

ST NICHOLAS CHURCH NATURE AND WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN

This Wildlife-Friendly Land Management Plan for St. Nicholas Church Yard aims to enhance biodiversity whilst at the same time enhancing the natural beauty of our church yard so that they can be enjoyed by the congregation and visitor alike. By aligning with wildlife-friendly principles, St Nicholas Church aims to be a model of environmental stewardship within the community.

***Date of last
revision /
review:
November
2025***

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St. Nicholas Church Nature and Wildlife-Friendly Land Management Plan

1 Introduction

St. Nicholas Church is committed to creating and maintaining a sustainable, nature-friendly environment that encourages biodiversity and enhances the natural beauty of our church grounds that can be enjoyed by the congregation and visitors alike. This land management plan outlines our approach to caring for our land in a way that supports wildlife, promotes native flora and fauna, and aligns with our values as an Eco Church.

2 Objectives

Our key objectives for managing the church grounds are:

- To provide a welcoming & tranquil church yard for the congregation, the local community and visitors to enjoy, including access to ancient graves where ever possible.
- To provide a haven for wildlife and to encourage biodiversity
- To provide easy and visually pleasing access to the church
- To promote sustainable gardening practices that reduce our environmental impact to our congregation and local community.
- To educate and engage our congregation and the local community in nature conservation efforts.
- To be sustainable in the long term in terms of the amount of effort and funding required to meet our objectives.

3 General Land Management Practices & Principles

3.1 Habitat Creation and Enhancement

- All land management actions will be undertaken with consideration of its impact on habitat for wildlife and on biodiversity.
- Maintain and add to existing insect hotels and log piles in quiet areas of the grounds to encourage invertebrates.
- Set up hedgehog houses and ensure passageways (hedgehog highways) between spaces.
- Conduct regular butterfly transects between 1st April and 31st September

3.2 Sustainable Gardening Practices

- Avoid use of pesticides & chemicals and artificial fertilizers. Alternative strategies where appropriate:
 - Saline / vinegar solution
 - Hand weeding
 - Boiling water
- Compost all flower & garden maintenance waste on-site to reduce waste and provide natural fertilizer for the grounds.
- Keep bonfires to an absolute minimum.
- Ensure extensive bramble growth & self-planted oak saplings are kept in check and so do not shade out native plants.
- Ensure bracken growth from lower down in the NFDC part of the cemetery does not jump across into church-maintained church yard as this can become invasive.

3.3 Seasonal Maintenance Schedule:

Develop a seasonal maintenance schedule that includes tasks such as planting, pruning, and mowing to ensure they align with wildlife needs (e.g., avoid mowing during nesting or flowering seasons) – See Appendix B – Annual & Ongoing Maintenance tasks;

4 Management of different Land Types

We have identified 4 land types within the church grounds for targeted management. The location of each of these is marked on the map of the grounds contained in Appendix A and further detail is given in Section 5:

1. **Short, well maintained community grassland on either side of the entrance path:** A designated section of the church grounds where the grass is to be kept short and tidy for easy access and a pleasing, well cared for aspect to the approach to the church. Benches to be located in these areas.
2. **Longer grass areas:** These areas are managed to encourage a variety of grass heights and bulbs in the spring, creating habitats for insects and small mammals. The areas of longer grass are marked on the map
3. **Mature Trees, hedging:** Preservation and care of the existing mature trees and hedges that are important for local wildlife.
4. **Woodland Bank:** This area to be kept bracken and rhododendron free and bramble contained. Existing hazel to be encouraged to form a canopy here.

5 Management Practices by Zone

5.1 Zone 1



Zone 1, the area to the left of the entrance path to the church is mainly grass, with interspersed grave stones and a tall 1100-year-old Yew tree right by the church entrance (Figure 2)

It is recommended that the grass in this area is regularly mown and kept short, giving a 'cared for' vibe to visitors as they enter the church yard and approach the church. There is also a bench in this area and keeping the grass short around it allows easy access.

