

Halesworth Biodiversity Policy

Draft1

Document reference:

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Date approved: X 2025

Date of next review: X 2026

Approved: L&E Halesworth Council

Related docs:

- Tree Policy
- Environmental Policy and carbon reduction plan
- Biodiversity Action Plan

Collaboration with:

- Halesworth Ash
- Halesworth in Bloom
- Alan Miller (Wenhaston)
- Ed Frazer (Wissett)
- <https://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/>
- Based on template of Stowmarket 2021/Wissett
- East Suffolk Council / Suffolk County Council

<https://stowmarkettowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Biodiversity-Policy-030221.pdf>

Wissett Biodiversity Statement: <https://wissett-biodiversity-network.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/WPC-Biodiversity-Statement-R01.pdf>

1. Background

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 requires that every local authority must have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. This policy sets out the approach of Halesworth Town Council in fulfilling this duty to protect wildlife and ecosystems.

Suffolk County Council confirmed plans to enhance the biodiversity of at least 30% of its land by 2030. <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-news/show/councils-commitment-to-further-enhancing-suffolks-natural-environment>

Under the 2021 Environmental Act, public authorities (including parish councils) must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is an objective of any development, with a BGN plan with every submission of major and minor and NSIP (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects) <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/design-heritage-ecology-trees-landscape-and-rights-of-way/ecology/biodiversity-net-gain/>

BNG ensures that more habitats are available, and that they are in better condition than before any development occurred.

Further guidance published in May 2023 clarifies that, as a public authority, the parish council must:

- consider what they can do to preserve and enhance biodiversity,
- agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration, and
- act to deliver their policies and achieve their objectives

2. What is biodiversity and why important

Biodiversity refers to the variety of living organisms on earth and the interactions between them. This includes the diversity of species, ecosystems, and genetic variations within a species. The richness and complexity of the natural world.

Biodiversity is important because it underpins healthy ecosystems and provides essential systems like food security, clean water, medicine and climate regulation through ecosystem services like pollination of flowers and water filtration. It also plays a crucial role in maintaining the balance and resilience of ecosystems, which in turn supports the sustainability of human life.

Biodiversity is currently threatened by various human activities, including habitat destruction, pollution, and climate change: the triple crisis which all interact with each other.

Whole-scale conservation efforts are needed to protect and restore biodiversity.

The need for its protection within local government grew out of the following needs:

- Need for action to combat climate change and loss of habitats and species

- Public concern over climate change
- Government wants to do something but is often poor at developing grass root initiatives that can be scaled up
- People, in particular young people, want to do something but don't know where to start or what to do in practical terms. The "what can I do?" question
- Nature reserves are important but unless there is a healthy wider countryside they are no more than isolated pockets
- There is a need for local solutions that are decided locally.

Eg Halesworth, our open spaces....

3. Approach

Halesworth Town Council will aim to protect, manage and enhance the biodiversity within the parish through the following core strategies. These will be integrated within the developing parish wide biodiversity strategy and reviewed annually to ensure they remain up to date and relevant with our changing environment.

INSERT a map of areas of rich biodiversity eg River, woodlands etc.

General Measures

Halesworth Town Council will undertake the following specific measures:

- manage public land in a way that promotes habitat creation and provides access to nature for local residents eg....
- provide resources to local residents on how they can manage their gardens, meadows and woodlands in a wildlife friendly way eg tree give away each winter
- Engage with partners such as the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk District Council to identify areas for the introduction of rewilding in the town. It is recognised that the creation of a network of "mini-nature reserves" can help protect and preserve wildlife and help the decline in many species that has occurred in recent years. eg Neighbourhood plan...
- Review mowing regimes of verges and public areas, cutting later in the season where appropriate, to maximise their biodiversity potential. Maintain rights of way. Review areas currently mown to identify if, in some instances, they can be left to grow up and cut only once annually
- Minimise the use of herbicides, pesticides and any other noxious chemicals in the establishment and management of public areas, especially near ponds of water courses.
- Tree and hedge enhancement/protection:
Protect existing habitats, particularly mature native trees and established hedgerows, Implement an annual programme of tree planting which will be supplemented by planting of new hedgerows where suitable locations can be identified to aid this.

Seek areas where additional tree, hedge and wildflower planting could be established. Seek locations within the parish for habitats such as bird boxes, swift boxes, hibernaculums and hedgehog highways.

- Map and maintain Halesworth Heritage Trees, examining them annually
- Support local biodiversity initiatives and working groups eg Halesworth Swifts
- Support the provision of habitats for wildlife to improve the diversity of Town Council land through the provision of bird boxes, bat boxes and bug hotels.
- Identify and adopt practices through managed retention of leaf litter, moss, piles of stones and dead vegetation which can be used as micro-habitats for invertebrates to feed, breed and shelter.
- Remove non native invasive species that are detrimental to native flora or fauna for example invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed. eg Himalayan Balsam
- Provide financial support from the Town Council's Environment Fund towards conservation projects within the town.

4. Develop a Biodiversity Action Plan eg Stowmarket

Create a Biodiversity Action Plan identifying a strategy for conserving, protecting and enhancing biological diversity in the local area, in relation to property, land and activities that are within the Town Council's control. The Plan will be developed from a professional assessment of the habitats and species present and how they can be conserved eg River, open spaces, immediate surroundings.

5. Spatial Development - Planning

The Planning & Development Committee, which reviews and provides comment on all planning applications:

- will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when commenting on planning applications and making representations in respect of the creation of local planning and environmental policies.
- will protect existing hedgerows and trees, promote the planting of new trees and hedgerows which reflect the character and habitats existing in the parish
- will seek to influence decision-makers so that the local environment is protected and to ensure that where development does take place it is done in such a way that there is a net gain in terms of biodiversity when sites are developed. (the current systems requires a 10% net gain)

4. Community Engagement

Whilst the Town Council commits to undertake some practical measures either itself, or in conjunction with local stakeholders to support biodiversity, it recognises that the involvement of the local community is required to achieve a step-change approach to

conservation. Therefore, the Town Council will seek to share information with local people and engage with them over practical measures that they can take to promote conservation in their own gardens and how they can get involved with projects and initiatives in the wider community.

BCCN / Open Spaces/ Halesworth Swifts / Hedgehogs / Wild Wenhaston

5. Review

The above statement sets out the parish council's key objectives by which it will protect and enhance the local biodiversity. The aim is to provide additional protection and positive long-term strategies for future generations of the town. This policy will be updated from time to time by the Town Clerk and shall be subject to formal review by the Council every 3 years.

Rachel Kellett

May 2025