**CHALLOCK PARISH COUNCIL WILDLIFE POLICY STATEMENT**

**Introduction**

It is the intention of Challock Parish Council (CPC) 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 Challock sits high on the North Downs above Ashford in Kent in a pretty and peaceful rural setting within an area of outstanding natural beauty and the well-kept Lees forms a picturesque centre and helps give us a classic English Village look. The Lees common dates back to doomsday, King's Wood Forest is adjacent to Buck Street and extends for about two square miles between our village, Chilham, and Boughton Lees. It sits at the top of the North Downs and spreads into valleys with ancients’ woodlands of oak, lime, ash, hornbeam, and yew. More recent economic crops include chestnut, fir, and beech trees. King's Wood is home to many wildlife including fallow deer, dormice, bats, and nightjars, reptiles, and amphibians.

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 CPC.

**Extent of Policy**

CPC will only operate a wildlife policy on land within its ownership, which is currently the Lees common. Although the grass area will need to be regularly mown and maintained, it is intended those smaller areas 2,3 & 5 perimeter where wildlife can be encouraged. CPC will liaise with Commercial Services to monitor the grass length to ensure it is not cut too short. CPC already works with an arboriculture consultant to undertake tree surveys within the Lees common and appropriate tree management is undertaken depending on the advice received. During 2020 CPC arranged for the groundsman to plant 30 tree saplings on the Lees common and in the wooded area. CPC intention is to replace any fallen tree on the Lees common and to work with local farmers & KCC Public Rights of Way to ensure wildlife is not diminished throughout the village. Hedges provide benefits for us and the wildlife. They have the natural ability to capture pollution, reduce noise, mitigate flooding, and provide food and shelter to wildlife. CPC will be mindful of future housing developments and request when commenting on planning applications that hedges are reinstated upon completion of building works. Majority of housing developments in the village have put in proposals for arboriculture & hedging as part of the planning application process. Many hedges in nearby farmland have diminished over the years to make way for more commercial farming.

The recreation field at Blind Lane is leased to the Cricket Club, CPC is responsible for the top area adjacent to the Cricket Pavilion and the land adjacent to Halfway Pub is owned by Highways, Kent County Council (KCC), the grass on this area is cut by the village groundsman. Shrubs and tree saplings have been planted in recent years at the back of the strip of grass.

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.

**Outline of Policy**

Working with the village groundsman and Commercial Services Contractor, CPC intend to introduce the following proposals as part of a continuing wildlife policy around the perimeter of the common ground Haverbrack area and the Lees Woodland Walk at the top of the Lees Beech Court Gardens:

**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 Lees Woodland Walk , Lees common.

There is an abundance of nettles growing around the edge of the cricket 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 in the wooded area of the Lees common 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 in areas 2,3 & 5. This is a policy that will evolve in time.

Areas 2 & 3 will be managed by the Parish Council with the further planting of woodland wildflower plugs during 2022. The groundsman to remove evasive plants such as ragwort as soon as it appears. The Parish Council to work with Eco Primary School Group on area 5 with enhancing the wildflower border with Sunflower plants and the groundsman to plant shrubs i.e., buddleia at the back of area 5.

**Focal areas.**

During 2022 CPC will be investigating to have built by local craftsman wooden planters to be placed around the village focal areas i.e., Challock sign, strip of grass opposite Halfway, Bus stop at the Halfway, Challock Church, Methodist Chapel, Challock Primary School, Memorial Hall & Cricket ground. It is hoped that community groups/businesses will adopt the planters to maintain the flowers/plants. Initial funding by CPC via funding avenue Together for our Planet lottery. This will further enhance creating a village in bloom attracting invertebrate species that feed on nectar.

**Nesting Boxes**

In order to encourage native nesting birds and bats the provision of nesting boxes in suitable

locations will be investigated.

**The Queens Platinum Jubilee**

Ashford Borough Council’s proposed plant a tree for every resident of Ashford Borough. CPC will investigate the further planting of trees in addition to CPC plan to plant a tree to commemorate the Queens Jubilee at Haverbrack end of the Lees.

**Working with Specialists**

In order to create a sustainable wildlife policy, CPC will seek advice as required from specialist

organisations such as the Kent Wildlife Trust for example as the policy develops over time and work with the Garden Society and other community groups who wish to get involved. Consultation with Woodland Trust for areas of the Lees and in particular the wooded area, Beech Court Gardens.

A workable wildlife policy would also create an opportunity to assist Challock Primary School and other local

organisations with wildlife education.

**CHALLOCK PARISH COUNCIL JUNE 2022**.