Aust Parish Council

Biodiversity Policy

Date	Version	Minute ref:	Key Changes	Review due:
14/11/2023	1.0	APC2023-11-6.1	First adoption.	
12/11/2024	1.1	APC2024-11-8.2	Inclusion of Woodwell Meadows volunteer group and introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain requirements in planning applications	
11/11/2025	1.2	APC2025-11-8.2	Reviewed, no amendments	
10/11/2026	1.3	APC2026-11/9.1	Amended review period to every two years.	November 2028

Introduction

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 human survival depends upon it[1].

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 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.

Parish councils should be able to show that they are meeting their duty to have regard for conserving biodiversity if they have identified ways to integrate biodiversity when they:

- develop policies and strategies and put them into practice;
- respond to planning applications;
- manage their land, buildings, and resources;
- make decisions about procurement;
- implement economic, environmental, and social programmes.

The Local Area

Aust parish is a rural area, with a variety of habitat types including the internationally important Severn Estuary SAC/SPA[2] and several sites of local or national importance. The biodiversity importance of the area is described in detail in the Aust Parish Biodiversity Action Plan[3] produced by South Glos. Council.

Parish Council assets and resources

Aust Parish Council does not own any land except for the Woodwell Meadows nature reserve in Littleton. Woodwell Meadows is managed by South Glos. Council under a management agreement. The parish council co-ordinates occasional volunteer work parties which carry out practical improvement tasks within the Woodwell Meadows reserve.

The council does not own or operate any buildings, plant, or powered equipment other than the clerk's laptop.

[1] As defined in 'Biodiversity 2020: a strategy of England's wildlife and ecosystems', DEFRA, 2011
[2] Severn Estuary SAC and SPA Factsheet https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5dc1525ded915d1cfe538e44/Severn_Estuary_SAC_and_SPA_Factsheet.pdf
[3] Aust Parish BAP https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/static/a361a9670c0a0c3f6712274703b843ba/Aust-BAP.pdf, South Glos. Council, 2017

Action plan

The council will address the biodiversity and environmental implications of their actions in all decisions taken. The following table sets out specific areas for action, but is not exhaustive.

Work area	Notes & Actions	Timescale
Planning – local applications	• Consider possible biodiversity impacts and benefits when responding to all planning applications, including proposed Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) mitigation measures; • Seek to identify opportunities for any BNG requirements to met within the parish • Use the Aust Parish BAP to identify sites of particularly important habitat which may be affected by applications; • Accord with SGC Green Infrastructure guidance.	Ongoing
Planning – strategic plans	Strategic level plans drawn up by SGC or WECA will be be informed by advice from specialist ecology and landscape officers, but local knowledge is also important: • Consider possible biodiversity impacts or potential benefits on areas or locations which may supplement advice from county/regional staff	Ongoing
Purchasing of assets and consumables	• Take account of biodiversity or environmental impacts in procurement decisions, for example by choosing recycled or energy efficient products where possible; • Prioritise sustainable transport where feasible, for all travel on council business. Cycling, walking or public transport should be considered first.	Ongoing
Woodwell Meadows Local Nature Reserve	Management of the nature reserve is primarily carried out by South Glos Council ecology staff. A management plan is developed by SGC every five years, in consultation with the parish council. The parish council will: • Maintain a 'watching brief' on management activities at Woodwell; • Advise SGC as appropriate, using local knowledge and skills within the PC; • Ensure that a written report on the site is received from SGC at least annually, and assess it for appropriateness; • Continue to support volunteer working groups to carry out practical conservation tasks	Ongoing Annual Ongoing
Local Nature Action Plan	The council has previously resolved not to pursue development of a Local Nature Action Plan (minute ref: APC2021-06-8.1) but may choose to reconsider this decision in the future.	None

Review frequency

This policy and action plan will be reviewed every two years.