



## Churchyard Biodiversity and Heritage Project – Evaluation Consultant brief

### Project background

The Diocese of Coventry has been offered a Development Grant of £195,176 by the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a Churchyard Biodiversity and Heritage Project. During the one-year Development Phase we will prepare churchyard management and activity plans with the aim of improving biodiversity, engaging local communities and promoting understanding of local nature and heritage in at least 50 churchyards serving communities across Coventry and Warwickshire. If a Delivery Grant is approved, the plans will be implemented over five years with a budget of over £2m.

We will be working with local communities and two project partners - Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (WWT) and Caring for God's Acre (CfGA). WWT will oversee the management plans. CfGA will lead on research. A project Steering Group representing all the partners will maintain oversight and scrutiny. Three staff will be appointed - Project Manager, Engagement Officer and Biodiversity Officer - to work with local parishes to prepare churchyard management and activity plans and documents for the Delivery Phase grant application. If the Delivery Phase is approved, the plans will be delivered in three tranches over five years. The first tranche of 10 management plans will be prepared during the Development Phase.

### The Diocese of Coventry

With annual turnover of over £10 million, the Coventry Diocese Board of Finance is one of the largest charities in the West Midlands. As well being responsible for 200 clergy and staff, we manage a portfolio of clergy housing and industrial and commercial land, oversee the stewardship of over 200 listed buildings and structures and manage externally funded projects with significant annual budgets. This project is being managed by the Diocese Buildings Team.

### Project aims

- a. Equip Coventry & Warwickshire Anglican churches to maximise the potential of churchyards for biodiversity, heritage, well-being & food security.
- b. Engage non-church people in managing churchyards.
- c. Broaden access for under-represented and less able groups and people from all economic and social backgrounds.
- d. Contribute to the national conversation about the role of local people and small organisations in managing churchyards and green spaces and mitigating the species and climate crisis.

Evaluating the Development Phase is crucial to a successful Delivery Phase grant application. The evaluation consultant will act as a critical friend throughout the Development and Delivery phases. Appointment to the Delivery Phase will depend on Heritage Fund approval of the Development Phase application.

### The commission

Expressions of interest are invited from experienced and inspiring evaluation specialists to work with the project team during the Development Phase to create a monitoring and evaluation framework that:

- a. takes account of the Heritage Fund's four Investment Principles;
- b. delivers the 'approved purposes' of the Development Phase and prepares an evaluation framework that aims to deliver Delivery Phase outcomes;
- c. helps the team set targets and prioritise project components and activities;
- d. advises on the prioritisation of 'hard' and 'soft' monitoring data and data capture methods;
- e. advises on priority 'audiences' and stakeholders.

- f. advises on the balance between local impact (churchyard management plans) and national impact (research);
- g. helps identify project legacies and good practice with potential for internal, regional and UK application;
- h. agrees a realistic monitoring and evaluation timetable that fits Heritage Fund reporting requirements.

During the first year of the Delivery Phase, a communications specialist will be engaged to set up a project-wide web site and a communications platform that can be used by the project team and participating churches to maximise engagement.

### **Selection criteria**

- A proven track record of heritage consultancy and evaluation.
- Experience of projects funded by the Heritage Fund.
- Experience of nature projects.
- Experience of projects with national significance.
- Sympathetic to the issues and challenges facing local church communities.
- Ability to draw out and present engaging local stories and connect them to nature recovery in churchyards.
- Ability to work with the project team and Diocese staff.
- Flexibility to respond to the demands of the timetable.

**Budget:** There is a fixed budget of £15,000 (including VAT) for the Development Phase. Appointment will initially be for the Development Phase only, with the option to extend for the duration of the Delivery Phase, if approved.

### **Development Phase timetable**

Summer 2025: finalise the first tranche of parishes.

Autumn 2025: appoint project staff

Winter 2025:

- agree evaluation framework.
- make contact with all participating parishes.
- begin research with Caring for God's Acre

Spring/ summer 2026;

- initial contact with all participating parishes and concentrated engagement with the first tranche of 10 parishes.
- undertake surveys and prepare draft management plans for first tranche of 10 parishes.
- Heritage Fund mid-term review.

Autumn 2026 - finalise and submit the Delivery Phase application and supporting documents to Heritage Fund.

### **Submission deadlines**

- Mondy 18<sup>th</sup> August - expressions of interest and any clarification questions to be submitted by email to Andy Duncan [andy.duncan@coventry.anglican.org](mailto:andy.duncan@coventry.anglican.org)  
Please indicate whether you are interested in the heritage or evaluation work, or both.
- Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> August - answers to clarifications will be issued to all those expressing an interest.
- Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> September – deadline for submission of proposals.

## **Delivery Phase Project outcomes**

### **How will your project involve a wider range of people?**

- *Increased diversity of heritage workforces and audiences*
- *Reduced barriers for people under-served by heritage*
- *Enabled more people's heritage to be recognised*
- *Championed digital technology to improve access*

It is estimated that, after project completion over 6 years, total average weekly visitor numbers to the 70 churchyards will have risen from 23,000 currently to 29,000. An Engagement Officer will work with churches to prioritise under-represented, marginalised and vulnerable individuals and groups, such as local schools, special schools, care homes, dementia groups, neuro-diverse people and people from poorer backgrounds. Working with churches and the Biodiversity and Natural heritage Officer, the Engagement Officer will consult with these groups, ensuring that activities are designed with them in mind. In order to embed autism-friendly practice into future events and activities, we are proposing to work with the Autism Society during the Delivery Phase to create resources that will ensure that some events and activities are autism-friendly and some are designed specifically for neuro-diverse people. These resources will be made available across the Diocese and more widely across the CoFE.

