

BIODIVERSITY POLICY (Updated October 2026)

CONONLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Background

Biodiversity is short for biological diversity and describes the collective term for the variety and abundance of forms of life found in an area or habitat. This includes animals, plants, fungi and microorganisms like bacteria. Each of these species and organisms work together in ecosystems to maintain, balance and support life. Biodiversity supports everything in nature that we need to survive including, food, oxygen, clean air and clean water.

Biodiversity is important because it contributes to:

- **Healthy environments**, through cleaner air and water, and resilience to climate change.
- **Healthy humans**, through food security, nutrition and positive mental wellbeing.
- **Healthy economies**, through job creation, recreation and tourism.

According to the [Natural History Museum's Biodiversity Intactness Index](#), the **UK ranks 189th out of 240 countries and territories** for how intact its nature and biodiversity remain, with just over [50% of the UK's original nature remaining](#).

[Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's 2024 State of Yorkshire Report](#) outlines a similar position, reporting that nearly 2,000 species may have disappeared from Yorkshire over the last 200 years, with a further 3,000 at risk of extinction. The report states that nearly 1 in 5 species have declined by more than 25% in the last 20-30 years and that biodiversity is diminishing – common species are increasing while rare species are disappearing.

Cononley Parish Council formally adopted a biodiversity policy on 9th January 2024 in response to the strengthened 'biodiversity duty' placed on local authorities introduced by the Environment Act 2021. The policy has been reviewed, updated and adopted on 13th October 2026.

Cononley Parish Council acknowledges the UK's 'nature crisis' and commits to take biodiversity into account in all its decisions and actions and to nurture a 'caring for nature culture' across the parish.

Commitment

Cononley Parish Council will, in line with [North Yorkshire Council's Local Nature Recovery Strategy \(February 2026\)](#):

1. Consider the impact on biodiversity in the decisions it makes in council, committee, sub-committee and task and finish group meetings. It will seek to minimise adverse impacts on biodiversity as a result of the Council's activities and will identify opportunities to increase biodiversity when practicable.
2. Encourage practices and projects beneficial to biodiversity through grants it makes to local groups.
3. Communicate information and raise public awareness of biodiversity as part of its leadership role within the local community through its website, newsletters, social media and notice boards.
4. Work in partnership with residents, farmers, local organisations and community groups to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity, wildlife and wetland habitats, such as Dead Eye Nature Reserve, Footpaths and The Pinfold.

Cononley's nature-based community groups include:
a. Cononley Wildlife Group

- b. Friends of Dead Eye
- c. Cononley Footpath Group
- d. Friends of Cononley Station
- e. Cleaner Greener Cononley

5. When commenting on planning applications, support site and building design that maximises biodiversity enhancement through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats. It will support protection of sensitive habitats from development and will consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife in respect of all applications.
6. Where necessary, seek advice from local experts, farmers and organisations such as Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), Woodland Trust and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.
7. Monitor its internal policies and processes to enhance biodiversity.
8. Actively support [North Yorkshire Council's Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#) and encourage residents to adopt nature-friendly gardening practices.
9. Support, promote and/or undertake community events that protect and enhance nature, including regular litter picks, wildlife talks and promotion of nature-friendly gardening.
10. Support the development of wildlife habitat surveys and biodiversity audits within the parish.
11. Advocate to limit and discourage the use of weedkillers by third parties, such as North Yorkshire Council Highways, as part of its maintenance policy.

As a **landowner**, Cononley Parish Council will consider how land it manages could improve biodiversity. It will:

1. Encourage allotment plot holders to adopt nature-friendly gardening, composting and rainwater harvesting.
2. Proactively remove invasive species as required under appropriate legislation in order to prevent harm to native species.
3. Cease the use of herbicides (such as glyphosate weedkiller), as part of its maintenance role, specifically within the two allotment sites, Village Playing Field and pathways.
4. Properly scale and time grounds maintenance work or vegetation removal such that the impact on biodiversity is minimised, for example, flailing during nesting season (1st March to 31st August) and introducing summer 'no mow' zones (from early May to late September) where appropriate. Maintenance practices that are beneficial to biodiversity will be taken into consideration when contracts are placed.
5. Protect dedicated blue and green spaces to attract and enhance wildlife, such as Dead Eye Pond and The Pinfold.
6. Improve the buildings it manages and land around them to enhance biodiversity, including Cononley Village Playing Field, and allotment sites at Meadow Croft and Meadow Lane.

Cononley Parish Council will not produce a biodiversity report and there is no legislative requirement to do so.

Adopted by Cononley Parish Council on: **9th January 2024**

Date of review: 13th October 2026