



## DO WE NEED A CHURCHYARD MANAGEMENT PLAN?

### Proposal

To create a simple 3-year management plan which can be initiated without too much investment in terms of money and volunteer hours. These four elements are likely to form the core of the plan:

1. Revise the grass cutting regime to boost biodiversity & support wildlife
2. Designate 'Biodiversity Booster' zones within the churchyard and link them with green corridors
3. Promote the churchyard as an area of tranquillity and peace for the wider community
4. Consider additional measures to encourage visitors to respect the churchyard and recognise it as a carefully managed area within the Warblington Conservation Area

### Funding

- A sponsorship campaign to fund the purchase of nest boxes, bug hotels and hedgehog homes should cover the costs of these items
- Funding for additional seating with associated sensory planting might be something the Trinity Trust would consider part-funding
- There may be funding pots within the Church of England for churches wishing to put interpretation boards up to help with these costs

## **1. A REVISED GRASS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

### **The Current Arrangement**

Norse SE is contracted to mow the grass on behalf of Havant Borough Council. This is undertaken by the cemeteries team and they do a great job of ensuring the grass looks neat throughout the year and especially when the Parish is holding special events. They do not collect grass cuttings – these are raked up by volunteers on an ad-hoc basis.

### **In the Future**

- We would like to work with Norse SE to create a rotational mowing pattern which boosts biodiversity.
- To those visiting the church for services throughout the year there would be little difference, except that the area of grass between the church and the western boundary might be mown more frequently throughout the growing season.
- The biggest change would be to allow most of the NE quadrant to rewild and to only mow that area once every three years. Other areas would be mown less frequently than with the current arrangement.
- The grass strip either side of paths would be close mown throughout the growing season for appearance and access.

Supporting Documents:

Map of churchyard to show proposed grass cutting scheme (a)

## **2. CREATING BIODIVERSITY BOOSTER ZONES**

### **The Current Arrangement**

The churchyard supports an abundance of wildlife of all kinds, simply by being there, undisturbed, within a Conservation Area. The tombstones support lichens of all sorts; there are over 60 trees within its boundaries; the soil is undisturbed by digging or pesticides. Norse SE keep an eye on the health of the tree population. However, there is no strategy for managing/supporting the flora and fauna within the churchyard boundaries other than to react to problems as they occur.

### **In the Future**

- Three key areas in the churchyard have been identified where initiatives to support local wildlife could be focussed. These are linked by existing green corridors.
- Two of these zones are areas that intersect with human activity in the churchyard and the third would be a more remote zone which would for the most part be undisturbed by human activity.
- Each of these zones could contain bug hotels, log piles, nesting boxes etc. They could also have areas planted both for pollinators and for the enjoyment of visitors walking through the churchyard and/or sitting in the churchyard during the summer months.
- In time the green corridors could be populated with nesting boxes, hedgehog homes and suitable hedge planting to make them more effective.

Supporting Documents:

Map to show suggested possible biodiversity booster zones with green corridors (b)

## **3. PROMOTE THE CHURCHYARD AS A PLACE OF TRANQUILITY AND CALM**

### **Current Arrangement**

There are five benches in the North-west quadrant of the churchyard. There is a Watch-Hut in the same quadrant which has been sensitively renovated to provide a small kitchen. This is used throughout the year to provide refreshments for outdoor gatherings. The churchyard has around 600 stone monuments which are of interest to the many walkers/visitors to the church. There is a significant walking route which runs through the churchyard and of course the church building itself is of interest to a wide variety of visitors.

### **In the Future**

- The two small areas of planting which have been identified could encourage the Parish to create a community churchyard gardening group, offering companionship in the fresh air for people in the wider community as well as members of both congregations.
- Providing additional seating on the southern side of the churchyard would encourage visitors and enable more people to find a spot to sit and quietly enjoy the churchyard and all it has to offer.
- Interpretation boards within the churchyard would help visitors understand both the built and natural environment around them

## **4. ADDITIONAL MEASURES TO ENCOURAGE VISITORS TO RESPECT THE CHURCHYARD**

### **The Current Arrangement**

There is no doubt that overhanging vegetation has obscured several monuments over the years and unimpeded ivy growth has covered others. For many this is not a problem but for others, especially those who have family monuments within the churchyard, this encroachment of nature is not so welcome. This is especially true where plants grow up between monuments and damage or dislodge them. A churchyard where vegetation is allowed to grow unchecked can look neglected which in turn does not encourage visitors to respect it as a burial site.

### **In the Future**

A more active management of the grass, trees, and boundaries, plus interpretation boards, will help visitors appreciate and respect the area whenever they interact with it.

- Churchyard Tree Survey and Management Plan  
It is important to identify promptly where work needs to be done to a tree to a) ensure its continued health and b) ensure that it isn't impacting negatively on an aspect of the churchyard considered more important (eg Watch Hut roof, particular monument, paths). A tree survey is being undertaken and should be complete by the end of January 2023. It will become part of any future churchyard management plan.
- Churchyard Boundary wall assessment & Repairs  
The flintstone wall along the southern and eastern boundaries of the churchyard has areas which need attention. The 'temporary' protection of two sections has been in place for several years. To ignore this work is to make the churchyard look uncared for and sends out the message that no one is actively managing the churchyard. These repairs are the responsibility of Havant Borough Council and they need to be encouraged to undertake this work!
- Gate painting  
The three gates are in good working order but repainting them would do wonders for the overall first impression for visitors.

