

Baginton Parish Council

Biodiversity Policy

Introduction

1. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 creates a duty for every public authority to conserve biodiversity. The act states that “Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”. The purpose of this document is to set out how Baginton Parish Council will fulfil this duty.

The importance of biodiversity

2. Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth, and includes all species of plants and animals and the natural systems that support them. Conserving biodiversity includes restoring and enhancing species populations and habitats, as well as protecting them. It is vital to our response to climate change and it provides economic and environmental benefits to local communities. The Council must consider the impact on biodiversity, whenever relevant, in its decision making process.

Planning applications

3. In considering planning applications, the Council will take particular account of the impact on biodiversity.

Contracts for work carried out on behalf of the Council

4. In setting out the specifications for any contracts of work to be carried out on its behalf, the Council will ensure that there is no negative impact and, where possible, that there is a positive impact on biodiversity.

Working in partnership with local organisations

5. Wherever possible, the Council will support local organisations in their projects to restore and enhance species populations and habitats, as well as protecting them. Through these partnerships, the Council will contribute to practical measures that will fulfil its duty to conserve biodiversity.
6. As opportunities arise, the Council will work with public, private and voluntary bodies in conserving biodiversity.
7. In all of its deliberations on matters concerned with biodiversity, the Council will take account of the objectives set out within Local Authority and National policies, guidelines and recommendations.

Control of Pests, Health & Safety and Open Spaces

8. Nuisance pests such as rabbits, moles, pigeons and squirrels are a natural part of our environment, but population explosions can present threats to open spaces, Health & Safety and to the biodiversity equilibrium. Baginton Parish Council will periodically take measures to control nuisance pests, but not to eradicate them.

Work on Trees

9. Trees abutting a road will be periodically inspected by Warwickshire County Highways to ensure safety, with the appropriate action taken. Highways will not prune, pollard, reduce or otherwise take action on a healthy tree for cosmetic reasons.
10. Baginton Parish Council follows Warwickshire County Highways policy on the pruning of trees on Parish Council land. We will always act as quickly as possible to resolve any Health and Safety issues, but we will not prune, pollard, reduce or otherwise take action on a healthy tree for cosmetic reasons, or to reduce leaf litter or increase light entering a residential property or to improve reception for television/other radio equipment.
Special licences are required when a tree has a protection order or lies within a Conservation Area, which will further restrict any action the Parish Council may take.

Control of Ivy, Nettles and Brambles

11. Ivy can provide valuable protection and a safe habitat for wildlife, but can be damaging to trees and shrubs if its growth overwhelms them. Similarly, brambles and nettles can provide nectar, berries and a safe habitat, but can overwhelm open spaces and make areas of the village look neglected.
12. The Parish Council will cut back brambles and nettles on Parish Council land if they impinge on seating, gateways, entrances, pavements, roads, play areas, signs, lights or in any way present a hazard to the public or restrict road visibility.
Ivy within trees and hedgerows will be managed where it is safe and economic to do so, in order to prolong the life of the supporting species. Ivy will not be eradicated as it offers advantageous habitats itself, but it will be managed as far as is practicable.

Control of Common Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*)

13. Common ragwort is covered by the Weeds Act 1959 and the Ragwort Control Act 2003. Ragwort is poisonous to cattle and horses, but is a very important food source for over 70 insect species, around 30 of which use ragwort as their only food source. As a result, the Parish Council does not remove ragwort from council land unless it is grazed by horses or cattle or near to grazed land.

District and County Land

14. Country Highways will periodically cut back all growth within the verge to a distance of 1m from the road edge. This is for safety reasons.
If a request is received from a member of the public to address a perceived issue on District or County Land, it will be considered by the Parish Council. Options include rejecting the request, addressing the request ourselves, or referring the request to District / County authorities for a decision. The Parish Council reserves the right to decide on the most appropriate action.

Private Land

15. The Parish Council has no powers to enforce actions on owners of Private Land. However, there is a requirement under the Highway Act 1980 for landowners to ensure vegetation/hedges on their land are controlled so that they do not obstruct the "public highway" (road or footpath) adjacent to their property or restrict road visibility. If a request is received from a member of the public to address a perceived issue on Private Land, it will be considered by the Parish Council. Options include rejecting the request or advising the landowner of the issue. The Parish Council reserves the right to decide on the most appropriate action.