

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. The full report can be found [here](#).

Who needs to create a plan?

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 [here](#) have a wealth of information to help you put together your land management plan. If you have a closed churchyard please refer to our resource [here](#) and supporting case studies [here](#).

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).

What does a plan look like?

Areas that make up a plan for nature or LMP:

1. **Purpose and objectives (what are you aiming to achieve with your land)**
2. **Simple nature surveys/citizen science/monitoring** (Include results and how you will engage with this in an ongoing way via your plan; for example, 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 4 or 5 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)

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 effort and reflect how you are going to take action in your management plan.

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)

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](#)

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 of removal of cuttings, participation in No Mow May, 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
- [Water and wildlife](#)

Management practices

- [Avoiding harmful chemicals](#)
- Water retention/runoff
- Water use/collection
- Climate resilient planting/measures
- Soil health
- Simple nature surveys/citizen science/monitoring
- [Managing churchyards and burial grounds](#)

Community

- [Communication](#) - consider signage to communicate what you are doing and why (grass left uncut etc.)
- Current users/community stakeholders
- Encouraging community engagement/use, more information [here](#)
- Local connections (e.g. wildlife trust)

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. [Risk assessment](#)
- Signage

Communication

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