

## CLUN TOWN COUNCIL WITH CHAPEL LAWN

### BACKGROUND: THE BIODIVERSITY DUTY APRIL 2024

Under the 2021 Environment Act, public authorities (including town and parish councils) operating in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Government guidance published on 17 May 2023 clarifies that, as a public authority, town and parish councils must:

- consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration.
- act to deliver their policies and achieve their objectives.

Town and parish councils, unlike other authorities, are not obliged to publish a report on their actions, but the [Government guidance](#) requires all public authorities to complete their first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity by 1 January 2024. They must agree their policies and objectives as soon as possible after this and must reconsider the selected actions within five years of completing their previous consideration, or more frequently if they choose.

To comply with the guidance, town and parish councils could as a minimum:

- have biodiversity as an agenda item for a meeting before the end of 2023.
- note what action they are already taking to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- agree what further steps they should take to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Such steps may include:

- reviewing what biodiversity or nature recovery plans are already in place from other local authorities, e.g. potential for jointly-supported wildlife corridors notably Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan and neighbouring parishes.
- making contact with local voluntary groups working on nature conservation.
- supporting biodiversity audits
- gathering expert advice on possible actions in support of biodiversity, such as from [Caring for God's Acre](#) and the [Eco Church initiative](#) in respect of churchyards
- drafting an action plan that covers action that the council will take itself as well as support for the actions of other local bodies.

Whatever action is agreed, as a minimum local councils could ensure they address biodiversity concerns when commenting on planning applications.

All these steps may inform an agreed biodiversity policy. Guidance for town and parish councils on developing a [local nature action plan](#) has been published by South Gloucestershire Council, as well as a [field guide](#) for those with little or no ecological background.

# **BIODIVERSITY POLICY**

## **BACKGROUND**

In accordance with the duty imposed on town and parish councils by Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, updated by Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021, Clun Town Council with Chapel Lawn (hereinafter referred to as the Council) must from time to time consider what action the authority can properly take, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective.

This duty also means that town and parish councils can spend funds on conserving biodiversity.

## **DEFINITION**

According to DEFRA (Biodiversity 2020), biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants; everything that is alive on our planet.

Biodiversity is important for its own sake and has its own intrinsic value. A number of studies have shown this value also goes further. Biodiversity is the building block of our 'ecosystems' that in turn provide us with a wide range of goods and services that support our economic and social wellbeing. These include essentials such as food, fresh water and clean air, but also less obvious services such as protection from natural disasters, regulation of our climate, and purification of our water or pollination of our crops. Biodiversity also provides important cultural services, enriching our lives.

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The object of this policy is to foster and where practical to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the land within the Parish of Clun with Chapel Lawn.

The Full Council and any committees of the Council will take into account sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

In particular, the Council will aim to improve the biodiversity of the area:

- consider the potential impact on biodiversity represented by planning applications.
- manage its land and property using environmentally friendly practices that will promote biodiversity.
- support local businesses and council operations in the adoption of low impact / nature positive practices.
- encourage and support other organisations within Clun to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind.
- support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity
- bring pressure to bear on the Environment Agency and Natural England to implement policies which will improve significantly the ecological status of the River Clun.
- work in partnership with others to bring the farming community together to discuss how its members might take up specific Environmental Land Management incentives which will protect the River Clun and enhance biodiversity throughout the parish. .
- support the Clun Climate and Environment Group in implementing agreed Actions.

See also the Clun Climate Emergency Action Plan March 2023.

Most of the open space in the parish of Clun and Chapel Lawn is privately owned agricultural land, private forestry or publicly managed forest by Forestry England as well as our important rivers and riverine habitats, and areas of woodland, some classed as historic or ancient. All the parish lies within the National Landscape

area of Shropshire Hills. Other than the public forestry, publicly owned open land is very limited. In all open spaces, private and public, there is concern about increasing greenhouse gas emissions from human and animal sources, loss of nutrients from land to our rivers and waterways and significant loss of biodiversity, such that wildlife species are showing significant change and decline, river quality may be in decline, and natural habitats are becoming too fragmented to support wildlife effectively. Policies to counter all these threats, all of which are aspects of the climate emergency, are supported by the Town Council. Joint working with other agencies in Shropshire including for example Shropshire Hills National Landscape, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Natural England, the Environment Agency and farming organisations will be necessary.

The Clun Climate and Environment Group Action Plan is looking at all options to help to deliver against both national and local targets by implementing step changes in the way public land is managed. Clun Town Council are fully aware of the important part many farmers play within the Parish not only to produce high quality food in a sustainable manner but also to continue to care for the high quality natural environment that surrounds us. The Plan will look to complement the various environmental schemes offered to farmers and land managers.”

## **ACTIONS**

### **Planning applications**

The Council will:

- when commenting on planning applications, support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats.
- support protection of sensitive habitats from development and will consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife in respect of all applications.
- consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.
- include policies in support of biodiversity within relevant spatial plans.

### **Land and property management**

The Council will:

- support a biodiversity audit of its landholdings and any land that it manages.
- consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity with regard to the management of its open spaces and buildings. This will include adopting beneficial practices with regarding to cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work, paying attention to the Government’s [regulations for plant protection products](#).
- take special care in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment.
- source sustainable materials when procuring supplies for the Council’s use
- consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing its buildings.

### **Local community**

The Council will:

- raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website and newsletters.
- engage with local businesses and residents regarding biodiversity in the community and how members of the community can assist and make a difference.
- where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects including for example tree planting, wildflower meadows, verges management

## **Partners**

The Council will work in partnership with other organisations such as Shropshire Wildlife Trust, English Heritage, Forestry England, Restoring Shropshires Verges, Shropshire Hills National Landscape to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the council area.

It will review any local nature recovery strategies, species conservation strategies, or protected site strategies in respect of local Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and consider how it may become more involved in implementing the strategies' recommendations.

## **MONITORING**

This policy was adopted on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2024 (Minute reference **046-24**) and will be reviewed in two years or sooner should legislation dictate. A summary of how the policy has been implemented will be published annually, with reference to the original biodiversity audit to show progress.