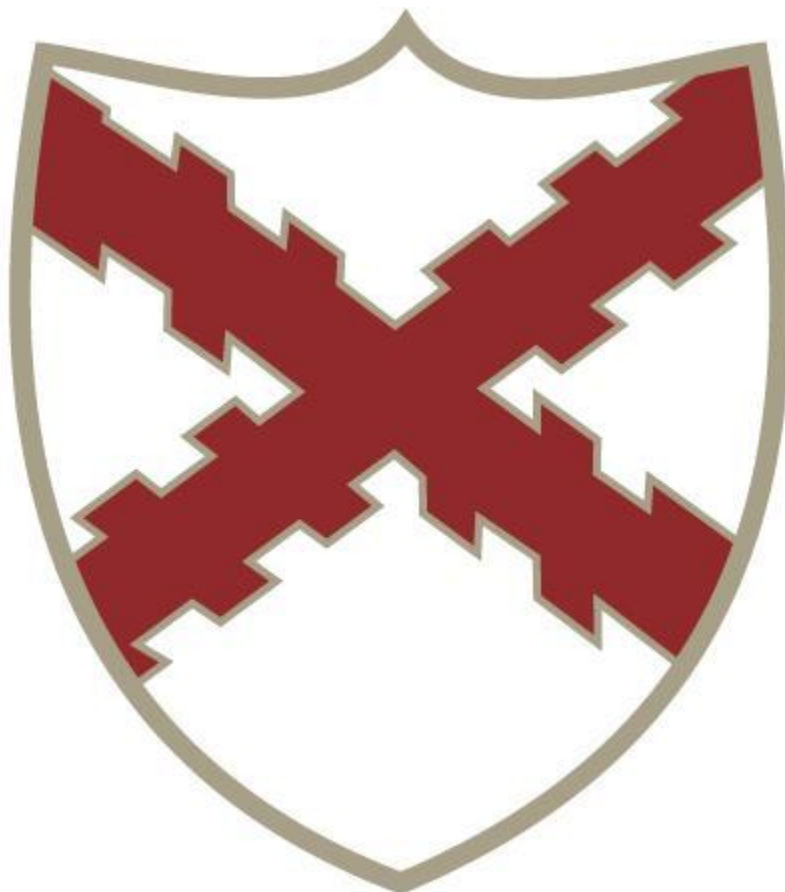


ST. AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL



BIODIVERSITY POLICY

Responsible Officer:	Town Clerk
Date approved:	26 th January 2026
Date of review:	January 2029

Approved: Monday 26th January 2026

1. Policy Statement

St Austell Town Council acknowledges its duty under **Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006**, as strengthened by the **Environment Act 2021**, to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing biodiversity.

The Council recognises that biodiversity underpins ecosystem health, climate resilience, and community wellbeing. Through the responsible management of its **17 parks and open spaces, rural footpaths, and one small woodland**, the Council is committed to taking proportionate, practical, and measurable action to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

2. Purpose of the Policy

This policy sets out how St Austell Town Council will:

- Fulfil its **statutory biodiversity duty**
 - Integrate biodiversity considerations into land management and decision-making
 - Support national and local nature recovery priorities
 - Deliver biodiversity improvements within the scale and resources of the Town Council
-

3. Scope

This policy applies to all land and activities under the control or influence of St Austell Town Council, including:

- Public parks and amenity spaces
 - Informal open spaces
 - Rural footpaths, verges, and rights of way
 - Council-owned woodland
 - Trees, hedgerows, and boundary features
-

4. Legislative and Policy Context

This policy aligns with the following UK legislation and guidance:

- **Environment Act 2021** – Biodiversity duty for public authorities
- **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006**
- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**
- **Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)** (where published)
- **DEFRA Biodiversity Metric principles** (proportionate application)

- **Tree Preservation and wildlife protection legislation** including the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
-

5. Policy Objectives

The Town Council will seek to:

1. **Protect existing habitats and species** on council-managed land
 2. **Enhance biodiversity value** through positive management practices
 3. **Create and restore habitats** where feasible
 4. **Support ecological connectivity** within and beyond council land
 5. **Avoid biodiversity harm** and mitigate unavoidable impacts
 6. **Engage residents and partners** in nature recovery
 7. **Monitor and report** on biodiversity actions and outcomes
-

6. Biodiversity Principles

The Town Council will apply the following principles:

- **Avoid – Minimise – Enhance:** prioritising avoidance of harm before mitigation
 - **Right habitat, right place:** using native and locally appropriate species
 - **Nature-based solutions** where appropriate
 - **Long-term stewardship** of council land
 - **Proportionate and evidence-led action**
-

7. Land Management Commitments

7.1 Parks and Open Spaces

The Town Council will:

- Maintain a **diversity of habitats** including grassland, trees, hedgerows, scrub, and water features
 - Introduce **wildflower areas** or relaxed mowing regimes where suitable
 - Reduce mowing frequency in selected areas to support pollinators
 - Retain **deadwood, leaf litter, and natural features** where public safety allows
 - Avoid the routine use of **pesticides, herbicides, and peat-based products where possible**
 - Protect mature trees and implement **tree replacement and succession planting**
 - Schedule works to avoid the **bird nesting season** (March–August) wherever possible
-

7.2 Rural Footpaths, Verges, and Rights of Way

The Town Council will:

- Manage footpaths to balance **public access and biodiversity protection**
 - Adopt **sensitive verge cutting regimes**, avoiding peak flowering periods
 - Retain hedgerows and boundary features and manage them sympathetically
 - Avoid unnecessary widening, surfacing, or lighting of rural paths subject to supporting measures to improve the safety of pedestrians
 - Work with the highway authority where responsibilities overlap
-

7.3 Woodland Management

The Town Council will:

- Manage the woodland primarily for **biodiversity and natural regeneration**
 - Retain standing and fallen deadwood where safe
 - Promote a **mixed age and species structure**
 - Control invasive non-native species where identified
 - Avoid clear-felling and large-scale disturbance
 - Protect woodland soils, ground flora, and nesting wildlife
-

8. New Projects, Works, and Procurement

When undertaking new works or commissioning contractors, the Town Council will:

- Consider biodiversity impacts at the **earliest planning stage**
 - Seek opportunities to deliver **measurable biodiversity enhancement**
 - Use native and locally appropriate planting schemes
 - Include biodiversity requirements in **tender and contract specifications**
 - Incorporate features such as:
 - Bird and bat boxes
 - Hedgehog access
 - Insect habitats and log piles
 - Sustainable drainage and natural landscaping
-

9. Community Engagement and Partnerships

The Town Council will:

- Encourage **community involvement** in biodiversity initiatives
 - Support volunteer groups, schools, and local conservation organisations
 - Promote biodiversity awareness through signage, events, and publications
 - Encourage responsible use of green spaces
-

10. Monitoring, Reporting, and Review

The Town Council will:

- Maintain a **simple record of biodiversity actions** undertaken annually
- Use habitat maps, photographs, or surveys where proportionate
- Report biodiversity actions to Council meetings or via an annual report
- Review this policy every **3–5 years** or when legislation changes