

Ash Millennium Wood

Five Year Management Plan

Update May 2023

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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.

RHS "It's Your Neighbourhood" 2017

".....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."

Green Flag Award 2021

"A wonderful site that just seems to get things right with a modest mix. The array of habitats, learning opportunities and informal activities make it a hit with families and dog walkers alike. Well done to everyone involved in maintaining this fantastic community site for all the residents and schools that value it."

This small site occupies a former agricultural 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 principal aims of the management group are:

- ensure the provision of a good quality open space that is accessible and well connected to the surrounding area, attractive and appealing, safe and contributing to the biodiversity of the area and of benefit to the community;
- provide and maintain a community wood where the Parishioners of Ash, and others, can enjoy 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 and volunteering.

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:

- *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)*
- *SSDC Community Biodiversity Toolkit (2022)*
- *DEFRA Environmental Improvement Plan (2023)*

All 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. Public access is via the village car park

and a new easy access gate has been installed to enable wheelchair and buggy users to enter without impediment. There is a further entrance from the school grounds which is kept locked for safeguarding reasons and only unlocked for school activities.

Paths are covered with woodchip in winter to help keep them accessible.

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 formal seating installations: a new tree seat, memorial bench, picnic table and a log circle for children.

A "Forest School" area has been set up in the wooded area.

This includes a den, log installations and an arrangement for raising an army surplus parachute as a shelter.



The site has been of particular value to the village during the COVID restrictions. 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 2020, 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 formal 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 site manager has a LANTRA (National Training Organization for The Land Based Industries) certificate for brush cutting.

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.

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 required. 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 new poo bag dispenser has been installed. 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 strimmers. 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 (20+ years old) trees are removed on a selective basis. Brash is used to restock windrows and "dead hedges". New planting is predominantly understorey specimens as the canopy grows. Signs of disease are noted (especially in ash) and remedial cutting undertaken when deemed necessary.

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

5. Environmental Management

Water for the wildflower plot is taken from butts that collect 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.

We have ceased the use of bonfires to burn brash over the past year. Instead a trial is taking place of creating "dead hedges" around the periphery. This is to ensure carbon is not released unnecessarily as well as to create further habitat.

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.

We hope to intensify the process of recording species on site in order to establish the case for designation as a "Local Nature Reserve".

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.

We hope to review and update the inventory of trees and to place number discs on the trees themselves to aid identification.

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.

The site is within a corridor defined by B-Lines as an insect corridor where the habitat for pollinators is to be encouraged. 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. Additional planting has taken place here with a "South Somerset Mix" of wildflower seeds.

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. We hope to set up a number of nesting tubes and reptile mats to aid in species monitoring. Hazel coppicing is being undertaken in a small way to encourage regeneration.

7. Community Involvement

The site is owned by the Parish Council which has delegated ongoing management to the "Millennium Wood Management Group" and has agreed an annual maintenance fee. The arrangement is documented in a "Memorandum of Understanding". 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 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.



In 2021, the site took part in the Keep Britain Tidy national “Love Parks Week”. This included an invitation to visitors to write what they thought of the wood.

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. A “Biodiversity Working Group” has also been formed to advise Ash Parish Council on biodiversity issues. The wood will be a key project for this group, initiating biodiversity monitoring and considering designation as a Local Nature Reserve.

The site is run by volunteers. There is an ongoing campaign to recruit new helpers through the local volunteers’ network (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.

Activities

Outdoor learning is becoming more popular 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.

Pachamama’s Forest School now run regular activities for younger children during term time.

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

The local "1st 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 bug houses.

Events

Various events have been organised on the site over recent years. 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.



In 2021, Ash School PTA organised a "Christmas Woodland Walk" for all pupils at the school. This included festoon lights, a reindeer enclosure, meeting Father Christmas and woodland activities. In 2023 the PTA organised an "Alice in Wonderland" themed Easter egg hunt.

We helped the PTA to run a "Millennium Wood Festival" in 2022 and hope to involve more of the local community in a similar event in 2023.



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> 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 370 followers.

There is also a business page on Google Maps: [Ash Millennium Wood - Google Maps](#) where visitors leave reviews of their experience on the site.



