Churchyard Conservation



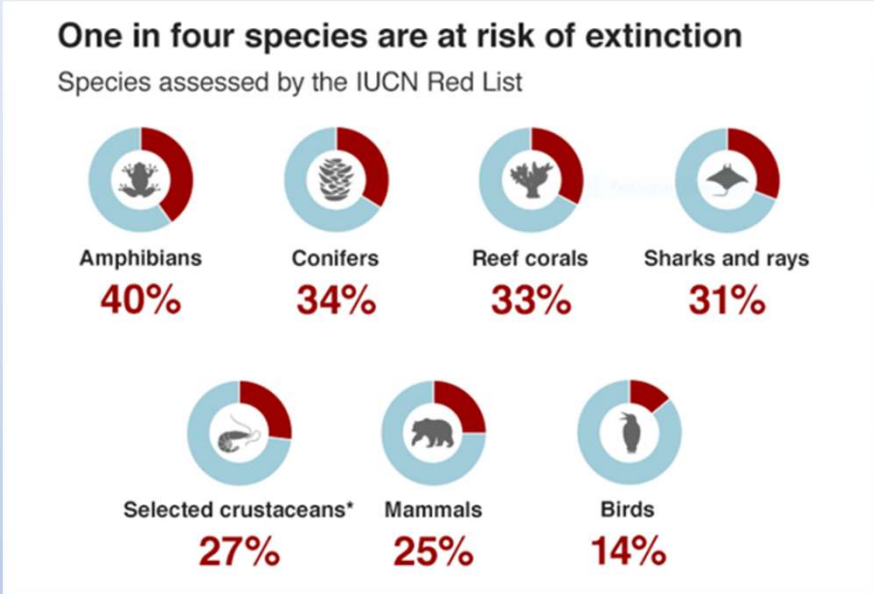
Saint Gregorys project - Welcome

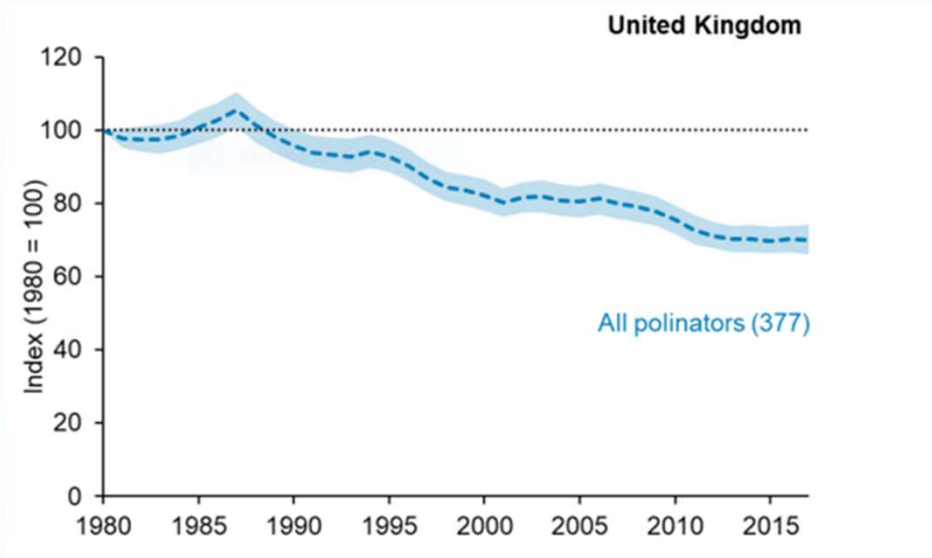
- Castlemorton Environment Group (a sub-group of the Parish Council) approached the Parochial Church Council with an idea to enhance the management of the churchyard to benefit wildlife.
- Agreed that we should carry out some initial scoping and hold a public meeting to seek community support.
- Welcome to this meeting.



Why look at churchyards?

