



# NORFOLK PARISH TRAINING & SUPPORT

## Complying with the Biodiversity Duty

### Introduction

The word biodiversity comes from the word's biological diversity – it means the variety of living species on Earth, including plants, animals, bacteria, and fungi.

The State of Nature Report 2023 which is the most comprehensive report on UK wildlife has found one in six of the more than ten thousand species assessed (16%) are at risk of being lost from Great Britain. However, this figure is much higher for some groups such as birds (43%), amphibians and reptiles (31%), fungi and lichen (28%) and terrestrial mammals (26%)<sup>1</sup>.

### Legislation

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, every public body, including Parish Councils, already has a duty to conserve biodiversity.

The Environment Act 2021 has strengthened this so those public bodies including Parish Councils in England must now consider what they can do to **conserve and enhance biodiversity**. This is the strengthened '**biodiversity duty**' that the Environment Act 2021 introduces.

### What must you do:

1. Consider what you can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
2. Agree policies and specific objectives based on your consideration.
3. Act to deliver your policies and achieve your objectives.

To comply complete your first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity by 1 January 2024. You must agree your policies and objectives as soon as possible after this.

You must reconsider the actions you can take within 5 years of when you complete your previous consideration.

### Actions to Comply

1. *Include an item on your next Parish Council agenda*

#### **Biodiversity Duty for [insert the name of your Parish Council] –**

If your parish council manages areas of land including commons, playing fields, allotments, churchyards, rivers, streams, ponds, grass verges or just a tree in a village square it will be home to an abundance of life including potentially rare plants or a site for breeding birds.

At the meeting introduce the subject of the biodiversity duty, talk, and note what is already being done in the parish. Start thinking about what small steps can be taken to enhance areas for wildlife. Perhaps contribute towards the many national campaigns helping to protect

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<sup>1</sup> (State of Nature Partnership, 2023)

wildlife, engage with local wildlife groups who might have enthusiastic volunteers willing to offer support, review grass cutting regimes to create some areas for wildlife.

As a first step agree that in future the Council will include any concerns about potential loss of biodiversity when making comments on planning applications. There is a legal duty that developments deliver a net gain in biodiversity.

2. *Agree a Policy*

A draft policy for your Parish Council to consider and adopt is appended to this briefing paper. There is no need to do this at your next meeting, take time to think about the actions to be taken and agree them as part of the agreed policy.

3. *Review agreed actions*

Within five years or sooner if it is considered appropriate the Parish Council will need to review its agreed actions and determine whether they have been achieved, or hopefully exceeded.