

Management plan - St Luke's church grounds



Where are we now?

Introduction

This is a management plan for the grounds of St Luke's church, Great Crosby. It was prepared in Spring 2007 by Steve Matthews on behalf of St Luke's church council. A variety of groups who use the church and its grounds or who have responsibility for them have been consulted in its preparation.

Consultation

Consultation has taken place with: Pete Spiers (vicar); maintenance team; PCC; The Way youth club; Crossroads' trustees; flower arrangers; Carol Rookcroft on behalf of those who use the graveyard; Agnes Law on behalf of hall users.

Why prepare a management plan?

A workshop was held in October 2006 to discuss the potential for managing the grounds more effectively for wildlife. It was suggested that the church register as a 'Breathing Place' under the joint BBC/ National Lottery scheme and apply for funding. The site was registered as a Breathing Place in November, and a bid was put together and submitted in December.

The process of making the bid revealed the scope to enhance the church grounds and make them more attractive both for people and wildlife. It also illustrated the variety of interests to be accommodated in how the site is managed. The management plan includes an action plan. It is intended to review this annually, and the management plan every three years.

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What will a management plan achieve?

A management plan will:

- 1 Set out priorities for managing and maintaining the church grounds, and for enhancing them
- 2 List routine tasks which can be carried out at specific times of the year
- 3 enable us to agree a vision for the church grounds
- 4 help us to communicate that vision clearly within the church family and the wider community and how we intend to achieve it
- 5 provide a framework for bidding for resources to carry out the work.

It will help the church make the most of a large green area in the centre of Crosby. It can become a retreat for shop and office workers, a haven for people visiting graves to reflect and a secluded area for people to enjoy. It will also identify the opportunities for people to be involved in making this happen.

Most important of all, it will help us fulfil the Biblical mandate of caring for creation. It will help the church to put its belief into action and, by so doing, encourage others to do the same.

Policy context



An opportunity to reflect and enjoy wildlife.

'By bringing the benefits of conserving biodiversity to the attention of local communities in such a direct way, the St Luke's project could serve as a role model for similar opportunities across North Merseyside'

There are a number of plans and strategies which are relevant to this site.

The church grounds are designated as 'greenspace' in the Sefton Unitary Development Plan. This promotes the retention of the site as open space. The Council is preparing a green space strategy which includes looking at ways in which individual green spaces can be made more accessible and valuable within their local community. The management plan will help meet the objectives of these strategies by proposing an action plan which will enhance the site and make it more accessible to the local community.

This site lies within the area covered by the North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan (NM BAP). Our proposals at St Luke's will coincide with the objectives of the NM BAP in several respects e.g. complementing a habitat action plan, creating and enhancing urban green space, and promoting the appreciation of biodiversity across all sections of the community. The site lies within the 'buffer zone' for red squirrels, in which it would be inappropriate to plant large seeded species (e.g. oak and beech) which would be more attractive to grey squirrels.

One of the aims of a Breathing Place is to encourage community and voluntary groups to improve local areas of open space for the benefit of wildlife and the local community. The management plan will help to achieve this by encouraging community involvement in managing

habitat. They can also enjoy the church grounds as they are transformed.

Richard Burkmar, the North Merseyside Biodiversity Manager, supported our application for Breathing Places funding noting that:

'By bringing the benefits of conserving biodiversity to the attention of local communities in such a direct way, the St Luke's project could serve as a role model for similar opportunities across North Merseyside'

Crosby is entered in the North West in Bloom competition annually. There is an opportunity for St Luke's to contribute to this through various initiatives within its grounds e.g. recycling, planting, conservation and wildlife projects.

St Luke's is Grade 2 listed. In addition to any consent required because of this, permission is required from the Diocesan Advisory Committee to make any significant changes to the church grounds e.g. felling or planting trees, laying headstones flat.

Managing the church grounds in a way which involves the local community is consistent with the overall vision of St Luke's church. The church's motto is 'At the heart of Crosby with Crosby in its heart'

Description of the site

Physical aspects of the church grounds

- ❖ St Luke's church grounds, Liverpool Road Crosby, Liverpool L23 5SE
- ❖ Map ref: 321 999
- ❖ Site is 1.8 hectares - front graveyard, main graveyard, drive and car park areas, immediately around church. Key green space right in the heart of Crosby

Significant features:

- Graveyard, church, church hall, vicarage, office, Crossroads, sub-station
- Trees - main access drive; around vicarage, rear of graveyard
- hedge along southern edge of vicarage grounds
- Remnants of stone pillars
- 56 war graves photo (24 WW1; 32 WW2)
- Tenure - church owns site for all practical purposes;



One of the war graves

Surrounding community and users of the church grounds

The church and its grounds are located right next to Crosby village from which they are separated by The Bypass, a busy through road connecting Liverpool to Formby and Southport.

