



Biodiversity

Background

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 there is a duty on public authorities in England, including Parish Councils to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of their policy or decision making. This was further strengthened by the Environment Act 2021 so public authorities must now consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. This means a public authority must;

- Consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration.
- Act to deliver policies and achieve objectives.

Biodiversity refers to the variety of life on earth¹. Biodiversity is everywhere: in gardens, fields, hedgerows, mountains rivers and the sea.

The Local Area

Stoke Hammond is a rural village, with several natural areas, including hedges, ditches and farmland. Newton Leys South is a new build estate which has limited natural areas.

Parish Council responsibilities

The Parish Council is responsible for the grass cutting of verges and the green spaces within the village. In the future the Parish Council will take on responsibility for grass cutting in parts of Newton Leys South.

What the Parish Council will do

- Consider the impact on biodiversity in the decisions made through the Parish Council, especially when commenting on planning applications in accordance with policies in the Neighbourhood Plan (currently under development)
- It will reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides used on Parish Council owned land
- Any hedge cutting/tree work to take place outside of the bird nesting season
- The Parish Council will look to purchase and install bird boxes on Parish Council owned trees
- The Parish Council are looking to plant a community orchard in Newton Leys South made up of a variety of fruit trees. Orchards are recognised as a priority habitat for conservation as they provide food and shelter for thousands of animals and plants
- The Parish Council will consider how to manage the orchard, this may include, but is not limited to:
 - Leaving standing and fallen dead wood as a habitat for invertebrates

¹ As defined in 'Biodiversity 2020: a strategy of England's wildlife and ecosystems' by DEFRA

- Leaving leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible as a habitat for invertebrates
- Consider limiting the number of cuts to allow areas of long grass to grow.

Date of Policy: November 2023

¹ As defined in 'Biodiversity 2020: a strategy of England's wildlife and ecosystems' by DEFRA