Several survey respondents mentioned the proximity and connections with local schools. We propose to pilot the National Burial Grounds survey in churchyards participating in this project, with a view to involving local school children in survey work that contribute to technology, history, geography and built and natural environment components of the National Curriculum. Local schools will be encouraged to involve children with special educational needs in these activities. Wildlife survey and identification activities are also well-suited to school groups, neuro-diverse people and people experiencing dementia. Priority will be given to these activities. The most common barrier to usage mentioned by survey respondents is access for people with mobility difficulties due to the poor condition and safety of surfaced paths and steps. The project includes provision is included to restore and repair paths and steps.

Many local people will have family connections that link to local churches and churchyards. Activities will recognise the growing interest in genealogy and family history.

To enable more visitors to experience the wellbeing benefits of churchyards, a communication company will present these benefits through branding, a project-wide web site and engaging online and on-site communication. This will be promoted extensively through local and county-wide channels and partners' own networks, bringing churchyard heritage and wildlife to the attention thousands of new people across a wider area.

### **Heritage will be in better condition.**

- *Improved condition and understanding of heritage*
  - *Reduced amount of 'heritage at risk'*
  - *Delivered transformational long-term projects*
  - *Made digital heritage more accessible*
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- 50 churchyard management plans will have been prepared and implemented.
  - 50 churchyards covering 35 hectares and accommodating 20,000 graves will be in better condition and more biodiverse.
  - 50 churchyards will be active on biodiversity databases.
  - 50 churchyards will have a digital presence.
  - 5000 new people will have interacted with digital or online information about the

project and about individual churchyards.

- 40 churchyards will report having barriers to access removed.
- 5 new churchyards will qualify for local wildlife site consideration
- 200 metres of surfaced or grassed path will have been repaired or created, improving the accessibility of 15 churchyards.
- 20 historic churchyard structures (e.g. tombs) considered to be at risk will have been repaired and no longer considered at risk.

### **Heritage will be identified and better explained**

- *Put landscapes and habitats into recovery*
- *Increased understanding of and connection to nature*
- *Reduced the negative environmental impact of our funding portfolio*
- *Improved heritage's ability to adapt to climate change*
- At least 50 communities will have management plans for their churchyards
- 10 schools, 200 under 18s, and 400 adults will have taken part in nature and heritage surveys.
- 20 hectares of churchyard will have shown to be in recovery.
- Soil sampling will have shown that wilding and biodiversity improvements capture carbon into the soil, improving their ability to adapt to climate change.
- 3,500 activity participants and visitors will report that they have an increased understanding and connection to nature and/ or heritage.
- Before and after nature surveys will have shown that 25 species previously in national decline are on the increase in the churchyards participating in this project.

### **People will have developed skills.**

- 500 under 18s and 1500 adults involved in activities will report that they have gained new nature conservation, heritage or digital skills.
- 40 church communities will report that they are better equipped with new skills, knowledge and more non-church volunteers to manage their churchyards more effectively in the future.
- 50 church communities will report that their churchyards are now attracting more visitors.
- 8 trainees will have been trained, mentored and awarded City & Guilds Level 2 Diploma in Environmental Conservation.
- 4 new churchyard management or Friends groups will have been created.
- 15 existing groups will report feeling more skilled, equipped and sustainable.
- 20 communities will report feeling more confident to engage in regional or national churchyard initiatives.

### **People will have learned about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions.**

- 3500 local people, volunteers, visitors, school children and neurally diverse people will report feeling better, more connected to nature & local heritage as a result of taking part in practical activities.
- 40 churches will report that their churchyards are more attractive & used more often as green spaces, activity/event spaces, outdoor classrooms & for food growing.
- 500 people will report that they have transferred some of their learning in natural and human heritage to other contexts (e.g. home, school, work)
- 200 people will report that they have made positive lifestyle changes that reduce their carbon footprint and other negative impacts.
- 4,000 people will report that they have learned about heritage and nature as a direct result of on-site or online information and interpretation.

**People will have greater wellbeing.**

- 1,000 local people, volunteers, visitors and neurally diverse people will feel better, more connected to nature & local heritage.
- 40 communities will feel more proud of where they live & more connected to others in their community.
- 400 activity participants will report that their mental health has improved as a result of participating in activities

**The funded organisation will be more resilient.**

- *Increased organisations' commercial and governance capabilities*
- *Developed skills and capacity across heritage*
- *Embedded resilience in projects we fund*
- *Strengthened heritage's contribution to local economies*
- Three project partners & 50 church communities will report being better resourced, more resilient & better informed.
- 20 church communities will report that income decline has slowed, or income has increased as a result of the project.
- 20 churches will report that the number of volunteers from the non-church community has risen.
- 20 communities will report that existing churchyard management groups are in a stronger position than before the project.
- 5 communities will report that new Friends or churchyard management groups have been formed.
- 30 churches will report that connections with their communities has improved.
- 20 communities will have contributed to regional or national initiatives.

**The local area will be a better place to live, work or visit.**

- 2,000 people will report feeling prouder of their place.
- 50 local communities will report feeling that the project has 'added value' to their community.
- 1,000 local people will report feeling prouder of their community's green credentials.
- 5 churches will have been awarded at Bronze Eco-church status (the Green Flag award for churches) and incentivized to work towards silver or gold.
- 2 Churches will have upgraded from Bronze or Silver Eco-church award.
- 40 churches will report rising churchyard visitor numbers.

**The local economy will be boosted.**

20 communities will report that they feel the project has benefitted the local economy.