

# St Austell Town Council



## Biodiversity Policy

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### 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.

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### 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

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### 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
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### 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
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### 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
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### 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**
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### 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
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#### 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
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### 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
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### 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
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### 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
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### 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
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