

Plan for nature/Land Management Plan Guidance for churches

This document is to be read in conjunction with the [Land and Nature overview](#).

Why does having a practical plan for nature matter for churches?

A plan for nature or Land Management Plan (LMP) helps you manage your outside space to ensure wildlife flourishes on your land. A plan for nature will help prioritise and organise biodiversity management in your churchyard or on your church land. It helps to identify which areas are to be managed in a particular way for the best results and clarify who does the work, when and how frequently it is to be done, and how it can be monitored. The plan can also help with budgeting for works that may require approval, e.g. from a PCC.

According to the 2023 *State of Nature* report the UK's wildlife continues to decline. Already classified as one of the world's most nature-depleted countries, nearly one in six of the more than ten thousand species assessed (16%) are at risk of being lost from the UK. In the face of accelerating climate change and species loss, we need more than ever to take action to protect and care for nature today. The land around our churches can make a difference and help protect and restore nature. Read the full [State of Nature](#) report.

Through the Land and Nature category of the Eco Church survey, it is recognised that churches have a significant contribution to make to the UK Government's target of 30% of land protected for nature by 2030. You can read more about these commitments via these links: [Delivering 30by30 on land in England](#) and [Delivering 30by30 on land in Wales](#).

Pathway 1 – for churches that own or manage land such as a garden, churchyard or burial ground.

Pathway 2 – for churches with very *limited* land such as a paved car park, a perimeter strip of land, or other hard-standing areas and for churches that do not own or manage *any* land. This pathway asks you to consider your own small amount of land, if you have any, *and* also how you can influence land managed by others.

A Rocha UK's [Target 25 project](#) identifies a range of declining species, taxonomic groups and threatened habitats. **Your church may wish to adopt two or three Target 25 species/species groups/habitats** to focus your efforts and reflect how you are going to take action in your land management plan for Pathway 1 or as part of your plan for nature in your local community for Pathway 2.

Land management plan guidelines

More guidance for Pathway 1

We hope all churches will create a plan for nature or LMP, but it is an **essential** requirement for a gold Eco Church award. You must have established a plan to manage your land for nature in the most impactful way. Our [Eco Church Land resources](#) have a wealth of information to help you put together your land management plan. If you have a closed churchyard please refer to our [Closed Churchyard resource](#) and [supporting case studies](#).

A simple LMP at a bronze award level could be as straightforward as completing the category survey questions and displaying them publicly in a statement.

Pathway 1 example

Mortimer Methodist Church has a churchyard, a large car park and a perimeter area around their church building. **All parts of their land** have been made nature-friendly including two wooden raised vegetable beds in their car park, a wildflower garden by their perimeter fence and a burial ground management plan that respects and cares for the natural flora and fauna.



More guidance for Pathway 2

We hope all churches will create a plan for nature or LMP, but it is an **essential** requirement for a gold Eco Church award. We are looking for good practice in the management of any land that **you have influence over**, no matter how small or large, green or not! Our [Eco Church Land resources](#) have a wealth of information to help you put together a simple land management plan. A simple LMP/plan for nature for a bronze award could be as straightforward as displaying your completed Land and Nature survey category answers publicly.

Pathway 2 example

If you do not have a green space but have hard surfaces (e.g. stone, tarmac, patio, paving) then we ask that you create your plan for nature accordingly. There are still wildlife-friendly actions you can take through planters, and bird boxes on or around your church building(s) for example. Don't forget that walls and other hard surfaces can have interesting lichen and moss communities, and nooks and crannies for other small-scale wildlife.

Read about the story of [St John's Methodist Church, Settle](#) (pictured).



Land management plan guidelines

If you are a church with very little outside space of your own, you may choose to express your plan for nature within your Environmental Policy. See **our corresponding information sheet** on Creating an Environmental Policy and Net Zero Action plan, and **editable example policies** that you can adapt for your church. You can find these documents in the [Buildings and Energy category](#). Again, use the survey questions to prompt your action.

What does a plan look like for Pathway 1?

