Loughton and Great Holm Parish Council Biodiversity Policy

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, ***Loughton and Great Holm Parish Council*** (hereinafter referred to as 'L&GHPC') 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 also means that town and parish councils can spend funds in conserving biodiversity.

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 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.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Parish area. The Full Council and any committees of L&GHPC will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

L&GHPC 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 activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

ACTIONS

Planning applications

The Council will:

- 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.

Land and property management

The Council will:

- consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity with regard to the management of its open spaces. This will include adopting beneficial practices with regarding to cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work, and 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, does not harm the natural environment.
- source sustainable materials when procuring supplies for the Council's use
- consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing its buildings.

Local community

The Council will:

- raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website and newsletters.
- engage with local businesses and residents regarding biodiversity in the community and how members of the community can assist and make a difference.

PARTNERS

L&GHPC will work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the Parish 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 more involved in implementing the strategies' recommendations.

MONITORING

This policy was originally adopted on ***18TH March 2024*** (Minute reference ***FC52/24***) and will be re-adopted each year alongside all other policies. A summary of how the policy has been implemented will be published in this policy annually.

AUDIT

Summary of enhanced biodiversity projects over past 5 years in the Parish:

- The Parish Council formed an Environment Working group in July 2023 and released a declaration of climate emergency statement.

- 195 Woodland Trust saplings were planted in our Parish in 2023. Denbigh School pupils helped us plant 90 saplings - 30 in March in the Millennium Meadow, in Church Walk and at Great Holm Community Centre and 60 in November at Ride High, the children's charity. The Parish Council also organised the planting of 105 Woodland Trust saplings along Linceslade Grove and Leys Road in November 2023 with 15 volunteers from the MK Veterinary Group helping us with this area. Unfortunately, 100 of these saplings were mown down by mistake by an MKCC contractor. **ACTION:** Next time we undertake such a project, we should make sure the trees are more visible. We continue to ask MKCC to inform us before undertaking the end of season cut.

- The Parks Trust agreed with the Parish Council not to spray around trees in Loughton Valley Park in the Summer of 2023. Thereafter, The Parks Trust invested £8,000 in wildflower seeds for Loughton Valley Park - sown in Autumn 2023 under the established trees.

- Local resident volunteers tidied up and added some plants to the 9 planters outside Loughton School - with bees and butterflies at the heart of their efforts.

- The Parish Council provided funding for native plants for the shrub beds in front of Nurtureville Nursery at the junction Bradwell Road and Ashpole Furlong to increase biodiversity in this area.

- The Parish Council worked with the senior landscaping officer for MKCC to plant 46 mature street trees in the verges of our parish in Autumn 2024. Ideas for locations were provided by residents. In the dry and hot Summer of 2025 local residents committed to watering 32 of these trees.

- Biodiversity trial - In 2023, we set up a local trial to improve biodiversity - the Parish Council worked with Milton Keynes City Council to agree for 3 verges and 2 meadows in Loughton being left uncut during the summer. These areas were then cut in September 2023 and volunteers raked up the risings. In 2024 the Parish

Council and MKCC agreed to extend the trial to include another 2 wide verges on Linceslade Grove near the North Bridge. These areas were also cut in September 2024, and local residents undertook the huge job of raking up the arisings. These uncut areas are vital habitats for insects which will feed the birds, including swifts.

- In Spring 2025 the Parish Council sponsored 30 swift boxes which were installed on residents' houses.

- Volunteers from the Parish moved 10 self-seeded Loughton Heritage Damson trees from a hedge, which was due to be flailed, to new locations in the village where they can hopefully flourish. In Winter 2023/2024 a Parish volunteer group stripped overpowering ivy off black poplars, ancient oaks, crab apple trees, cherry trees in Loughton.

- In April 2024 Loughton School Council sowed wildflower seeds and planted wildflower plugs in the Millennium Meadow behind Bradwell Road with Parish Council support.

- In 2023 was resolved to encourage our partners to adopt the Parish Council policy not to spray pesticides on soft landscaping and to find alternative methods of weed control.

- Allotment Plot Holders are now encouraged to practice sustainable environmental management, including the adoption and use of organic products and materials to support cultivation and not to spray pesticides and herbicides.