Ash Millennium Wood

4.7 ★★★★★ (22) ⓘ
Community garden

Occasional articles are placed in the village newsletter and "The Pinnacle" (a publication covering a number of local villages). 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.

The site is featured as an exemplar in South Somerset District Council's "Biodiversity Toolkit": [Community Environment Toolkit | Environment \(southsomersetenvironment.co.uk\)](#). This is designed for community groups, local landowners, Parish and Town Councils, schools and youth groups to help them take a lead in preserving and restoring biodiversity in their communities. It also features in SSDC's "Get SuSSed" sustainability newsletter.

9. Management

The site is managed by the "Millennium Wood Management Group", with a site manager responsible for defining and implementing projects and ensuring maintenance work is carried out. The group has a formal constitution and its own bank account. The group has agreed a "Memorandum of Understanding" with Ash Parish Council that sets out respective roles in meeting a common goal.

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

There are also volunteers who are local landowners who are paid for the use of mechanical equipment to cut hay on the meadow and to cut the paths. These form the major part of maintenance costs.

The main elements of income are:

- Maintenance Fee 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, Ash Parish Council and NextEnergy.

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 has been awarded a Green Flag Community award each year from 2019.

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 variety of habitats limits the extent of activities that may take place, but these have not produced insurmountable 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>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">IYN and Green Flag awardsActive managementWell regarded by local peopleGreat place for families and childrenEducational valueAccessibilityImproving biodiversity	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Limited ongoing volunteer timeConflicting uses (e.g. dogs)
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Growing acknowledgement of valueEducation potentialGrowing biodiversity awarenessLegislation and local strategies	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Unsecured futureSuccessionClimate change

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 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

- creating and executing a rolling five year management plan for the Wood;
- defining work schedules;
- applying annually for the Green Flag Award accreditation, the benchmark international standard for publicly accessible green space;
- maintaining and enhancing the Wood in line with the Group's five year management plan;
- raising funds and receiving contributions where appropriate to finance the work of the Group;
- publicising and promoting our work;
- obtaining expert advice when appropriate;
- recruiting and supervising volunteers (including paid volunteers);
- engaging and managing external contractors;
- organising meetings and training courses as required;
- fostering community spirit by holding and enabling events and activities in the Wood;
- taking any action that is lawful which helps the Group fulfil its aims;
- Engaging with Somerset Wildlife Trust's Nature Recovery Network;
- Encouraging conservation, biodiversity and nature recording in the wider community.

PART 3 – HOW DO WE GET THERE?

12. Five Year Work Programme

Last year's projects and events completed:

- New tree bench funded and installed
- New dog bag dispenser funded and installed
- Commenced hedge laying on eastern boundary
- Achieved "Green Flag" Award
- Supported PTA "Millennium Wood Festival"
- Supported Forest School and PTA activities

New tasks for the coming year, to be agreed and scheduled:

- Support joint "Millennium Wood Festival"
- Support Forest School, youth group and PTA activities
- Research and purchase electric brushcutter
- Research and install water capture shelter
- Carry out ecological surveying tasks
- Promote "Local Nature Reserve" designation
- Review, with PC, elm trees safety on southern boundary
- Carry out tree inventory
- Retain "Green Flag" status

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

	2023_2024	2024_2025	2025_2026	2026_2027	2027_2028
A Welcoming Place					
Maintain interpretation board at entrance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maintain small information boards	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue planting of native bulbs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maintain paths	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Safe and Secure					
Monitor litter and dog fouling and take appropriate action	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Monitor footpaths and fences and take action	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carry out tree safety surveys	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clean and Well Maintained					
Litter pick the site	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clean and maintain seats	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clean and maintain signage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prune trees as required	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Promote positive liaison with visitors	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sustainability					
Continue not to use pesticides or herbicides	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue to maintain grass heaps	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue to use rain capture in the wildflower plot	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Investigate compostable tree guards and employ		✓			
Work	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Conservation					
Carry out nature surveys	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue planting appropriate trees	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue to scythe and bale meadow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cut hedgerow		✓		✓	
Encourage biodiversity with appropriate planting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Create new habitats	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cut back field margins		✓		✓	
Community Involvement					
Support 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"	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Marketing					
Ensure website and FB page is kept current	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Update signage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Occasional articles in "The Pinnacle"	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Management					
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	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Elicit user group requirements for better service/features	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Liaise regularly with Ash Parish Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