Areas that make up a plan for nature or LMP:

1. **Purpose and objectives (what you are aiming to achieve with your land)** (Include a reference to which Target 25 declining species, taxonomic groups and/or threatened habitats you are focusing on).
2. **Simple nature surveys/citizen science/monitoring** (Include results and how you will engage with this in an ongoing way via your plan, e.g. see resources on [Wildflower Surveys](#) and [Wildlife Surveys](#))
3. **Simple maps** (These can be hand drawn)
4. **Plan of work/management** (An annual plan, updated each year with who is responsible and timings. Health and safety considerations may be included. Some larger churchyards would benefit from a four or five year plan, with a list of annual works that tie in with tree management, budgeting, quinquennials etc.)
5. **Engagement** (Explain how you actively encourage church members/volunteers/wider community to nurture and protect the environment)
6. **Impact and celebration** (Outline how you will celebrate and share what your church is doing and about how wildlife is flourishing)
7. **Date for review** (Any plan needs to be monitored and reviewed so dates will need to be included)

Example plans

- Mortimer Methodist Church [Land Management Plan](#) (Gold awarded church)
- St Mary's, Eaton Socon [Churchyard Management Plan](#) (Silver awarded church with a closed churchyard)
- St Mary's Church, Haughley [Land Management Plan](#)
- All Saints Church, Kettering [Land Management Plan](#)

What does a plan look like for Pathway 2?

Areas that make up a plan for nature or LMP:

1. Purpose and objectives (what you are aiming to achieve with your limited land or land managed by others) (Include a reference to which Target 25 declining species, taxonomic groups and/or threatened habitats you are focusing on).
2. Simple nature surveys/citizen science/monitoring (Include where these take place, survey results and how you will engage with this in an ongoing way via your plan, e.g. see resources on [Wildflower Surveys](#) and [Wildlife Surveys](#))
3. Simple maps (These can be hand drawn for your limited land)
4. Plan of work/management/community engagement (An annual plan updated each year with who is responsible and conservation/survey timings such as community tree planting initiatives, contact details of the land owner(s) or local wildlife or conservation organisations and community groups that you are linking with (as appropriate), allotment or community garden work plan. Health and safety considerations may be included)
5. Engagement (Explain how you actively encourage church members/volunteers/wider community to nurture and protect the environment where you are, and how you are working with or supporting other wildlife organisations or community groups to encourage your local wildlife to flourish)
6. Impact and celebration (Outline how you will celebrate and share what your church is doing within your community or in partnership with others and celebrate how wildlife is flourishing)
7. Date for review (Any plan needs to be monitored and reviewed so dates will need to be included)

Example Pathway 2 plans

- St John's Methodist Church, Settle – coming soon

For Pathways 1 and 2 use this checklist and links to further resources to help you develop your plan:

Native species

- Native wildlife
- Birds – swift/house martin boxes, steeples
- Invertebrates
- Amphibians and reptiles – lots of churchyards can have good habitats for slow worms, or compost heaps used by grass snakes
- Mammals including bats
- Havens for Wildlife

Land management plan guidelines

Native habitats

- Grass is a really important habitat for grassland fungi, flowering plants and insects. Remember that 'spare' grass areas should not be used as tree-planting sites if the grassland habitat is already supporting valuable wildlife. Create an **annual mowing plan** with consideration given to removal of cuttings, participation in No Mow May and Let it Bloom June, etc.
- **Pollinator plants** and **bee-friendly** species (native and local as far as possible); ideally all flowers/seeds should be **native** to the UK and sourced locally. Consider a seed collection plan.
- Research on seed introduction (is the seed right for that specific location?)
- Allow 'wild' or untidy areas of habitat
- Invasives removed
- **Hedges and boundaries**
- **Trees**
- Borders and surfaces, e.g. gravestones
- A source of water for wildlife all year round **Water and wildlife**
- Supporting wildlife habitats through all seasons

Management practices

- **Avoiding harmful chemicals** such as synthetic fertilisers, pesticides or herbicides
- Water retention/run-off
- Water use/collection
- **Land based climate resilient planting/measures** through rainwater management, soil protection and wet mud during the bird breeding season
- Healthy soil management practices
- Simple nature surveys/citizen science/monitoring
- **Managing churchyards and burial grounds**

Local community and community engagement

- **Communication** – consider signage to communicate what you are doing on your land and why (grass left uncut for wildflowers etc.)
- Identify who uses your land and how they can be part of what you are doing, e.g. current users/community stakeholders
- Encourage **community engagement/use**
- Connect with local wildlife organisations such as your local Wildlife Trust or nature reserve
- Connect with nearby landowners such as your local council to establish a community garden or other nature-friendly spaces you can start or support.

Land management plan guidelines

Health and Safety

- Consider risks for your outdoor space, e.g. areas of unsound graves, presence of poisonous plants, accessibility (steps, footpaths and surfaces), water risks, tree management, community participation and events etc. and undertake a **risk assessment** when running an event or a volunteer work party on your church land.
- Install signage as appropriate

Communication

- Share your LMP/plan for nature on your website
- Community engagement
- Impact and celebration