

Loose Parish Council Environment Policy 2019 (Draft)

Background from the Loose Neighbourhood Plan (adopted in 2019)

The Loose Neighbourhood Plan sets out our commitment to protect and enhance the distinctive landscape of Loose so that it can be enjoyed by future generations. Loose was one of the first villages in Kent to have a designated Conservation Area comprising of the historic centre of the village. More recently the Conservation Area has been extended to include large areas of the Loose Valley, into the neighbouring parish of Tovil and Boughton Monchelsea and is now known as the Loose Valley Conservation Area.

Across the Loose Valley, the landscape is enhanced by the Loose Stream and the numerous small streams that flow into it from the southern side of the valley. All of the watercourses are wildlife habitats. Hedgerows, orchards, woodland, grassland, scrubland and meadows are all features that contribute to the attractive distinctiveness of Loose. Crucially, they provide important flora and fauna habitats and movement corridors. Mature hedgerows, trees and wetland habitats must be protected and retained. Local provenance wildflowers should be planted and native hedge species and mixed grass verges are to be encouraged.

The Loose Valley and the surrounding areas support a broad diversity in both flora and fauna, including many species regarded as under threat, such as the song thrushes, turtle doves, grey wagtails and spotted flycatchers. In order to ensure that this diversity is maintained and that rare and threatened species can thrive, biodiversity must be given a high priority when planning new developments and determining planning applications. This policy is applicable across the parish, not just in the areas of open countryside or agriculture, but in the built environment as well.

As well as the woods, meadows and fields across the parish, gardens and transport routes (e.g. roads, footpaths, tracks and watercourses) also provide important migratory routes for small mammals as well as nesting and feeding habitats for birds, wrens, buzzards, increasingly red kites and various waterfowl. We own and manage several green spaces which we will continue protect to enhance to rural feel of the area and the natural environment. We closely monitor other green spaces owned by others which fall within the Parish.

For many years now Loose has been noted for its trees and has on several occasions received regional awards and commendations for the way in which trees have been managed and protected in the parish. To demonstrate the importance of continuing this overall landscape management the council has signed the Tree Charter.

Our commitment

We recognise climate change and the climate emergency and will work with Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council to become carbon neutral by 2030. We accept our responsibilities towards maintaining and protecting the environment but need the support of the whole community and other organisations to achieve a lasting change. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 states that “Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.” We understand the importance and value of our local environment and its contribution to our community’s quality of life and encourage local action in support of the environment.

In carrying out our activities, where practical and economical, we will make a positive contribution towards protecting and enhancing the local and global environment by:

- Protect and enhance our green spaces, re-wild areas where possible
- Use native, wildflower, pollinator friendly species for planting schemes
- Protect and manage water quality in streams and ponds
- Conserve and improve air quality by planting more trees
- Protect hedgerows which support many animals and plants
- Encourage the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources
- Encourage the use of materials and systems which improve energy efficiency in developments, council owned buildings and local housing stock
- Promote the importance of walking, cycling and public transport
- Minimise waste and pollution, reduce, re-use and recycle
- Provide information electronically to save paper, where possible
- Discourage all forms of littering, dog fouling and fly tipping

- Avoid single use plastic items and harmful chemicals in the maintenance of our buildings and land

We require contractors and councillors who carry out maintenance on Parish owned land to:

- Minimise the use of harmful pesticides and chemicals (one exception is the management of Japanese Knotweed)
- Undertake their work in a manner that promotes, enhances and benefits wildlife and the environment

When purchasing services and goods, where practical and economical, we will give preference to:

- Local suppliers who are environmentally friendly
- Products which have been manufactured from recycled materials and sustainable sources
- Products which can be disposed of in an environmentally sustainable manner