

# **Ash Millennium Wood**

## **Five Year Management Plan**

### **Update June 2021**



## **Contents**

### **Part 1- Where are we now?**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. A Welcoming Place**
- 3. Healthy, Safe and Secure**
- 4. Clean and Well Maintained**
- 5. Environmental Management**
- 6. Biodiversity, landscape and heritage**
- 7. Community involvement**
- 8. Marketing**
- 9. Management**
- 10. Constraints and SWOT**

### **Part 2 - Where do we want to get to?**

- 11. Management Plan Aim**

### **Part 3 - How will we get there?**

- 12. Five Year work programme**
- 13. Annual Work plan**

### **Part 4 - How do we know when we have arrived?**

- 14. Monitoring and review**

## **Appendices**

## PART 1 - WHERE ARE WE NOW?

### 1. Introduction

#### **Site Description**

Ash Millennium Wood is a well-loved local green space on the edge of the village of Ash in Somerset. The wood was described in the 2017 RHS “It’s Your Neighbourhood” judging as:

*“.....a fantastic natural area for the village. It is used by the school children who regularly visit to discover the flora and fauna around on the day, those involved in its creation and ongoing maintenance should be applauded. The mix of age ranges of the trees in the wood is great to see as it provides a better balance for the health, longevity and diversity of its flora and fauna.”*

The site occupies a former grass field of some 1.56ha (3.85 acres) adjoining the Church of England Primary School and village car park on the western fringe of Ash Village, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) ST 472208. The wood lies diagonally opposite the parish church, and is bordered on its southern edge by the embanked and wooded margin of the road to Highway and Stapleton. Farm hedges and ditches form the western and northern boundaries, with the school grounds to the east.



Ash Parish Council purchased the site in 1998 from Somerset County Council with a covenant restricting its use to “agricultural, horticultural or equestrian”. Following consultation with the village, the PC decided to establish a community wood in 1998 to mark the millennium and invited parishioners to plant trees. It was also to seek advice on the creation of a wildlife area.

In May of 2000 it was reported that 30 people had helped to plant 151 trees and that there were further plans for a gate, seating and the reinstatement of a pond in the NE corner of the field. Many trees were donated by parishioners, but unfortunately no record is available of who donated particular trees. A number of wildlife interpretation boards were later installed in 2006.

Apart from twice yearly mowing of some paths, the site was subsequently somewhat neglected. Scrub species such as bramble and blackthorn spread and open areas were dominated by thistles, nettles and coarse grasses. Species diversity and amenity value were consequently severely limited.

Ash PC formally appointed a management group, in December 2012, to manage the site. A management plan was agreed with the PC. The wood has been looked after by the management group since that time. During that time many new trees, a hedgerow and native bulbs have been planted, a wildflower area with raised beds established and new paths cut. The meadow area is now being regularly mowed and baled to get it ready for wildflowers, seating has been put in and a viewing mound constructed. In short it is being well looked after and enhanced for wildlife and amenity.

The principle aims of the management group are:

- Provide a community wood that the people of the village can enjoy; a place for peaceful, informal recreation
- Undertake projects to encourage wildlife and enhance knowledge of the natural environment and its management
- Foster community spirit by providing an opportunity for villagers including school children to participate safely in communal activities

### ***Aim & Purpose of the Management Plan***

The purpose of the management plan is to provide a coherent approach to the maintenance and management of the site. It aims to ensure the provision of a good quality space that is accessible and well connected to the surrounding area, attractive and appealing, safe, contributes to the biodiversity of the area and is of benefit to the community.

### ***Policy Context***

There are numerous international, national and regional strategies, policies and legislation which are relevant to the management of open green spaces. Below is a list of some relevant documents. More extensive details and links can be found on the website

<https://ashmillenniumwood.wordpress.com>

- *South Somerset District Council (SSDC) Open Space Strategy (2011)*
- *SSDC Adopted Local Plan*
- *Somerset County Council woodland strategy (2010)*
- *HM Government "A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment" (2018)*
- *Natural England "Nature Nearby" Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance (2010)*
- *SSDC Environment Strategy (2019)*
- *Ash PC Tree Policy (2020)*
- *Somerset Wildlife Trust: Wilder Somerset (2021)*
- *England Trees Action Plan (2021)*

Most of the recent sources stress the value of access to green spaces, especially woodland.

