**Sidlesham Parish Council**

**Biodiversity Policy**

**Background**

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 there is a duty on public authorities in England, including Parish Councils to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of their policy or decision making. This was further strengthened by the Environment Act 2021 so public authorities must now consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. This means a public authority must:

* Consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
* Agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration.
* Act to deliver policies and achieve objectives.

Biodiversity refers to the variety of life on earth1. Biodiversity is everywhere: in gardens, fields, hedgerows, mountains Rivers and the sea.

**The Local Area**

Sidlesham is a large rural parish of 6.5 square miles lying to the south of Chichester on the eastern side of the Manhood Peninsula in West Sussex.

The parish measures five miles north/south and three miles east/west. The southern border touches the coast west of Selsey; the eastern boundary is in [Pagham Harbour](https://sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/). Sidlesham Common marks the northern extreme and Ferry Pool the south. The whole parish is notable for the wide, very flat, low-lying land. It has a significant coastal fringe, with extensive farmland. It also has several natural areas, including ponds, hedges, ditches, and the Sidlesham Memorial Recreational Ground.

**Parish Council responsibilities**

The Parish Council owns one piece of land at the Memorial Recreational Ground which incorporates a Childrens playground, Orchard, adult outside gym, football playing fields and the Memorial Hall.

The Parish Council is responsible for the grass cutting of the Childrens playground, adult gym, the Orchard and driveway, the playing fields are cut by the Sidlesham Memorial Association. The Parish Council is also responsible for grass cutting the Paddock Straight, Mill Site Quay, Highleigh Pound, Florence Pond, Bird Pond, Beggars Lane and the Anchor Public House Bus Stop.

The Parish Council are responsible for the maintenance of the playground and gym equipment, the Orchard and as landlords the exterior of the Memorial Hall.

The Parish Council is also responsible for the provision and updating of the Sidlesham Neighbourhood Development Plan.

**What the Parish Council will do**

* Consider the impact on biodiversity in the decisions made through the Parish Council, especially when commenting on planning applications.
* It will reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides used on Parish Council owned land.
* It will review how it manages the land it owns within the village, this may include, but is not limited to.
  + Leaving standing and fallen dead wood as a habitat for invertebrates
  + Leaving leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible as a habitat for invertebrates
  + Removing invasive and non-invasive species that are detrimental to native flora or fauna as required.
* The Sidlesham NDP is currently on hold, but the working group will ensure that biodiversity is discussed and added to the plan as necessary.
* As owner of the playing field the Parish Council will
  + Ensure that there is a margin of uncut grass around the hedges and tree line to allow longer grasses to grow.
  + Allow fallen tree branches to remain, if safe, to allow invertebrates to habitat.
  + To preserve the trees and encourage biodiversity around the edges of the playing field to include the Orchard (in partnership with Manhood Peninsular Partnership) either to grow as long grass and flowers, or to be formally managed as a wildflower area.
* It will continue to maintain the Village Ponds in conjunction with the support of the Manhood Wildlife Group to
  + Ensure that there is a margin of uncut grass around the ponds to allow longer grasses to grow.
  + Leaving leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible as a habitat for invertebrates
  + Removing invasive and non-invasive species that are detrimental to native flora or fauna as required.
* Leaving standing and fallen dead wood, if safe to do so, as a habitat for invertebrates.
* The Parish Council will look to promote biodiversity via the Parish Council website.