

DISS TOWN COUNCIL BIODIVERSITY POLICY

Background

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.
2. This was further strengthened by the Environment Act 2021 so public authorities must now consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England.
3. This means a public authority must;
 - a) Consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
 - b) Agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration.
 - c) Act to deliver policies and achieve objectives.
4. Biodiversity refers to the variety of life on earth. Biodiversity is everywhere: in gardens, fields, hedgerows, mountains, rivers and the sea.

The Local Area

5. Diss is a market town located on the Norfolk side of the Norfolk/Suffolk border, situated on the northern bank of the River Waveney, around a large body of water called The Mere (the second deepest natural lake in England) and then further north leading to open farmland. The village of Roydon is to the West and Scole is to the East.

Diss Town Council responsibilities

6. The Town Council owns and helps to manage several buildings and pieces of land. Assets with potential for enhanced biodiversity include:
 - a) Diss Park
 - b) Banks of the Mere (partially but not the entire bank)
 - c) The DTC Offices Garden and Boardwalk
 - d) Diss Cemetery
 - e) Diss Youth and Community Centre (DYCC)
 - f) Diss Cricket Ground (Rectory Meadow)
 - g) Diss Allotments (Roydon)
 - h) Sports Ground (Roydon)
7. The Council also reflects the policies to enhance and protect green spaces in the Diss and District Neighbourhood Plan (DDNP) adopted in September 2023 when considering planning applications.
8. The Council has appointed an action group of councillors to work with relevant stakeholders to enhance the green corridors (the spaces and routes between habitats and green areas) in and around Diss.

What the Town Council will do

- a) Consider the impact on biodiversity in the decisions made through the Council, especially when commenting on planning applications.
- b) It will reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides used on Town Council owned land where possible
- c) It will review how it manages the land at the Cemetery, Cricket Ground, Boardwalk and Garden. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - i) Leaving standing and fallen dead wood as a habitat for invertebrates
 - ii) Leaving leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible as a habitat for invertebrates
 - iii) Removing invasive and non-invasive species that are detrimental to native flora or fauna as required.
- d) The Council will consider reducing the number of cuts in the Cemetery and allowing the grasses to grow and be scythed/mown/strimmed in September.
- e) The DDNP adopted in September 2023 will be regularly reviewed until 2038 and the working group will ensure that biodiversity is discussed and added to the plan as necessary.
- f) The Town Council plans to plant and maintain wildflower areas at three different sites across the town. The Council will ensure that these new areas are implemented and managed properly to maximise biodiversity.
- g) The Council is looking to improve the water quality of The Mere, which will involve the introduction of native friendly plant species to help clean the water and improve its habitat potential.
- h) Hedge cutting takes place at different times of year, and is very much a balancing act as Council hedges run alongside narrow, well used footpaths so require cutting. All hedges are cut outside of the bird nesting season.
- i) The Council will look to purchase and install bird, bat and bee boxes in Council owned trees and on buildings where appropriate.
- j) The Council is host of and supports the Diss Litterpicking Group. This group helps keep local habitats healthy by removing litter and other harmful waste from these areas.
- k) The Council has improved existing green corridors between Diss and Roydon and is looking to improve further areas across the town.
- l) The Council has also committed to reducing its carbon footprint through its strategic plan and will consider appropriate measures to achieve this.
- m) The Council will consider replacing trees that have to be removed for safety or financial reasons and planting new trees on its sites in suitable locations and where funding allows.
- n) The Council will look to promote biodiversity via its website.
- o) The Council will implement this policy through a planned approach in partnership with stakeholders in the Green Corridor Network Action Group and publicise appropriately.