

Minsterworth Parish Council

Biodiversity Policy

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MINSTERWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

1. Introduction

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on public authorities in England, including Parish Councils to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of their policy and decision making.

This obligation was further strengthened by the Environment Act 2022, and public authorities must now also consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

This means that a public authority must:

- Consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration.
- Act to deliver policies and achieve objectives.

2. Definition

According to Defra (Biodiversity 2020), biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants – everything that is alive on our planet.

Biodiversity is everywhere, in gardens, fields, hedgerows, mountains, rivers and the sea. Biodiversity is important for its own sake and has its own intrinsic value.

A number of studies have shown this value also goes further. Biodiversity is the building block of our 'ecosystems' that in turn provide us with a wide range of goods and services that support our economic and social wellbeing. These include essentials such as food, fresh water and clean air, but also less obvious services such as protection from natural disasters, regulation of our climate, and purification of our water or pollination of our crops. Biodiversity also provides important cultural services, enriching our lives.

3. The Local Area

Minsterworth Parish Council is a semi-rural village, which lies on the western side of the River Seven between Gloucester and the Forest of Dean. It is a particularly long and

mostly linear village, with the majority of houses build along the length of the A48. Over the past five years it has seen a steady rise in new, smaller housing developments and there is approved planning permission for a number of additional houses. Many of the older houses in the village have large gardens.

Minsterworth has a considerable number of natural areas, including the verges alongside the A48, hedges, ditches, farmland, and the river Severn which runs along the length of the Parish.

4. Our Parish Council Responsibilities

The Parish Council has responsibility for two areas of open land: Calcotts Green and Ham Green.

In addition, it manages a play area on land owned by Gloucestershire County Council and loaned to the Parish Council on a monthly lease.

The Parish Council also takes responsible for cutting the grass verges along the A48 to supplement the cutting done by Gloucestershire County Council Highway Department.

5. Aims and Objectives.

The aim of this Policy is to ensure that Minsterworth Parish Council fulfils its responsibilities under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Environment Act 2022; and works towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Council's areas of responsibility and influence. In doing so, the Parish Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

6. Actions

In order to meet its obligations under the relevant legislation, Minsterworth Parish Council will aim to improve the biodiversity of the area in the following ways:

- Consider the impact on biodiversity in the decisions made through the Parish Council, especially when commenting on planning applications. In particular this will include supporting site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats.

- Help ensure the protection of sensitive habitats from development, always having regard to whether proposed development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife in respect of all applications.
- Consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.
- Work in partnership with residents and other organisations in Minsterworth to help raise awareness of, and to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the council area.
- Manage its land and property using environmentally friendly practices that will promote biodiversity. This will include adopting beneficial practices with regard to cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work.
- Consider the impact on biodiversity when commissioning work by any supplier of services to the Parish Council, and in particular taking care in the specification of any grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment.
- It will review how it manages the land it is responsible for and will, wherever possible:
 - Leave standing and fallen dead wood as a habitat for invertebrates
 - Leave leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible and where appropriate, as a habitat for invertebrates
 - Remove invasive and non-invasive species that are detrimental to native flora or fauna as required.
 - For any work it commissions, leave a margin of uncut grass around hedges and allow longer grasses to grow.
 - Allow fallen tree branches to remain, if safe, to provide a habitat for invertebrates to live.
- Where possible, utilise the offer of tree saplings, such as the Gloucestershire County Council Ash Die Back Scheme, including publicising relevant schemes to residents, to encourage the planting of a wide range of tree species.
- Encourage residents to consider biodiversity on their own premises, such as having areas of unmown grass, bug houses and/or bird feeders and bird boxes.

- Promote the planting of bulbs and areas of wild flowers.
- Provide waste and dog poo bins and encourage residents to “pick up the poo”.
- Help raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website and promoting relevant issues in the Minsterworth Villager magazine.

7. Monitoring and Review

This policy was adopted on 14.10.2024 and will be reviewed in two years or sooner should legislation dictate.