

Notes from Churchyard Biodiversity and Heritage Project meeting on 27th January 2026

Attendees Frances Hall (Community Engagement Officer for the Churchyard Biodiversity and Heritage Project), Sophie Smith (Biodiversity and Natural Heritage Officer), Alison Wilkes (Project Manager), Nick Miles, Jeff Robinson, Chris Twine and Sue Foster

Frances introduced the project

The project aims to enhance churchyards for wildlife and to highlight and protect their heritage, by working with church congregations and communities and local communities beyond the church too.

Phase1 (next 12 months)– Survey and Testing Phase

Over the next 12 months, the team will be working with 10 churches and their local communities across the diocese, gathering ideas, organising wildlife surveys, working with schools and running community events. The churches in phase 1 include Astley, Ox Hill, Old Milverton, Salford Prior, Southam, Keresley, Shipston on Stour, Rugby. (I missed 1!) Together they will create a plan to maintain and enhance the churchyards for nature, balancing the needs of local users, site heritage and wildlife to create a bespoke approach for each site.

As their work progresses, they plan to meet with and consult the wider church community to plan biodiversity actions, community events and other activities to successfully deliver this phase of the project - hopefully helping us secure funding for the Delivery Phase.

Practical work will begin in the delivery phase.

The 10 churches in the first phase include Astley,

Questions asked of us.

Are we part of eco church? We don't yet have the bronze award but we have done some work towards it.

Do we work with other churches? We used to be part of a 'Churches Together' Group, along with the Society of Fiends, St. Annes RC church, Hartshill Methodist church and Hartshill United Reform Church but the last 2 have now closed and so it doesn't really exist any more.

Have we done any surveys such as big garden bird watch? No

Would we be interested in having swifts in the tower? We will ask the PCC.

How do we maintain the churchyard? We pay a contractor to mow the lawns etc. We also have a twice yearly garden blitz with half a dozen volunteers from the church. Contractor Steve is also developing the raised area next to the church as a wildflower area.

When do the lawns get mown? Every 2 to 3 weeks from spring to autumn.

Do we experience any anti social behaviour? Some in the past

It was suggested we could use Green Hay to grow wild flowers.

Green Hay

Green hay is made up of wildflowers and grasses that are harvested just as they are shedding seed. It's cut and collected from the donor site before it dries. Once spread on the recipient site the seed drops out of the hay and germinates.

<https://defrafarming.blog.gov.uk/harvest-seeds-or-take-green-hay-to-restore-other-grassland-sites/>

It was also suggested that we could make a rain garden to water the sycamore and/or other plants with water harvested by the water butts.

Rain Garden

See <https://raingardens.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/UKRainGarden-Guide.pdf>

We are to send a copy of our community survey to the Churchyard Biodiversity and Heritage Project team.

Next steps

The Churchyard Biodiversity and Heritage Project will draft a proposal by about June.