



**Wombourne Parish Council**  
Biodiversity Policy

## **Introduction**

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, Wombourne Parish Council will in exercising all its functions have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.

This duty also means that town and parish councils can spend funds in 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. It is the building block of our 'ecosystems'. These 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.

## **Policy Statement**

Wombourne Parish Council is committed to preserving and protecting the environment by adopting an environmental and sustainability policy.

## **Aims**

Wombourne Parish Council is committed to protecting the environment including foot/bridle paths and the natural heritage of the Parish, recognising the importance and value of the area and its contribution to quality of life for villagers and the wider community.

## **Council activities**

In carrying out its own activities the Parish Council will strive to make a positive contribution to protecting the local and wider environment. It will seek to promote the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources and to minimise environmental pollution in all its own activities and through its influence over others.

## **Parish Council responsibilities**

The Parish Council owns the land to the front of the Civic Centre, Wombourne. Wombourne Parish Council lease land at Bratch Park and Brickbridge Playing Fields.

The Parish Council are not responsible for the grass cutting of verges, but will work alongside South Staffordshire County and Staffordshire County Council to ensure they are appropriately cut.

Wombourne Parish Council is responsible for cutting the grass at the aforementioned areas.

### **Minimise waste and pollution**

We will endeavour to minimise waste and pollution by:

- a. Reducing the use of resources
- b. Re-using materials whenever possible
- c. Recycling when waste is produced
- d. Seek to eliminate the unnecessary use of energy and reduce carbon and greenhouse gas emissions.
- e. Provide information electronically as much as possible.
- f. Avoid and advocate against the use of single-use plastic items.
- g. Minimise the environmental impact of travelling on Council business, where practicable and safe, by, walking, cycling, car sharing or the use of public transport.
- h. Holding meetings by on-line mechanisms such as “webinars” where possible

### **Procurement**

When purchasing services and goods, where practical and economical, and in line with best value outlined in other policies, the Parish Council will give preference to:

- a. Local suppliers
- b. Options that are environmentally friendly
- c. Products that have been manufactured from recycled materials
- d. Products that can be disposed of in an environmentally sustainable manner.

### **Contractors and maintenance**

The Parish Council will require that contractors, Councillors and volunteers who carry out maintenance on Parish-managed land, or on other areas of the Parish at the instigation of Council officers:

- a. Minimise the use of harmful pesticides and chemicals
- b. Minimise adverse impacts on air quality
- c. Undertake the work in a manner that, where practicable, benefits wildlife and the environment
- d. Where practicable use locally sourced plants grown in the UK. In appropriate locations encourage the use of native, wildflower and bee friendly species.
- e. Goods and services are purchased locally, where possible, to reduce mileage and packaging. In addition, we try to combine meetings to save on travel

### **Decision Making**

In its decision making the Parish Council will take careful consideration of:

- a. The importance of encouraging walking, cycling and the use of public transport when practicable.
- b. The need to reduce, re-use and recycle to protect resources
- c. The need to avoid adverse impacts on air quality
- d. The need to conserve and improve natural habitats
- e. The need to protect vulnerable and protected species
- f. The need to conserve the natural beauty of its woodlands, The Green and surrounding landscape.
- g. Goods and services are purchased locally, where possible, to reduce mileage and packaging. In addition, we try to combine meetings to save on travel

### **Trees and hedges**

In maintaining our trees and hedges , we will:

- a. Organise regular tree inspections
- b. Remove dead, dying and dangerous trees
- c. Remove dangerous and damaged limbs
- d. Endeavour to replace large specimen trees with similar species.

If works are required, this will be programmed as necessary.

