



Biodiversity Policy Statement

Churchyards are first and foremost a spiritual place and play a powerful role in the Church's witness to the world. They contain memorials to departed Christians demonstrating the Church's continuing love for them and its belief in the communion of saints. They are places of solace and relief for those who mourn and, for many, comfort is gained from knowing that the mortal remains of their loved ones are interred in a particular churchyard in a particular setting.

Churchyards can be very ancient and often the oldest enclosed piece of land in a parish, and could contain a variety of plants now rare in the surrounding countryside. Although much has disappeared from the wider countryside, many of our churchyards are there, waiting to be rediscovered and managed in a way that allows them to truly flower once more. Other churchyard habitats can include veteran trees especially yews, hedges, ponds, ditches, ivy-clad walls and unusual tree specimens; three quarters of Britain's ancient yews are found in churchyards. The variety of stone used in boundary walls, gravestones and the church itself provides habitat for a range of mosses, ferns, and drought tolerant plants; 20 species that rely on church walls are now rare in the wild. The variety of substrates and aspects in churchyards also encourages a rich diversity of lichen species which are particularly important in Warwickshire because of the rarity of stone outcrops elsewhere in the local landscape.

The Diocese of Coventry believes that Parochial Church Councils should be working to support wildlife and enhance their churchyards, where possible, for wildlife and biodiversity and this policy has been developed to support parishes undertake this in a way reflective of their consecrated status, and with respect and consideration given to those who mourn and find solace in that space.

The Diocese of Coventry has adopted this policy to encourage a strategic approach to churchyards as wildlife stepping stones across the landscape and to support partnership approaches by conservation groups.

Aim:

Each Parochial Church Council is encouraged to aim for an area of its churchyard to be managed for wildlife, if feasible, and with due care and consideration for the area as a place of burial, and with the necessary permissions (e.g. Faculty, Planning

Permission) should any works be undertaken in which particular permissions are required.

Plans specific to your own churchyard will help you with its long-term care and maintenance.

Policy Objectives:

1. Identify areas within the churchyard in which to protect and enhance biodiversity
2. Produce a management plan, referring to the published [Local Action Plan for Churchyards & Cemeteries](#)
3. Manage biodiversity in a consistent way, referring to best practice and current legislation
4. Acknowledge that a more biodiverse churchyard will provide an excellent educational and recreational resource that can help to bring together the local community
5. Work together with other members of the local community to enhance biodiversity