**KEMPLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

**Biodiversity Position Statement**

Adopted 27 July 2021

**Biodiversity**

*The UN Convention on Biological Diversity defines biodiversity as the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems. In simpler terms, biodiversity refers to the variety of life on Earth.*

Source: UN Convention on Biological Diversity, Article 2. Use of Terms (1992)

**The Challenge**

*"The world is witnessing a colossal decline in global biodiversity. One million animal and plant species are threatened with extinction. Most terrestrial biomes are damaged. Since 1970 there has been a 68 percent decrease in population sizes of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, and fish. This global picture is reflected in the UK, one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. 15 percent of UK species are threatened with extinction. Of the G7 countries, the UK has the lowest level of biodiversity remaining. At a minimum, the UK has failed to meet 14 of the 19 Aichi biodiversity targets, the global nature goals the UK committed to meet by 2020.”*[[1]](#footnote-1).

**Within the UK,** populations of our most important wildlife have plummeted by an average of 60% since 1970[[2]](#footnote-2). Our natural habitats not only support wildlife but they also provide a wide range of ecosystem services such as pollination, pest control, flood defence, and carbon sequestration, services which a healthy ecosystem provides for free and are worth millions to the UK economy[[3]](#footnote-3) The latest Government plans to reverse biodiversity decline in the UK were announced in a speech by the Environment Minister George Eustice (18th May 2021) on restoring nature and building back greener.[[4]](#footnote-4)The government has committed itself to “safeguard our cherished landscapes, restore habitats for wildlife in order to combat biodiversity loss and adapt to climate change, all whilst creating green jobs.”

Within the Parish of Kempley we have not collated the evidence base, from a range of voluntary and statutory bodies, to quantify the scale of biodiversity loss or explored the potential economic costs of loss of ecosystem services. We can record, however, that since the 2nd World war we have lost most of our species rich lowland grasslands, and that we have experienced a decline in traditional cider orchards. A simple check on ordnance survey maps also documents the steady loss of hedgerows, small woodland areas and wetlands alongside Kempley Brook and its tributaries. Other losses taking place are more subtle, affected by changes to management practises in woodlands or on verges where the impact of fertiliser and spray drift on insect and plant species composition is evident.

Despite these changes we still possess a mosaic of semi natural habitats, both on the parish boundaries and within the parish which include nationally recognised Sites of Scientific Interest. On our northern boundary with Herefordshire, we also have an area that is recognised by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust as locally significant for its biodiversity containing woodland, semi natural grasslands, traditional cider orchards and farmland managed by the Countryside Restoration Trust to demonstrate current best practise in meeting the needs of modern farming and wildlife conservation.

**Solutions**

Kempley Parish Council is committed to play its part in reversing biodiversity decline in the Parish in line with Government policies and consistent with the proper exercise of its functions.

The Parish Council will therefore:

* **Collate existing biodiversity data** onto the Parish Online Records and where information is lacking promote further studies to document the state of biodiversity within the Parish;
* **Support Planning & Development Applications** that:
  + incorporate site and building designs that benefit biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing or provision of new habitats; and
  + protect sensitive habitats from development.
* **Conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the land it manages or influences** through the adoption of best practise management techniques for wildlife conservation that are incorporated into agreed management plans consistent with community need.
* **Work in partnership** with neighbouring parishes, local public and private organisations and our local farming community to improve local ecosystem services, and to protect, promote & enhance biodiversity within the Parish;
* **Promote** the development and expansion of wildlife corridors connecting existing high-value nature sites within Kempley and across the bordering parishes of Dymock, Oxenhall and Linton/Gorsley, along the verges, footpath network and water courses.
* **Support Community programmes** designed to enhance biodiversity, including tree planting, wild-flower planting, and the management of road-side verges.
* **Raise public awareness** of biodiversity issues within the parish through its website and newsletters.

The Parish Council will focus its partnership work with local NGO’s such as the Gloucestershire Faming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and with our own local community group Dymock Forest Rural Action (DyFRA).

Two key priorities for the Parish Council during 2021/22 will be:

* the conservation and expansion of habitats for wild daffodils particularly on and close to the Daffodil Way, a nationally recognised medium distance footpath; and
* agreement with the Highways Authority on a management plan for verges within the Parish that adopts current best practice to enhance their biodiversity.

1. Biodiversity in the UK: bloom or bust? – House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee report published 30 June 2021 - <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5802/cmselect/cmenvaud/136/136-report.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. State of Nature 2019, State of Nature Partnership ( A consortium of 70 scientific and public bodies in the UK) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/bulletins/uknaturalcapital/urbanaccounts> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/environment-secretary-speech-at-delamere-forest-on-restoring-nature-and-building-back-greener> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)