

# **ASH PARISH COUNCIL**

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## **Ash Annual Parish Meeting**

Meeting of	<b>Ash Parish</b>
Time	<b>19:00hrs</b>
Date	<b>Tuesday 06<sup>th</sup> May 2025</b>
Venue	<b>Ash Pavilion</b>

**Everyone is invited to attend**

### **AGENDA**

01. To receive the apologies for absence
02. To approve and sign as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting
03. Chairman of the Parish Council's report
04. Village groups report
  - Millennium Wood report
  - Martock U3A
  - Millennium Wood management plan
05. Somerset Councillors report
06. Public open session

# **Minutes of Ash Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024 at 18.30 hrs**

**Present:** Councillor Steve Davey (Chair) and 10 Members of the Public

01 Apologies for Absence

Joyce Humphries

02 To Approve and sign as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED

03 Chairman of the Parish Council's report

## **Chair's Report 2024**

You might be surprised to hear it, but being on Ash Parish Council is far from glamorous. Most of the job involves organising, or in many cases just doing, the minutiae of Parish life. This might be arranging for the consecration of the new cemetery; sorting new disabled access paths for the village car park and the recreation ground along with proper access gates; providing, installing and maintaining defibrillators; planting trees and hedgerows and making sure that Parish land is well maintained.

To do all of this, we set and administer the Parish Precept - the share of your Council Tax that pays for the running of the Parish. For the past three years we have managed to keep this precept at the same level and not increased it at all. When the cost-of-living crisis was at its peak, we wanted to do as much as possible to help parishioners to make ends meet. Now that things are easing, we have had to face reality and increase the precept for the first time in three years.

During this three-year period, estimates for the accumulative rate of inflation using ONS data is around 27%. Quite simply, everything that we do on your behalf is costing more than it did three years ago. Having the rate of inflation drop to something reasonable doesn't mean that prices have gone down. It means that prices are going up more slowly, and unfortunately, we have had to reflect that by raising our Parish Precept by 14% - a little over half of what inflation has been doing over the same period.

The situation is not helped by the fact that the combination of government cuts and previous financial incompetence has led to the newly and expensively dreamt up Somerset Council trying to shirk off many of their responsibilities on to Parish Councils. They have presented us with a number of these 'opportunities' under the justification that we can charge you whatever we like and get away with it, whereas they are limited by statute. What they don't acknowledge is that through your council tax, you have already paid them to do the things that they are suggesting that we charge you again for.

Whilst government funding decisions have undoubtedly contributed to the financial position, there is a negative financial legacy from previous iterations of the various

non-unified Somerset councils have also played a part - such as apparently spending £289 million on a property portfolio that is now worth only £220 million. We are also yet to see any of the promised financial benefits from the expensive creation of the unified Somerset authority.

Luckily, Somerset don't do a great deal directly for this Parish, and we are actively resisting all attempts to take on extra things at your expense, although we do have to make some form of contingency. For example, if Somerset stop paying for dog poo bins to be emptied then we will either have to step in, or we will literally and metaphorically be in excrement.

04 Village Group Reports

## **ASH IN BLOOM – 2024 REPORT**

Over the past year, our already small group of active supporters has dwindled further. Consequently, our plans for 2024 will be adjusted to be slightly less ambitious than previous years. However, we remain confident that with our current limited volunteer resources, these goals can still be attained.

Our primary focus will be on the planting and maintenance of summer floral displays and Christmas decorations in the planters and pole-planters along Main Street, stretching from the buildouts at the Old School House to the lower end of the village.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Parish Council for their generous £500 grant towards our endeavours.

One of our greatest challenges remains the regular watering required by the plants throughout the summer. We are pleased to report that last year, four residents volunteered to water the plants near their homes.

