

Normandy Parish Council

Serving Our Community through working in Partnership

Biodiversity Policy & Action Plan

1. Legislation for Policy

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 so public authorities must now consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. This means a public authority must:

- Consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration.
- Act to deliver policies and achieve objectives.

Town and parish councils, unlike other authorities, are not obliged to publish a report on their actions, but the Government guidance requires all public authorities to complete their first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity by 1 January 2024.

They must agree their policies and objectives as soon as possible after this and must reconsider the selected actions within five years of completing their previous consideration, or more frequently if they choose.

2. Definition of Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth: genes, species and ecosystems. It includes all species of animals and plants, and the natural systems that support them.

Biodiversity matters because it supports the vital benefits humans get from the natural environment. It contributes to the economy, health and well-being, and it enriches our lives.

3. Normandy Parish Council Local Area

Normandy Parish Council is a semi-rural area, largely within the Greenbelt for Guildford. Much of the north of the Parish is heathland owned by the Army. This area is part of the Ash to Brookwood Heath Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) and the Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Special Area of Conservation (SAC). There are a number of Semi-natural Ancient Woodlands scattered through the southern and eastern part of the Parish, and a range of Priority Habitats.

In addition there are at least 3 Traditional Orchards, one on NPC owned land; at least 10 Sites of Nature Conservation Interest including Normandy Common and Pond.

4. Normandy Parish Council Responsibilities

NPC owns Normandy Common and Pond and has a responsibility to manage the land here for biodiversity and people. The Council also leases Manor Fruit Farm and the Allotments from Guildford Borough Council.

5. Aims and Objectives

The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the areas the Council owns and/or manages.

The Parish Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

In addition, the Council will involve and enable the community to connect with nature.

6. Actions

6.1 Planning Applications

In line with the UK Environment Act 2021, and Guildford Borough Councils Climate Change Policy, the Council will consider the impact on biodiversity and sustainability when commenting on planning applications to Guildford Borough Council.

This should include but not be limited to

- biodiversity net gain considerations,
- building features that promote biodiversity such as swift or bee bricks,
- promoting maintenance of existing habitats or creation of new habitats at the site including trees, hedgerows, ponds or meadows,
- promoting sustainable energy features.

6.2 Normandy Conservation Management Sub-Committee

The Council employed Surrey Wildlife Trust to carry out a Management Plan of Normandy Common SNCI in 2013 and again in 2022. To help implement the work of the 5 Year Plan, the Council established the Normandy Conservation Sub-Committee in August 2023 and this Committee works under the Estates and Facilities Committee to run volunteer work parties and biodiversity surveys.

In part, this work builds on the work of the Normandy Pond Trustees (who re-created Normandy Pond in 1987 and managed it until 2023 when the Pond returned to the management of the Council) and the Normandy Traditional Orchard which was established through the work of local volunteers in 201X(3).

The work of the Sub-Committee and Conservation Volunteers also covers Manor Fruit Farm and Normandy Allotments.

The Sub-committee consists of a mix of NPC Councillors and members of the local community, including local wildlife and environment experts. The Sub-Committee

also works closely with Friends of Normandy Wildlife to obtain local knowledge and advice on the maintenance and improvement of habitats and biodiversity.

Actions:

Monthly work parties through the autumn to spring. Initial focus is on removing non-native species, maintaining paths and improving the Pond. Invite volunteers from the local community to join with work parties

Biodiversity surveys in the summer. These will be promoted locally to encourage the community to take part.

Need to consider how to work with others to collate and store data and how to feed it back into future management of Normandy Common and MFF.

Plan to run a BioBlitz in Summer 2025 and if it is successful, this could be run on an annual basis. The data collected could feed back into future management.

6.3 Grounds Maintenance

NPC ensures that biodiversity considerations are taken into account when managing the land maintenance contract for Normandy Common and Manor Fruit Farm.

This has resulted in:-

- leaving a long-grass edge around the football pitch to provide improved wildlife habitat,
- increasing the area of the wet-grass and orchids to the west of the tennis courts
- managing the grassland areas of Normandy Common and the large back field of Manor Fruit Farm as hay-meadows with a single cut each year
- managing the swales on MFF to encourage wildflowers including cowslips and orchids
- reducing pesticide use to only using herbicide to control weed-growth on pavements and car parks at MFF.
- creating paths through the MFF Hay meadow
- checking for Brown-Hairstreak butterfly eggs prior to cutting the Elmgrove Lane Hedge

In doing so, we aim to create a space for both people and wildlife, again utilising the advice of local experts.

Linked policies/Documents

- Pesticide Policy
- Allotment Agreement