

The five steps in a Churchyard and Burial ground management project

A churchyard or burial ground may well be older than the building it surrounds and possess its own unique treasures, in need of cherishing. These sacred sites have been refuges for plants and animals for generations and their importance to both natural and built heritage are now well recognised.

The information to be found here will help both professionals and amateurs to care for burial grounds/churchyards in an appropriate and sensitive way and share the beauty and interest with others through well-planned interpretation.



Planning Protection

A wide-range of national and international statutory designations are presently in place to protect the natural environment. Burial grounds may be included in these areas with special protection. For example, a number of churchyards are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's), which is a legal designation. There are also many burial grounds situated within National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Local authorities may designate certain areas, which could include burial grounds and churchyards, as being of local conservation interest. The criteria for inclusion and the level of protection provided, if any, may vary between areas. Most individual counties have such schemes, although they do vary. Consult your local authority for details.

Burial grounds/churchyards are often small, isolated and fragmented and as such their

protection and management is important in conserving our natural resources. These areas may be given various titles such as 'Listed Wildlife Sites' (LWS), 'Local Nature Conservation Sites' (LNCS), 'Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation' (SINCs), or 'Sites of Nature Conservation Importance' (SNCIs).

To find out more about your particular area and its designations then the statutory conservation agencies are as follows:

Natural England

Scottish Natural Heritage

Countryside Council for Wales

Environment and Heritage Services

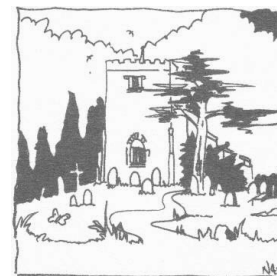
Local Authority Offices



The Five Stages in Managing a Burial Ground/Churchyard

Getting Started

We suggest that the objective of burial ground/churchyard management should be to create a churchyard, which is attractive to local people, visitors and wildlife. This is possible and can be found in many places. A basic understanding of the process of conservation management is required and this pack is designed to provide information to help you get started.



Here are the five stages to burial ground/churchyard management, which will be described more fully.

1. Research past records and check any conservation designations with your local authority, diocesan advisory committee or county wildlife trust.
2. Survey or inspect more closely the habitats. These include the grassland, trees and walls to see what species of plants and animal you can find.
3. Draw a site plan and in consultation with others create and implement a work plan or management plan.
4. Let people know how the churchyard is being managed.
5. Review the management to see if it is working and achieving the original aims.



Stage 1 Research

- To discover what species have previously been recorded in your burial ground/churchyard contact your local biological records centre – it collects, manages and analyses biological records. The local authority or county wildlife trust has the contact details for this.
- For information on built structures such as monuments and memorials and preaching crosses then contact the local authority archaeological department or your diocesan advisory committee or church head office.



Stage 2 Survey

Volunteers can conduct a basic survey to establish the current wildlife. Wildlife includes plants as well as animals. A site plan is required and this can be achieved by pacing out the area or a printed plan may be obtained, sometimes at a cost, from the local authority planning department.

The site plan should contain these key points:

1. The entrances, boundaries, paths and church outline.
2. Orientation N,S,E,W.
3. Areas where new burials take place and where graves are visited regularly.
4. Status of surrounding land. E.g. arable fields, gardens, road.
5. Location of trees and shrubs with a note of species (see section on trees for information on more detailed tree surveys).
6. Note any interesting wall plants or lichens on church and boundary walls and other stonework.
7. Include monuments and memorials of special significance.
8. Show flower beds and borders, compost and grass heaps.
9. Mark on areas of short mown grass, areas cut less often and any flowers you recognise.
10. Note any sightings of animal life (mammals, birds, butterflies, insects, amphibians, reptiles) or other evidence such as droppings, food remains, runs or nests

This basic survey is the starting point for deciding on the management of the various features within your site.

More detailed recording of plants and animals could follow up the survey.

To achieve detailed surveys:

- Ask a local county amateur naturalist group e.g. local botanical society or local bat group. Members may be interested to help you with surveys. A list of groups will be available through your local county wildlife trust.
- Apply for small grants to pay specialists fees.
- Local people, using identification field guides, could begin to carry out surveys. Training courses may be available, which will help to give the information needed. Ask your local wildlife trust.



Stage 3 The management plan

- Draw up the plan in consultation with the burial ground/churchyard workforce and the church members to ensure that everyone understands the work to be carried out. It also gives people a chance to get involved.
- The plan of work must be achievable and not over ambitious. It is better to start with small changes and build on them.
- It works well to have certain aims for the management, for example:

This burial ground/churchyard is cared for in way, which makes it:

- a pleasant, attractive place for visitors
- a place in keeping with the function of burials
- a fit setting for the church/chapel
- a haven for plants and animals

Stage 4 Letting people know about the management

- The plan of work and its aims need to be accepted by local people. This can be achieved by displaying a plan with a list of future work.
- Perhaps create more detailed displays showing pictures of the interest to be seen throughout the year.
- Send articles to local papers or newsletters on a regular basis.
- Put up special signs in taller grassland areas letting people know that it is a 'grassland conservation area'.

Stage 5 Checking to see if the plan is working

- Review the work plan at the end of each year. After all, it is only a guide and can be changed if anything is found not to be working.
- Ask local people and visitors what they think about the churchyard management.

- Further surveys can be carried out after two or three years to see if any changes, good or bad, have occurred.

Useful Organisations

Countryside Council for Wales

CCW
 Maes-y-Ffynnon, Penrhosgarnedd, Bangor,
 Gwynedd, LL57 2DW, 0845 1306229
www.ccw.gov.uk

Cadw

Welsh Assembly Government
 Plas Carew, Unit 5/7 Cefn Coed, Parc Nantgarw
 Cardiff, CF15 7QQ
 01443 336000
Cadw@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

Natural England

Northminster House, Peterborough, PE11UA,
 0845 6003078
www.naturalengland.org.uk

English Heritage

Po Box 569, Swindon, SN2 2YP, England
 0870 333 1181
www.english-heritage.org.uk

Historic Scotland

Longmore House, Salisbury Place, Edinburgh
 EH9 1SH.
 0131 668 8600.
www.historic-scotland.org.uk

Scottish Natural Heritage

www.snh.org.uk

Environment and Heritage Services – Northern Ireland

41 Dogleap Road, Limavady, BT49 9NN
 028 7772 2074
www.ni-environment.gov.uk

County Wildlife Trust

Wildlife Trusts, The Kiln, Waterside, Mather Road,
 Newark, Nottinghamshire, NG241WT
 0870 0367711 enquiry@wildlifetrust.org

Local Authority A to Z of local councils at

www.direct.gov.uk



Dogwood, hawthorn and blackthorn