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Date: 26th March 2004

Dear Church Contact

Churchyard Biodiversity Project

Last summer, all Diocese of Coventry parishes were invited to express an interest in being part of a Diocese-wide Churchyard Biodiversity and Heritage project, to be funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). Over 80 parishes kindly returned an initial survey.

Thanks to your responses, the NLHF has invited the Diocese to submit an application for a Development Grant to prepare investment and activity plans with you. In fact, NLHF liked the idea so much they suggested extending the term and applying for more than we asked for. The Development Grant application must be submitted by August 2024.

To meet Development Grant requirements, we now need more information. To confirm your participation, **please use this link to complete a more detailed survey no later than Tuesday 7th May 2024.**

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

If your parish didn't express an interest by returning the previous survey, you can do so now by returning this one.

Below you will find:

- Instructions on completing the survey.
- A summary of the project aims.
- A summary of the results of the Expression of Interest survey.

You are asked to complete the survey online. However, to allow time to collect information, discuss your answers and coordinate a single parish response, a Word copy of the questions is attached. Completing it online enables it to be automatically analysed. A reminder will be issued.

Your participation is very much appreciated. I'm sure you look forward with us to a successful outcome.

Kind regards

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How to complete the survey

To help you prepare the online submission, the survey questions are copied below.

The questions are designed so the Development Grant application can be answered comprehensively and build a picture of the project's likely impact. Completing it thoroughly will maximise the likelihood of securing the grant.

The survey should take around 16 minutes to complete, but cannot be saved and returned to later and must be completed in one session. Some questions may require preparation or discussion, so you are advised to prepare your answers before opening the link and completing the survey. Copies of the questions are attached.

Project summary

Aims:

- a. Equip participating Coventry and Warwickshire parishes and communities to maximise churchyards' potential for biodiversity, heritage, well-being and food security.
- b. Engage local people in managing churchyards and church buildings.
- c. Broaden access for less able groups and people from all economic and social backgrounds.

The project will work with church members and local people to achieve some or all of the following:

- a. Preparing and implementing churchyard management plans.
- b. Delivering nature and heritage activities, including workshops and demonstrations.
- c. Engaging people from all backgrounds and abilities.
- d. Using all media to explain natural and human heritage.
- e. Communication: awareness-raising among church members, local people and visitors.
- f. An interactive map about what each parish is doing, with links to UK resources.
- g. Exploring the potential for food growing.
- h. Volunteer training, equipping existing groups and forming new groups.
- i. Conducting research and transferring knowledge.

The Diocese will oversee programme management. Warwickshire Wildlife Trust will lead on the preparation of management plans and supervise practical activities. Caring for God's Acre will deliver training and lead research. A Diocese-wide project board will oversee direction, progress, outcomes and reporting.

What are you committing to?

Completing the survey and committing to the project does not prevent you from withdrawing later if circumstances change. To maintain your interest, however, you are advised to complete the survey.

The project is designed to be cost-neutral for every parish - all costs will be met by the project. If funding is approved, it would be advisable for each parish to form a small project team.

Summary of the Expression Interest survey

In summer 2023, all parishes in the Diocese of Coventry were invited to complete an online survey. 84 responses were received, representing 80 parishes. Your responses were crucial in the National Lottery Heritage Fund's enthusiastic response to the project proposal and their invitation to apply for a Development Grant. If you missed the first survey, and your parish would like to participate, you can return the Stage 2 survey without completing the Expression of Interest survey.

Here are the headline results:

- a. When asked if you would like the opportunity to transform, or further improve, your churchyard at no financial cost, 100% of you said 'yes' or 'maybe'.
- b. 35% said you have already have a Bronze, Silver or Gold Eco-church award.
- c. 67% of you said you already have an existing group who could take responsibility for this project. Another 35% answered 'maybe'.
- d. Nearly 70% of you said that church members or local people would be interested in helping design and manage your churchyard.
- e. 70% of you said there would definitely be interest from the church or community in free demonstrations and biodiversity training. The remaining 30% said 'maybe'.
- f. You were more cautious about whether you thought more people would make use of your churchyard: 49% said 'yes', 42% said 'maybe'.

What happens next?

The full application for the five-year plan will be prepared after detailed plans have been submitted to the NLHF at the Development Grant stage in August. If invited to progress, the full application is likely to be submitted in early 2025. We will then have five years to deliver the plans together, with professional support from our partners Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and Caring for God's Acre. Project start dates may need to be staggered, with some parishes starting in 2025 and some in 2026.