While this assistance was invaluable, we continue to seek more help. If you are willing to water a planter near your property, please reach out to us at [ashinbloom123@gmail.com](mailto:ashinbloom123@gmail.com)

It is evident that we are in constant need of additional volunteers. If you are interested in contributing in any way, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please don't hesitate to contact me via phone at 01935 825020 or email at [ashinbloom123@gmail.com](mailto:ashinbloom123@gmail.com)

Regards  
Antoinette Groves  
Chair Ash in Bloom

## **Millennium Wood Group**

Biodiversity work continues as does the general maintenance. The group is pushing for recognition as a nature reserve. This will strongly help with ongoing opportunities in the future.

No Mow for the year will be implemented for the verge at the front of the Parish Car Park in aid of Biodiversity.

# ASH PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk:

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The hedgerow in the new cemetery is doing well. Ten of the plants failed, but there is a nursery in place for any replacements needed.  
Sheep fleece with chippings will be used as mulch in future.

## 05 County Councillor's Report

Somerset Councillor Emily Pearlstone agreed with the comments made by the Chair.

It wasn't until Somerset Council took over, that the true financial situation was clear. Covid money had shielded the truth.

Investments for the future had been made. Some were good, some were bad.

Comments were made regarding an expensive mailshot regarding waste collections. This was the only way to ensure that the information got to everyone as not all residents of the County have access to social media.

To save money on waste collections, boundaries and routes are being replanned. Emily asked that the Councillors are notified of any problems and also to note any positives.

Somerset Council will carry on the try and do their best to save money where possible.

Losing District means that towns are now paying for big amenities and ones that are not just being used by the town.

In the next 6 – 8 months staff costs and jobs will be reviewed.

Cllr Steve Davey that Somerset Cllr Emily Pearlstone for attending the meeting.

Mary Rhonda (Parishoner) noted that everyone, Ash in Bloom, The Millennium Wood Group and Ash Parish Councillors deserved the Parish's thanks.

Cllr Steve Davey thanked all residents who attend Parish Meetings.

The meeting closed at 18.58pm

## **ASH PARISH COUNCIL - CHAIRMAN'S REPORT MAY 2025**

The last year has seen some personnel changes at Ash Parish Council, and to start off with, I would like to thank Cllr Lesley Andrew and our former Clerk Julie Ferguson for their much appreciated work on the Parish Council. I would also like to welcome Zannette Bougourd as our new Clerk.

Parish Councils are in a unique and somewhat incongruous position in local government. All of our Councillors are unpaid volunteers, but whereas local authorities such as Somerset Council are not legally allowed to increase your council tax by more than 4.99% without government permission, we have no such limit. Due to the increasing budget deficit in Somerset Council's budget, permission was given by government to increase Council Tax by 7.5% for this financial year 2025/6.

We could, if we so choose, increase our share of your Council Tax by whatever we want. Despite this eye-watering power, you might have noticed that the Ash Parish Council Precept has increased this year by a minimal 1.79% this year. There are a number of reasons for this – in part we found ourselves between clerks for some four months and during that time, myself and Caz Halfhide the Deputy Chair muddled our way through as (unpaid) volunteer Clerks.

The bottom line though is that we found ourselves better off than we budgeted for last year, and we didn't need to charge you more, so we didn't!

We regularly get advised that we should charge as much as we think we can get away with. This is a notion that your Parish Council has taken the communal decision to reject on principle.

We are also careful with the money that we do raise from the Parish, and always endeavour to spend it wisely. It isn't always popular: there are always opinions about things that we should be spending your money on, and we do regularly get pressure to throw money at problems that are outside of our remit.

Not least of all, from Somerset Council are trying to

Ash Parish Council are helped to manage your finances responsibly by the selfless assistance of a small group of volunteers: the Millennium Woods Group, Ash in Bloom and the Ash Parish Fete Planning Group all give up their time in order to make the Parish a better place. Although outside of the Parish Council remit, the volunteers who run Ash Village Hall also do an incredible job for the Parish.

It is sad to realise though that these volunteers are a tiny proportion of our Parish residents. Whether it is planting a hedge or running a fete, it always seems to be the same faces who step forwards to help.

