



## SHERE PARISH COUNCIL

### Enhanced Biodiversity Policy

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  - Locally and nationally designated sites in the parish with their locations and descriptions. [To be completed.]
  - Schedule.  
A schedule to include a list of the entire PC estate with detailed procedures for each will be produced separately.

#### **1. Summary**

The PC has a legal obligation to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Effective work to do this should be based on the four main geological/ habitat sections of the parish: chalk downland, valley base, agricultural sandstone, and nutrient poor higher sandstone, see Context: Landscape Background section.

Biodiversity has been increasingly damaged in recent centuries and decades at a global, national and local scale, see Challenges to biodiversity section.

There is a range of planning and land management designations and policies relevant to the area designed to conserve and enhance biodiversity (amongst other aims), see Existing external designations and policies section.

The core objective is to conserve and enhance biodiversity in a way that recognises the physical and policy structure within which the council is working. This relates mainly to the management of the council's estate but also extends to supporting community activity.

Methods for the different types of holding are outlined.

The undertaking of a consistent review of all of the council's estate is specified.

#### **2. Aim**

The purpose of this policy is to enhance biodiversity within the parish of Shere both because of the obligation placed upon parish councils by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended by the

Environment Act 2021) and because of the intrinsic desirability of doing so to contribute to the health of the World's ecosystems. The obligation has been summarised by the government:

“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.”<sup>ii</sup>

This aim is to be pursued within the parish in a way which reflects the landscape of the parish and the national and local aims for nature restoration in this area.

### **3. Responsibilities**

The Council holds ultimate responsibility for implementation of this policy.

The Clerk has executive responsibility for the management of the policy.

Staff and contractors are responsible for carrying out their roles in line with this policy.

### **4. Policies**

#### **a. Core statement**

The council will work to enhance biodiversity within the parish in line with its legal obligation. This will be through their management of their own estate and also by encouraging residents and land managers within the parish to manage their land in a nature friendly way.

This aim of the policy to enhance biodiversity within the parish recognises that the methods used need to be ecologically appropriate given the physical structure of the parish (as set out in Context: Landscape Background section). It also recognises that social conditions also provide opportunities and generate constraints in achieving a better world for wildlife (both fauna and flora).

The wildlife content of the area has been reduced over the previous centuries with increasing population and use of its resources, whether for agricultural, domestic or recreational purposes. This policy is not about trying to restore the landscape to a particular time in the past. The landscape is perpetually changing even without human intervention. The aim is increasing the amount and variety (diversity) of wildlife, especially that which is most seriously depleted or endangered.

The council believes that the improvement of the biodiversity of the parish will reinforce its value as a National Landscape and as Green Belt.

#### **b. Main policy approaches**

Within the overall aim to manage all land under their control in a way that maintains or enhances biodiversity, it is acknowledged that this would be done in a way that aligns with the primary reason for holding the land.

It is noted that the aim to encourage the increased complexity of wildlife habitats will generally improve them.

The council remain aware that all areas have potential for improvement. While this district already has a high level of biodiversity value this is often being reduced in practice, for example by more use, including intrusion into secluded areas. It is recognised that there are nearly always opportunities for improving standards of management.

The council will survey all of their managed sites to refine their biodiversity strategies (either by voluntary or paid expertise) within one year of the approval of this policy.

The council will undertake a review of existing contracts for land management to see whether variation of them before completion would be productive

The council will pursue opportunities for increasing/improving wildlife habitats when renewing land management contracts

If any species are introduced these would be appropriate for the habitat, including the natural soils on the site.

Whilst the provision of natural habitat is often a good option for nesting sites, there are times when nesting boxes (or similar) may be desirable, either in green habitats or on buildings. Possible users include birds, bats and hedgehogs. In appropriate locations hardware such as bat-boxes, bird boxes (including swift boxes), log piles, bee hotels may be introduced. Installations such as bird boxes will need to be maintained (cleaned). The council's-built structures will be assessed for opportunities within two years of the approval of this policy.

In general hedges and other boundaries should be kept permeable for wildlife and measures may be introduced to improve their condition, for example with the introduction of hedgehog passes or dropped kerbs for amphibians.

Only native species will be introduced and where possible these will be locally sourced (other than in planters).

The council will not use biocides ("weedkiller" or pesticides) unless to control invasive species if other methods are not practical.

The council will endeavour to make purchases of goods that are made in a sustainable way so far as practicable.

The council will aim to identify threats to the well-being of natural habitats on an ongoing basis within its estate, and will report any incidents elsewhere in the parish through existing channels if necessary. These threats include pollution (air and water), poor management, erosion and invasive species.

