

Biodiversity Policy

Sedbergh Parish Council

1. Introduction

Sedbergh Parish Council recognises that Cumbria contains some of England's most valuable landscapes and habitats, including uplands, peatlands, rivers, woodlands, and species-rich grasslands.

In accordance with the biodiversity duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, and strengthened by the Environment Act 2021, the Council will have regard to conserving and enhancing biodiversity in all its functions.

This policy sets out how Sedbergh Parish Council will contribute to nature recovery locally and support Cumbria-wide environmental priorities.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Meet statutory biodiversity duties
- Protect and enhance local habitats and species
- Support Cumbria's contribution to national nature recovery
- Embed biodiversity into council decision-making and land management

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All land owned or managed by the council
- Grounds maintenance and public spaces
- Planning consultations and responses
- Procurement and council-led projects
- Community engagement activities

4. Local Context (Cumbria)

Cumbria is home to internationally and nationally important sites such as:

- Lake District National Park
- Yorkshire Dales National Park
- Solway Firth

Priority habitats locally include:

- Upland peat bogs and blanket bog
- Species-rich hay meadows
- Ancient and semi-natural woodland
- Rivers and freshwater habitats

The council will consider these local priorities in its actions.

5. Objectives

5.1 Protect

- Safeguard existing habitats, including hedgerows, trees, and watercourses
- Protect designated and priority sites where relevant
- Avoid biodiversity loss in council activities

5.2 Enhance

- Create and restore habitats (wildflower meadows, ponds, tree planting)
- Improve habitat connectivity (wildlife corridors)
- Support nature recovery networks across Cumbria

5.3 Manage Sustainably

- Reduce mowing frequency where appropriate
- Minimise or eliminate pesticide and herbicide use
- Use native, locally appropriate plant species

5.4 Support Species

- Protect species listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act
- Enhance habitats for pollinators, birds, and bats
- Incorporate biodiversity features into council land

5.5 Climate & Nature

- Recognise the link between biodiversity and climate resilience
- Support peatland protection and tree planting where appropriate
- Promote natural flood management solutions

5.6 Community Engagement

- Support local volunteering and conservation groups

- Work with schools and residents
- Promote awareness of Cumbria's natural environment

6. Actions

The council will:

- Develop a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)
- Identify areas suitable for reduced mowing or rewilding
- Introduce wildflower planting and pollinator-friendly areas
- Install bird and bat boxes on suitable sites
- Map council land for biodiversity opportunities
- Review grounds maintenance contracts to align with this policy
- Seek funding (e.g. from environmental grant schemes)

7. Planning and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Under the Environment Act 2021, most developments in England must deliver at least 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.

When commenting on planning applications, the council will:

- Support developments that achieve or exceed BNG requirements
- Consider impacts on priority habitats and species
- Encourage green infrastructure and wildlife corridors
- Promote nature-friendly Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

8. Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Cumbria)

The Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), published in November 2025, provides the strategic framework for nature recovery across the county.

Sedbergh Parish Council will align its biodiversity actions with the priorities and opportunity areas identified within the LNRS, including habitat creation, restoration, and improved ecological connectivity.

The council will:

- Use the LNRS to identify local priority habitats and species relevant to the parish
- Support delivery of LNRS objectives through council land management and decision-making
- Contribute, where appropriate, to nature recovery networks across Cumbria
- Consider LNRS priorities when responding to planning applications

9. Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) Workbook

To support implementation, the council will make use of guidance developed by Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC), including the Biodiversity Workbook produced in partnership with the Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

The council will:

- Use the workbook to audit council land and assets
- Identify practical actions to enhance biodiversity
- Record and monitor progress against biodiversity objectives
- Support transparent reporting of biodiversity duty compliance

10. Partnerships

The council will work with:

- Cumbria Wildlife Trust
- Natural England
- Westmorland and Furness Council / Cumberland Council
- Local farmers, landowners, and community groups

11. Monitoring and Reporting

In line with strengthened duties under the Environment Act:

- The council will review biodiversity actions annually
- Progress will be reported publicly where possible
- The policy will be reviewed every 3–5 years

12. Responsibilities

- Full council retains overall responsibility
- A nominated councillor or committee will lead delivery
- Staff and contractors must follow biodiversity requirements

13. Adoption

This Biodiversity Policy was adopted by:

Sedbergh Parish Council

On: 14 May 2026