Yew trees (*Taxus baccata*), one of the longest-lived native species in Europe, are often found in churchyards as they used to symbolise immortality. Yew tree's fruit is eaten by birds, such as the blackbird, mistle thrush, song thrush and fieldfare (species protected in the UK). Small mammals like squirrels and dormice also feed on them. The leaves are eaten by caterpillars of the satin beauty moth. Keeping this tree is essential for local wildlife. It is important to note that eating Yew leaves and berries is poisonous for humans.

5.2 Zone 2

Zone 2, the area to right of the entrance path to the church is also mainly grassland, again with interspersed grave stones.

It is recommended that this area of grassland be mown at different lengths in order to support different species.

From April onwards, the area adjoining the entrance path should continue to be tightly mowed to show that the area is managed and to match with Zone 1 on the other side of the path. The width of this area should be around 6m

Then area in the middle should be mown to a higher height to enable different species of wild flower to thrive (ie raise the mower blades to the full height on the area of



grassland adjacent to the uncut area). This will give more flowers an opportunity to bloom and set seed and provide more meadow habitat. This area should be around 2m wide.

The remaining grassland on the right of the zone is to be left without mowing from April till End of September, possibly adding wildflowers. Please note that width of this zone should be extended by around 2m for the current unmown area as this extra 2m of land contains many plants that would benefit from being left in the spring and summer.

The unmown grass, should be strimmed once a year in late September and the arisings removed and composted.

It should be noted that a grassland with a variety of sward lengths, including some short, regularly mown areas will actually provide habitat for a greater variety of species than if it was either all long or all short. Many species prefer the long grass but there are some that will use shorter lawns such as Solitary Bees.

5.3 Zone 3



Zone 3 is the area of the right of the church and extending down to the top of the bank to the right of the steps going down to the council owned part of the grave yard.

It is shaded by large oak trees and, without maintenance will constantly attempt to revert to being woodland with bramble and oak saplings spreading rapidly. The aim of the land management of this zone is to curb the spread of the brambles and to convert into unmown grassland, similar to that on the East side (right) of Zone 2.

To this end, ongoing uprooting of brambles and saplings will be undertaken, to allow grass and wild flowers to establish and thrive. Care must be taken when digging in this area in order not to disturb other plant life that we want to encourage.

The area should be strimmed once a year in autumn, and the arisings removed.

Leaving some bramble on the edges will provide habitat for nesting birds and small mammals.

5.4 Zone 4



Zone 4 is the area to the back of the church and on the west side of the path leading up from the council managed cemetery. It extends around to the west side of the church up to the Yew tree.

This area is currently very overgrown with rampant bramble and will need similar management to that recommended for Zone 3, concentrating particularly on the area between the back of the church and the path.

Once again, leaving some bramble on the bank edges will provide habitat for nest birds and small mammals, though this can be cut down in late autumn / winter to support the creation of a hazel canopy (see Zone 5 for more detail).

5.5 Zone 5

Zone 5 is the woodland bank, accessed by turning left at the bottom of the steps that lead down to the council-maintained graveyard and cemetery. It extends around to the west side of the church up to the Yew tree. This bank at the back is quite distinct from the main grassland area within the churchyard.

There are 2 clumps of hazel on the bank which it is recommended is coppiced every few years to encourage the growth of a hazel canopy that will, in time inhibit the growth of the bramble beneath. In addition, the bramble around the hazel should be cut back regularly to encourage the hazel canopy to develop.

Lower parts of the bank are populated with many species of wild woodland plants such as bluebells, wood anemone well as greater stitchwort. The bank should be maintained to be bracken free and Rhododendron has recently been removed from this area and it is important to keep a look out for more and remove, as it is an invasive species.



6 Community Engagement & Education

- Bi Monthly gardening day with team from Southampton Community Probation to help maintain the grounds and keep on top of the bramble
- Install informational signs around the perimeter of the grounds explaining the purpose of wildlife-friendly areas and the benefits of specific plants and habitats.
- Regularly update the church website and social media with information on land management activities and events.
- Encourage church members, Greener Brockenhurst, local residents and the school Eco Group to participate in surveys and other community conservation activities.