13. Annual work plan: 2023_2024

Work area	Elements	Reason	Dependencies	Action
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
Meadow margins	Cut back brambles, wildflower planting	To provide pollinator habitat	Volunteer time	Autumn/Winter
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	Lay next section of hedgerow. Cut back every 2 nd /3 rd year
Wild area (west side of site)	Area left as habitat. Manage "dead hedges"	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	Shape trees	Cut lower and dead branches to aid tree health	Volunteer time	Autumn/Winter
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	Autumn/Winter
Activities	Community groups	To engage and educate youth groups	Engagement Volunteer time	Liaise with providers
Bird feeders	Feeders filled and maintained	To encourage more birds to visit the wood	Funding Volunteer time	Continue

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.

Appendix 1: Treasurer's Report for year ending 31 March 2023

APPENDIX 1
MILLENNIUM WOOD MANAGEMENT GROUP
Treasurer's Report
Year ending 31st March 2023

The accounts show that the Millennium Wood Management Group is on a sound financial footing. On 31st March 2023 the reconciled bank balance was £1,445.84

Opening Balance 01/04/22	£959.73
Total Income	£2,414.00
Total Expenditure	£1,957.89
Closing Balance 31/03/23	£1,415.84

Note: Total income for year of £2,414.00 includes Ash Parish Council's annual management fee for the year 01/04/23 to 31/03/24 received in advance on 07/03/23.

INCOME SUMMARY

Ash PC Management Fee 2022/2023	600.00	
Ash PC Management Fee 2023/2024	660.00	
Grants	870.00	
Friends of the Wood	125.00	
Sale of Hay from Meadow	159.00	
Total Income		£2,414.00

EXPENDITURE SUMMARY

Mowing Meadow	135.00	
Bailing	87.00	
Grass Cutting	140.00	
Hedge Cutting	84.00	
Consumable	46.43	
Insurance	109.60	
Trees, Plants, Seeds, Compost	404.68	
Bird Feeders and Food	88.79	
Fixtures & Fittings	647.18	
Tools	66.89	
Miscellaneous Expenditure	148.32	
Total Expenditure		£1,957.89

Chair M. Wood
M. WOODEN

Treasurer 
D. GROVES

Date 12/4/2023

Date 12/4/2023

Appendix 2: Community User Groups

Ash CE VC Primary School (*Rebecca Bennett, Headteacher, Ash CE VC Primary School*)

The Millennium Wood is an essential resource for our school and Nursery. It provides a safe haven for our pupils and staff for rest and peace, and it is a valuable asset to our curriculum. The space provides an excellent focus for our nature studies and outdoor stories. We use the wood daily for forest school activities and practical learning, including mathematics and science.

We also use the wood for our outdoor assemblies and services. Our remembrance service is held in the wood annually and we are able to share this with our families and the local community. Now more than ever, our children and staff need time in nature. Our busy lives are enriched by the time we spend learning, playing or resting in the wood and we feel very fortunate to have this brilliant resource so close to our setting. It is part of what makes Ash such a special place.

First Fosseway Scout Group (*Julie Holman, Scout Leader*)

Ash Millennium woods continues to be an extremely valuable resource for 1st Fosseway Beaver Scouts. It is ideally located within a couple miles of our Scout hut. Easily accessible from the main road and has a good car park adjacent. Some of the Beavers in the group go to Ash School right next-door to the woods therefore are lucky to use the woods frequently. As a leader I like the different habitats that have been created, learning about these with Beavers is very important. Having the woods enclosed is a great safety feature for using the area with a group of young children. We have done numerous activities here, including putting up tents, toasting marshmallows, seed bombs, planting trees, making mud sculptures, treasure hunts, identifying plants and trees, making bug houses and a magical Xmas party following a trail of stars hung from trees to complete various challenges and ending the evening with warm spiced apple juice and biscuits.

This term we plan to visit the woods on 28th June for a nature ramble and learning the basics of tracking towards the Beaver Adventure Challenge badge. Mick and his team are amazingly enthusiastic and helpful with our group in suggesting ideas as well as supporting and running activities for the Beaver Scout. We are very keen to keep visiting the woods.