## 2. A Welcoming Place

Ash Millennium Wood is managed to be inviting to those who visit. There is something for everyone to take pleasure in, from the variety of trees and flora, the wildflower plot, seating areas and informal children's play area.

The site is located on the edge of the village of Ash, adjacent to Ash Primary School and has easy walking access via the Village Car Park.

There is no vehicular access except for contactors/volunteers. There is a "Bristol" gate that has a pedestrian section which is always left unlocked. Public access is via the village car park. There is a further entrance from the school grounds which is kept locked for safeguarding reasons and only unlocked for school activities.



A good quality welcome and interpretation board is sited at the main entrance. Details of what can be seen on the site are provided along with website and Facebook links. A sign showing contact details is also displayed.

There are two formal seating installations and a log circle for children.



The site has been of particular value to the village during the COVID-19 lockdown. For many, especially families with young children, it was the only green space they could visit. Groups from the adjacent school used the site on a daily basis. Nationally, Natural England's long-running People and Nature survey showed that in May, during lockdown, eight out of



ten adults agreed that “being in Nature makes me very happy”. In addition, 41% reported visiting local green and natural spaces has been even more important to their wellbeing.

### **3. Healthy, Safe and Secure**

The site is an enclosed area which makes it safe to let children play there.

The main entrance gate is kept locked except for the pedestrian section.

Infrastructure on the site includes two seats, log seating, raised wildflower beds and a shed for tools. The seating is low to prevent injuries to children. The wildflower beds area is behind a low natural fence to demarcate an area excluding dogs. The shed is a secure building that is kept locked at all times.

Risk assessments are available for volunteer working and for events. A safe handling leaflet is made available to new volunteers. The main volunteer has a LANTRA certificate for brush cutting.

Informal tree safety checks are carried out once a year by a tree surgeon.

Where invasive plants that represent a risk to users are found they are removed or otherwise managed. Such plants include hogweed and hemlock. Ragwort is controlled on the meadow so that it does not pass to livestock with the baled hay.

Safeguarding of children is important. Youth group leaders are always present when groups such as the Scouts and school carry out activities. The lead volunteer on the site has Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) certification so that other situations are covered.

### **4. Clean and Well Maintained**

The site is managed to provide a clean and well-maintained environment.

Regular weekly inspections for litter and damage are carried out and remedial works carried out as and when. We are lucky in that strong community support means that visitors often pick up litter when visiting and some even pick up other peoples' dog poo.

In common with public open spaces everywhere, there is the issue of dog fouling. There is a dog poo bin located at the entrance which is emptied weekly by South Somerset District Council. A supply of poo bags is kept nearby. There are signs on the site warning of the danger of dog faeces to children. The whole of the area of South Somerset is the subject of a Public Space Protection Order and fixed penalty notices can be imposed if dog owners do not control or pick up after their dog.

There are no general rubbish bins on site and, so far, this has not proved to be a problem.

Carved signs and seating are cleaned and treated once a year.

The meadow is mechanically scythed and baled by contractors in late summer after the main flowering to allow setting of seed. Areas under the trees are also subjected to occasional “topping” using trimmers. Encroaching blackthorn and brambles are cut back when necessary. Paths are cut four times a year by a contractor, the cuttings placed in grass heaps.

The beds in the wildflower plot are planted with annual and perennial plants and weeded when necessary. Within this area, paths are surfaced with chippings.

The wooded area is managed to achieve a good woodland structure over time. Lower branches of larger (around 20 years old) trees are removed on a selective basis. Brash is used to restock windrows. New planting is predominantly understory specimens as the canopy grows. Signs of disease are noted (especially in ash) and affected limbs burned on site.

Hand tools are kept in the secure shed. A brush cutter is kept at the main volunteer's home.

## **5. Environmental Management**

Water for the wildflower plot is taken from a butt that collects rainfall from the shed roof. No other water is available on site. It is brought in containers where there is new planting.

No pesticides or herbicides are used on the site. Control of weeds in the wildflower plot is by hand pulling.