When you look at your Council Tax bill, it is them who you should really be thanking, but more than that, why don't you make this the year that you step forward to volunteer as well. Not only do we currently have a vacancy on Ash Parish Council, we are always looking for people to help in the Millennium Woods, at the Parish Fete or just next time we put out a call for volunteers. You really would be more than welcome, and as well as making the Parish a better place you will be helping to keep our share of the Council Tax lower for everyone!

## Ash Millennium Wood – 2025 Report

Volunteers continue to maintain the village's community wood to a high standard with the help of funding from the Parish Council. The management plan for 2025 has been posted on the village website.

Last year's projects and events completed:

- Supported joint "Millennium Wood Festival" in September
- Supported Forest School, youth group and PTA activities
- Retained "Green Flag" status
- Habitat enhancements
- Agreed dog control policy with PC
- Campaigned for volunteers in the village

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

- Support joint "Millennium Wood Festival" in September
- Support Forest School, youth group and PTA activities
- Continue "Local Nature Reserve" process with Somerset Council
- Retain "Green Flag" status
- Undertake SWT habitat (hibernaculum and scrape) project
- Implement new meadow management regime
- Investigate feasibility of installing composting toilet
- Investigate on-line voluntary donations scheme
- Continue campaign for volunteers

There will be a "Millennium Wood Festival" on 20<sup>th</sup> September and Parishioners are invited to contact me if they wish to be involved.

Thanks to the volunteers from the village and elsewhere who give up their time and effort to look after the wood. It should be noted that we definitely need more help from any Parishioners who want to get involved in practical nature conservation.

Thanks

Mick Wooden

06<sup>th</sup> May 2025 – report from Martock & District U3A.

Martock and District u3a was founded in 2016 and now has approximately 247 members.

We have over 20 groups running each week and listings of these may be found on our website [martocku3a.org.uk](http://martocku3a.org.uk). In addition to our groups we also hold a monthly meeting in Martock Parish Hall. These meetings always have a speaker, followed by home made refreshments costing £3.

Our next meeting is on Wednesday May 14<sup>th</sup> starting promptly at 2.30. The talk, a potted history of Quakerism will be given by Mr Richard Salter.

We aim to make talks as varied as possible and information regarding upcoming topics can also be found on the website.

If you are looking for like minded people to learn, laugh and have fun with then contact myself Chris Atkins, [martocku3achair24@gmail.com](mailto:martocku3achair24@gmail.com)

With thanks

Chris Atkins  
Chair Martock & District u3a.





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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.

Green Flag Award 2021

Somerset Environmental Records Centre 2024

*"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 little haven in Ash is a very popular and valuable asset to the local community, providing opportunities for learning and wellbeing for children and adults alike. The hard work of the management team is already paying off, with records of slow worms and the nationally declining and protected dormouse in 2023, as well as a wide variety of other animals and plants, proving that it is a valuable wildlife asset too. It has won a Green Flag award each year since 2019 and would be a worthy recipient of Local Nature Reserve status.*

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, numerous habitats 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:

- *Natural England "Nature Nearby" Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance (2010)*
- *HM Government "A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment" (2018)*
- *Somerset County Council Pollinator Action Plan (2018)*
- *SSDC Environment Strategy (2019)*
- *Ash PC Tree Policy (2020)*
- *HM Government "Environment Act" 2021*
- *Somerset Wildlife Trust: Wilder Somerset (2021)*
- *England Trees Action Plan (2021)*
- *SSDC Community Biodiversity Toolkit (2022)*
- *DEFRA Environmental Improvement Plan (2023)*
- *Somerset Tree Strategy (2023)*
- *Ash PC Biodiversity Strategy (2023)*

All these sources stress the value of access to green spaces, especially woodland and the value trees have for nature recovery and climate change adaptation.



## 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 an 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 was 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 nearly half of adults in England report spending more time outdoors than before the pandemic (45%, March 2022). Close to four in ten say that nature and wildlife are more important than ever to their wellbeing (39%, March 2022). The National Trust has recently carried out a survey that found more than three-quarters of children want to spend more time in nature. The Trust is calling on the government to live up to its previous promise for every person to be 15

minutes away from nature – a target backed by 80% of parents in the survey – by enshrining the access in law.

