

CHIGWELL PARISH COUNCIL BIODIVERSITY AND HERBICIDE POLICY

Adopted Date: 28 August 2025

Next Review Due: August 2026

What is Biodiversity

The WWF defines biodiversity as all the different kinds of life in one area. This includes animals, plants, fungi and microorganisms such as bacteria that together form our natural world. Each of these species and organisms works together in ecosystems to maintain balance and support life. Biodiversity supports everything in nature that we need to survive including food, clean water, medicine and shelter.

Biological diversity refers to the variety of life on Earth at all levels from genes to ecosystems. It encompasses the evolutionary, ecological and cultural processes that sustain life. Biodiversity includes not only species we consider rare, threatened or endangered but also every living thing from humans to organisms such as microbes, fungi and invertebrates. Healthy biodiversity ensures a greater variety of species and a resilient ecosystem that can better withstand and recover from disasters.

As human activity puts increasing pressure on the planet through higher resource use, we risk upsetting the balance of ecosystems and losing biodiversity. The Global Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services reported that one million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, the highest number in human history. Restoring nature is critical to reversing the loss of biodiversity. This can be achieved through tree planting, habitat restoration and community-led conservation projects which benefit both people and the natural world.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 introduced a duty for all public authorities to have regard to biodiversity conservation. Section 40 of the Act states that every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. Chigwell Parish Council recognises the importance of protecting biodiversity both locally and globally and is committed to shaping its policies and practices to safeguard the parish's natural environment. The Council will also encourage Epping Forest District Council and Essex County Council to respect and follow this policy when working in Chigwell.

Policy Objectives

Chigwell Parish Council is taking direct action to protect and enhance biodiversity within the parish. This includes habitat restoration to provide essential food sources and shelter for pollinating insects, birds and other wildlife. The Council will promote verge management, habitat creation, reduced maintenance regimes, elimination of herbicides and pesticides and the adoption of new maintenance methods and technologies.

Planting

When planting on parish-owned land the Council will give preference to native trees, shrubs and plants that are suited to the local environment. Drought-resistant species will be prioritised to ensure long-term sustainability and reduce the need for additional watering. Species that require frequent or ongoing watering will not be planted. Planting schemes will aim to provide food and shelter for wildlife throughout the year and will be designed to improve the ecological value of the parish. Where possible, wildflower seeding will be used to enhance biodiversity.

Verges and Mowing Procedure

Many road verges and roundabouts appear to be ordinary strips of grass but are in fact valuable ecological habitats. Even small verges can support more than 20 species of wildflowers and grasses. Managed properly, they become vital spaces for pollinators and other wildlife and help form important ecological corridors. With Britain having lost the majority of its wildflower-rich grasslands, managing our verges and smaller areas of land as mini-meadows is a practical step toward reversing biodiversity loss. This approach also reduces maintenance costs and increases opportunities for residents to connect with nature.

To support biodiversity, verges and other similar areas of land will be managed as follows. Mowing will not take place between April and late August or early September. This allows plants to flower and set seed, supporting bees, butterflies and other pollinators. Taller vegetation also creates shelter and feeding grounds for insects, birds, hedgehogs and small mammals.

An annual cut will take place between late August and early October with all cuttings removed to prevent nutrient build-up which encourages rank growth and reduces wildflower diversity. One third to half of the verge will be left uncut during the annual cut with uncut areas rotated each year to maintain habitat continuity and provide shelter for overwintering species.

Where full summer growth is not practical, for example on Station Green or at the Cemetery, mowing will take place more regularly. If space allows, varied mowing frequencies will be adopted in different sections of the verge to maximise habitat variety, for example the area adjacent to a road such as Courtland Drive, Lee Grove, etc. may be mowed every 4-8 weeks. If diversity is low, the Council may alter these routines and sow native wildflower seed or add plug plants from locally appropriate sources.

The Council will aim to work with local ecological groups to survey selected verges, record species present and review results annually. Residents will be encouraged to observe and photograph wildlife on verges and submit sightings to local recording schemes. Public involvement will be encouraged in cutting and clearing vegetation, promoting understanding of the ecological value of meadow-style verges and participating in surveys and educational events.

To avoid misunderstandings, clear signage will be installed and maps published online to explain the purpose of the reduced mowing regime. Residents will be informed about the benefits through Council and community communication.

Herbicide and Pesticide Use

Chigwell Parish Council has already ceased the use of glyphosate and other non-selective herbicides on parish-owned land. Herbicides and pesticides will not be used for routine control. Only in exceptional circumstances, such as the treatment of dangerous or highly invasive species, may alternative approved treatments be considered and these will be selected to minimise harm to biodiversity.

The Council will continue to encourage Epping Forest District Council, Essex County Council and their contractors to adopt the same approach when carrying out works in Chigwell.

Chigwell Parish Council Approach

The Council acknowledges the loss of biodiversity within the UK and is committed to reversing this trend. It will identify parish-owned land for habitat creation and planting that supports wildlife. It will restore and manage habitats through targeted planting, wildflower seeding and reduced

mowing. It will commit to native and drought resistant tree planting in both urban and rural areas to improve the environment and help counter climate change.

The Council will maintain its ban on glyphosate and other non-selective herbicides.