



Donnington and Muxton Parish Council
Biodiversity Policy Statement

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INTRODUCTION

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 introduced a duty for all public authorities to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity. Section 40 of the Act states: *“Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”*. The duty affects all public authorities and aims to raise the profile and visibility of biodiversity. Conservation of biodiversity requires an all-inclusive approach, integrating it into a wide variety of activities.

Donnington and Muxton Parish Council understands that biodiversity is a crucial component of the quality of life for the communities it serves and is aware of its responsibility to conserve and enhance biodiversity and recognises it as a natural and integral part of policy and decision making.

Raising community awareness of local biodiversity can help support specific initiatives within the parish and the surrounding areas and through Community Engagement provides an opportunity to both deliver biodiversity projects and activities alongside community regeneration or neighbourhood empowerment initiatives.

WHAT IS BIODIVERSITY AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Biological Diversity (Biodiversity) refers to the variety of life on Earth at all its levels, from genes to ecosystems, and can encompass the evolutionary, ecological, and cultural processes that sustain life. Biodiversity includes not only species we consider rare, threatened, or endangered but also every living thing – from humans to organisms we know little about, such as microbes, fungi, and invertebrates.

Biodiversity = Nature.

Biodiversity is important as it boosts ecosystem productivity where each species has an important role to play, for example:

- A larger number of plant species means a greater variety of crops
- Greater species diversity ensures natural sustainability for all life forms
- Healthy ecosystems can better withstand and recover from a variety of disasters.

Biodiversity itself is recognised as an essential, but diminishing, resource and its loss can have considerable consequences for communities and habitats.

MANAGEMENT OF PARISH COUNCIL OWNED LAND

Donnington and Muxton Parish Council owns approximately 16 acres of open space land and allotments. It has planted wildflower borders on some of this land to help provide food for pollinating insects (such as honeybees and butterflies). The land is located:

- Opposite Muxton Primary School, Marshbrook Way, Muxton
- At Brands Meadow Play area and woods, Muxton



- Adjacent to Muxton Primary School, Marshbrook Way, Muxton through to the junction of Winchester Drive, Muxton
- At the southern end of Saltwell's Drive running northwards between Thornton Park Avenue and Broomhurst Way, Muxton

Situated within the parish is Granville Country Park and Nature Reserve, owned by Telford & Wrekin Council which works in partnership with Shropshire Wildlife Trust and the Friends of Granville. The Country Park covers an area of 61.4 hectares (around 150 acres) and is one of the largest and most wildlife rich of Telford's green spaces. It is unique in being the Borough's only Country Park. The importance of the Country Park is recognized through multiple and overlapping designations. The entire Park is designated as a Local Nature Reserve and there is the nationally important Muxton Marsh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) as well as an important Shropshire Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve.



Dingy Skipper Butterfly

Biodiversity and endangered species can be conserved and protected by:

- sites of special scientific interest (SSSI)
- National Parks
- local biodiversity action plans

These forms of conservation and protection are local, national and international. Much of this work depends upon dedicated volunteers. Other examples such as the protection of land as National Parks, depends upon governments. This requires legislation which can take time to pass into law - governments need to use reliable sampling data, often from ongoing monitoring, to do this. It is often challenging for all parties to weigh up whether protection of species and ecosystems is more or less important than other priorities such as healthcare and infrastructure like roads and schools.

Donnington and Muxton Parish Council will continue to work with the Borough Council, Shropshire Wildlife Trust and the Friends of Granville to ensure the protection and sustainability of the species and ecosystems found in the Country Park, SSSI and land that it owns. The Parish Council realises that the importance of the future of our species on Earth depends on maintaining high biodiversity which is important for human wellbeing as it provides food, potential foods, industrial materials and new medicines.

PLANNING INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

There are a number of positive and negative effects that plans for infrastructure and development can have on biodiversity. If biodiversity is recognised at key points within the planning process, then the overall impact should be beneficial. Forward planning is essential to ensure all opportunities are maximised:

- Develop good baseline evidence of current biodiversity.
- Seek biodiversity enhancement in regional and local development plans.
- Identify sites that are really important.

- Include biodiversity targets in monitoring reports for local development plans.

Biodiversity conservation should be given full and proper weight in planning decisions and development control. Planning conditions and obligations are useful tools for protecting and enhancing biodiversity and as such, this Parish Council will work with the Local Planning Authority and potential developers to highlight the importance of protecting the biodiversity within its boundary and surrounding areas.

POLICIES

The principles for considering biodiversity are set out in national planning policy. Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9) sets out the Government's key principles to ensure that the potential impacts of planning decisions on biodiversity and geological conservation are fully considered.

To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

- a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks.
- b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
- d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in

combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.

Telford and Wrekin Council Local Plan Policies relating to biodiversity and Geodiversity are as follows:

- Policy NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity assets will be protected, maintained and enhanced. Nationally and internationally protected sites and species will be afforded the highest level of protection.
- Policy NE2 – The Council expects existing trees, hedgerows and woodland with biodiversity value, visual amenity value and landscape value to be retained, protected and appropriately managed. Aged and veteran trees, ancient woodland and Important Hedgerows will be valued and protected.

Additional policies are:

- Policy NE3 – Existing Public Open Space
- Policy NE4 – Provision of Public Open Space
- Policy NE6 – Green Network
- Policy GCP1 – Granville Country Park and Local Nature Reserve – Development that would adversely affect the Country Park and Local Nature Reserve will not be supported.
- Policy GCP2 – Enhancement of Granville Country Park – Measures that enhance the qualities of the Country Park through effective management and improved accessibility will be encouraged.

EDUCATION ADVICE AND AWARENESS

Education at school and in the community should include biodiversity where possible. Also, school grounds should be enhanced for biodiversity. Community engagement provides an opportunity to both deliver biodiversity projects and activities alongside community regeneration or neighbourhood empowerment initiatives. Raising community awareness of local biodiversity can help support specific initiatives and foster attitudes. Donnington and Muxton Parish Council will look toward working with local schools and investigate suitable locations/places where people can learn informally about biodiversity and communicating information through campaigns or education programmes.

CONCLUSION

Biodiversity is often taken for granted, particularly small habitats in our local area. It is important to remember that action to improve biodiversity can reinforce other Council objectives such as reducing health inequalities, economic development and regeneration.

There are many practical reasons to preserve biodiversity. It saves us money and effort, protects our lives and livelihoods, and ensures we have enough to eat. It's

also worth noting, however, that biodiversity is bigger than any one species, including humans.

By leaving biodiversity intact, we let natural evolutionary processes continue. That's a long-term benefit beyond the scale of human lifetimes, but that doesn't mean it's not important. Evolution lets organisms adapt to environmental change.

Finally, the most basic beauty of biodiversity is the beauty itself. Spending time in nature offers many perks for people, like more creativity, better memory and faster healing.

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 should be seen as an opportunity to integrate biodiversity into the way this Parish Council and other Local Authorities work.