Grass cuttings are placed at a few locations on the edge of the site and left as habitat. There is a composting bin in the wildflower plot.

The hay collected from the meadow is baled and sold on to support ongoing costs.

The selection of trees for new planting is based on increasing diversity so that there is more resilience in the woodland overall.

Natural England in "Nature Nearby" recommends that everyone, wherever they live, should have an accessible natural greenspace of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home. The Millennium Wood serves the village of Ash under this measure. Consequently, people in the village do not have to use their cars to enjoy accessible green space.

Climate change will, it is understood, lead to hotter, drier summers and milder, wetter winters. The site will need to adapt to projected changing circumstances to provide resilience. It is not clear, as yet, what should be done on a site such as ours to provide that resilience. For the time being we are aiming to plant as wide a variety of native trees as practicable and plant according to best practice. When clearer advice becomes available, we will need to review planting and management practice.

## **6. Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage**

In order to ensure that the site creates value as a biodiversity asset, as many viable habitats as possible are being created and a broader variety of tree and botanical species encouraged.

The site is broadly divided into a wooded area and a meadow. The former is the area originally planted in 1998 and the latter an open area being gradually prepared as a wildflower meadow.

Other areas include a wildflower plot, where beds have been laid to give concentrated displays, hazel copses, a damp area where willows are grown and various log piles, grass heaps, windrows and rock habitats.



The features are identified on site through carved signs and small explanatory posters.

### **Wooded area**

Following original planting, the site was neglected until 2012.

A tree survey carried out in 2013 identified 135 trees: 25 ash, 28 beech, 1 field maple, 3 hazel, 2 horse chestnut, 48 oak, 2 silver birch, 25 wild cherry, 1 willow.

The variety of trees originally planted is limited. This results in a poor woodland structure and lack of resilience against disease. Planting from 2012 onwards has concentrated (and will continue so to do) on increasing the variety of trees and underplanting to provide an understorey. The main varieties have been willow, hazel, holly, alder, spindle, dogwood and guelder rose. In addition, an informal orchard area has been planted with some local heritage trees. Native plants such as bluebells, snowdrops, primroses and wood anemones have been planted under the trees.



### **Meadow Area**

The overall site comprises semi-improved agricultural land. The open area of the site is being gradually stripped of nutrient in order to provide the conditions in which native wildflowers can flourish. Otherwise “thug” plants like coarse grass, nettles and thistles out compete more sensitive varieties.

A contractor with a tractor and mechanical scythe is employed to cut and bale during late summer (late July/August) after the main flowering. The bales are then sold on. The alternative (and much faster) method is to strip and relocate the topsoil, but this is an expensive and not very sustainable approach.



There is evidence that the work is gradually having effect. A botanical survey by the Somerset Botanical Group in 2018 recorded 42 plant species and commented:

*“There are some signs of herb species gaining a foothold with significant amounts of Meadow Vetchling and an area of Slender Tare (another vetch). Corky-fruited Water-dropwort (Oenanthe pimpinelloides) was surprisingly frequent and it was nice to see a couple of examples of Goat’s-beard (Tragopogon pratensis)”.*

A small area was tested in early 2018 with the planting of yellow rattle (parasitic on grasses), but the coarse grass proved still too vigorous to allow successful planting of wildflowers. It is hoped that a few more years of management will be sufficient. A key long term aim is to achieve a degree of biodiversity in the meadow such that the site overall can meet the necessary criteria for designation as a “Local Wildlife Site”.



Some planting of knapweed and ox-eye daisies has taken place and we will see if these take hold and spread.

There was a site visit by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust in 2019 attended by children from the school. Following advice from the Trust field margins around the meadow are being left uncut (cut perhaps every third year) to encourage wildlife. The site is also within a corridor defined by B-Lines as an insect corridor where the habitat for pollinators is to be encouraged. See Appendix 1.

### ***Other areas***



A wildflower plot has been laid out in the north east corner of the site where there is direct access from the school grounds. This is used to display a variety of annual and perennial plants. There are also bug homes so that children can learn about pollinators.

Grass heaps, a rock pile, log pile and windrows have been left to encourage wildlife with signs for children to learn about the creatures that benefit from them. Hazel coppicing is being undertaken in a small way to encourage regeneration.

