



Biodiversity Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set clear objectives for how Knaresborough Town Council will conserve and enhance biodiversity, reduce its environmental impact, and contribute to tackling climate change while delivering high-quality services for the community. The policy establishes the Council's commitment to meeting its statutory duties and to embedding biodiversity considerations across its decision-making and operations.

Statutory Duty

Under the Environment Act 2021, all public authorities in England—including town and parish councils—must consider what actions they can take to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Government guidance issued on 17 May 2023 confirms that public authorities must:

- Consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity
- Set policies and specific objectives based on that consideration
- Act to deliver those policies and achieve those objectives

This duty also enables town and parish councils to spend funds on activities that conserve or enhance biodiversity.

Background and Context

Public authorities must have regard to relevant national and local strategies that influence how they comply with their biodiversity duty, including:

- Local Nature Recovery Strategies
- Species Conservation Strategies
- Protected Site Strategies

Authorities must understand how these strategies relate to land they own or manage, and how their actions can contribute to wider biodiversity objectives.

Biodiversity refers to the variety and abundance of life within an area—animals, plants, fungi, and microorganisms. These species interact within ecosystems that support essential natural processes, providing food, oxygen, clean air, clean water, and climate regulation. Protecting biodiversity is fundamental to sustaining life and community wellbeing.

Council Commitment

Knaresborough Town Council commits to taking proportionate, practical and meaningful action to conserve and enhance biodiversity within the parish. The Council will:

1. **Embed biodiversity considerations in decision-making** Ensure that Council, committee, sub-committee and task group decisions take account of biodiversity impacts, seeking to minimise harm and identify opportunities for enhancement wherever practicable.
2. **Support community-led biodiversity initiatives** Encourage and enable local groups to deliver biodiversity-positive projects through the Council's grants programme.
3. **Promote awareness and understanding** Share information and raise public awareness of biodiversity through the Council's website, newsletters and other communication channels.
4. **Work in partnership** Collaborate with statutory bodies, environmental organisations, community groups and neighbouring councils to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity across the parish.
5. **Champion biodiversity within the community** Use its civic leadership role to highlight biodiversity issues and encourage residents, businesses and visitors to support nature recovery.
6. **Influence planning outcomes** When commenting on planning applications, support proposals that conserve existing habitats, integrate new habitats, or otherwise benefit biodiversity. The Council will oppose development that would result in the loss of important or sensitive habitats.
7. **Review internal policies and processes** Regularly assess and update Council policies, procedures and operational practices to ensure they contribute positively to biodiversity.

Biodiversity in Council-Managed Land and Assets

As a landowner and manager of public spaces, Knaresborough Town Council will take active steps to enhance biodiversity on land within its control. The Council will:

1. **Manage invasive species responsibly** Remove invasive non-native species in accordance with legislation and best practice to protect native ecosystems.
2. **Minimise chemical use** Avoid the use of herbicides except in exceptional circumstances where no practical alternative exists.
3. **Adopt biodiversity-sensitive maintenance practices** Plan and time grounds maintenance and vegetation management to minimise ecological disturbance. Biodiversity-positive practices will be incorporated into contracts and specifications.
4. **Create and enhance wildlife habitats** Establish dedicated spaces that support wildlife—such as wildflower areas, pollinator-friendly planting, and habitat features—where appropriate.
5. **Improve Council buildings and surrounding land** Enhance biodiversity through measures such as green infrastructure, nesting or roosting features, sustainable drainage, and nature-friendly landscaping.

Monitoring and Review

The Council will monitor progress against this policy and review it annually, or sooner if legislation or local circumstances require. Outcomes and actions will be reported through the appropriate committee structure.

First Adopted: 17 June 2024 Reviewed: 14 September 2026

Next Review: Sept 2027

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