- Global habitat and species loss needs to be reversed.
- UK is one of the world's most nature-depleted countries - in the bottom 10% globally and last among the G7 group of nations.
- UK 30% decline in pollinators since 1980. Burial grounds can provide a refuge for native wildlife.
- **> 10,000 burial grounds across England and Wales offer significant potential to benefit wildlife.**





Churchyards can be rich in wildlife



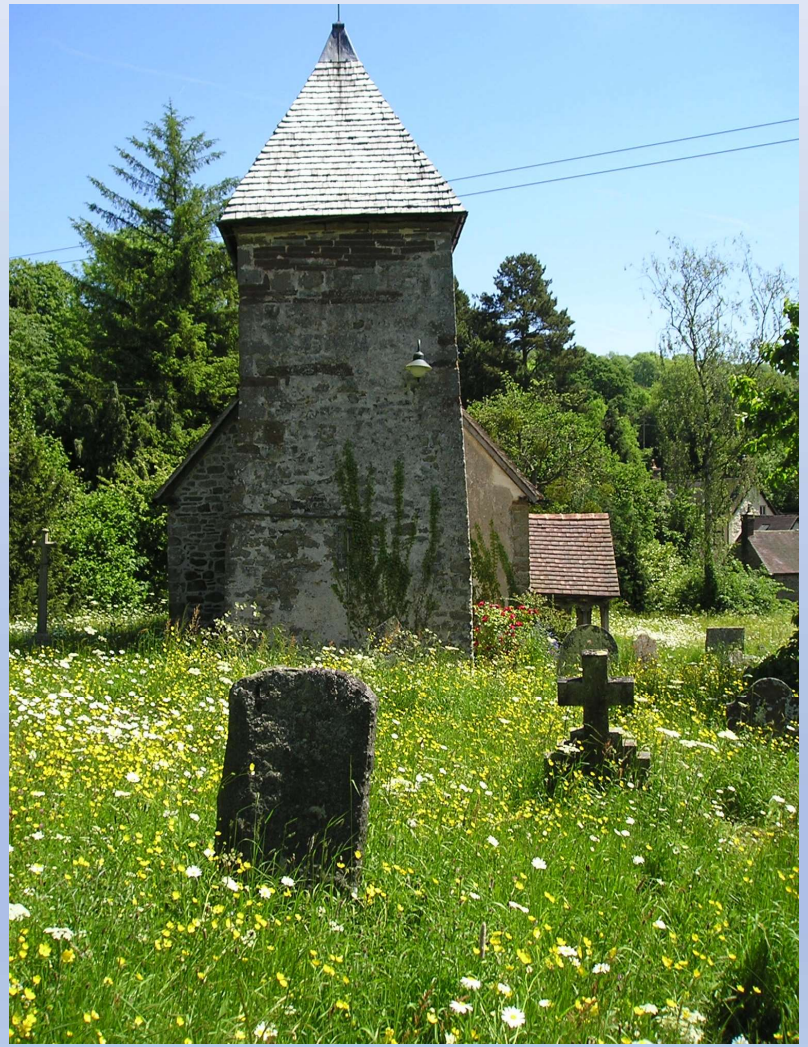






Churchyard conservation movement

- Church of England recognises churchyards are important for biodiversity.
- National charity - Caring for God's Acre supports groups to investigate, care for and enjoy churchyards.
- Aim is to support churchyards that are rich in heritage and wildlife.
- Examples in Malvern area include Colwall.