7 People Involved:

- Tim Dodwell (Chair of Fabric Committee)
- Eco Church Team
- Greener Brockenhurst Making Space for Nature Team (as and when) –
- Neil Hunt, contractor who mows grass (as and when required under the supervision of Tim)
- Susan Simmons, Community Ecologist, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
- Stephen Grove, Community Payback Placement Coordinator, Southampton Probation Service

8 Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure the effectiveness of this plan, we will:

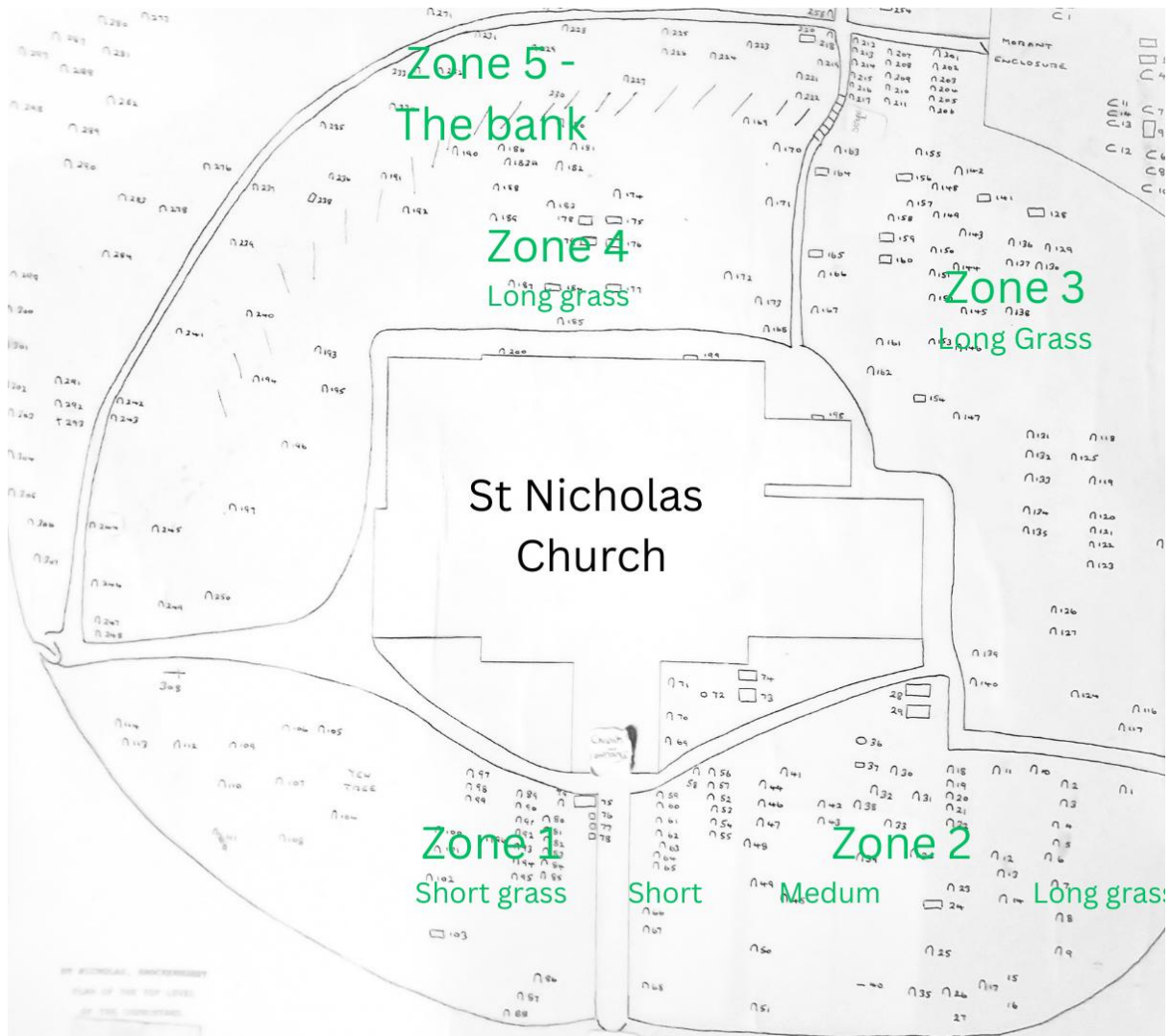
- Conduct regular surveys of plants, birds, butterflies & insects, to monitor biodiversity. See Appendix C for Observed Species List to date.
- Review and update the land management plan annually, incorporating feedback from the church community and local partners.
- Report on progress in the Parish Magazine and website to maintain transparency and engagement.