### **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 Somerset 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 issues of dogs not being under control. A new sign has been installed that is more definitive about what "under close control" means for dog owners.

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.

Ideally, the meadow is mechanically scythed and baled by contractors in late summer after the main flowering to allow setting of seed. The hay collected from the meadow in the past was baled and sold on to support ongoing costs. Unfortunately, our contractor has now retired and we need to find a new way to manage the meadow with a view to encouraging wildflowers.

Areas under the trees are also subjected to occasional “topping” using a brush cutter. 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 and new tree/shrub plantings is taken from a rainwater collection system. Butts collect rainfall from the shed roof and a lean-to roof has been constructed to divert rain into a new 1000l i.b.c. container.

No pesticides or herbicides are used on the site. Control of weeds in the wildflower plot is by hand pulling. A new battery operated brushcutter has been purchased to replace the previous petrol driven tool.

Grass cuttings are placed at a few locations on the edge of the site and left as habitat.

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 and 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 cuttings are left as heaps and “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.

An ecological survey was carried out in 2023 which found that “Ash Millennium Wood is a good wildlife haven in an otherwise intensively farmed environment, currently supporting a mosaic of



habitats that provides a biodiverse resource in the local area.” The survey found evidence of dormouse presence. A number of recommendations for habitat management and enhancement were made. As a result, we are pursuing the process of establishing the site as a “Local Nature Reserve”\*.

When the Somerset Nature Recovery Network is published it is likely that the site will be identified as a constituent part: a “stepping stone” contributing to wider biodiversity.

\*Local Nature Reserves are a statutory designation of places with wildlife features that are of special interest locally. They offer people opportunities to study or learn about nature or simply to enjoy it.

### **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, buckthorn 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.

There is evidence that work to date 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".

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.

Mechanical scything and baling was carried out until 2023 but we now have to consider other contractors or methods. The alternatives are:

- *Find contractor with the right equipment to cut and bale;*
- *Manual scything by a gang of volunteers and dumping of hay;*
- *Use of "Allen scythe" by volunteers and dumping of hay.*

### **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.

A grant from Somerset Wildlife Trust will support the creation of a hibernaculum and scrape on the along the northern edge of the site.

## 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 have been 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.

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

As part of this, Parishioners have been consulted on the plan and asked to comment on how the site is run and what changes they might like to see. The results are shown at Appendix 5. Most like the peacefulness and access to nature. Most also want the current management regime to continue although many also want greater control of dogs on the site. These responses feed into the management plan.

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)) through posters 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 with the school and PTA is now common. They were involved in a specific project to monitor dormice, installing habitat boxes, tubes and footprint tunnels.

The local “1<sup>st</sup> Fosseway” 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. Other Youth Groups are also beginning to use the site as a resource.



During 2024 four children volunteered on site as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award task.

### 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.

We have helped the PTA to run a "Millennium Wood Festival" since 2022 and hope to involve more of the local community in an event in September 2025.



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. The PTA organises themed Easter egg hunts.

## 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 400 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.

Occasional articles are placed in the village newsletter and "The Pinnacle" (a publication covering a number of local villages). Involvement in the Ash Biodiversity Action Group enables information sharing and updating on activities.



Ash Millennium Wood

4.7 ★★★★★ (22) ⓘ  
Community garden

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 \(southsomerseenvironment.co.uk\)](https://southsomerseenvironment.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 grass. 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
- Profit from events

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

The management fee charged to the Parish Council has been increased for 2025 because of higher contractor costs of path and meadow maintenance.

Project funding has been gained in recent years from: People's Postcode Lottery, SSDC, Somerset Community Foundation, Martock Charity Shop, Ash Parish Council, NextEnergy and Wessex Water for a project (completed in April 2024) including a rainwater capture system, electric brushcutter and tree/shrub/wildflower planting. Somerset Wildlife have given a grant for habitat creation during 2025.

