



MEDSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

1. Introduction

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (section 40) 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 (section 102) 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.

This duty also means that town and parish councils can spend funds in conserving biodiversity.

2. Definition of Biodiversity

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 also 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 also less obvious services such as protection from natural disasters, regulation of our climate, and purification of our water or pollination of our crops. Biodiversity also provides important cultural services, enriching our lives.

3. Aims and Objectives

The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Medstead area. The 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 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’s activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

4. The Local Area

Medstead is a semi-rural village, with a considerable number of natural areas, including woodland, hedges, ditches, ponds and farmland.

5. Parish Council responsibilities

Medstead Parish Council owns several pieces of land that provide valuable wildlife habitats:

- Village Green (Roe Downs Road / South Town Road)
- Village Pond (Roe Downs Road / South Town Road)
- Village Hall car park (Roe Downs Road)
- Medstead Cemetery (South Town Road)
- Medstead Cemetery Extension (Rear of Cemetery)
- The Knapp (South Town Road)
- Five Ash Pond (Five Ash Road/ South Town Road junction)
- Soldridge Pond (Upper Soldridge Road / Grosvenor Road)
- Wildflower Meadow (The Stables, Trinity Hill)
- The Allotments (Nelson Drive)
- Medstead Churchyard (maintenance only)

Medstead Parish Council has already undertaken considerable actions in recent years to increase and improve natural habitats.

The Village Pond has undergone a restoration, completed in 2025. A semi-permeable membrane has been installed to provide a year-round pond to support a wide range of aquatic life. Marginal plants have been planted round the edge with water lilies in the body of water and a duck house in the centre.

Five Ash Pond and the pond at Soldridge are essentially drainage pits for run-off surface water, but regardless are left as wild areas and to support a wide diversity of life.

The Knapp is around 2.7 acres of mature woodland, providing a habitat for animals, birds, plants, insects and fungi and is particularly attractive in the spring with blue-bells and wild garlic.

The Cemetery contains mature trees, shrubs, wildflowers and grasses and is a home to several species of animal and other wildlife. The cemetery extension is currently left as a roughly-cut meadow until it is brought into use.

The Wildflower Meadow is carefully maintained to perpetuate perennial wildflowers, a particular haven for bees, butterflies and other insects.

The Village Green has very diverse habitats. Whilst most people notice the mowed grassy areas, the surrounding edges are unassuming, but rough-cut habitats supporting a wide range of biodiversity. There are large numbers of mature trees and the wooded areas are left natural with just sufficient intervention to ensure health and safety.

The allotments also support biodiversity, both through the grown crops and green grassed areas between. Despite the primary purpose being for tenants to grow food to eat, they enrich biodiversity through the soil and the variety of plants and the invertebrates they support..

Even the Village Hall carpark supports wildlife, being surrounded by trees and hedges. When the Council extended the car park to provide more parking space, it opted for permeable grid-matting rather than tarmac, and extended the hedging the full length of the car park.

The Village Pond, Village Green, Wildflower Meadow and Cemetery all have a number of benches to allow residents to sit and appreciate the natural environments.

6. Actions

The legislation requires the Council to identify actions that it will take to promote biodiversity, and will revisit these five years after first consideration.

