

TOLLESHUNT KNIGHTS PARISH COUNCIL

Biodiversity Policy

Approved by the Council at the Meeting dated 28.4.2025 and recorded as Minute Reference 3829.01.

Next review date April 2027.

INTRODUCTION

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act there is a duty on public authorities in England such as Parish Councils to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of their policy and decision making.

This requirement was further strengthened by the Environment Act 2021, so that public authorities must now:

- 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 stated objectives.

Town and Parish Councils, unlike other authorities, are not obliged to publish a report on their actions, but government guidance now requires all public authorities to complete their consideration as to what action to take for biodiversity.

They must agree their policies and objectives and must then reconsider actions every five years, or more frequently if they choose to do so.

DEFINITION

DEFRA defines Biodiversity (2020) as the variety of all life on planet Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants – in fact everything that is live on our planet.

Biodiversity is everywhere – in gardens, fields, woodland, 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 that this value also goes further. Biodiversity is the building block of all our ecosystems which in turn provide us with a wide range of benefits that support our economic and social wellbeing. These include essentials such as food, fresh water and clean air, but also less obvious benefits such as protection from natural disasters, regulation of our climate, purification of our water and pollination of our crops. Biodiversity also provides important cultural benefits, thus enhancing the lives of all

THE LOCAL AREA

Tolleshunt Knights is a rural village lying a few miles from the Blackwater Estuary which includes Ramsar designation, National Nature Reserve, Special Sites of Scientific Interest, Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area. The area has so far escaped major development and retains its rural character. The parish contains a considerable number of natural areas, including woodland, hedges, farmlands and water features.

PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Parish Council owns one piece of land – the site known as the playing field in Top Road. It has been in Parish Council ownership since 1974, and prior to that was agricultural land. It is an area of grassland and woodland which is very popular for recreational purposes with both residents and those coming from neighbouring settlements. It provides a rich and varied habitat for many species of animal and plant life. It includes a children's play area and car park and is notable for many fine mature trees.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The object of this policy is to show how the Parish Council will work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of Tolleshunt Knights. The Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making its decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

ACTIONS

The Parish Council will aim to improve the biodiversity of the area in the following ways:

- Consider the impact on biodiversity in the decisions that it makes, especially when commenting on planning applications. It will support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or the provision of new habitats. It will support the protection of sensitive habitats from development and will consider whether planning applications would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife. It will also consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.
- It will also consider the impact on biodiversity in the decisions made by adjacent local authorities/parish councils.

- It will 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, paying attention to current government regulations for plant protection products.
- It will take care in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not have as negative impact on the environment.
- It will review how it manages the land at the playing field site. This may include but is not limited to:

Leaving standing and fallen dead wood as a habitat for invertebrates.

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.

Maintain a margin of uncut grass around the hedges of the playing field to allow longer grasses to grow.

Allow fallen tree branches to remain, if safe to do so, to improve habitats for invertebrates.

- Hedge and grass cutting on the playing field takes place regularly and as required throughout the year to allow access for members of the public who use the field.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy was adopted on 28.4.2025 and will be reviewed in two years or sooner if legislation dictates. Any actions or decisions made by the Parish Council which affect biodiversity will be reported in the Council's minutes and meeting reports which are posted on the Parish Council's website.