## **7. Community Involvement**

The site is owned by the Parish Council. That body has delegated ongoing management to a “Millennium Wood Management Group” and has agreed an annual maintenance grant. The group reports on progress and projects to the Annual Parish Meeting.

There are funding partnerships with South Somerset District Council, Somerset County Council, Wessex Water and the Postcode Lottery Trust. This is in the form of grants being given for specific projects.

A new community group known as “Ash & Martock” Nature has been formed to encourage and develop biodiversity across the two Parishes. The wood is one of the exemplar projects for this group and this will encourage greater local understanding of the value of nature.

The site is run by volunteers. There is an ongoing campaign to recruit new helpers through the local volunteers’ network ([www.sparksomerset.org.uk](http://www.sparksomerset.org.uk)) and through publicity for specific work packages.

A number of external groups have been onto the site for surveys and to offer advice. These include the Somerset Wildlife Trust, the Somerset Botany Group and the Carymoor Environmental Centre.

Outdoor learning is becoming a much greater requirement for children, young people and adults. It boosts confidence, social skills, communication, motivation, physical skills, knowledge and understanding. Research has found an increase in children's self-esteem, self-confidence, ability to work cooperatively and a positive attitude through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland environment.

The adjacent Primary School uses the site for many curricular and extra-curricular purposes and joint planning of activities is now common.

The local "1<sup>st</sup> Fosseyway" group of scouts, cubs and beavers carry out activities on the site to help children earn badges. Recent examples have been camp cooking, exploring and making fire beacons. A Forest School group and "Tree Babies" therapy group now have regular sessions on the site.



Various events have been organised on the site. A "Countryside Day" has been held during three summers (2014, 2015, 2018) with local craft stalls and woodland management demonstrations including willow sculptures, hazel wigwams and chainsaw carving. A "Spooktacular" event was also held on Halloween in 2014.

A number of local residents have planted "remembrance" trees in the wood. These include "disease resistant" elms. In 2015 the local Women's Institute paid for a circular bench in the wood to commemorate 100 years of existence.

## 8. Marketing

The overall aim of marketing/publicity is to keep villagers informed about work and activities on the site.

The principal form of marketing is via a dedicated Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/ashmillenniumwood>

This is used to keep local people up to date with what's going on the wood and what's planned. It covers events, activities, work and the changing face of the wood. It has over 280 followers.

Occasional articles are placed in the village newsletter and "The Leveller" (a publication covering a number of local villages) although this has been hit and miss over the last year. Involvement in the Ash & Martock Nature group enables information sharing and updating on activities.

Posters are put at the entrance to the wood and at locations around the village to announce events.

For those interested in more in-depth information, there is a dedicated website:

<https://ashmillenniumwood.wordpress.com>

An interpretation board has been erected at the entrance to the wood, with a space for A5/A4 posters underneath.

## **9. Management**

The site is managed by the “Millennium Wood Management Group”, with a manager (also the main volunteer) responsible for defining and implementing projects and ensuring maintenance work is carried out. The group has a formal constitution and its own bank account.

Volunteers are mainly members of the group but also others from the local area who help out with maintenance tasks and event organisation.

Contractors are employed to take a hay cut and bale the meadow and to cut the paths. These form the major part of maintenance costs.

The main elements of income are:

- Maintenance Grant from Ash Parish Council
- Project funding from external sources
- Donations from “Friends” group
- Profit from events

Free trees, bulbs and seeds are obtained from sources such as the Woodland Trust.

Project funding has been gained in recent years from: People’s Postcode Lottery, SSDC, Wessex Water, Somerset Community Foundation, Martock Charity Shop and Viridor.

The main elements of cost are:

- Meadow scything and baling
- Grass cutting
- Tools, sundries
- Projects

Overall, it does appear that management of the site is successful. This is shown by the award in 2017 of the RHS “Its Your Neighbourhood” certificate with a rating of “Thriving”. In 2018 the award was given again with a rating of “Outstanding”. The site gained a Green Flag Community award in 2019 and again in 2020.

## **10. Constraints and SWOT Analysis**

Every site has constraints on how it is managed and limitations to the activities that can be carried on. The principal aims of the management group, providing a community wood that the people of the village can enjoy, and encouraging wildlife, limits the activities and development that can take place.