The main elements of cost are:

- Meadow management
- 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:

<b>Strengths</b> IYN and Green Flag awards Active management Well regarded by local people Great place for families and children Educational value Accessibility Improving biodiversity	<b>Weaknesses</b> Limited ongoing volunteer time Conflicting uses (especially dogs)
<b>Opportunities</b> Growing acknowledgement of value Education potential Growing biodiversity awareness Legislation and local strategies	<b>Threats</b> Unsecured future Succession Climate 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.

## External recommendations

	Recommendations	Management Group response
<b>Green Flag inspection 2023:</b>	-Signage from the road -May need to consider opening some vistas, to ensure future sight lines and increase feeling of personal safety -May need to sign some dog free areas, to prevent damage to habitats -Engagement with wider community -Succession planning	-not thought necessary  -not thought appropriate to the site  -trying to control through refined "rules" -campaign for volunteers underway - campaign for volunteers underway
<b>Ecological Survey 2023:</b>	Increase coppicing of maple, hornbeam, hazel and willow	-coppicing taking place

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Cut meadow later (September)</li> <li>-More trees in hedgerow</li> <li>-Gapping up of hedgerow at S and SW</li> <li>-Sow yellow rattle</li> <li>-Small scrape in NW corner</li> <li>-More bird/bat/dormouse boxes</li> <li>-More surveys: invertebrate/ lower plants/birds</li> <li>-Monitoring of dormice/ reptiles and amphibians/ bats</li> <li>-Plant wetland species</li> <li>-Create more wood piles</li> <li>-Create reptile hibernacula</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-management being changed</li> <li>-more trees being planted</li> <li>-hedgerow planting taking place</li> <li>-not pursued as yet</li> <li>-2025 project</li> <li>-more boxes being put up</li> <li>-not pursued as yet</li> <li>-some dormouse monitoring taking place</li> <li>-2025 project</li> <li>-ongoing management</li> <li>-2025 project</li> </ul>
<b>Parishioner consultation 2024:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Continue current management</li> <li>-More dog control</li> <li>-More seating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-ongoing</li> <li>-new "under close control" signage; results to be reviewed</li> <li>-not considered necessary</li> </ul>
<b>Green Flag inspection 2025:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Composting toilet</li> <li>-Employ "able2achieve" as volunteers</li> </ul>	



## **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's Nature Recovery Network;
- pursuing "Local Nature Reserve" status to provide a degree of protection;
- 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:

- Supported joint "Millennium Wood Festival" in September
- Supported Forest School, youth group and PTA activities
- Retained "Green Flag" status
- Habitat enhancements
- Agreed dog control policy with PC
- Campaigned for volunteers in the village

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

- Support joint "Millennium Wood Festival" in September
- Support Forest School, youth group and PTA activities
- Continue "Local Nature Reserve" process with Somerset Council
- Retain "Green Flag" status
- Undertake SWT habitat (hibernaculum and scrape) project
- Implement new meadow management regime
- Investigate feasibility of installing composting toilet
- Investigate on-line voluntary donations scheme
- Continue campaign for volunteers

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

	2025_2026	2026_2027	2027_2028	2028_2029	2029_2030
<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	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue to use rain capture in the wildflower plot	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Investigate compostable tree guards and employ		✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Conservation</b>					
Carry out nature surveys	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue planting appropriate trees	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Manage meadow for wildflowers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cut hedgerow		✓		✓	
Encourage biodiversity with appropriate planting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Create new habitats	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cut back field margins		✓		✓	
<b>Community Involvement</b>					
Support activities for school and scouts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Organise events	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Work with people interested in helping maintain the site	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carry out a user survey		✓			✓
Promote volunteering opportunity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Engage with "Ash Biodiversity Group"	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Marketing</b>					
Ensure website and FB page is kept current	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Update signage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Occasional articles in "The Pinnacle"	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<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	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Elicit user group requirements for better service/features	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Liaise regularly with Ash Parish Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## 13. Annual work plan: 2025\_2026

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 cut Aug/Sep
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 <sup>nd</sup> /3 <sup>rd</sup> 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	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	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 2024

The year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 sees the Group Bank account with a healthy balance of £1030.14. This compares to £960.85 as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

The Group's income and expenditure have become more challenging. Income to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 was £1,395.00 (£3,251.00: 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024) while expenditure over the same period was £1325.71 (£3,045.43: 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024). That leaves us with a small surplus of £69.29.

