

Oakington & Westwick Parish Council

Biodiversity Statement and Policy

November 2023

Background

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 there is a duty on public authorities in England, including Parish Councils to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of their policy or decision making. This was further strengthened by the Environment Act 2021 so public authorities must now consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. This means 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.

Biodiversity refers to the variety of life on earth¹. Biodiversity is everywhere: in gardens, fields, hedgerows, mountains, rivers and the sea.

Parish Council responsibilities

The Parish Council owns two areas of land;

The Recreation Ground (including Cemetery and Orchard) in Queens Way and 'Stocks Green' (registered village green) in High Street

The Parish Council is also responsible for grass cutting, but does not own, the small village green in Water Lane.

The Parish Council also leases land in Mill Lane from Homes England which is used a community orchard.

What the Parish Council has already does/has done

- Planted more than 40 mature trees and saplings on the Recreation Ground between 2020 and 2023
- Planted 22 metres of Beech hedging
- Created several wildflowers areas on the Recreation Ground
- Established two extensive mature orchards with the help of volunteers
- Limits hedge cutting to twice a year, outside the bird nesting season
- Makes environmentally sustainable purchases when possible – e.g. recycled plastic picnic benches and litter pickers made from plastic retrieved from the ocean
- Funded work undertaken by the EAG to improve the condition of the pond in Longstanton Rd such that it is an improved environment for wildlife

¹ As defined in 'Biodiversity 2020: a strategy of England's wildlife and ecosystems' by DEFRA

What the Parish Council will do

- Consider the impact on biodiversity in the decisions made by the Parish Council
- Adopt a policy of considering biodiversity in comments on planning applications
- Reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides used on Parish Council owned land
- Review how it manages the Recreation Ground, Cemetery, Orchards and Stocks Green. 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 as required.
 - Ensuring that there is a margin of uncut grass around the edges of the Rec to allow longer grasses/wildflowers to grow.
 - Allowing fallen tree branches to remain, if safe, to allow invertebrates to habitat.
 - Preserving the London Plane tree on Stocks Green.
 - Continuing to plant new trees, where appropriate, with an aim to increase species diversity of the existing tree stock.
 - Only purchasing trees and plants from companies that have a biosecurity policy
 - Watering and caring for any newly planted trees and shrubs to ensure they establish
- Look to promote biodiversity via the Parish Council website
- Work collaboratively with Sustainable Oakington & Westwick (SOW) to support 'Nature Recovery' aspirations

Adopted: 13 November 2023

Review Due: November 2024

¹ As defined in 'Biodiversity 2020: a strategy of England's wildlife and ecosystems' by DEFRA