The grounds border the residential streets of York Rd and The Northern Road. Residents were invited to comment on our 'Breathing Places' proposals. A number expressed concern about overhanging trees, and in March 2007 submitted a petition asking for them to be reduced in height!

The church celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2003. A history of St Luke's church was produced to mark the occasion and highlights the cultural value of the church grounds: 'The graveyard is not just a place where the dead have been buried. It is part of the continuing history of the church and Crosby, and a memorial to lives fulfilled in service and love. It is also a great haven for wildlife; birds and flowers of all kinds flourish and remind us that in death there is life'.

Of particular note is the fact that the church grounds contain 56 war graves and the church receives a payment each year to ensure these are kept in good condition.

Users: the church buildings and grounds are used intensively each day and at all times of the year. The main uses comprise a place of worship, vicarage, office, Crossroads ecumenical café, The hall is used for church activities and is hired by the local community e.g. Pram Club, Crosby Gardening Club, dramatic society, RSPB, play group, hire for parties. The graveyard is visited daily.

There are a number of access points. The main access from Liverpool Road is shared by both cars and pedestrians. There is a separate pedestrian access leading to the front of church. A further pedestrian access (not accessible to disabled) along side of old Crossroads building. There is also limited access to the grounds from The Bypass which is open when the café is open (Mon-Sat 10am - 4pm).

Access to rear graveyard both from car park and from main access drive; very good accessibility - bus stop outside; parking for bikes inside site.

There is a contract for others to use car parking spaces during the week. There is also a right of access along the drive by Optisavers who own the front end part of car park, and allow its use by the church on Sundays.

'The graveyard is not just a place where the dead have been buried. It is also a great haven for wildlife; birds and flowers of all kinds flourish and remind us that in death there is life'.



Entrance drive to front of church

The organisation that looks after the church grounds, the structure, the team and the available resources

Current management arrangements

A paid site manager works for 20 hours each week (3 days/ wk). Up to eight volunteers assist in maintaining the grounds, but there is no formal management arrangement or work programme. Work is carried out as required.

A couple of volunteers have specific expertise in gardening, but there is scope to increase awareness of environmentally sound practices in the way the church grounds are managed e.g. in controlling weeds.

There is a variety of resources: goodwill in abundance, a willing volunteer team, a good stock of mowers, tools and equipment, and funding for essential maintenance for the church grounds. The key constraints are the lack of a planned programme for the management and maintenance of church grounds and the lack of specific expertise on how to manage the grounds in a positive way. There is also inadequate help at busy periods (e.g. mowing and strimming during summer).

Known issues and challenges

- 1 Gravestones and kerbs make it difficult to maintain area around graves
- 2 The way people treat the graves - do their own thing ...
- 3 Not clearly signed that people are welcome - either at Crossroads entrance or at main entrance
- 4 Impact on neighbours, particularly along The Northern Road boundary
- 5 Opportunity to welcome more people
- 6 Main entrance - conflict with traffic - how to make the site more accessible/ friendly for pedestrians
- 7 Right of access over main drive
- 8 Too much maintenance for number of people available
- 9 No formal arrangement for looking after the vicarage garden
- 10 Problems with trespass



Individual treatment of one of the graves

'There is scope to increase awareness of environmentally sound practices in the way the church grounds are managed'

Where do we want to get to?

