

## **BROOK PARISH COUNCIL WILDLIFE POLICY STATEMENT**

### **Introduction**

It is the intention of Brook Parish Council (BPC) to introduce a wildlife policy and this statement has been prepared to set out the parameters within which this policy will evolve.

### **Background**

The village of Brook is located within the North Downs AONB and the Wye National Nature Reserve is located approximately 1 km to the north of the village. Wye National Nature Reserve is home to an abundance of wildlife, including moths, insects and orchids that are important for national and international conservation efforts. It has a circular nature trail and several public footpaths passing through it.

A large Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located to the western side of the village on the former Wye College Estate which is also home to an abundance of wildlife and rare bird species such as Yellowhammers.

In view of the abundance of protected natural areas in the vicinity of the village, the aim of the wildlife policy is to encourage native species on a much smaller scale on land within the ownership of BPC.

### **Extent of Policy**

BPC will only operate a wildlife policy on land within its ownership, which is currently the recreation ground. Although the grass area will need to be regularly mown and maintained as a playing field, it is intended that the perimeter will be used as areas where wildlife can be encouraged. BPC already works with an arboricultural consultant to undertake annual tree surveys within the recreation ground and appropriate tree management is undertaken depending on the advice received.

The green at Stonebridge is owned by Kent County Council (KCC) and the land to the front of Brookbank is owned by Ashford Borough Council (ABC), and the grass on both areas is cut by the village caretaker. Both ABC and KCC contribute towards the running of the caretaker scheme by providing funding for the grass cutting service to these areas and so BPC will not be able to include them within its wildlife policy by allowing re-wilding to occur.

The roadside verges remain the responsibility of KCC as the local highways authority. The main consideration for maintaining these areas is highway safety which will take priority in the ongoing maintenance of these areas particularly alongside the footpath on Spelders Hill.

### **Outline of Policy**

Working with the village caretaker, BPC intend to introduce the following proposals as part of a continuing wildlife policy around the perimeter of the recreation ground:

### Log Piles

Log piles are one of the most effective ways to help local wildlife. Amphibians, reptiles and small mammals can use them as a cool, damp shelter in hot weather and for hibernation during the winter months.

Rotting wood is a rare habitat type that produces nutrients enabling mosses, fungi, lichen and ferns to grow. Log piles are a haven for insects, providing food and shelter for invertebrate species such as woodlice, wood-boring beetles, slugs and worms.

When tree maintenance is undertaken, small logs and old branches can be used to build a stable pile in the shaded areas surrounding the recreation ground. Given the presence of a water course that runs alongside the recreation ground such piles might provide shelter for amphibians.

### Nettle Patches

There is an abundance of nettles growing around the edge of the recreation ground. These nettles provide a food source for the caterpillars of Small Tortoiseshell, Comma, Peacock and Red Admiral butterflies.

If small areas of the nettles are cut back in June, this will encourage peacock and Small Tortoiseshell butterflies to lay their brood of eggs on fresh new nettle foliage. The nettles will be allowed to die back naturally in winter to protect any pupae or any caterpillars that may still be feeding.

### Bug Hotels

Where trees on the recreation ground have died the trunks or remaining stumps can be drilled to encourage a variety of insect species to live, hunt and breed.

### Nectar Rich Plants

Some of the UK's most beautiful invertebrate species feed on nectar and need flowering plants for their survival. Butterflies, bees, hoverflies and other pollinating insects can be encouraged to thrive by growing different types of nectar rich plants around the perimeter of the recreation ground. This is a policy that will evolve in time.

### Nesting Boxes

In order to encourage native nesting birds and bats the provision of nesting boxes in suitable locations will be investigated.

### **Working with Specialists**

In order to create a sustainable wildlife policy, BPC will seek advice as required from specialist organisations such as the Kent Wildlife Trust for example as the policy develops over time.

A workable wildlife policy would also create an opportunity to assist Brook School and other local organisations with wildlife education.

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