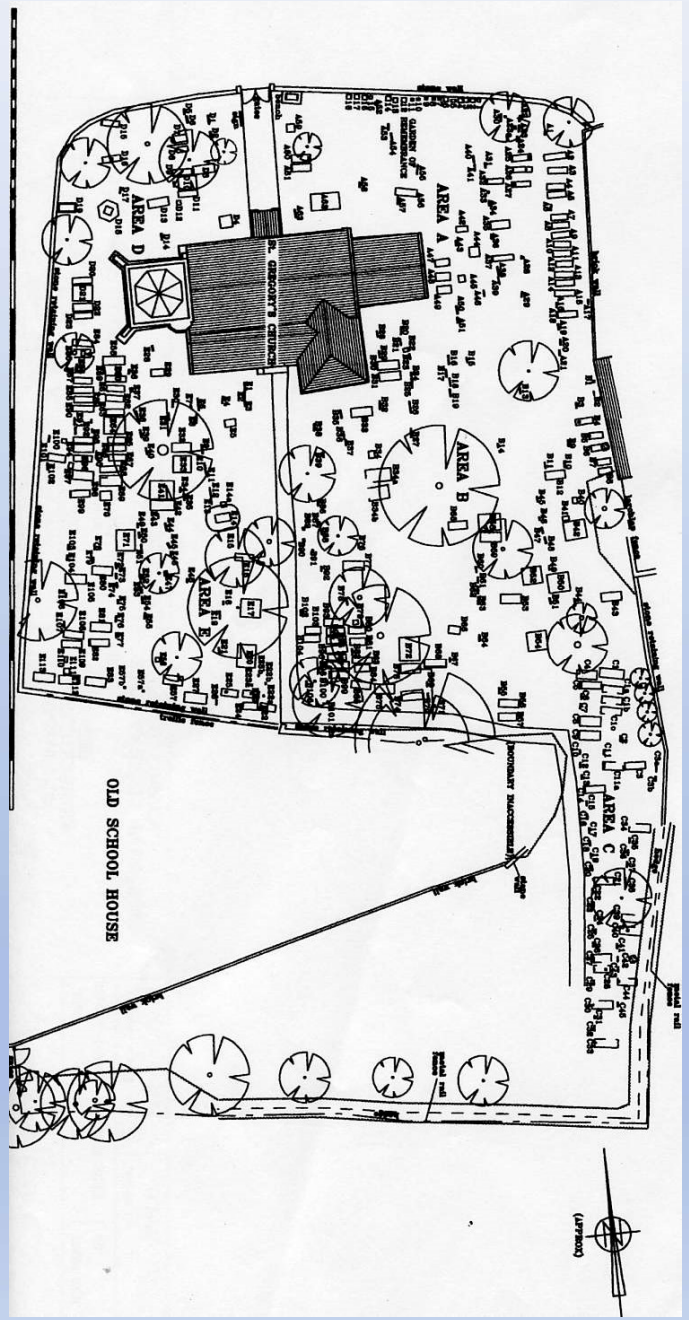
One step at a time

- Caring for God's Acre recommend a staged process and produce helpful guidance.
- Survey to identify features and areas of interest.
- Consult and engage local community.
- Draw up management plan.



Orientation - map

- Church Road to the north (top)
- Old churchyard
- Extension taken in from agricultural field.
- ‘Notch’ is the old schoolhouse.



Current management

- Old churchyard is kept as a close mown lawn from April to October.
- Intensive (and costly) management.
- Paths maintained with some spraying.
- Area in churchyard extension for new burials. Less frequently mown.



Saint Gregorys – where are we at?

- Initial botanical survey undertaken to identify areas of potential interest.
- Researched some ideas on possible management options.
- Identified some areas where current management should take priority.
- Need for community feedback and input.



Survey

- Some areas are flower rich – south of the Church in particular.
- Spring display of primrose/hybrid primula.
- Old meadow plants present include ladies bedstraw, ox-eye daisy, ladies smock.
- The extension – south of the old school – is poorer in species and partially shaded. More of a ‘blank canvas’.