Vision - To create a place of beauty and a haven for people and wildlife

S.W.O.T. analysis - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

Strengths

- Centrally located greenspace right in the heart of Crosby
- Much support and interest from church family and wider community
- Church grounds and buildings are used intensively
- Dedicated volunteer workforce
- Plenty of advice available e.g. BTCV, North Merseyside Biodiversity Officer
- Good links with Crosby Herald
- Meticulous record of all the graves held in the parish office

Opportunities

- Demonstrate care for creation - part of the church's mission - and encourage others to do the same
- May encourage more people to actively care for church grounds - training can be provided
- To promote use of church grounds by different sections of the community
- Plenty of partners (e.g. Sefton Leisure Dept - Crosby in Bloom)
- Good potential for further funding
- Opportunities for publicity - Crosby Herald; North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan Group, Breathing Places web-site
- Liaise with Biobank to promote community involvement in grounds
- Broaden volunteer base through organising work parties on the first Saturday of every month

Weaknesses

- Lot to do for a small, mainly voluntary, team
- No co-ordinated programme for maintenance or priorities for spending
- High costs of maintenance - equipment
- Grave kerbs make maintenance difficult
- Different users of church grounds have different expectations
- Conflict between pedestrians and cars
- Paths uneven and not accessible to those in wheelchairs
- Patchy knowledge about how to maintain and manage grounds for wildlife

Threats

- The more that is planted, the more there is to maintain - who will look after it?
- We could become inward looking - looking after grounds for our own benefit
- More people who are invited in, greater potential threat to property within graveyard
- Welcoming more people to church grounds potentially increases conflict between cars/ cyclists/ pedestrians
- It will all cost a lot of money and we will not be able to accomplish very much



Transformation of the front graveyard

'John Beach spent many years mapping and collating the graveyard and his work was completed by his wife Dorothy after his death there is now a meticulous record of all the graves held in the parish office which is consulted regularly by families enquiring after relatives'.

Extract from 'St Luke's Church 1853-2003'

Aims and objectives

Overriding aim

Manage the church grounds in a way which demonstrates our biblical calling to care for the environment, welcomes all parts of the community and encourages people to learn about and value wildlife.



An opportunity to demonstrate care for the environment

Objectives

Objective 1

Actively promote wildlife

- manage existing trees and shrubs more appropriately
- plant new wildlife habitat e.g. trees, shrubs, butterfly garden, wildflower meadow
- limit use of pesticides

Objective 3

Involve community

- organise events to which community are invited
- involve people in management, design and implementation e.g. community garden (set up a 'Friends of St Luke's grounds' group)
- publicise events widely
- record wildlife (e.g. www.7wells.co.uk - links to butterfly conservation site - how to identify butterflies)

Objective 2

Make church grounds accessible and attractive to community

- provide welcoming signboards at entrance and interpretation boards within grounds
- make entrance and paths safe and accessible for all
- raise standard of maintenance, including reducing weeds
- consider laying headstones flat or around edge of graveyard.

Objective 4

Raise awareness of environmental issues amongst church family, visitors and community

- invite church family help organise and participate in events
- provide appropriate training for maintenance staff
- erect interpretation boards e.g. butterfly garden
- demonstrate re-use and recycling e.g. water, compost, community garden, recycling of waste

How will we get there?



The church's welcome signs could be improved

'An action plan should be drawn up and this should be linked to a strategy for seeking funding'.

- Introduce clear lines of responsibility into the maintenance team. Prepare a plan of routine maintenance, setting out tasks to be done at different times of the year.
- Devise an action plan in consultation with the church family and local community, and link this to a strategy for seeking funding. Possible funding sources include St Luke's church council, Faiths4Change, National Lottery, local (Merseyside) funders, bequests, families who tend graves.
- Organise opportunities for involving the community e.g. through specific events, opportunities to be involved in regular maintenance. Explore the possibility of starting a 'Friends of St Luke's' group, to extend the responsibility for managing the church grounds to the wider community.
- Call on the advice of experts as appropriate e.g. British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, North Merseyside Biodiversity Manager, Biobank, tree consultant.
- Design a publicity strategy to reach a wide audience e.g. through the Breathing Places web-site, church web-site, Crosby Herald, Wildlife in Merseyside newsletter, 'A Rocha' local events, leaflets explaining how grounds are being managed.
- Devise an access and signing strategy for safer pedestrian/ cyclist and wheelchair use. This should include welcome signs and should consider a segregated route or separately marked route for cyclists, pedestrians and wheelchair users.



A wildlife activity morning attracts a lot of interest

How will we know when we have arrived?

- 1 Favourable feedback from those using graveyard and church grounds
- 2 Establishment of 'Friends of St Luke's group'
- 3 Award of Green Pennant - this is equivalent to the Green Flag award, but available to community groups
- 4 People taking more active interest in wildlife in church grounds - both church members and others from the local community
- 5 Our proposals should result in more wildlife. It will be important to record this.
- 6 Active group of volunteers - different ages (including schools); different abilities (e.g. Crosby High School, Mencap)
- 7 Positive coverage in Crosby Herald and other publications e.g. Merseyside biodiversity newsletter, A Rocha magazine, Big Issue supplement.

