

Ipstones Parish Council

Biodiversity Policy



Adoption and review

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1. Introduction and statutory context

Ipstones Parish Council (the Council) recognises the importance of biodiversity and the vital role it plays in sustaining healthy ecosystems, supporting climate resilience, and enhancing the quality of life for residents and visitors.

Under **Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006**, as strengthened by **Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021**, public authorities in England, including parish councils, must have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing biodiversity when exercising their functions.

This policy sets out how the Council will meet this duty in a proportionate, practical and locally appropriate manner, and how biodiversity considerations will be embedded in Council decision-making.

2. Definition of biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth, including plants, animals, insects, fungi and microorganisms, as well as the habitats and ecosystems they form. Biodiversity exists everywhere – in gardens, hedgerows, farmland, woodlands, watercourses and settlements.

Biodiversity has intrinsic value and supports ecosystem services that underpin human wellbeing, including clean air and water, food production, pollination, soil health, natural flood management and climate regulation.

3. Local context

Ipstones is a rural parish within the Staffordshire Moorlands, characterised by a mix of agricultural land, hedgerows, grassland, woodland features, watercourses and surrounding upland landscapes. The Council recognises that biodiversity within the parish is influenced by land management practices and wider county and national strategies for nature recovery.

The Council considers that meaningful and lasting biodiversity improvements are best achieved through partnership working with residents, landowners, local voluntary groups, neighbouring councils and principal authorities.

4. Policy aims

- Meet its biodiversity duty and demonstrate that biodiversity is considered in Council functions.
- Integrate biodiversity considerations into decision-making in a proportionate and locally appropriate way.
- Protect, conserve and, where practicable, enhance biodiversity within the parish.
- Encourage partnership working and community-led action to support nature recovery.

5. Objectives

- **Embed biodiversity in decision-making** by considering potential impacts on biodiversity when exercising Council functions, including policy development, land management and responses to consultations.
- **Planning and development:** when commenting on planning applications and local plan consultations, have regard to the protection and enhancement of habitats and landscape features (for example trees, hedgerows and watercourses), and support measures that secure biodiversity enhancement, including biodiversity net gain where applicable.
- **Land and asset management:** where the Council owns or manages land or assets, seek to apply wildlife-friendly practices such as native planting, sympathetic verge and green space management, retaining and enhancing habitats, and minimising the use of herbicides and pesticides where practicable.

- **Procurement and contractors:** where relevant, include proportionate biodiversity and environmental expectations within procurement and contract management (for example timing of works to avoid the bird nesting season, and protecting trees and hedgerows).
- **Partnership working:** work constructively with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Parish Councils Association and local environmental organisations to identify opportunities for nature recovery and shared initiatives.
- **Community engagement:** encourage and support residents, schools and community groups to take positive action for biodiversity, including through information-sharing, local projects and volunteering where appropriate.

6. Delivery and proportionality

The Council recognises that it has limited resources and that actions must be proportionate to its role, legal powers and financial capacity. This policy does not commit the Council to actions beyond those powers or resources.

Where appropriate, the Council may support biodiversity initiatives through advocacy, partnership working, signposting, and/or modest financial support, subject to budget setting and approval processes.

7. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed at least every five years, or earlier if there are significant changes to legislation, guidance or local circumstances.

Progress against this policy will be evidenced through Council decisions, meeting minutes, engagement with partner organisations and (where relevant) updates to local and county strategies.