

SMARDEN PARISH COUNCIL ENVIRONMENT POLICY

“Lets reduce our impact on the environment - one day & initiative at a time”

It is the Parish Council's aim to initiate a Policy in regard to our environment for the future. This Policy will outline our aims to protect the environment in which we live and the diversity of wildlife within the Parish.

“No Mow May”

- You may have heard of the no mow May initiative, which aims to not mow grassed areas during the month of May. The Council already has an area of Cornes Meadow which we do not mow at all and we are planning a new area of the Minnis & Cornes Meadow for the “No Mow May” initiative where we will not mow during that month, but going forward we plan to continue this all through the year to promote diversity of wildlife.
- If any resident feels that they could contribute, even in a small way, to this initiative, by leaving a small area of grass (if you do not feel you could leave all your grassed area for the month unmown) during the month of May this would greatly contribute to the encouragement of wildlife.

“Hedge Cutting Policy”

- The Parish Council makes two cuts a year on Parish Council land to the hedgerows. The first at the end of August (at the end of nesting season) and another in October. Prior to the main cut in August, only the road frontage of the hedges needs to be cut (by non-mechanical means only) to ensure free movement past said hedge. We would encourage all Parishioners to avoid any disturbance of bird nests and their eggs, by also using non mechanical means to maintain your hedges during this period.
- We would also, take this opportunity to remind any Parishioner that has a hedge fronting a highway of your responsibility to safety to make sure these are appropriately maintained throughout the year.

“Dark Skies”

- Following on from “No mow May” and Hedge Cutting, in 2014 Ashford Borough Council adopted a dark skies policy, although Smarden has been maintaining a dark sky policy for some time, we have been identified as having “an intrinsically dark sky” in the Parish and this is to protect the sanctity of the night environment.
- As we know artificial light at night (ALAN) is harmful to both our health and to wildlife. This policy is important in many ways, as obtrusive external lighting is both ecologically and physiological detrimental. Therefore by having good lighting practice we will benefit from better health to less money & energy waste. It is also vital for nesting birds, bats and the fauna & flora in our Parish. It aims to protect their habitats and encourage more diversity of wildlife. Smarden Parish Council would therefore encourage all Parishioners to consider external lighting and its impact on wildlife and neighbours.
- We hope to have our dark sky adopted into the new Local Plan to 2041. This will allow greater control on all external lighting of any new development in the Parish, although the 2014 Policy is being used to limit the impact of lighting today.
- We aim to include appropriate lighting design in the new design statement for the village going forward, but would encourage everyone to consider the existing level of lighting you may have to ensure it is appropriate.
- The WKPS (Weald of Kent Protection Society- <https://wkps.org.uk>) wrote an article in the July 2024 Watch on the Weald newsletter entitled “Dark Skies” & the CPRE (Campaign for Rural England - www.cprekent.org.uk and search “our stolen night skies”) have maps and information regarding light pollution. Their message is: downlighting only, install at low level, use warm light if you can at low wattage, use PIR sensors (burglars hate these, but love static lighting) ensure your lighting is NOT on during daylight hours and that it does not remain on ALL night.
- Think before you light: Is it necessary (we only need to light our way into and out of our homes on dark nights), What effect could it have on others (including neighbours and wildlife) & has it the potential to cause a nuisance?