However, of the income received during the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, a grant of £410.00 from Somerset Wildlife was paid on condition that it would be applied in creating a hibernaculum and a scrape. As that work will not be undertaken until some time in the 2025/2026 year, £410.00 has been accrued to that period.

Deducting this accrual of £410.00 from the income received in the 2024/25 year leaves us with £985.00 which when applied to expenditure of £1325.71 results a small deficiency of £340.71.

The increase in the contribution made by the Parish Council from £660.00, in the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, to £1060.00, for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026, will help us avoid any similar deficiency in the forthcoming year assuming of course that other items of income and expenditure remain broadly unchanged.

### INCOME SUMMARY

Ash PC Management Fee 2024/25	£660.00
Grant from Martock Charity Shop	£300.00
Friends of the Wood	£25.00
Somerset Wildlife*	£410.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1395.00</b>

### EXPENDITURE SUMMARY

Mowing Meadow	£195.00
Path Cutting	£100.00
Consumable	£392.76
Insurance	£130.80
Trees, Plants, Seeds, Compost	£252.06
Bird Feeders & Food	£13.00
Fixtures & Fittings	£65.76
Tools	£25.85
Labour	£135.00
Miscellaneous Expenditure	£15.48
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1325.71</b>

\*Note: Somerset Wildlife granted the Wood £410.00 on the basis that this would be applied for the purpose of creating a hibernaculum and a scrape. This work is expected to be undertaken in 2025/26.

<b>Total Income</b>	£1395.00
Of which accrued to 2025/26	£410
<b>Total Income (deducting income accrued to 2025/26)</b>	£985.00
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	£1325.71
<b>Total Income (Deducting income accrued to 2025/26) less Total Expenditure</b>	-£340.71

## Appendix 2: Community User Group Endorsements

**Ash C E V C Primary School, Main Street, Ash, Martock**  
**Somerset TA12 6NS Telephone: 01935 822674**  
**Email: [office@ash.ppat365.org](mailto:office@ash.ppat365.org)**

**Headteacher: Melissa Gibbons**



Dear Mick,

Ash Millenium woods is an invaluable resource not just for our school but the community as a whole. Although blessed by beautiful countryside and wonderful views, our fortune is extended by being able to access the secure, enclosed environment of the woods next door. Wellies adorned ... what an adventure for all our little learners, as they step with excitement from one location to the next. The proximity of the woods is simply fantastic.

Stimulating curiosity, a spark for nature and exposure to another glorious realm of wonder, the woods ignite enthusiasm. Packed with insects, birds, vegetation, flowers, trees and the occasional small mammal, Millenium Woods is an ever-evolving educational extension of our school. It caters for all years throughout and across the curriculum from Nursery to Yr6; encompassing all areas of outdoor learning, scientific discoveries, art initiatives, historical investigations, geographical orientations, mindfulness, physical well-being, fuel for writing and much, much more.

Our children benefit greatly from this magnificent outdoor, safe space.

### PPAT Education

Registered address: Kingfisher Drive, Yeovil, Somerset, BA22 8FJ

A charitable company limited by guarantee registered in England Wales (Company number: 8727883)





## 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.

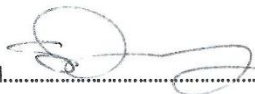
The Council, as landowner, will ensure it has equivalent insurance cover for criminal or accidental damage to structures including fences, shed, raised beds, gate and signage, and Public Liability insurance for users of the woods.

#### **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