Bladon Parish Council: Biodiversity Duty Statement

This statement has been prepared by Bladon Parish Council in accordance with the Environment Act 2021, which places a legal duty on parish councils and other public authorities to consider how they can conserve and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions.

1. Introduction

Under the Environment Act 2021, parish councils must consider how they can conserve and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions.

This means a public authority must:

- Consider what it can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity
- Agree on policies and specific objectives based on this consideration
- Act to deliver the policies and achieve the objectives.

This statement sets out how Bladon Parish Council plans to fulfil this duty and how it plans to continue supporting local wildlife and nature recovery.

2. About Bladon Parish

Bladon is a small historic village in West Oxfordshire with just over 400 houses and a population of just under 1,000 people.

The village is located along the A4095 in a semi-rural location. Blenheim Palace and its grounds border the North of the village, and most of the land within Bladon is owned by the Blenheim Estates. The rivers Glyme and Evenlode form part of the boundary of the North and West of the parish.

The parish has many areas which are diverse in ecology, including: -

- Bladon Heath
- Burleigh Wood
- The Lince
- The Evenlode and Glyme Rivers
- Community Path – Which runs between Long Hanborough and Bladon
- St Martin's Churchyard – including the grave of Sir Winston Churchill
- Community Orchard
- Historic hedgerows in fields south of the village

Currently, as of November 2025, a planning application for Botley West Solar Farm is being considered by the Planning Inspector. The outcome of the planning examination is expected to be known in February 2026. If the application is approved, then due to its size, it will affect most of the land to the south of the village and neighbouring parishes.

3. Our Land and Activities

The Parish Council owns/leases and manages the following areas and assets:

- Village Green
- Recreation ground
- Cemetery
- Land beside the Recreation Ground
- Village Pump
- War Memorial

We also comment on local planning applications and support community environmental projects.

4. What We Have Done to Support Biodiversity

Over the past few years, the Parish Council has:

- Created a dedicated wildlife meadow area as part of the recreation ground. This area is mowed only once a year to help promote biodiversity and to allow for a more diverse range of flora to flourish.
- Leased an additional area from Blenheim Estates beside the recreation ground to create another wildlife biodiversity area. This area has had additional planting of native trees and hedging.
- Created a meadow area in the Cemetery. This area is mowed only once a year to help promote biodiversity and to allow for a more diverse range of flora to flourish
- Left some hedges within the Cemetery meadow area uncut to encourage biodiversity.

5. How We Consider Biodiversity in Our Work

The Council ensures biodiversity is considered by:

- Keeping up to date with Local Nature Recovery Strategies and District Council guidance.
- Discussing the potential impact on biodiversity and nature when making decisions.
- Considering the potential impact on biodiversity and nature when commenting on planning applications.
- Including biodiversity improvements in maintenance contracts and management plans for the Parish Council's land and assets. This may include, but is not limited to:
    - Reducing the use of pesticides and herbicides
    - Reducing areas of mowing to allow for margins of longer grasses and flowers to grow.
    - Leaving standing and fallen dead wood as a habitat for invertebrates
    - Leaving leaf litter and dead vegetation in suitable areas to provide a habitat for invertebrates

6. Future Plans

Over the next few years, we aim to:

- Formally lease the land beside the War Memorial (also known as the Primary School Wild Flower Meadow) to ensure that the area continues to be maintained as a wildlife/wild flower area.
- Support a grant application to the Trust for Oxfordshire Environment for improvements to the Primary School Wild Flower Meadow in consultation with the Head. These will include a circle of tree stump seats for outdoor learning, replacement of an overgrown Cyprus hedge around the War Memorial with native berry-bearing hedging, and scrub reduction
- Support biodiversity improvements to and the ongoing maintenance of the meadow area beside the War Memorial
- Review mowing and spraying practices to reduce harm to pollinators, invertebrates and to fauna and flora and to help increase biodiversity
- Supported local school and wildlife group projects.
- Encourage residents to take part in community projects when they occur, such as planting and wildlife surveys.
- Support the improvements and promotion of public rights of way in the area.
- Work with Blenheim Estates to maintain and improve the biodiversity of the Glyme, Evenlode and the Lince.

7. Monitoring and Reporting

The Parish Council will review this statement every five years and report progress through council meetings and the parish website. Notes and photographs of biodiversity actions will be kept as part of council records.

Adopted by Bladon Parish Council 27/11/2025 Next review due: 01/11/2030