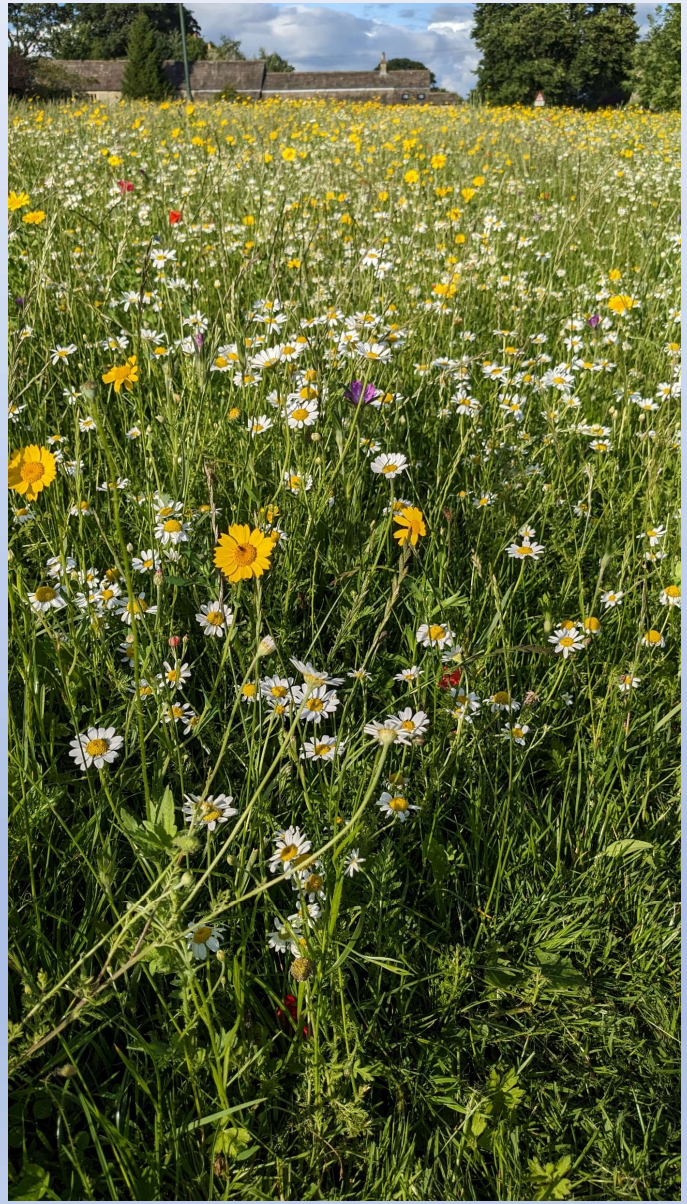
Options for wildlife – long grass

- Allow some areas of long grass to grow and flower.
- Cut and remove as a ‘hay cut’ in late summer.
- To benefit wildflowers and insects such as pollinators.
- Areas of short grass would be maintained as now in front of the church and around some graves.



Options - churchyard extension

- Active area for burials excluded from project.
- Sow areas with wildflower pollinator seed mix.
- Plant native spring bulbs in shady areas eg bluebell and wood anemone – perhaps as a school project.
- Look at bird and bat boxes and tree and hedge management.



Example of possible zones

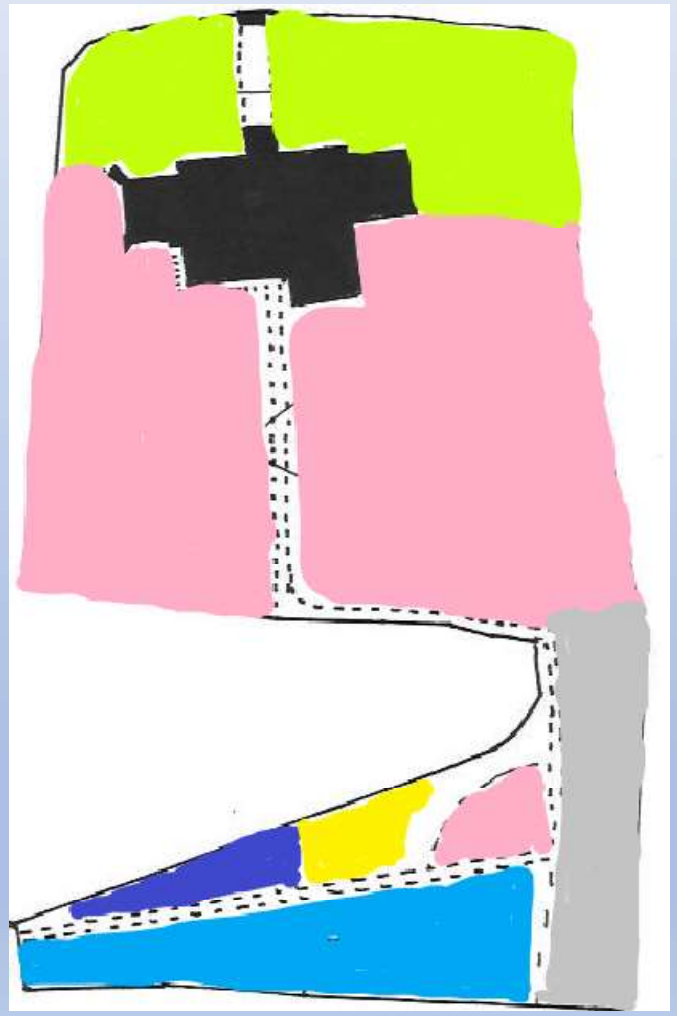
Short mown

Long grass
with mown paths

Spring bulbs

Pollinator seed mix

Shady wildflower mix



Potential benefits

- Better for wild-flowers, pollinators and other wildlife.
- More colourful areas contrasting with mown lawns and paths.
- More community involvement.
- Options to involve the school?
- Potential for lower carbon footprint with reduced mowing?



Questions and feedback

Next steps



Form a volunteer group to assist with surveys and some management tasks.



Draw up a management plan.



Costed action plan and annual programme – with possible fundraising eg for spring bulbs and seed mixes.



Autumn/Spring – wildflower seeding and spring bulbs.



Spring/Summer 2024 – start changes to the mowing regime.