Adopted 08.09.26

MARY TAVY PARISH COUNCIL

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

September 2026

INTRODUCTION - STATUTORY DUTY

Under the 2021 Environment Act, public authorities (including town and parish councils) operating in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Government guidance published on 17 May 2023 clarifies that, as a public authority, town and parish councils must:

- consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration.
- act to deliver their policies and achieve their objectives.

Town and parish councils, unlike other authorities, are not obliged to publish a report on their actions, but the Government guidance required 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 then reconsider the selected actions within five years of completing their previous consideration, or more frequently if they choose.

To comply with the guidance, town and parish councils could as a minimum:

- have biodiversity as an agenda item for a meeting (if not already, as soon as possible).
- note what action they are already taking to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- agree what further steps they should take to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Such steps may include:

- reviewing what biodiversity or nature recovery plans are already in place from other local authorities, e.g. potential for jointly-supported wildlife corridors.
- making contact with local voluntary groups working on nature conservation.
- carrying out a biodiversity audit of council landholdings and/or the whole council area, potentially involving residents in a "BioBlitz"
- gathering expert advice on possible actions in support of biodiversity, such as from Caring for God's Acre and the Eco Church initiative in respect of churchyards
- drafting an action plan that covers action that the council will take itself as well as support for the actions of other local bodies.

Whatever action is agreed, as a minimum local councils could ensure they address biodiversity concerns when commenting on planning applications.

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

Introduction

Mary Tavy is a small-medium village and civil parish located in West Devon Borough Council in West Devon. A rural village with a number of green spaces including:

- The parish council cemetery
- St Mary's Church
- The Hall & Field Trust Coronation Hall land and allotments
- Roadside verges

The parish council maintains some grass verges and carries out some work on roadside clearing of gullies and drains.

In addition, the parish council own some assets including:
- War memorial
- Bus stop
- Parish cemetery

Background

In accordance with the duty imposed on town and parish councils by Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, updated by Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021, Mary Tavy Parish Council (hereinafter referred to as the Council) which has any functions exercisable in relation to England must from time to time consider what action the authority can properly take, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective.

This duty also means that town and parish councils can spend funds in conserving biodiversity.

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.

Biodiversity is important for its own sake and has its own intrinsic value. A number of studies have shown this value also goes further. Biodiversity is the building block of our 'ecosystems' that in turn provide us with a wide range of goods and services that support our economic and social wellbeing. These include essentials such as food, fresh water and clean air, but also less obvious services such as protection from natural disasters, regulation of our climate, and purification of our water or pollination of our crops. Biodiversity also provides important cultural services, enriching our lives.

Aims and Objectives

The object of this policy is to work towards enhancing and protecting the biodiversity of Mary Tavy. All committees of Mary Tavy Parish Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies.

Mary Tavy Parish Council will aim to improve the biodiversity of the area in the following ways:
- Work to identify short, medium and long term goals to minimise Mary Tavy Parish Councils impact on the environment.
- Work in partnership with Devon County Council and West Devon Borough Council.
- Consider the potential impact on biodiversity represented by planning applications.
- Manage its land and property using environmentally friendly practices that promote biodiversity.
- Support local businesses and council operations in the adoption of low impact practices.
- Support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

Actions completed

Current at the time of writing:

- Raised awareness of hedgehog highways through sharing of information and guidance for residents (minute reference FC.24/74).
- Resolved to prohibit the use of pesticides across all council assets and services (minute reference)
- Supports working in partnership with the Hall & Field Trust Coronation Hall Allotments.
- Contracts a grounds maintenance contractor to carry out maintenance in the parish.
- Composts, shreds and mulches green waste generated through the work of the grounds maintenance contractor and from the parish cemetery.
- Encourages residents and visitors to access the natural environment through sharing local information on our website.
- Previously the council assisted in setting up The Mary Tavy Nature Project and Climate Action group.

Action Plan

Site / Objective	Action/Priority/Outcome	Priority	Progress
Protect and support biodiversity	Raise local awareness of biodiversity. Gain local support for action. Set measurable targets and standards for biodiversity increase, seeking to increase community engagement with habitat creation such as bee banks and ponds. Encourage suitable planting to support biodiversity. Work in partnership with institutions, schools, business and community groups, to raise awareness and encourage wider biodiversity action across Mary Tavy.	High	Meeting Minute reference
Cemetery	Adopt a plan to support wildlife and biodiversity whilst maintaining the site in a way which enables visitors to experience quiet and calm remembrance. Compost green waste. Encourage recycling where possible.	High	Green waste is composted. Signs erected to encourage recycling. (MAY) AM. 25/18 (18)
Planning	As a consultee: The council, when commenting on planning applications, will support the site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats. Ensure that planning consultations are considered against the requirements of the Dartmoor National Park Local Plan.	High	
Land activities	Manage land and activities using environmentally friendly practices that promote biodiversity and enhance habitats. The council will carry out a biodiversity audit of the Cemetery. Encourage residents to use compost waste bins where available, remove litter and pick up dog foul. Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries.	High	

Local Community	Raise awareness of biodiversity initiatives Where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects on its land including for example tree planting, wildflower meadows, installing wildlife boxes.	High	

Printing	Consider using recycled paper Consider options to enable the reduction of printed agendas	Medium	

Grass Cutting	Work with the County Council and West Devon Borough Council on verge management, favouring biodiversity but noting which areas may need cutting for highway safety	Medium	

In England, biodiversity net gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021). This is referred to as biodiversity net gain in Planning Practice Guidance to distinguish it from other or more general biodiversity gains. 2 Producing a parish biodiversity audit supports the Council meeting their biodiversity duty under Section 40 (1) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Local authorities have a key role to play in conserving biodiversity and the Act places the following duty on public authorities – 'Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity'. This applies to all local authorities, including parish and town councils.

Reference list

Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services. (n.d.). Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a78c263ed915d04220651ea/pb13583 biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf [Accessed 11th Nov. 2023].

GOV.UK. (n.d.). Draft biodiversity net gain planning practice guidance. [online] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/draft-biodiversity-net-gain-planning-practice-guidance

Local Nature Action Plans: guidance for town and parish councils 2. (n.d.). Available at: https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/Local-Nature-Action-Plans-guidance-for town-and-parish-councils.pdf [Accessed 19 Dec. 2023].

SLCC (2023). RESPONSE TO THE BIODIVERSITY DUTY. [online] Available at: https://www.slcc.co.uk/site/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Model-biodiversity-policy-30 October-2023-1.pdf [Accessed 19 Dec. 2023].