- In March 2024, 4 rare native black poplars were donated to us by a Loughton resident. These are now planted in the wide verge along Leys Road. There are also 3 mature native black poplars at this site next to the brook, and we are currently liaising with Milton Keynes City Council to get these formally identified.

- On 12 December 2024 the High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire, and Roger Jefcoate, the late Queen's black poplar specialist, planted two rare black poplars near the stepping stones in Loughton Valley Park with the support of the Parks Trust, MKCC, MK Community trees and the Parish Council.

- In January 2025 we planted two donated oak trees in Leys Road biodiversity trial verge.

- In Spring 2024, following a meeting with Judith Heinemann and Nick Bowles from Butterfly Conservation, the Parks Trust agreed to leave some areas uncut in Loughton Valley Park between Loughton Green and the Stepping Stones to increase biodiversity and butterfly habitat. Unfortunately, these areas were mown in July 2025 whereas they were mown in late Autumn in 2024. The Parish Council will continue to work with the Parks Trust to increase biodiversity in our parish.

- A local resident, has planted, with Parish Council approval, 180 camassia, 200 wild

leek, 10 winter aconites and sown a lot of wild flower seed including yellow rattle in the Leys Road verge and 150 crocuses in Church Walk.

- We have set up two iNaturalist projects to record sightings at Leys Road and Linceslade Grove.

- In Summer 2025 4 noticeboards were erected in Leys Road and Linceslade Grove informing the public about our biodiversity trial areas and raising awareness of our efforts to increase biodiversity in our parish.

LOUGHTON AND GREAT HOLM PARISH ACTION PLAN 2025 - 2026

Site/ Objective	Action	Outcome	Target
Whole Council area to raise biodiversity awareness	Raise local awareness of biodiversity through reporting/publicity measures (Newsletter, social media, website, noticeboards)	Gain local support for action	Ongoing
Protect and support biodiversity	Encourage e planting to support biodiversity. To encourage and reduce other methods of weed control rather than spraying.	Connect and diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species	Ongoing
Wildflower planting in the Millenium Meadow, Loughton	Additional planting. Leave leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible as a habitat for invertebrates.	Increased diversity of habitats and food sources. Encouraging insects particularly butterflies and bees.	Ongoing
Great Holm Community Centre	Sympathetically maintain hedging.	Food sources and cover encourages insects. Sustain and enhance natural habitats.	Ongoing
Loughton Pavilion and Sports Field	To liase with Milton Keynes City Council regarding the hedge maintenance around this site To liase with our Sports Ground Contractor regarding methods of weed control and grass management.	Increased diversity of habitats and food sources. Encouraging insects particularly butterflies and bees.	Ongoing
Common/	Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs.	Sustain and enhance natural habitats.	Ongoing

other open spaces	Work with the City Council on verge management, considering biodiversity but noting which areas may need cutting for health and safety.	Protecting habitats.	
The Built Landscape	Encouraging hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries	Protecting/ enhancing habitats. Extending habitats.	Ongoing
Increase community awareness of biodiversity	Ask residents for their views on what they would like to be done to conserve biodiversity within the parish. Raise awareness of the importance of gardens as habitats for wildlife. Provide seed bombs/bulbs etc. for residents' use. Discourage floodlighting.	Engagement/ ownership of biodiversity. Promote biodiversity. Extending habitats. Protecting nocturnal animals.	Ongoing
Support Community Projects	Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas. Work in partnership with local schools 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. Promote biodiversity.	Ongoing
Reduce pesticide use in the Parish	MKCC is at present drafting its integrated Pest Management Framework and the Parks Trust is committed to reducing its pesticide use. We are working to ensure there is no unnecessary spraying on green landscaping, around trees, and under hedges where visibility lines and grey infrastructure are not compromised.	Promote biodiversity. To reduce the risk of spraying to human health and to support the recovery of nature in our parish.	Ongoing
Greenhill Close and All Saints Allotment sites	Liaise with the allotment management teams to increase biodiversity and wildlife habitats at these sites, and to recommend that no pesticides are used on both these sites.	Extending habitats. Promote biodiversity. Promote biodiversity.	Ongoing