

# Willingham Parish Council

## Biodiversity Policy and Action Plan

### Policy Statement

Willingham Parish Council is committed to promoting biodiversity in all of its activities and recognises its responsibility to encourage and protect the natural environment.

### Background

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 S40, there is a duty on public authorities in England, including 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 S102(3), 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 considerations.
- Act to deliver policies and achieve objectives.

Biodiversity refers to the variety of life on earth<sup>1</sup>. Biodiversity is everywhere: in gardens, fields, hedgerows, mountains, rivers, and the sea.

### The Local Area

Willingham parish Council is a rural village, with a range and number of natural areas, including hedges, ditches, farmland, trees, flood fens and rivers.

### Parish Council responsibilities

The Parish Council owns the following land and buildings:

- Cemetery on Church Street
- Barton Field on Black Pit Drove
- Village Green on Green Street
- Recreation Ground and playing fields on West Fen Road
- Community Orchard, Earith Road
- The two greens on Pyrethrum Way
- The Landing Ground on Shelfords Road
- The Pound on Pound Lane

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<sup>1</sup> As defined in 'Biodiversity 202: a strategy of England's wildlife and ecosystems' by DEFRA  
Biodiversity Policy – Adopted August 2024

- Ploughman Hall on West Fen Road
- Public Hall on the High Street
- The Pavilion on West Fen Road

The Parish Council is leaseholder for:

- The wildlife meadow on Meadow Road

The Parish Council is also responsible for the grass, hedge and shrub cutting of the cemetery and all of its open space/grass areas.

#### What the Parish Council will do

- Consider the impact of biodiversity in the decisions made through the Parish Council, including when commenting on planning applications.
- Look to reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides used on Parish Council owned land whilst considering alternative methods of controlling unwanted weeds and maintaining football pitches.
- review how it manages land at Meadow Road, Barton Field and the Community Orchard which may include but is not limited to:
  - Leaving standing and fallen dead wood as a habitat for invertebrates where appropriate.
  - Leaving leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible as a habitat for invertebrates.
  - Removing invasive and non-invasive species that are detrimental to native flora or fauna as appropriate.
- Balance the Shrub cutting that takes place once or twice a year to ensure shrubs do not encroach on footpaths and passageways. Cutting is to take place outside of the bird nesting season.
- look to place additional bird boxes where appropriate in Parish Council owned trees.
- look to promote biodiversity via the Parish Council website and Willingham News.
- have an action plan which it will review annually.

## Willingham Parish Council Biodiversity Action Plan

SITE/OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (YEARS)	REPORTING/ PUBLICITY
Whole Council Area	Raise local awareness of biodiversity	Gain local support for action	Ongoing	Newsletter, social media, website
Cemetery	Develop a summer wildflower area  Leave leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible as a habitat for invertebrates	Increased diversity of habitats and food sources Encouraging insects particularly butterflies and bees	Ongoing	Newsletter, social media, website
Wildlife Meadow	Develop natural pond so that it populates naturally. Continue to enhance remainder of the site with bird/bat boxes, hedgerows, and planting. Continue to work with local volunteers and residents	A water source for a variety of wildlife Increased diversity of habitats and food sources Encouraging insects particularly butterflies and bees  Raise awareness in community of biodiversity	Ongoing  Ongoing	Newsletter, social media, website
Community Orchard	Continue to work with local volunteers to enhance and develop the Orchard and its wildflower planting areas.  Work with volunteers on hedge laying project	Increased diversity of habitats and food sources Encouraging insects particularly butterflies and bees  Provides increased cover for insects and wildlife species	Ongoing	Newsletter, social media, website
Barton Field	To continue to leave the area to develop as a natural open space with hibernacula plus planting hedgerows etc	Increased diversity of habitats and food sources Provide shelter for all types of wildlife	Ongoing	Newsletter, social media, website
Common other open spaces	Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs (provide dog bag stations where appropriate). Continue with regular tree surveys and maintenance work of hedges and land	Protecting habitats  Protecting habitats	Ongoing	Newsletter, social media, website

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