

This document supports and should be read in conjunction with Somerset Council's Local Nature Recovery Strategy [Somerset's Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)

BIODIVERSITY POLICY and ACTION PLAN Adopted May 2026 – Review May 2027

BACKGROUND

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, South Petherton Parish Council (hereinafter referred to as the Council) which has any functions exercisable in relation to England must from time to time consider what action the authority can properly take, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective.

This duty means that town and parish councils can spend funds appropriately in conserving biodiversity if they so wish.

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 goes further. Biodiversity is the building block of our 'ecosystems' that in turn 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 less obvious services such as protection from natural disasters, regulation of our climate, and purification of our water or pollination of our crops. Biodiversity can provide important cultural services, enriching our lives.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Council's area. The Full Council and any committees of the Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required. In particular, the Council will aim to improve the biodiversity of the area in the following ways:

- consider the potential impact on biodiversity represented by planning applications.
- manage its land and property using environmentally friendly practices where financially practical that will promote biodiversity.
- support local businesses and council operations in the adoption of low impact / nature positive practices.
- encourage and support other organisations within the parish to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind.
- support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity where possible.

ACTIONS

The Council will with regard to planning applications:

- when commenting on planning applications, support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats.
- support protection of sensitive habitats from development and will consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife in respect of all applications.
- consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.
- include policies in support of biodiversity within the neighbourhood plan.

The Council will with regard to property and land management:

- consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity with regard to the management of its open spaces. This may include adopting beneficial practices with regarding to cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work, paying attention to the Government's regulations for plant protection products.
- take special care in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, reduces harm the natural environment where possible.
- source sustainable materials when procuring supplies for the Council's use
- consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing its buildings.

The Council will with regard to the local community:

- support public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website and TA13.
- engage with local businesses and residents regarding biodiversity in the community and how members of the community can assist and make a difference.
- where financially feasible and if practical, involve the community in biodiversity projects on its land including for example tree planting, wildflower meadows, birdbox making.

Partners:

The Council will work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the council area.

It will review any local nature recovery strategies, species conservation strategies, or protected site strategies in respect of local Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and consider how it may become involved.

MONITORING

This policy was adopted on 30.03.2026 minute reference 4.5 (g) and will be reviewed in two years or sooner should legislation dictate / each year at the Annual Meeting.

SPPC ACTION PLAN

Site/Objective	Action	Outcome	Target	Reporting
Whole Council area	Raise local awareness of biodiversity.	Gain local support for action	Ongoing	PC website, PC meetings, local organisations and members of public word of mouth

Site/Objective	Action	Outcome	Target	Reporting
Protect and support biodiversity	Encourage where possible suitable planting to support biodiversity.	Connect & diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species	Ongoing	Mapping in future and local awareness
Cemetery and churchyard	Additional planting, maintain and renew any bird boxes as required. Support wildlife and diversity whilst maintaining the site in a way which enables visitors to experience quiet and calm remembrance. Leave leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible as a habitat for invertebrates. Consider bug hotel installation.	Increased diversity of habitats and food sources Increased cover for invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals. Encouraging insects particularly butterflies and bees.	Ongoing.	PC website, residents viewing and reporting, PC meetings
Recreation ground	Sympathetically maintain hedging. Leave some areas less maintained. Only use environment friendly pesticides where absolutely necessary and only in ideal weather conditions.	Food sources and cover Encourages insects. Sustain and enhance natural habitats.	Ongoing	Feedback from SPRUG users, PC meetings and website
Other Open spaces, community green space and common land	Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs. Work with the unitary council on verge management, favouring biodiversity but noting which areas may need cutting for highway safety. Encourage residents to look after areas with landowners relevant permissions	Sustain and enhance natural habitats. Protecting habitats Protecting/enhancing habitats Regular attention.	Ongoing	Feedback from individual organisations such as Mere Lynches Trust, Somerset Council, housing associations etc
The built out and potential built landscape	Ensure that planning consultations are considered against the requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan	Protecting/enhancing habitats. Extending habitats. Encouragement of	Ongoing as new applications come to	Through planning committee, PC meetings and website.

Site/Objective	Action	Outcome	Target	Reporting
	Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries Encourage developers to build in bee bricks, swift boxes etc	behaviours to be copied.	councils attention	
Community awareness	Ask residents for their views on what they would like to see to conserve biodiversity within the parish where feasible and possible and financially viable. Raise awareness of the importance of gardens as habitats for wildlife, with possible actions highlighted in the TA13. Keep updated the section on the parish council website for photographs / information / links Encourage local farmers to contribute. Provide seed / bulbs etc. for residents' use.	Engagement/ownership of biodiversity Promote biodiversity. Extending habitats. Protect nocturnal animals.	Ongoing	PC website, PC meetings and minutes, TA13.
Community projects	Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas. Work in partnership with other organisations to develop young people's awareness of the environment around them. Consider events and offer volunteering opportunities to support biodiversity, working with local organisations.	Extending habitats. Promote biodiversity.	Ongoing	Through the different organisations, the PC website news section, PC meetings and minutes. Library.