### **General**

Where the Parish Council has the opportunity, in a way that is both practical and economic, it will:

- a. Discourage the use of single use plastics within the parish
- b. Discourage all forms of littering
- c. Encourage the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.
- d. Encourage reduction, re-use and recycling of resources within the Parish.
- e. Encourage the use of materials and systems that improve energy efficiency of developments, new-builds, extensions and renovations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- f. Encourage new-builds, extensions and renovations to be nature friendly, located close to public transport and amenities and to provide electric vehicle charge points.
- g. Encourage local action in support of the environment
- g. Highlight the importance and value of our local environment and its contribution to our community's quality of life
- h. Ensure the nature conservation value of the area to the front of the Civic Centre, Bratch Park and Brickbridge Playing Fields and surrounding landscape by encouraging maintenance and enhancements.
- i. Recognise the importance of trees, hedgerows and deadwood, as an essential corridor for the movement of wildlife, and a support for animals and plants.
- j. Encourage and work closely with Staffordshire County Council to maintain the Public Rights of Way (PROW) to foster and encourage biodiversity whilst still meeting the legal requirements to clear them to the required widths.
- k. Encourage the provision of cycle lanes and footpaths.
- l. Encourage any person or organisation carrying out works in the Parish to do so in line with this policy.
- m. Consider the provision of insect hotels, bird feeders, swift/swallow nests and bird nests in where appropriate
- n. Biodiversity in public spaces. Wombourne Parish Council is not responsible for the highway verges, although, it has identified suitable areas that can be replaced with a wildflower area and will work with South Staffordshire Council to implement this.
- o. Guidance to be sought from the Tree Officer at South Staffordshire Council where required.
- p. Designate and protect sites as local green spaces, new play spaces (formal and informal) and green infrastructure networks, encouraging local residents into the fresh air, walking or cycling rather than using their cars for local journeys.

q. Soap dispensers are refillable.

### **What does Wombourne Parish Council plan to do?**

Wombourne Parish Council is aware that there are still measures to be introduced which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- To comment on small and large planning applications. Planning decisions will be made by the local planning authority, which needs to hear from those that support the applications. The UK needs to increase the amount of renewable energy it generates by around eight-fold. Comments to include how an application can aid the environment, can the application support renewable energy?
- Consider moving to a 'paperless council' where Councillors would be provided with a tablet for meeting purposes. This will remove the requirement of paper copies in meetings.
- Office staff to reduce the paper files held and aim to reduce printing by storing files in the cloud with the support of MBM Ltd.
- Engage with the Local Plan and future developments regarding different sources of energy generation, i.e. solar panels.
- Encourage young people to engage with activities which are already taking place.
- Encourage walking. Employees and Councillors should also be encouraged to walk, cycle or use public transport or car-share to meetings where possible.
- Encourage residents to increase biodiversity in their back gardens.
- Bring together groups of people for bulk purchases or purchase goods with other local authorities.
- Oppose high-carbon developments, promoting sustainable alternatives instead.
- Encourage national changes to bus services regulations, so all areas can regulate buses as London does, and urban profit-making routes can cross-fund loss making rural routes.
- Reduce pesticide use and other harmful activities.
- Encourage residents and local landowners to take part in tree planting. The Tree Charter, developed by the Woodland Trust, provides excellent guidance on how to increase tree cover. The National Association of Local Councils website provides case studies where it has been used<sup>1</sup>. Also, the Trees for Climate scheme supported by the Forest of Mercia provides free trees for large landowners.
- Buying green electricity helps develop new renewable energy. Friends of the Earth has identified "Ecotricity", Good Energy and Octopus as the greenest energy companies.
- Support the introduction of safe walking and cycle routes and, where necessary, work in partnership with the local authority to deliver them.
- Ensure the climate change or nature implications of decisions are known before making them. It isn't credible to accept the need for rapid action on climate change and nature and then

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<sup>1</sup> NALC website, The Tree Charter, link to the NALC website for information on the tree charter.

make decisions without knowing whether they'll be harmful or helpful. Requiring every decision to be well informed is common sense as well as good practice.

This Action Plan will be a flexible, working document that can be added to when required.