



Background

Biodiversity means the variety of life around us and includes every species of plant and animal, the genetic material that makes them what they are, and the communities that they form. Biodiversity is essential to sustaining the living networks, or 'ecosystems', that provide us all with health, wealth, food, fuel and the vital services our lives depend on. It is a core component of sustainable development, underpinning economic development and prosperity. Conserving biodiversity can include restoring or enhancing a population or habitat.

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 makes it clear that as a public authority, Wisborough Green Parish Council has a duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of its policy and decision making. Under the 2021 Environmental Act, public authorities operating in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

The Local Area

Wisborough Green is a quintessential English village with a picturesque central village green, pond, church and shop located in the historic and Conservation Area of the village. The south-western part of the Parish, approximately one third, lies within the South Downs National Park.

The Parish is predominantly of a rural nature and the character of the landscape is typical of the north-western Low Weald. Wisborough Green features several ancient woodlands as defined by Natural England, both within and adjacent to the Parish. Other woodland and individual trees are equally important to this area in terms of landscape character and habitat for a broad range of species.

There are two Sites of Special Scientific Interest on the east and west borders of the Parish, The River Arun and The Mens (ancient woodland) respectively; The Mens is also internationally important, a Special Protected Area under EU legislation. There are several areas of semi natural and replanted woodland in the Parish, lengths of Notable Road Verge and several locally important Sites of Nature Conservation Importance. The village settlement is surrounded by a variety of wetlands - rivers, tributaries, a section of the Wey & Arun canal, ponds, springs and water meadows.

This area supports incredibly rare, protected and internationally important populations of

Barbastelles and Bechsteins bats. It is within their “key conservation area” and also within the Core Sustainance Zones for Barbastelle bats from The Mens Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Ebernoe Common SAC. As such, this area is ‘functionally linked’ to the SAC’s.

The Council’s Responsibilities

The Council owns and has the following maintenance responsibility:

- Village Green – grass (excluding sports use), ditches, paths and trees.
- Songhurst Meadow Open Space – grass, hedges, ditches, paths and trees.
- Allotments – onsite maintenance, outside grass verges, hedge and trees.

How the Council will meet its duty

To help fulfil its commitments outlined in this policy, Wisborough Green Parish Council will commit to undertake a biodiversity audit when officer and councillor time permits.

The Council will show that it has regard for conserving and enhancing biodiversity when it:

1. Considers, as one of the criteria for supporting a planning application, the extent to which the site and building design benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats.
2. Endeavours to conserve the biodiversity of the land it manages. It will adopt practices beneficial for biodiversity regarding cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work.
3. Takes care to word the specification of ground maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, while reaching acceptable standards, minimises harm to the natural environment.
4. Works in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the Parish.
5. Raises, wherever possible, public awareness of biodiversity issues by means of, for example, community involvement in biodiversity projects in the Parish, such as tree planting and maintenance, wildflower meadows, birdbox making.
6. Communicates information and raises awareness of biodiversity through its website and newsletters.