Pachamama's Forest School (*Heidi Daniel*)

My Forest School sessions at Millennium Wood have become increasingly more popular since the pandemic. Families come from as far away as Milborne Port and Bridgwater to enjoy the chance to get outside and play and learn together in a natural environment.

The Millennium Wood is very calm and relaxing. The children feel safe and confident to play and explore away from their parents and parents are secure in the knowledge that they can give their child some freedom. The benefits of the wood are invaluable to my families and to the whole development of their children. The sessions are designed to help children to learn and grow, make new friends, stay active and build confidence. The children, who visit us, get the opportunity to connect with nature as well as one another. They love the balancing beams, playing with the mud kitchen in the 'den' and running through the meadow.

For families, Millennium Wood is a natural playground that contributes to their child's positive development. It also provides parents the opportunity to meet other parents and support for their mental health.

Appendix 3: Constitution

CONSTITUTION OF THE MILLENNIUM WOOD MANAGEMENT GROUP

1. **Name**
The name of the group is the Millennium Wood Management Group (hereafter referred to as “the Group”)
2. **Aim**
The overall aim of the Group is to manage and improve the community woodland known as Ash Millennium Wood (hereafter referred to as “the Wood”). The principle aims of the group are to:
 - ensure the provision of a good quality open space that is accessible and well connected to the surrounding area, attractive and appealing, safe and contributing to the biodiversity of the area and of benefit to the community;
 - provide and maintain a community wood where the Parishioners of Ash, and others, can enjoy 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 and volunteering.
3. **Objectives**
The group will fulfil the aim by:
 - creating and executing a rolling five year management plan for the Wood;
 - defining work schedules;
 - applying annually for the Green Flag Award accreditation, the benchmark international standard for publicly accessible green space;
 - maintaining and enhancing the Wood in line with the Group’s five year management plan;
 - raising funds and receiving contributions where appropriate to finance the work of the Group;
 - publicising and promoting our work;
 - obtaining expert advice when appropriate;
 - recruiting and supervising volunteers (including paid volunteers);
 - engaging and managing external contractors;
 - organising meetings and training courses as required;
 - fostering community spirit by holding and enabling events and activities in the Wood;
 - taking any action that is lawful which helps the Group fulfil its aims.
4. **Membership and Meetings**
 - Membership of the Group is open to all those interested in helping the Group to achieve its aims;
 - The Group will hold an Annual General Meeting of members;
 - Other meetings will be held as and when required;
 - Officers of the Group namely the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, will be elected each year by and from the membership at the Annual General Meeting;
 - The Secretary will maintain a list of all current members;
 - Members of the Group may resign their membership at any time by giving written notice to the Chair;
 - Three members of the Group including at least one of the Officers, will constitute a quorum.
5. **Finance**
 - A Group bank account will be held in the name of the "Millennium Wood Management Group" and administered by the Treasurer;

CONSTITUTION OF THE MILLENNIUM WOOD MANAGEMENT GROUP

- The Treasurer and two other nominated members of the Group will be authorised as signatories of the Group bank account and any two of these will be required to authorise all payments;
 - Any monies accruing through grants, fund raising or donations shall be used solely for the fulfilment of the aims of the Group;
 - No financial commitments shall be entered into unless there are sufficient cleared funds in the bank account of the Group to cover those commitments and any others already made that have yet to be invoiced.
6. **Risk Management**
- The Group will hold insurance for Public Liability, Employers Liability and Trustee Indemnity.
7. **Management Group Meetings**
- The group will aim to meet at least annually
 - The quorum for a meeting shall be three (3).
8. **Relationship with Ash Parish Council**
- A Memorandum of Understanding sets out the respective roles of the Group in managing the Wood and Ash Parish Council as the owners of the Wood;
 - The Chair will present the rolling five year management plan of the Group to the Annual Parish Meeting highlighting a summary of work carried out in the previous year and proposals for future work;
 - The Chair will liaise with the Parish Council’s representative on the Group on projects, events, and Parish Council funding.
9. **Alteration of the Constitution**
- Proposals for amendments to this constitution, or dissolution (see Clause 10) must be delivered to the Chair in writing and be supported by at least two members;
 - The Chair in conjunction with the Secretary and Treasurer shall then decide on the date of a special meeting to be called to discuss such proposals, giving at least 28 days clear notice.
 - Any changes made to this constitution must be agreed by at least two thirds of those members present and voting at the special meeting.
10. **Dissolution**
- The Group may be wound up at any time if agreed by two thirds of those members present and voting at the special meeting;
 - Upon dissolution, assets will be returned to their providers if requested, otherwise they will be passed to another group with similar aims.
11. **Adoption of the Constitution**
- This constitution was adopted by all members of the Group present at the meeting held on:

21st April 2022

Signed:

..... M. Wood (Chair)
..... M. Wood (Secretary)
..... [Signature] (Treasurer)

Appendix 4: Memorandum of Understanding

ASH PARISH COUNCIL

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

This Arrangement is between Ash Parish Council ('the Council'), owners of the land known as Ash Millennium Wood, and

Ash Millennium Wood Management Group ('the Group') who offer voluntary services in relation to the Wood for and on behalf of the Council for the benefit of the residents of Ash Parish.

PURPOSE

This MOU is a statement of joint intent which indicates the broad principles that the Council and the Group ('the Partners') will seek to apply when making decisions on strategy, operational management and support.

The Partners acknowledge that this MOU is not a legally binding contract but, as outlined above, a statement of intent which provides the foundation blocks for on-going cooperation.

GENERAL

The Group is an "unincorporated association" with a constitution and bank account. It consists of individuals who are prepared to offer their services in the management of the Wood on an entirely voluntary basis. The Group is a committee of members which meets from time to time to discuss matters relevant to the Wood and the Group.

SHARED PRINCIPLES

The Partners aim to:

- ensure the provision of a good quality open 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;
- 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.

BENEFITS OF JOINT WORKING

The Partners consider that there are benefits in working together:

- Achieve shared objectives that would not be feasible otherwise;
- "Best Value" provision of services to Parishioners (Added Value);
- Utilise local resources and appropriate expertise in managing the site;
- Benefit from best external technical advice;
- Give volunteers a feeling of pride and custodianship of a local resource.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Council owns the freehold of the site, on behalf of the Parish, and is therefore in full control of land use, Town Planning issues and in determining the overall manner in which it is managed. It is responsible for managing budgets to meet Parish needs.

The Group will undertake the operational management of the site. It engages the community in the day to day running of a wood through practical activities or active participation in management planning.

The Group will (as far as it can, given its voluntary nature):

- maintain and enhance the site in line with the shared principles;
- produce and publish an annual five-year rolling management plan and include any specific restrictions given by the insurers and present the plan to the Annual Parish Council Meeting;
- provide a list of the current Group Officers and their roles and update the Parish Clerk of any changes;
- consult and seek agreement from the appointed Parish Council Representative on projects and events that are not covered by the five-year plan, who will then refer to the rest of the Parish Council as required;
- Meet the Parish Council's financial reporting standards (as agreed with the Responsible Financial Officer);
- Comply with all relevant legislation, by-laws and insurance requirements;
- ensure there are appropriate risk assessments in place;
- The Group will demonstrate that it is carrying out its role by retention of the "Green Flag" award for the site year on year.

The Council will:

- ensure a budget-line is maintained to support maintenance costs for the site;
- appoint a Councillor to take an active role in the Group and to liaise with the Parish Council.

LIMITATION OF LIABILITY

The Group will hold insurance for Public Liability, Employers Liability and Trustee Indemnity.

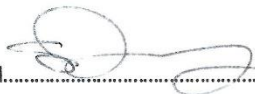
The Council, as landowner, will ensure it has equivalent insurance cover for criminal or accidental damage to structures including fences, shed, raised beds, gate and signage, and Public Liability insurance for users of the woods.

REVIEW AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION

By following the principles set out in this document and pursuing a collaborative approach wherever possible it is expected that disputes on how to address infrastructure needs will be avoided or at least kept to an absolute minimum. Where differences arise parties will take all reasonable steps to reach a mutually acceptable resolution.

ENDING PARTNERSHIP

At some point this partnership arrangement could come to an end. The arrangement may be terminated at any time and with immediate effect in writing by either Party.

Signed.......... Date.....5/3/22.....
on behalf Ash Parish Council

Signed.......... Date.....5/3/2022.....
on behalf of Ash Millennium Wood Management Group