

# Biodiversity and Environment Statement & Policy



Version 1: Adopted by Ruskington Parish Council on 9 June 2026  
Min ref: 10.2., pages 40,41 -2026  
(This replaces and enhances the Environment Policy Statement)  
For review in 2031, or sooner if legislation dictates.

## Summary

RPC recognises that a climate emergency has been declared at national, regional and within some organisations, local level. This statement explains Ruskington Parish Council's (RPC) legal duties and practical approach to protecting and improving the environment and biodiversity locally. The statement and policy summarise current good practice, sets aims and actions for Council land and services and explains how biodiversity and the environment will be embedded in decision-making and reviewed over time.

## 1. Introduction

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 duty was strengthened by the Environment Act 2021 (in force from 1 January 2023), so public authorities must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England, set appropriate policies and objectives, and take action to deliver them. Government guidance requires all public authorities to complete their first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity by 1 January 2024.

## 2. 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.

## 3. The Local Area

Ruskington is a semi- rural village, with a considerable number of natural areas, including hedges, ditches, farmland, and with the Beck flowing through the village and along its High Street.

## 4. Parish Council responsibilities

- The Parish Council owns the following pieces of land: -
- Horseshoe Hollow off Horseshoe Close
- The allotments on Horseshoe Close
- The cemetery on Sleaford Road
- The playing fields on Parkfield Road
- The playing field and play area on Elmtree Road
- The play area on Beck Close
- The Garden of remembrance on Sleaford Road
- The Community Garden on High Street North

## **The Council is also responsible for maintaining**

- The closed church yard at All Saints' Parish Church in the village centre
- The land off Ruskington Co-op car park which is leased from Lincolnshire Co-op as an extension to the Community Garden
- Some grass verge grass cutting in the village on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council.
- The play areas at Hillside
- The public toilets and their grounds on Church Street

## **5. The Council's Current Biodiversity and Environment Practices**

- Council is a member of Plastic Free Sleaford.
- Employs an Environment Caretaker to offer advice and expertise, suggest, and carry out environmental projects
- Encourages non-councillor membership to its committees to share expertise and information
- Plants flora, native trees, fruit trees, and hedgerows
- Does not permit pesticides on any of the land it owns or manages.
- Naturalisation of the closed church yard in liaison with the Diocese of Lincoln and the Parochial Church Council
- Removes litter from the environment, the Beck and other water courses
- Encourages wildlife
- Encourages walking, cycling and car sharing in its practices, policies and lease agreements
- Uses solar panels on the parish office and changing rooms
- Hires an electric van that runs off the solar panels on the office roof
- Recycles and upcycles wherever possible
- Leaves standing and fallen dead wood as a habitat for invertebrates, where safe to do so
- Leaves leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible as a habitat for invertebrates
- Removes invasive and non-invasive species that are detrimental to native flora or fauna as required
- Maintains a margin of uncut grass around the edges and hedges of the Parkfield playing fields to allow longer grasses to grow.
- Management plan for Horseshoe Hollow
- Has a 30-year environment management plan for Parkfield playing fields

## **6. Aims and Objectives.**

- The object of this policy is to continue to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of all areas owned and managed by RPC.
- RPC will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.
- RPC will progressively build environmental concerns and sustainability into all its policies and practices.

## **7. Actions**

The Parish Council aims to improve the biodiversity of the area in the following ways:

- Manage its land and property using environmentally friendly practices that will promote biodiversity. This will include adopting beneficial practices with regarding to cutting and removal of vegetation, reducing the use of plastic and other materials known to be harmful to the environment, preventing the application of chemicals, and the timing of maintenance work such as grass cutting.
- Take care in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment.

## **8. How Council embeds biodiversity responsibility within its committees, sub committees and working groups.**

### **8.1. Council – Sustainability practices**

- Ensure councillors receive information and training on new environment duties, sustainability, and legislation
- Embed biodiversity and the environment into all its committees, sub-committees and working parties.
- Minimise the consumption of all resources used in its operations, particularly in respect of the buildings and equipment it uses and the administration of its activities.
- Co-ordinate its work and activities in a way that has the least detrimental on the environment.
- Where possible, affordable, and, commensurate with Parish Council powers and duties, support local initiatives aimed at climate change and or, biodiversity protection or enhancement, and
- Involve the local community and local groups and encourage local action in support of the environment.
- Review local environmental indicators, such as water quality and waste recycling
- Enforce regulations designed to protect the environment, as applicable.
- Where possible conserve water from buildings and on allotments and check/protect external taps in winter.
- Encourage users of RPC owned grounds and allotments to enhance biodiversity to encourage wildlife and plant-life where appropriate.
- Prohibit the use of pesticides and herbicides on Council owned facilities and open spaces, (i.e. allotments/cemetery/memorial garden/recreation spaces) apart from in exceptional cases as agreed by Council to ensure health and safety of the amenity.
- Discourage use of pesticides on privately owned spaces in the village.
- Where possible to only plant native trees or fruit trees to provide the best habitat for wildlife that fits naturally into our ecology and landscape, creating a biodiverse, native ecosystem which is more resilient to changing environmental factors.

### **8.2. Finance & Governance - Sustainable procurement**

- Seek, wherever possible, to only use contractors and suppliers who have their own environmental policy, which is continually reviewed, updated and measured against recognised, best practice examples.
- Prioritising local low carbon, or plastic free suppliers and goods.
- Ensure policies and terms of reference embed biodiversity to meet the statutory duty.

### **8.3. Estate Management and Planning - Land Management:**

- Transitioning to pollinator-friendly mowing regimes, preventing pesticide use and installing bird and bat boxes on Council buildings.
- Explore and use alternative ways to prevent vegetation growth in play areas, paths, and the MUGA/4G pitch.
- Prepare, implement, and monitor environmental action plans for its buildings and other assets.
- To encourage all pollinators.

#### **8.3.1. Planning – Biodiversity Net Gain:**

- Scrutinise applications for habitat loss and seek confirmation that developments provide at least 10% biodiversity gain where BNG requirements apply.
- Support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats.

### **8.4. Staffing / HR - Training**

- Ensure the Clerk and staff receive training on new environment duties and legislation.
- Use cleaning fluids, polishes, glues and similar products that are the least environmentally damaging practicable; avoid bleach and solvents where harmful to the environment.

### **8.4. Recreation, sport, leisure & play**

- Install bike racks at all its recreation, play and sporting facilities
- Encourage individuals, groups and teams using the facilities to cycle and car share.
- Encourage users of Council's sports and leisure and recreational facilities to care for the environment of the environment.

### **8.5. Events**

- Promote plastic free events
- Prioritise plastic free businesses, entertainers and stall holders
- Encourage event applications from local businesses, entertainers and stall holders to reduce emissions and the carbon footprint
- Promote the use of recycled crockery and cutlery

## **9. Review**

This policy was adopted on 9 June 2026 and will be reviewed in five years, by the Environment, Estate Management, and Planning Committee, (or relevant committee), or sooner should legislation dictate.

## **10. Key legislation and guidance (England)**

The Council's work on biodiversity is informed by (among other things):

- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, section 40 (as amended by Environment Act 2021, section 102): the strengthened 'biodiversity duty' requiring public authorities to consider actions to conserve and enhance biodiversity, set policies/objectives and take action.
- Defra guidance: Complying with the biodiversity duty (GOV.UK, updated periodically) including the expectation that the first consideration was completed by 1 January 2024 and then reviewed at least every 5 years.