# Grass Cutting 3 Year Management Plan

(A)



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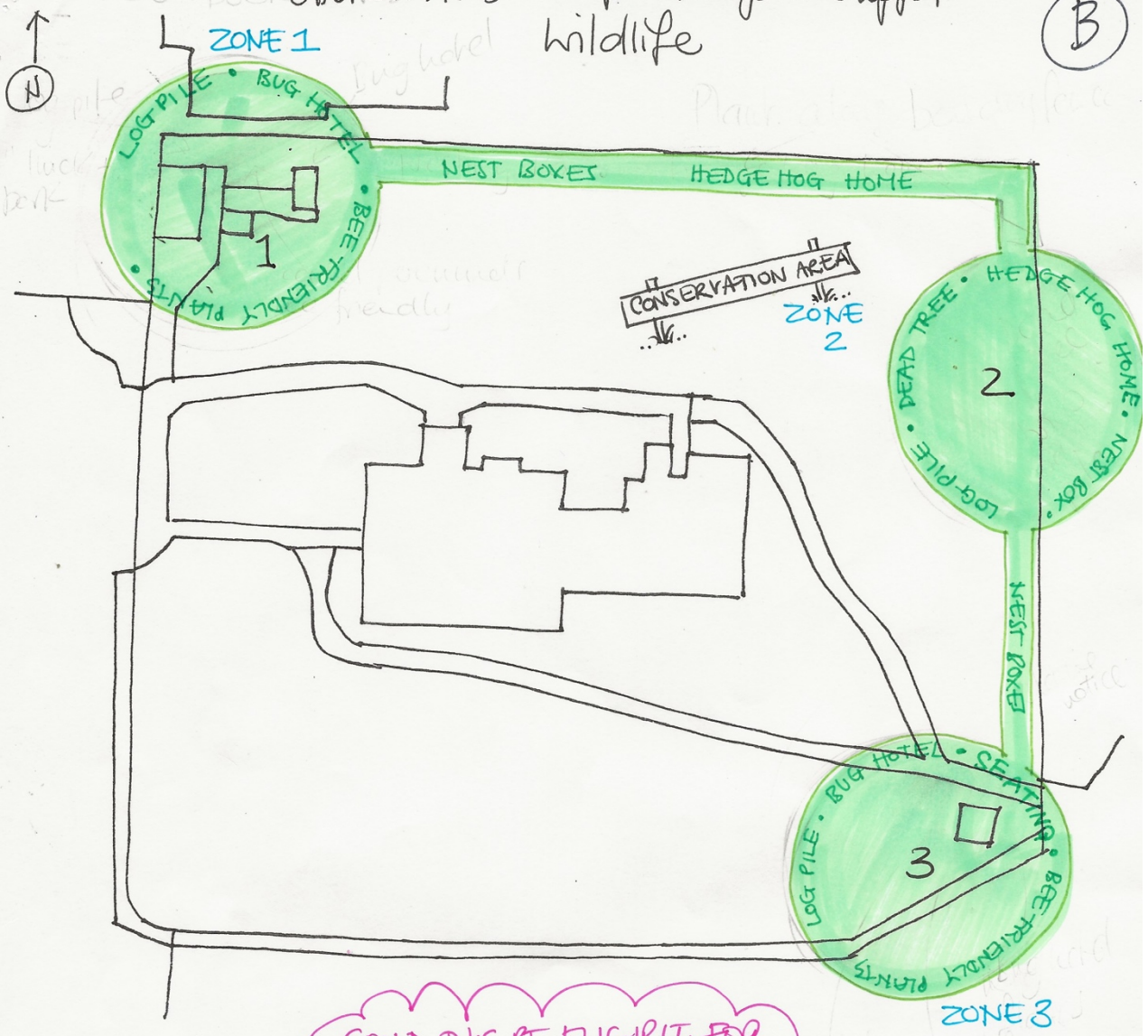
NOTE  
Add location of Spring Bulbs!!

ZONE	ECOLOGICAL VALUE	COMMENTS
[Red]	MOD	Plant with sensory plank suitable for locater. HERBS?
[Green]	LOW	Mow regularly for appearance + access
[Yellow]	HIGHT	Mow Year 1 and then every 3rd year thereafter
[Purple]	LOW	mow/trim twice a year
[Blue]	LOW med	mow/trim twice a year
[Red]	LOW	Shaded. Mow for appearance on needed



# CHURCHYARD - Simple ways to support wildlife

(B)



COULD THIS BE ELIGIBLE FOR TRINITY TRUST FUNDING?

ZONE		
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Log pile behind watch hut</li> <li>• Bee-friendly planting either side of gravel path</li> <li>• Bug hotel on side of shed</li> </ul>	INFORMATION BOARDS NR SHED
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dead tree + stump already there</li> <li>• log pile</li> <li>• hedgehog home</li> </ul>	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bug hotel behind watch hut</li> <li>• log pile</li> <li>• Bee-friendly planting</li> <li>• seating?</li> </ul>	INFORMATION BOARD BY GATE
CORRIDORS BETWEEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nest boxes for robins in shrubs</li> <li>• Nest boxes on tree trunks</li> <li>• Hedgehog home</li> <li>• additional planting to strengthen green corridor</li> </ul>	

## **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

We would very much welcome your comments on these proposals

You can leave comments on our website or you can email the churchwarden of St Thomas à Becket church at *tabwarden@gmail.com*. We welcome comments both from our congregation and from the wider community.

Norse SE would need to have input into any churchyard management plan. They have already indicated that it would be sensible for the Parish to create a draft plan for them to then review with the Parish.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to comment on these proposals, they will be attached to the document and forwarded to the Parochial Church Council of the parish of Warblington-with-Emsworth for further consideration by its Eco Group sub-committee.