning and environmental regulations

The Council will review its actions regularly, in line with statutory biodiversity duties.

5. Actions

5.1 Planning and Development

The Council will:

- consider biodiversity impacts when responding to planning applications
- support site and building design that protects or enhances habitats
- protect sensitive habitats from development
- consider nutrient impacts on waterways
- check drainage proposals to reduce flood risk and protect wildlife
- support biodiversity net gain requirements
- include biodiversity policies in neighbourhood planning

5.2 Land and Property Management

The Council will:

- carry out biodiversity audits of its landholdings (wildlife audit undertaken summer 2023)
- manage open spaces using wildlife-friendly practices, including reduced mowing, careful timing of works, and minimal chemical use; including complying with current regulations on plant protection products and pesticide use
- specify biodiversity-friendly requirements in grounds maintenance contracts
- conserve water where possible and protect external taps in winter
- source sustainable, low-impact materials
- consider biodiversity when managing buildings and infrastructure

5.3 Pollution, Waste & Resource Use

The Council will:

- minimise consumption of resources
- reduce single-use plastics where possible
- minimise waste and maximise reuse and recycling
- ensure cleaning products and chemicals are the least environmentally damaging available
- reduce emissions and energy use, and use renewable energy where possible

5.4 Contractors and Procurement

The Council will, where possible, use contractors and suppliers who:

- have an up-to-date environmental policy
- follow biodiversity-friendly working practices
- are local, reducing transport emissions and supporting the local economy
- can demonstrate appropriate qualifications or certifications (e.g., NPTC)
- comply with all relevant environmental legislation and best-practice guidance
- use peat-free composts, low-impact materials, and the least harmful chemicals available

- schedule works to avoid sensitive periods for wildlife to avoid unnecessary disturbance to habitats, wildlife, or soil structure

5.5 Community Engagement

The Council will:

- raise public awareness of biodiversity and environmental issues
- encourage community-led initiatives and involve residents in projects: examples of biodiversity-friendly measures include bird and bat boxes, hedgehog highways, tree planting, wildflower areas, scalloped mowing edges, and habitat piles
- support sustainable transport initiatives (cycle parking, EV charging where feasible)
- encourage wildlife-friendly gardening and reduced floodlighting
- work with schools, farmers, and local organisations to promote biodiversity

5.6 Partnerships

The Council will work with:

- neighbouring parishes
- Charnwood Borough Council
- Leicestershire County Council
- local conservation groups
- national bodies where relevant

It will review local nature recovery strategies, species conservation strategies, and SSSI management recommendations.

5.7 Training and Emergency Preparedness

The Council will:

- provide training for staff and volunteers on environmental and biodiversity matters
- ensure emergency procedures are in place for environmental incidents (pollution, habitat damage, flooding impacts)

6. Funding and Resourcing

In line with its statutory biodiversity duty, the Council recognises that it may lawfully allocate funds to biodiversity conservation and enhancement, which may include:

- commissioning biodiversity audits or ecological surveys
- funding habitat creation or restoration projects
- supporting community-led biodiversity initiatives
- procuring specialist ecological advice
- investing in sustainable land-management practices

Biodiversity-related expenditure is considered a legitimate and necessary part of delivering the Council's statutory functions.

7. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if legislation changes.

A summary of progress will be published annually, as part of the Council's Action Plan.

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....