



West Meon Parish Council

Biodiversity Policy

Adopted: September 2025

1. Introduction

Under the **Environment Act 2021**, public authorities in England – including parish councils – have a duty to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity within their local area.

Government guidance published in May 2023 confirms that parish councils should:

- Consider actions to conserve and enhance biodiversity
- Agree clear policies and objectives
- Act to deliver those objectives
- Review biodiversity policies and actions at least every five years

This policy sets out how **West Meon Parish Council** will meet these responsibilities.

2. What Is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth, including animals, plants and microorganisms. It has **intrinsic value** and is fundamental to healthy ecosystems that support human wellbeing.

Biodiversity underpins essential services such as:

- Food production
- Clean water and air
- Climate regulation
- Pollination of crops
- Flood prevention and soil stability

It also provides cultural, recreational and wellbeing benefits that enrich village life.

3. Policy Aim

This policy aims to **identify, conserve, enhance, create and connect biodiverse habitats across West Meon Parish**, while strengthening wildlife “stepping stones” with neighbouring parishes.

West Meon Parish Council is committed to working with residents, landowners, conservation organisations and neighbouring councils to support biodiversity at both **local and landscape scale**.

4. Policy Objectives

The Parish Council has identified the following objectives:

1. Understand Existing Biodiversity

Build a robust understanding of current species and habitats across:

- Parish council owned or managed land
- Public rights of way
- Private land and gardens (where permission is given)

2. Biodiversity in Planning

Ensure biodiversity, sustainability and environmental impact are considered when reviewing planning applications, seeking biodiversity net gains wherever possible.

3. Manage Council Land for Wildlife

Ensure parish land and managed public rights of way are maintained using best practice to improve biodiversity.

4. Raise Awareness and Encourage Nature-Friendly Practices

Promote biodiversity awareness and practical action within the community, building on the strong work already underway in the parish.

5. Support Targeted Habitat Enhancement

Support residents and groups to enhance areas with high potential for biodiversity improvement, including areas identified in Hampshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

6. Focus on at-Risk Species

Target collective action to support selected at-risk species identified for the Central Chalk Belt area.

5. Action Plan (Summary)

Objective 1 – Understanding Biodiversity (2025–2030)

Actions include:

- Collating existing biodiversity records and survey data
- Undertaking seasonal surveys (e.g. pollinators, birds, mammals)
- Establishing a Parish Council Biodiversity Group
- Identifying information gaps to guide future work

Outcome:

Improved understanding of biodiversity baseline and areas suitable for enhancement.

Objective 2 – Planning Considerations (Ongoing)

Actions include:

- Considering biodiversity impacts in planning responses
- Supporting habitat protection and enhancement through development

Outcome:

Existing habitats protected and improved where possible.

Objective 3 – Land Management (2025–2030)

Actions include:

- Publishing information on parish landholdings
- Exploring volunteer involvement on public rights of way
- Enhancing identified areas of ecological potential
- Using environmentally friendly methods and minimal pesticide use
- Adopting wildlife-friendly mowing and hedge management

Outcome:

Improved habitats, increased insect abundance and stronger wildlife corridors.

Objective 4 – Community Engagement (2025–2030)

Actions include:

- Publicising local wildlife events and good practice
- Consulting residents on biodiversity priorities
- Promoting gardens as wildlife habitats
- Sharing seasonal guidance through parish communications

Outcome:

Increased community involvement and coordinated action for wildlife.

Objective 5 – Habitat Creation and Enhancement (2025–2030)

Actions include:

- Supporting an "Adopt a Plot" volunteer scheme
- Encouraging hedge and tree planting
- Supporting native wildflower planting
- Promoting installation of wildlife features (e.g. bird boxes, ponds, hedgehog highways)

Outcome:

Extended and connected habitats across the parish.

Objective 6 – Supporting At-Risk Species (2025–2030)

Actions include:

- Identifying priority species
- Improving habitat quality and connectivity
- Working with neighbouring parishes and specialist groups

Outcome:

Improved survival and monitoring of at-risk species.

6. Communication

The Parish Council will share information about biodiversity actions and progress through:

- Parish website
- Social media
- Notice boards
- Parish newsletter

7. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be:

- Reviewed annually
- Formally reviewed at least every five years

An annual summary of actions, survey results and progress against baseline data will be presented to the Parish Council and made available to residents.

8. Existing Biodiversity Activity in the Parish (Summary)

West Meon Parish already benefits from significant biodiversity-friendly activity, including:

- Wildlife-supportive farming practices
- Ancient woodland management by conservation organisations
- Management of the West Meon Trail as a wildlife corridor
- Active community conservation groups
- Ecologically sensitive road verge management
- Pollinator surveys and monitoring

- Hedgehog highways and garden wildlife initiatives
- Pond creation and restoration
- Strong partnerships with county and regional conservation bodies

9. Priority Areas and Species

The Parish Council will align actions with:

- **Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy**
- Areas identified as "Areas That Could Become of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (ACBs)"
- Priority species for the Central Chalk Belt area, including selected butterflies, birds, mammals, bats, pollinators and aquatic species

10. Adoption

This policy was adopted by West Meon Parish Council on:

2nd September 2025

Minute reference: **2509-17**