The principal constraint on successful and sustained management of the site relates to its ownership. Whilst the land is owned by the Parish Council, there is no guarantee that it will continue to support management for recreation and nature conservation. There is a covenant on the site that restricts its use to “agricultural, horticultural or equestrian”. At the same time, there are no protective devices in place to ensure that current use continues.

The variety of habitats limits the extent of activities that may take place, but these have not produced problems so far. There is a high degree of care shown by visitors so that habitats are not damaged but there can be difficulty in resolving competing activities such as children’s play and dog walking.

The action plan for the wood is informed by a SWOT analysis:

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IYN and Green Flag awards</li> <li>Active management</li> <li>Well regarded by local people</li> <li>Great place for families and children</li> <li>Educational value</li> <li>Accessibility</li> <li>Improving biodiversity</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited ongoing volunteer time</li> <li>Lack of commitment from some local people</li> <li>Conflicting uses (e.g. dogs)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growing acknowledgement of value</li> <li>Education potential</li> <li>Growing biodiversity</li> <li>Review of SSDC “Open Spaces” strategy</li> <li>Ash PC Tree Policy</li> <li>Legislation and local strategies</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unsecured future</li> <li>Lack of volunteer time</li> <li>Climate change</li> </ul>

An emerging threat is that of climate change. Successful planting and resilience will require knowledge of appropriate species and an enhanced water supply. It is not clear at the moment how these will be achieved.

Another threat in terms of resilience is the dependence of management on very few (and ageing!) volunteers. It is not clear how to achieve a succession at the moment without greater community involvement.

## **PART 2 – WHERE DO WE WANT TO GET TO?**

### **11. Management Plan Aim**

#### ***Vision***

The vision for Ash Millennium Wood is to provide a safe and peaceful green space for villagers whilst enhancing the site to provide a haven for wildlife.

#### ***Aims***

The management group's principle aims for the site are:

- To provide a community wood that the people of the village can enjoy; a place for peaceful, informal recreation
- To undertake projects to encourage wildlife and enhance knowledge of the natural environment and its management
- To foster community spirit by providing an opportunity for villagers including school children to participate safely in communal activities

The management group will continue to develop an asset for the village that offers a welcoming place for low intensity recreational use that is compatible with its nature conservation features, ensuring the site's integrity is maintained for the benefit of the local community. A balance is to be achieved between all key elements and none shall, within reason, dominate others.

#### ***Objectives***

- Providing a community wood that the people of the village can enjoy; a place for peaceful, informal recreation
- Undertaking projects to encourage wildlife and enhance knowledge of the natural environment and its management
- Fostering community spirit by providing an opportunity for villagers including school children to participate safely in communal activities
- In the longer term, providing sustainable resources such as wood products
- Creating and executing a management plan for the site and defining work schedules
- Maintaining the health of the trees on the site through the application of woodland management principles
- Raising funds and receiving contributions where appropriate to finance the work
- Publicising and promoting the work
- Obtaining expert advice when appropriate
- Recruiting and supervising volunteers
- Managing external contractors
- Endeavouring to maintain sure, safe and easy access to the site at all reasonable times.
- Organising meetings, training courses and events
- Take any action that is lawful, which would help it to fulfil its aims.

## PART 3 – HOW DO WE GET THERE?

### 12. Five Year Work Programme

Last year tasks completed, in addition to general maintenance:

- DBS certification obtained
- Tree health survey undertaken
- Removal of trees and branches required by tree health survey
- Planting of "understorey" trees
- Clearing of some brambles on edge of meadow
- Maintenance of shed, front fence and circular bench
- New entrance signs installed
- Chippings put on worst bits of paths.
- Woodland balance beams and "xylophone" installed

This section outlines the work that we will carry out over the next five years in order to achieve the aims and objectives above.

