

# IRTHINGTON 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 earth<sup>1</sup>. Biodiversity is everywhere: in gardens, fields, hedgerows, mountains Rivers and the sea.

### The Local Area

Irthington Parish Council covers the rural villages of Irthington, Laversdale, Newby East and Newtown with a considerable number of natural areas, including hedges, ditches, farmland, and the River Irthing.

Local groups are active within the parish including Irthington in Bloom, Irthington Primary School and Brampton2zero. The groups have undertaken various projects which the parish council supports.

Irthington in Bloom in conjunction with Cumbria Wildlife Trust used Irthington village as a study area for biodiversity which may result in it being an example or case study for other areas and/or communities.. The area across from the local church, where a noticeboard and seat are located, received a gold award in biodiversity from Cumbria in Bloom in 2023.

### Parish Council responsibilities

The Parish Council owns three pieces of land - Black Gap, Newtown and the village greens at Newtown and Laversdale.

The Parish Council is also responsible for maintaining the grassed areas in Irthington at the notice board opposite St. Kentigern Church and an area known as Stanegate.

### What the Parish Council has done

The area known as Black Gap is already a haven for wildlife and the annual grass cutting is carefully monitored to allow 2m to be left uncut until late August to encourage wildlife

There is a pond and several fruit trees, with a bench for the public to relax and watch the wildlife.

<sup>1</sup> As defined in 'Biodiversity 2020: a strategy of England's wildlife and ecosystems' by DEFRA

The Parish Council made a pledge in July 2023 to the Cumbria Wildlife Trust's Plan Bee Project and agreed to the following:

- Reducing, and where possible, avoiding, the use of pesticides on our land
- Supporting and/or working with our community to create a pollinator friendly environment

#### 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 review how it manages the village greens at Laversdale and Newtown, this may include, but is not limited to:-
  - Ensuring that there is a margin of uncut grass adjacent to the hedge to allow longer grasses to grow
  - Allow fallen tree branches to remain, if safe, to allow invertebrates to inhabit the trees which will be wilded, either to grow as long grass and flowers, or to be formally managed as a wildflower area
- Black Gap, the Parish Council will
  - Continue to preserve the area as a conservation area.
- The Parish Council will look to promote biodiversity via the Parish Council website.

<sup>1</sup> As defined in 'Biodiversity 2020: a strategy of England's wildlife and ecosystems' by DEFRA