The parish council will continue its practice of considering biodiversity implications when it is consulted on planning applications.

### **Specific area types**

Woodland: Actions might include for example introducing plants of shade tolerant plants on woodland floors where they are not occurring on the sites from natural migration. In some locations limited felling may be done to improve complexity, or create glade habitats or heathland conditions where appropriate. Cut wood would normally be left on site (though not necessarily where it fell) to decompose naturally and provide habitats for invertebrates (for example beetles).

Waterside habitats. There are streams (both on parish and private land) and also ponded areas (from past industrial use and landscaping) within the parish. Those on parish land will be reviewed for opportunities to improve their wildlife value.

Hedgerows. Manage in accordance with the Management of Hedgerows (England) Regulations 2024.<sup>iii</sup> These mean the council must not cut or trim a hedgerow that is covered by the rules from 1 March to 31 August. The council must not cause or permit another person to cut or trim such a hedgerow. These apply to agricultural sites. There are exceptions to this prohibition.<sup>iv</sup>

Where the council manages hedgerows that are not controlled by the regulations they will abide by the principles of the regulations.

The council will compile and maintain a list of the locations in their estate to which the regulations apply.

Verges and other grasslands. Manage for wildlife but this may need to be balanced with the intended use of the land. Verges next to paths may be left to be cut only once or twice annually, but a narrow strip next to pavements may be cut more often to prevent obstruction of the footway if this is found necessary. It is noted that verges in general are potential wildlife corridors. However, the default management regime is to cut only once or twice a year (with or without the collection of cuttings) and variations from this need to be agreed. Where it is practical the council will seek to establish hedgerows around their sites.

Scrub management. When scrub/brush/bramble is being cleared for management, this should not be done during the hibernation season to prevent disturbance to hibernating mammals or during the spring when it is necessary to prevent damage to nesting birds. A short period in the late summer and early autumn is appropriate. (Reptiles generally hibernate from October<sup>v</sup>. “Hedgehogs usually hibernate from October/November through to March/April.”<sup>vi</sup> In general where scrub etc. is being cleared close to a road, clearance should start from the road side of the area and work away from the road to avoid displacing animals onto the road.

Planters . Whilst native species are preferable in planters, it is acceptable to use non-native horticultural species in planters although this should not include “double” varieties of flower which are less accessible to pollinators.

### **c. Encouragement**

The council will provide encouragement to others, including by setting an example with its wildlife friendly management of its estate.

In garden areas, especially on former fields, there is great potential to raise the quality (biodiversity value) above that on (current) agricultural land. The council emphasises that habitat creation should reflect the underlying conditions of the location. The council will provide information on wildlife friendly gardening on its website, mainly based on linking to the extensive material that is available from other sources. Other forms of communication may also be used and may also include providing general information for the public on protecting and respecting wildlife etc.

## **5. Compliance and monitoring**

Compliance with the legal requirement to enhance biodiversity is mandatory for the council.

Specific exceptions to the procedures set out in the document are not expected to be made, however, the council may make decisions that diverge from this policy by agreement at a full council meeting but must state that they are diverging and state their grounds for doing so.

In the event of non-compliance with the policy by members, staff or contractors this occurrence should be reported to the Clerk and then to the council.

No specific process for monitoring of compliance is currently considered necessary, however problems may be identified by members, staff or contractors during their carrying out of their duties.

## **6. Review process**

The policy is to be reviewed on an annual basis; however, a further review will need to be undertaken when the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is published and agreed for the area that includes this parish as this will supersede the BOA's and is fundamental to the Enhanced Biodiversity Duty.

## **7. Appendices**

- **Context** (including Landscape Background, Challenges to biodiversity (Global context, National context, Local changes) and Existing external designations and policies
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- **Schedule.**  
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<b>Adopted Councillor R Smith</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> June 2025	
<b>Version</b>		
<b>To be reviewed</b>	June 2026	

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1. ii <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complying-with-the-biodiversity-duty>
- iii <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2024/9780348260472/regulation/6>
- iv <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hedgerow-management-rules-cutting-and-trimming#check-if-the-rules-apply-to-a-hedgerow->
- v <https://www.arc-trust.org/hibernation-faqs#:~:text=Typically%2C%20British%20reptiles%20enter%20hibernation,locally%20and%20according%20to%20species>
- vi <https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/about-hedgehogs/hibernation/#:~:text=Hedgehogs%20usually%20hibernate%20from%20October,well%20into%20November%20and%20December>