Work	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
<b>A Welcoming Place</b>					
Maintain interpretation board at entrance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maintain small information boards	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue planting of native bulbs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maintain paths	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Safe and Secure</b>					
Monitor litter and dog fouling and take appropriate action	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Monitor footpaths and fences and take action	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carry out tree safety surveys	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Clean and Well Maintained</b>					
Litter pick the site	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clean and maintain seats	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clean and maintain signage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prune trees as required	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Promote positive liaison with visitors	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Sustainability</b>					
Continue not to use pesticides or herbicides	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue to maintain grass heaps	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Develop composting arrangements	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue to use rain capture in the wildflower plot	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Investigate compostable tree guards and employ	✓				



Work	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
<b>Conservation</b>					
Carry out nature surveys	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue planting appropriate trees	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue to scythe and bale meadow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Plant vigorous wildflowers on meadow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue to cut hedgerow		✓		✓	
Encourage biodiversity with appropriate planting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Create new habitats	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cut back field margins		✓		✓	
<b>Community Involvement</b>					
Plan activities for school and scouts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Organise events			✓		✓
Work with people interested in helping maintain the site	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carry out a user survey		✓			✓
Investigate possibility of wildlife walks		✓			
Promote volunteering opportunity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Engage with "Ash & Martock Nature"	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Marketing</b>					
Ensure website and FB page is kept current	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Update signage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Occasional articles in "The Leveller"	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Management</b>					
Ensure management plan is followed and monitored	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Review plan annually	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Liaise with external bodies for advice on habitat management	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue to submit external funding bids for projects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Take part in SSDC "Open Spaces" strategy	✓	✓			
Elicit user group requirements for better service/features	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

**13. Annual work plan: 2021**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Elements</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>Dependencies</b>	<b>Action</b>
Cleanliness	Litter, dog mess	To ensure the wood is a pleasant place to visit	Volunteer time	Weekly check
Maintenance	Furniture, fences, signs	To ensure infrastructure is in good repair	Volunteer time	Weekly check
Wild flower meadow	To be cut and cuttings removed	To reduce fertility and dominance of coarse grass	Contractor Volunteer time	Commission scythe and bale July/August
Meadow margins	Cut back brambles, wildflower planting	To provide pollinator habitat	Volunteer time	Winter project
Wild flower plot	Wild flower planting	To provide an interesting feature and support pollinators	Active school involvement Volunteer time	Plant annuals Weed beds Maintain bug homes
Hedgerow habitat	Manage hedgerow	To provide habitat for species that thrive there. Emphasis on Autumn berries for food	Volunteer time	Cut back every second year
Wild area (west side of site)	Area left as habitat	Contains neglected ditch that may provide permanent "wet area"	Volunteer time	Establish windrows, increase rock habitat, repair log habitat
Damp habitat	Planting Drainage	To provide habitat To provide more interest To improve footpath	Funding Volunteer time	Trial drainage channels Plant willows Cut black maul in Autumn
Log/rock/windrow habitats	Build and maintain	To provide invertebrate habitats and habitats for overwintering wildlife	Volunteer time Materials	Acquire wood and stone Refresh as required
Footpath	Sinuous path/s through trees	To provide more interest for visitors	Volunteer time	Agreed mowing regime Winter laying down of wood chippings
Woodland	Additional planting of understorey trees and shrubs	To improve woodland structure To provide more interest To provide habitat	Funding Volunteer time	Continue underplanting as opportunity arises. Autumn.
Woodland	Ground cover to be cut in succession	To reduce fertility of soil and therefore dominance of nettles/thistles/coarse grass To allow visitors to access area between trees	Volunteer time Contractor	Strim
Nesting boxes	Nest boxes to be installed and maintained	To encourage nesting birds	Funding Volunteer time	Continue
Activities	Community groups	To engage and educate youth groups	Engagement Volunteer time	Liaise with providers

## **PART 4 – HOW DO WE KNOW WHEN WE HAVE ARRIVED?**

### **14. Monitoring and review**

This final section looks at how we will monitor progress and how the Plan is updated.

A management plan is only a snap-shot in time and will need periodic updating to keep it relevant. This may include alterations to reflect policy changes, new methods, changes in resources or feedback from users and others.

The plan has been written to meet the criteria for the Green Flag Award. In large part the quality of the plan will be assessed against the outcome of the application and the feedback report received from the judges.

