

ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIODIVERSITY POLICY & FRAMEWORK (2026 – 2031)

1. Policy statement

The parish of Goring-on-Thames is a landscape of national significance, shaped by the meeting of land, water, and people. The River Thames passes through the chalk hills of the Goring Gap, framed by the Chilterns to the east and the North Wessex Downs to the west. Goring-on-Thames Parish Council ('the Council') recognises its responsibilities as a local public authority with a statutory duty to protect, enhance, and sustain this environment for future generations. The Council reaffirms its duties under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Environment Act 2021, and acknowledges the parish's full inclusion within the Chilterns National Landscape (formerly the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). Parts of the parish are in the Goring and Gatehampton Conservation Areas.

2. Context

This Environmental and Biodiversity Policy & Framework (2026 – 2031) provides a five-year foundation for local action. It complements, but does not override, the Goring Neighbourhood Plan (2018 – 2033) — particularly Objectives 4 ("Protecting the landscape") and 5 ("Maintaining biodiversity") and aligns with the Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan (2025 – 2030), as reviewed and refreshed by the Chilterns Conservation Board. That updated Plan extends and strengthens earlier commitments, emphasising nature recovery, climate adaptation, and inclusive stewardship. Its purpose is not simply compliance but conviction to embed sustainability and biodiversity into every council decision, procurement choice, and community project, ensuring that Goring remains a place where the natural world and village life thrive together.

3. Aims

The Council commits to exercising its statutory environmental responsibilities with care and diligence. The Council aims to:

- Conserve, enhance and connect the habitats and green spaces within Council land and influence positive biodiversity outcomes across the parish through planning responses, partnerships and advocacy.
- Consider biodiversity and sustainability within all decisions, operations, and projects.
- Reduce carbon emissions and waste by promoting circular use of resources.
- Collaborate with residents, landowners, schools, and environmental bodies to share responsibility for and support the parish's landscape.

- Monitor and report progress transparently to encourage continuous learning and improvement.

4. Key Principles

- Local stewardship: Decisions will reflect Goring's distinctive geography — its riverbanks, meadows, and chalk slopes — and the relationship between people and place that defines the Goring Gap.
- Evidence-based action: Actions will draw on recognised best practice, national guidance, and scientific understanding, including the Biodiversity Net Gain framework under the Environment Act 2021.
- Collaboration: The Council will work with local partners, including the Anna Carmichael Trust, the Chilterns Conservation Board (and Mend the Gap), the National Trust, local landowners, and volunteers to help sustain habitats and promote education.
- Proportionality: Environmental considerations will inform every relevant project, scaled appropriately to its size and impact.
- Transparency: The Council will record, in a proportionate way, how biodiversity has been considered in decisions and will publish progress annually.

5. Themes and Objectives

The following aspirations apply to Council land and operations, and the Council will use its influence to encourage the same principles across the wider parish.

5.1. Biodiversity and Natural Habitats

- Manage all Council land to improve ecological value through considering reduced mowing, re wilding, native planting, hedgerow restoration, and tree-succession planning.
- Encourage protection and enhancement of wildlife corridors linking river, meadow, woodland, and garden habitats.
- Support local initiatives in maintaining the parish's wildlife reserves and meadows.
- Encourage residents to adopt pollinator-friendly planting, hedgehog highways, and "No mow May" principles and encourage wildlife such as birds and bees via the use of suitable planting.
- Support the delivery of biodiversity net gain in new developments and advocate for protection of the parish's landscape character and heritage assets.

5.2. Land and Water Management

- Seek to protect the Thames corridor as a living habitat, promoting water quality and flood resilience in partnership with the Environment Agency and riparian landowners.



- Avoid where possible and cost effective artificial fertilisers and pesticides on Council-managed land, favouring organic and regenerative methods.
- Support community action for village and riverbank litter clearance and responsible recreation.
- Support the use of sustainable drainage and natural-flood-management measures in planning proposals, especially where development may affect flood water or flood risk.
- Encourage restoration of hedgerows, verges, and traditional orchards as multifunctional wildlife networks and where appropriate allow areas to grow wild or be managed for pollinators and native species

5.3. Resource Use, Waste and Circular Practices

- Apply circular resource management — reusing materials, composting green waste appropriately and retaining rainwater where possible.
- Maintain and promote composting areas and support community initiatives for repair, reuse, and sharing.
- Prioritise procurement from suppliers demonstrating low-carbon production and responsible environmental practices.
- Reduce single-use plastics and unnecessary packaging in council operations and events.

5.4. Energy, Carbon and the Built Environment

- Improve energy efficiency in Council buildings and explore renewable-energy options for future upgrades.
- Encourage sustainable transport — walking, cycling, and public transport — aligned with the Goring Neighbourhood Plan.
- Support the provision of electric-vehicle charging points and active-travel infrastructure.
- Encourage biodiversity-sensitive lighting to protect nocturnal wildlife and dark skies.
- Respond to planning consultations with clear advocacy for low-carbon design and green infrastructure.

5.5. Community Engagement and Education

- Promote biodiversity and environmental awareness through relevant Parish communications.
- Celebrate local biodiversity events, guided walks, and volunteer days.
- Encourage schools and youth groups to take part in nature recording, tree-planting, and riverbank stewardship.
- Interact with local organisations — including the Anna Carmichael Trust, the Village Hall Trustees, and neighbouring parishes — to share good practice.

- Encourage use of local heritage, such as the Goring Gap and riverside meadows, as a platform for learning about climate adaptation and sustainable living.

6. Implementation and Responsibility

The Clerk, and the Clerk's team, are delegated to act within this framework, ensuring environmental principles are integrated into all relevant operational, procurement, and project decisions to the extent that resources allow.

The Facilities Management team will apply biodiversity-friendly methods in daily work, when cost effective, while contractors engaged by the Council should demonstrate environmental awareness and be made aware of this policy. They will seek to use contractors and suppliers who have their own environment and biodiversity policies. Councillors will review environmental initiatives annually to support informed decision making, and ensure this framework is reflected in budget setting, capital projects, and strategic plans.

7. Monitoring and Review

The Council will:

- Keep records of biodiversity improvements, tree planting, habitat creation, and carbon-reduction initiatives.
- Review progress annually at a Full Council meeting, identifying achievements and setting new priorities as appropriate.
- Report updates via the Council website and Parish communications.
- Update this policy and its delivery framework at least once each Council term — or earlier if legislation, guidance, or the Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan is revised.

8. Conclusion

Through this Environmental and Biodiversity Policy & Framework (2026–2031), the Council commits to conserving and enhancing the natural environment of the parish and to meeting its duties under the Environment Act 2021. This policy replaces the Environmental & Sustainability Policy (2023).

Approved by Goring-on-Thames Parish Council.

Signed: _____

Dated: 8 December 2025

Chair of the Council