

Earnley Parish Council Biodiversity Statement and Policy

Introduction

Earnley Parish Council, despite not owning land directly, recognizes its crucial role in promoting biodiversity and contributing to sustainable development within the parish. As a public authority, we adhere to the **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2021** and actively show regard for conserving biodiversity in all our actions. Earnley Parish Council actively promotes awareness of biodiversity and encourages sustainable practices.

Earnley Parish spans approximately three miles from north to south and about a mile and a quarter from east to west. It boasts a two-and-a-half-mile coastline, stretching from West Sands, Selsey to Bracklesham. The Parish consists of the villages or hamlets of Earnley, Almodington, and Somerley. Most of the non-residential land in the parish is dedicated to agricultural and horticultural use. Additionally, a significant land mass is devoted to the RSPB Medmerry Nature Reserve and a part of the Bracklesham Bay SSSI. The Parish has two designated conservation areas: the centre of Earnley and Somerley.

Our Commitment

1. **Biodiversity Awareness Education:**
 - We commit to raising awareness about biodiversity among residents, businesses, and visitors, and we aim to foster a deeper understanding of the importance of biodiversity.
 - Our Environment Group plays a pivotal role in disseminating information.
2. **Collaboration and Advocacy:**
 - While we do not own land, we actively collaborate with neighbouring landowners, conservation organizations, and relevant authorities. By advocating for biodiversity-friendly practices, we contribute to the overall health of our local ecosystems.
 - We support initiatives such as wildlife corridors, tree planting, and habitat restoration, and will work with other organisations to facilitate the provision of these initiatives.
 - When engaging with developers, businesses, or residents, we emphasize biodiversity-friendly options and encourage wildlife-friendly landscaping and sustainable practices.
 - The **RSPB Medmerry Nature Reserve** plays a crucial role in preserving local biodiversity within the Parish.

3. Policy Integration:

- We integrate biodiversity considerations into our decision-making processes. Our policies align with the principles of sustainable development, recognizing that biodiversity underpins economic prosperity and community well-being.

Key Focus Areas

1. Highway Meadows

- **Highway Meadows:** we actively manage highway meadows to enhance biodiversity, in Clappers Lane. These areas serve as vital habitats for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife. We will actively look to make further provision through the parish.

2. Native Planting and Wildlife Habitats

- **Native Planting:** We promote the use of native plant species in public areas. These plants support local wildlife, enhance soil health, and contribute to a resilient ecosystem.
- **Wildlife Habitats:** Collaborating with landowners and local wildlife conservation organisations, we identify opportunities to improve and create wildlife-friendly habitats. This includes bird boxes, insect and hedgehog-friendly areas, the planting of native trees, shrubs and wild flowers for pollinators, as well as the maintenance and of local ponds.

3. Climate Resilience and Adaptation

- **Climate-Resilient Practices:** Despite not owning land, we explore and advocate climate-resilient strategies. Drought-tolerant planting, soil improvement, and flood-resistant measures contribute to biodiversity conservation.
- **Monitoring and Reporting:** We will aim to assess the impact of climate change on local biodiversity and adjust our practices accordingly.

4. Community Engagement

- **Public Consultations:** We actively seek input from residents regarding biodiversity-related matters. Their insights guide our actions and policies.
- **Involving the Community:** We aim to engage residents in projects that improve biodiversity. We organize community events such as planting days, wildlife surveys, or habitat restoration events, usually in collaboration with local wildlife conservation organisations.
- **Collaboration with Local Groups:** Partner with local environmental organisations, community groups and neighbouring parishes. Joint initiatives can create a positive impact.

- **Public Communications:** We can use our website and regular newsletters to inform parishioners about environmental matters.
- **External Advice:** When engaging with developers, businesses, or residents, we emphasize biodiversity-friendly options and encourage wildlife-friendly landscaping and sustainable practices.
- **Garden Awareness:** In a parish where most properties have private gardens, awareness can be raised about how individual gardens can support biodiversity, through native plantings, wildlife-friendly features, and avoidance of artificial grass and large areas of concrete.

Conclusion

Earnley Parish Council remains committed to its duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act. By fostering biodiversity awareness, collaborating with stakeholders, and integrating biodiversity considerations into our policies, we contribute to the resilience and distinctiveness of our local environment.

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