

Churchyard Biodiversity – a new Diocese-wide initiative

Introduction

Much natural biodiversity has disappeared from urban areas and the wider countryside. However, our churchyards and church grounds are places where wildlife can flourish and where local people can find peace and relaxation. Some churchyards are already wildlife havens. Some already function as local green spaces or village greens and some host organic food growing.

Churchyard biodiversity

Churchyard habitats can include unusual or veteran trees (especially yews), hedges, ponds, ditches and ivy-clad walls; three quarters of Britain's ancient yews are found in churchyards. The stone used in boundary walls, gravestones and in the church building itself provides habitat for mosses, ferns and drought-tolerant plants; 20 UK species that rely on church walls are now rare in the wild. Increasing and protecting biodiversity can help sequester and store carbon, contributing to the Church of England's aim to be carbon neutral by 2030. Churchyards located close to schools can also be developed as outdoor classrooms.

A new project

The Diocese will be working with Caring for God's Acre - <https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/> - and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust - <https://www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/> - on a 5-year strategic biodiversity project that can be presented to regional and national funders. The project aims to offer parishes the chance to work with experts to transform, further improve and explain the biodiversity of your churchyards and grounds, at no financial cost. The project aims to set an example, engage local people and invite public engagement and community access.

How will it work?

The project will work with you to make available and fund whatever you need and fill any gaps, at no cost to each parish. The purpose of the development stage is to agree churchyard management plans with each parish and identify the resources needed to deliver them over the next few years. Solutions will be tailored to the needs of each parish. You articulate your needs and together we'll agree how to meet them. The project will provide the funds. If equipment and manpower is what you need, this will be provided by the project.

Please return the survey no later than Tuesday 7th May 2024 using this link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CoventryDioceseChurchyard>

Many thanks.

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