In order to keep the plan relevant an annual management plan review will be carried out. Much of the site description, policy and aims are unlikely to change from year to year, but the final sections of the plan are more dynamic and the whole plan will need reviewing and updating where necessary. The most important part of the review will be to look at the Five-Year Work Programme and, from this, drawing up the Annual Action Plan for the coming year.

Prior to the expiry of this Plan on 31 December 2025, a full management plan review and rewrite will be carried out.



## **Appendix 1: Treasurer's Report for year ending 31 March 2021**

The accounts show that the Management Group is on a sound financial footing.

On 1 Apr 2021 the reconciled bank balance was £1,160.64

Total Income during the period was £675.00

Major items were:	Ash PC Maintenance Grant	£550.00
	Friends Donations	£125.00

Total Expense during the period was £834.98

Major items were:	Nesting boxes, feeders, food	£249.83
	Consumables	£54.83
	Machinery Hire	£360.00
	Trees, plants, seeds	£214.76

Signed

Jack Parker

## **Appendix 2: Testimonials**

### **Ash CE VC Primary School**

***Rebecca Bennett, Headteacher, Ash CE VC Primary School 25/5/2021***

The Ash Millennium wood is central to our outdoor learning curriculum at Ash Primary School. From the age of 2-11 our pupils enjoy access to this space for rest, study and activity. We find peace amongst the trees and engage in worship and assembly in the space.

On a weekly basis, pupils receive group teaching from a forest school leader and are able to develop emotional skills such as collaboration and respect as part of a group. They also have opportunities to use tools and build dens, develop narratives and imaginative play.

Our pupils know more and remember more about the natural world when they can study plants, minibeasts and other creatures in the wood.

Our staff take a well-earned break in the space and the quiet opportunities for reflection support our ongoing wellbeing strategy, not least whilst we recover from the impact of the COVID pandemic on us all.

In the future we hope to use the Millennium Wood to develop our partnership with all our stakeholders and the wider community to enable our pupils, staff and community to develop their love for the natural world.

### **First Fosseway Scout Group**

***Julie Holman, Scout Leader, 28/5/2021***

Ash Millennium woods is an invaluable resource for our Scout group. It is within a couple of miles of our usual meeting place. It has easy access and adjacent car park. The woods are securely fenced providing a safe place for young people to freely explore the woods.

Over the last couple of years we have done nature trails learning vast amounts about the different habitats in the woods, their importance and what species they support. We have done fire lighting, learnt how to use axes, saws and knives, had a chainsaw demonstration. Planted trees, thrown wild flower seed bombs, made mud sculptures, identified trees, put up tents, practiced fire lighting, toasted marshmallows, had a try at archery, plus many more wonderful activities.

Mick has been extremely knowledgeable in answering numerous questions from the Scouts and very keen and helpful in any activity that we have wanted to run in the woods. And if it was a specialist activity he has always found A MAN THAT CAN!

All the children in our group love our time spent in the woods and we look forward to spending many more hours there.

### **Pachamama's Forest School 18/4/2021**

***Heidi Daniel 18/4/2021***

When I first discovered Millennium Woods I knew that this was where I wanted to start my Forest School. The woods have a special feeling and look beautiful in every season. It is clear they are well looked after and nurtured by a community of people who have a love of

nature. I particularly liked that the area is secure and enclosed from traffic and thoroughfares and felt this would be safe for the families that attend Forest School.

As an Early Years teacher and Forest School Leader, I believe spending time in the great outdoors is an important part of children's development. There are many benefits to spending time outside, including supporting mental health, developing physical skills as well as social development. The adults have also benefitted from coming out to the woods, especially during COVID19, and many have visited during the lockdowns for exercise, fresh air and mental health reasons due to the calm and peaceful atmosphere.

Since starting my Forest School the number of families attending has doubled. The parents have commented on how much their children have enjoyed the sessions in Millennium Woods and enjoy the freedom the woods allows young children. The children have gained confidence and feel free to explore while their parents can still keep them in their sights. It has also been a pleasure to see so many young children develop a love and respect of nature through spending time in such a special place.

The recent additions, the tree trunks for balancing and the wooden glockenspiel, have been excitedly received and they have added an extra dimension to our sessions. It has made the younger families of the community feel valued and welcomed so thank you for that.