GRAPPENHALL AND THELWALL PARISH COUNCIL

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

DEFINITION

Biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth[1]. 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.

BACKGROUND

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places 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 such that public authorities must now consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. This means that as a public authority Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council must:

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

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

The parish of Grappenhall and Thelwall is a semi-rural suburb of Warrington with a considerable number of natural areas and open spaces including parks and sports pitches. These areas include mature trees, hedgerows, ditches, farmland and open countryside, watercourses including the Bridgewater Canal and Manchester Ship Canal, It parish has an extensive network of footpaths including the Trans-Pennine Trail. It also has a considerable area of land designated as Green Belt and three Conservation Areas.

The Parish Council owns the Parish Council Office, the Grappenhall Youth and Community Association buildings, the Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden, Jubilee Park (Euclid Avenue) and Diamond Park (Barley Road). It also employs two Parish Wardens. The Parish Wardens undertake maintenance work and environmental improvements on Parish Council owned land and support Warrington Borough Council with the upkeep of WBC owned areas including footpaths, footways, verges and hedges.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council's area.

[1] Biodiversity 2020: a strategy of England's wildlife and ecosystems (DEFRA)

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 parish 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 of Grappenhall and Thelwall to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind; and
- support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

ACTIONS

Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council will:

- Consider the impact on biodiversity when commenting on planning applications.
- Ensure the emerging neighbourhood plan includes policies in support of biodiversity.
- Consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity with regard to the management of its parks and open spaces. This will include adopting beneficial practices with regarding to the 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 its grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment.
- Source sustainable materials when procuring utilities and supplies for the Council's use.
- Consider biodiversity issues and if necessary, implement changes to the management of its buildings to support biodiversity.
- Raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website and other media platforms.
- Where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects on its land including for example tree, shrub and wildflower planting.
- Work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the parish of Grappenhall and Thelwall.
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MONITORING

This policy was adopted on ***18th January 2024*** (Minute reference ***178.1)*** and will be reviewed in two years or sooner should legislation dictate.