'Brambles ... provide very good cover to roosting and nesting birds, particularly wrens, dunnocks and if we are lucky, 'sylvia' warblers such as Blackcap, Whitethroat and Garden Warbler'.

Local resident



St Luke's school children plant in front graveyard



Crosby High School pupils admire their planting along The Bypass railings

The butterfly garden being planted during the wildlife activity morning



Action Plan

	By June 2008	July 2008 – end of 2009	Continuous
A welcoming place	Erect new signage at Crossroads entrance, including a statement that the site is accessible to those in wheelchairs.		
	Erect interpretation boards at main entrances to different parts of graveyard: at main entrance from access drive, at car park entrance to section K, and entrance to main graveyard from car park.		
	Publicise the church grounds project on the St Luke's web-site, indicating what facilities are available		
	Replace path parallel with The Bypass with wider path suitable for wheelchair users		
Healthy, safe and secure	Include comment on signs that responsible dog walkers are encouraged	Agree a policy for managing the graves and kerbstones	Ensure paths are level and free of hazards
Well maintained and clean	Draw up routine maintenance plan for all of church grounds including vicarage garden	Maintenance team to attend courses on weed control, strimming, use of chain-saw	Ensure paths are well maintained and kept free of grass
			Further training as required
Environmental sustainability	Ensure that compost bins are used for all compostable waste		No pesticides or herbicides to be used unless on hard surfaces where other means are not practicable
	Signs to be erected next to bins in graveyard to encourage segregation of plastic wrappers and flowers		Use of peat to be kept to absolute minimum
	Construct community garden with re-used or recycled materials where possible		

	By June 2008	July 2008 – end of 2009	Continuous
	Provide means of collecting rainwater from church buildings		
	Begin to recycle waste generated from church buildings		
Biodiversity and heritage	Introduce differential mowing regime: this will involve mowing the least used areas once a year, other areas twice a year and the most frequently used and public areas more regularly	Agree and implement policy for new gravestones	Avoid planting large seeded species of tree which would attract grey squirrels (as we are in a red squirrel buffer zone)
	Make leaflets about church grounds available on St Luke's church web-site to raise awareness and make it easier for visitors to know what is available	Lay headstones flat in front graveyard	
	Develop further phase of butterfly garden	Screen sub-station railings	
	Provide interpretation boards and leaflets to raise awareness and interest in church grounds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - self-guided history trail of church grounds - self-guided nature trail of church grounds - slate sign to be fixed to church office showing layout of graveyard - interpretation panels as described under the heading: 'A welcoming place'. 		
	Define different sections of graveyard with stone markers		
	Plant up bank behind wildflower meadow with wild plants		
	Sow wildflower meadow along part of York Road boundary		
	Plant 5 Corsican pine ¹ and two yew trees ² .		
	Ensure hedges are cut at appropriate times of year and that this is reflected in maintenance work programme		
	Continue to plant bulbs, shrubs and trees		

¹ Corsican pine donated by National Trust

² One yew tree is the millennium tree offered to all Anglican churches in England to celebrate the year 2,000. The second is to celebrate the 150th anniversary of St Luke's school, Crosby

	By June 2008	July 2008 – end of 2009	Continuous
Community involvement	Work with Biobank to involve the community in biological recording events and in practical habitat management	Set up 'Friends of St Luke's grounds' group	
	Work with Sefton Leisure Services to involve probationers and day centre patients in construction and installation of seats for community garden and interpretation signs	Design and erect new entrance to main part of graveyard	
	Continue to involve parents and toddlers, guides and school groups in planting bedding schemes, bulbs and shrubs	Design and implement sensory garden	
	Advertise project and events on St Luke's web-site and on Breathing Places web-site, in Crosby Herald and through local schools		
	Hold a further wildlife activity morning which is open to the public		Continue to hold further community events, at least once a year
	Continue to participate in Crosby in Bloom		
	Celebrate Environment Sunday by focusing service on environment and linking in to practical work within grounds		
Funding and resources		Apply for further funding e.g. 'Awards for All'	Devise list of suitable items which could be paid for by bequests/ donations