

Duns Tew Parish Council Biodiversity Policy

Background

Duns Tew's natural environment is central to its character and the quality of life enjoyed by its residents. The council recognizes the critical role biodiversity plays in sustaining this environment and is committed to ensuring it thrives for future generations.

In response to the strengthened biodiversity duty introduced by the Environment Act 2021, Duns Tew Parish Council formally adopted this policy on ... January 2025. The Act requires all local authorities, including parish councils, to conserve and enhance biodiversity in their areas. This duty also allows parish councils to allocate funds to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Biodiversity, the variety of life on Earth, underpins essential ecosystem services such as clean air, water, and food, while contributing to our well-being and resilience against climate change.

This policy sets out the council's approach to embedding biodiversity considerations in its operations and decision-making processes. To fulfill this duty, the council commits to regular reconsideration of its actions to enhance biodiversity, at least once every five years, and will seek to contribute meaningfully to broader biodiversity strategies where appropriate.

Aims and Objectives

The aims of this policy are to:

1. Integrate biodiversity considerations into council decisions and activities.
2. Encourage community engagement and action to promote biodiversity.
3. Manage council-owned and council-managed assets and resources in a manner that enhances biodiversity.
4. Foster partnerships with local organizations to contribute to broader biodiversity strategies.

Commitments

1. Decision-Making and Planning

- Consider biodiversity in decisions made at council and committee meetings, aiming to minimize adverse impacts and maximize opportunities to enhance local biodiversity.
- Support planning applications that conserve and integrate existing habitats or create new habitats.
- Advocate for the protection of sensitive habitats and seek biodiversity net gain in developments.

2. Land and Resource Management

On land and property under its control, the council will:

- Conduct a biodiversity audit of its landholdings and the wider parish to identify key habitats, species, and opportunities for enhancement.
- Avoid the use of pesticides and herbicides except in exceptional circumstances.
- Time grounds maintenance and vegetation removal to minimize disruption to wildlife.
- Create dedicated wildlife habitats, such as uncut grass margins and wildflower meadows, and leave standing or fallen dead wood and leaf litter as invertebrate habitats.
- Plant native species and install bird and bat boxes where appropriate.
- Ensure that hedge and tree cutting is conducted in line with seasonal biodiversity considerations.
- Support pollinators by encouraging the creation of “bee squares” (small wildflower plots) on council land and in private gardens.

3. Community Engagement

- Raise public awareness of biodiversity issues through the council’s website, newsletters, and events.
- Encourage community involvement in biodiversity projects, such as tree and wildflower planting, habitat creation, wildlife monitoring, and pollinator support.
- Work with local schools, youth groups, and organizations to educate young people about biodiversity and involve them in practical projects.

4. Partnerships and Collaboration

- Work with local conservation groups and neighbouring councils to align efforts in protecting and enhancing biodiversity.
- Participate in broader biodiversity strategies and initiatives, such as nature recovery networks and regional wildlife corridors.

5. Monitoring and Review

- Use the results of biodiversity audits to inform decisions and track progress in enhancing biodiversity.
- Revisit this policy at least every five years, or sooner if new opportunities, legislation, or community feedback arise.
- Publish an annual summary of actions taken and progress achieved, referencing biodiversity audits and community projects.

Adoption and Implementation

Duns Tew Parish Council adopted this policy on 6 January 2025. It reflects the council’s commitment to fulfilling its biodiversity duty and ensuring that Duns Tew continues to support a rich and sustainable natural environment for generations to come.

Policy adopted: 6th January 2024

Next review: January 2029