Council Land	
Village Green	<p>Maintain quality of grass through regular professional mowing regime rather than resort to weedkillers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave areas around the edge wild, rough-cut twice a year to keep under control. • Plant new trees when diseased trees need to be removed. • Leave fallen leaves and small fallen wood as natural habitats for insects, other invertebrates and fungi (but removing larger fallen trees or trees that have had to be removed when needed for health and safety to avoid children climbing on wood and getting injured). • Blow fallen leaves off the main greens into the woodland to naturally rot down. • Allow wild flowers and other plants to grow naturally in the wooded areas • Plant more flowers, such as daffodils. • Use natural nematodes rather than pesticides where necessary. • Periodically inspect trees and maintain as necessary to best prolong the life of the tree (balanced with safety precautions). • Be alert to any invasive species and stop ivy from dominating trees when necessary. • Take special care in the specification of future grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work as specified does not harm the natural environment. • Periodically review whether any support is needed for specific species, e.g. bat boxes, owl boxes, log piles, brush piles etc. Research as necessary and action if required.
Cemetery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain quality of grass through regular professional mowing regime rather than resort to weedkillers • Maintain hedges surrounding the cemetery • Periodically inspect trees and maintain as necessary to best prolong the life of the tree (balanced with safety precautions) • Allow the cemetery extension to remain as a natural meadow until needed • Allow blown leaves to mulch in the corner of the cemetery • Be alert to any invasive species and stop ivy from dominating trees when necessary.
The Knapp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodically inspect trees and maintain as necessary to best prolong the life of the tree (balanced with safety precautions) • Allow fallen wood to naturally rot unless blocking footpaths

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stack logs from trees that have had to be removed as habitats for wildlife • Allow new saplings to grow in constant rejuvenation • Be alert to any invasive species
Five Ash Pond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave as a natural habitat apart from possible re-dredging every few years as needed.
Soldridge Pond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave as a natural habitat
Churchyard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain quality of grass through regular professional mowing regime rather than resort to weedkillers
Wildflower Meadow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a cutting regime tailored for a wildflower meadow with an expert contractor, in particular allowing flowers to go to seed and dissipate after flowering before cutting back. • Periodically reseed to maintain a diverse range of flowering plants. • Remove invasive species such as dockleaves that will take over if unchecked
Village Hall Car Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not weedkill the car park extension until it becomes absolutely necessary • Maintain the hedge along side the car park and the trees in the car park.
Village Pond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the marginal plants and lilies and replace as necessary • Manually remove pond weed if it appears and starts to affect other wildlife in the pond. Should blue algae appear treat it in the best way to protect biodiversity, should treatment be necessary • Increase the planting of shrubs and flowering plants in the grounds around the pond.
Local Community	
Resident's land and local businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide advice and links to sources of useful information on the Council's website to help other residents and businesses improve the biodiversity of their own gardens and land
Charitable organisations and other relevant bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider grants and donations to charities that help support biodiversity, when appropriate • Seek grants to help with projects that enrich biodiversity, when appropriate • Seek advice from other organisations, such as CPRE, Hampshire and IoW Wildlife Trust, The Conservation Volunteers, EHDC and HCC and other specialist wildlife organisations as appropriate and be receptive to new ideas in their newsletters etc.
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate Council initiatives that help improve biodiversity through the website and seek any suggestions from residents
Footpaths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support volunteers who clear footpaths (e.g. Alton Ramblers), encouraging sufficient clearance to allow residents to appreciate the rural land in the village, but with minimal impact on biodiversity.
Local organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve local organisations in volunteer work, e.g. planting bulbs, trees.
Planning	
Commenting on Planning applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support protection of sensitive habitats from development and consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife • Consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.
Neighbourhood Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include policies in support of biodiversity within the neighbourhood plan.
Buildings	
Parish Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to run the Parish Office with an environmentally friendly air source heat pump and solar panels and connect the solar panels to the national grid. Act as an example of renewable energy within the community. • Consider the environment when making further decisions about the running and maintenance of the Parish Office
Residents and businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make residents aware of any local or national initiatives for renewable energy via the Council website, such as grants, incentives etc.

Many items on this list read as a continuation of the present rather than new actions because the Council has already been interested in supporting biodiversity for many years now. The Council will continue to consider biodiversity in new decisions.

7. Monitoring

The Council has a duty to review actions by 1st January 2029, but will do so more frequently, and the table will be updated as needed.

8. Version Control

Version	Date adopted	Minute ref.
Biodiversity Policy 2025	First adopted 10 th December 2025	25.190(a)

This policy will be reviewed every two years by F&GP or sooner if there are changes in legislation and re-adopted by Full Council.