9 Conclusion

This nature and wildlife-friendly land management plan is a living document that reflects our commitment to environmental stewardship as part of our spiritual mission. We aim to

create a thriving, biodiverse environment that enriches the lives of all who visit St. Nicholas Church.

10 APPENDIX A: Overall Plan of the land

Plan of the grounds of St Nicholas Church, Brockenhurst

11 APPENDIX B: Annual & Ongoing Maintenance Tasks

Annual / biannual tasks:

- Check and clean hedgehog box
- Turnover / manage compost pile
- Clip front and side hedges biannually
- Every few years, coppice hazel
- Autumn strim of all areas long grass and rake up of arisings

Ongoing Tasks (as and when required):

- Cut / pull up encroaching bramble in Zones 3 and 4 (leaving bramble at edges)
- Pull up any self-seeded oak saplings paying particular attention to Zones 3 & 4.
- Ensure bracken does not encroach into Zone 5
- Mow short and medium length grass area (ie Zone1 and left of Zone2)
- Perform any maintenance required on benches etc

12 APPENDIX C: St Nicholas Species List:

Compiled from Community Survey: **Bioblitz 16th June 2025 (Rain)**

12.1 Trees

- Yew
- Field maple
- Holly
- Silver birch
- Oak
- Turkey oak
- Rowan
- Hazel
- Sycamore
- Lichen
- Beech
- Spruce

12.2 Plants

English Species name	Latin Species name
Germander speedwell	<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i> L.
Yellow rattle	<i>Rhinantus minor</i>
Violet	<i>Viola</i>
Bird's foot trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>
Cleavers	<i>Galium aparine</i>
Wood avens	<i>Geum urbanum</i>
Herb robert	<i>Geranium robertianum</i>
Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus</i>
Speedwell	<i>Veronica</i>
Nettles	<i>Urtica</i>
Dock	<i>Rumex</i>
Dog's mercury	<i>Mercurialis perennis</i>
Lesser hairy brome	<i>Bromus benekenii</i>
Smooth tare	<i>Vicia tetrasperma</i>
Golden rod	<i>Solidago virgaurea</i>
Greater stitch wort	<i>Stellaria holostea</i>
Common spotted orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza maculata</i> subsp. <i>fuchsii</i>
Creeping cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla reptans</i>
Smooth tare	
Bugle	
Common spotted orchid	
Tormentil	
Orchard grass	

12.3 Vegetation

English Species name	Latin Species name
Bitter vetch	<i>Lathyrus linifolius</i>
Bracken	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>
Oak seedling	<i>Quercus (robur)</i>
Ash	<i>Fraxinus (excelsior)</i>
Wild Strawberry	<i>Fragaria vesca</i>
Bluebell	
<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	
Wild Rose	<i>Rosa</i>
Plantain	<i>Plantago</i>
Primrose	<i>Primula vulgaris</i>
Bedstraw	<i>Galium verum</i>
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>
Grasses/Orchard	
Fern	
Ivy	<i>Hedera (helix)</i>
Herb robert	<i>Geranium robertianum</i>
Grass - Yorkshire Fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>
Hart's Tongue Fern	<i>Asplenium scolopendrium</i>
Ribwort Plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
Wild marjoram	<i>Origanum vulgare</i>
Cranesbill	<i>Geranium spp.</i>
Grass - Cocksfoot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>
Sweet vernal	<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>
Sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>
Common cat's ear	<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>
Japanese honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera japonica</i>
Hedge woundwort	<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>

12.4 Invertebrates

- Green crickets
- 4 Ants
- 3 Crab spiders
- Harvestman spider
- Marbled white butterfly
- 2 Meadow browns
- 2 Woodlouse
- 2 Flies
- 1 Moth

12.5 Animal Signs

- Deer poo
- Rabbit poo
- Pigeon feathers
- Ladybird 6 spot
- 2 Black and white spiders
- Grasshopper
- Flea beetle
- Ladybird larvae
- Owl pellet