



# STONEHOUSE METHODIST CHURCH



## LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR NATURE

Updated February 2026

<https://stonehousemethodist.church/we-are-an-eco-church>

[Facebook](#): Stonehouse Methodist Church

## Contents

	page
1. Introduction, aims and objectives	3
2. Our land	4
3. Work and improvements to date	4-6
4. Action plan and next steps	7

## Appendices

1. Google image of the church site	8
2. List of Garden improvements 2018-2025	9-10
3. Map of eco improvement areas	11
4. Lifestyle survey church members 2025	12-13
5. Garden Management Plan 2026	15
6. Photo gallery	16-22
7. Fairtrade Church Certificate	23

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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

This is our plan for the stewardship of the land, fauna and flora around our church. It sets out what we have done to date, what we want to do in the future, and how we are going to do it.

### Our aims

We care about our planet. Our aims are to actively protect our environment and enhance nature. This plan is an important part of this and is central to our church mission.

#### ***Stonehouse Methodist Church Mission***

*To know Christ and to make Him known. We exist to encourage and celebrate a loving relationship with God in Jesus. To that end, we will endeavour to:*

- *make followers of Jesus Christ by sharing our faith*
- ***be a good neighbour and share God's love***
- ***encourage the care and good stewardship of God's creation in every way***
- *offer a warm welcome and a safe place*
- *grow closer to God through Prayer, Bible Study, and Worship*
- ***use our talents for God's purposes***
- *and challenge injustice!*

### Land Management Plan Objectives

We will

- provide a high-quality safe space that can be enjoyed by all, including users of the church premises, our neighbours and members of the local community.
- optimise the habitat for all animal, plant and insect native species.
- maintain and care for our garden through organic means only and ensure no harmful methods, products or chemicals are used.
- play our role in the global carbon cycle, by planting to soak up carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) that would otherwise live in the atmosphere.
- record and measure the improvements we make

## 1. OUR LAND

Stonehouse Methodist Church is situated on the Park Estate on the corner of Elm Road and Park Road GL10 2DW (Grid Ref: SO802055). The garden wraps around the main church building on two sides in an 'L' shape. The Google Earth satellite view can be seen in **Appendix 1**. The overall space of the garden area is about 150 square metres. There is also a small car park with three spaces for the disabled.

Our garden is a 'shop window' for our Church. Being situated on the corner of the main junction out of the Park Estate, hundreds of people walk, drive and go by on a bus every day. Our church is a hub for community activities. On average one hundred and forty people use our buildings every week. Therefore, we try and maintain it to look nice and welcoming but also be a place where nature and wildlife thrive.

## 2. WORK TO DATE

A summary of work and improvements can be seen at **Appendix 2**. Highlights of this include:

### Establishment of an Eco Church Team

The church established an Eco Church Team in 2018 under the leadership of Ginny Young and registered with ARocha UK in March 2019. The team, which includes church stewards, the property steward and interested church members, has delivered significant improvements in many areas including:

- Better understanding and awareness of green and eco issues amongst church members and users.
- The implementation of a wide range of eco-friendly operational measures including recycling
- Fair Trade Place of Worship Certification
- Action to reduce use of water and conserve rainwater
- The eradication of harmful chemicals
- Improvement to the external spaces of the church including planting of native trees and plants and a rain garden.
- Assessment and action to reduce the church's carbon footprint
- A Rocha UK Eco-Church Gold Award in October 2024

## Ongoing maintenance

We have a gardener who mows our grassed areas from April to October while leaving areas unmown to form a meadow where wildflowers are left to grow. Members of the Eco-Church Team and others meet regularly to tidy up the garden, weed and mulch trees and flowers, plant and water the raised beds and clear litter. They introduce new projects eg a bat box, leaf cage and dead hedge. This is very much an enjoyable social activity with coffee and biscuits.

Our Junior Church has installed bird feeders which they refill each week. Different birds are attracted. The Junior Church takes an active interest in eco initiatives and put in a Beetle Bucket for insects to overwinter and take part in the annual RSPB Birdwatch survey in January.

## Tree management

We work in partnership with John Parker of the Arboricultural Association (Head Office is near Stonehouse <https://www.trees.org.uk/About-Us/Our-Team> ). John is also a Stonehouse Town Councillor. This enabled the donation of a new tree (Alder *alnus spaethii*) which was planted in late 2020 as part of the Stonehouse Community Arboretum. In 2025 he donated a Rowan *Olympic Flame*' tree planted in July to mark the Church's 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. He also sourced 2 small local heritage apple trees which were planted in March. We were also given a neglected fig tree which has been repotted and is now growing well. Annual care required is weeding, mulching and regular watering, particularly in dry weather.

We have sycamore and conifer trees forming the (Elm Road) boundary with The Elms Care Home (closed in 2022) which need monitoring. Previously overhanging branches caused storm damage to the Morley Hall roof and caused problems in the Manse garden next door (the responsibility of the Methodist Circuit not our church). Our beech hedge does have brambles growing in it. We have tried to reduce/limit these by digging out, particularly those growing towards the pavement where people walk.

## Nature Surveys/Monitoring (Wildflowers/Wildlife)

Since 2020 we have monitored and photographed wildflowers, pollinators and butterflies. New species have increased in number, including poppies, yellow rattle, cornflowers, self-heal, cats ear, speedwell, three-cornered leek and in 2025 an orchid. We have seen cinnabar moth caterpillars on ragwort.

## Areas of eco improvement

The garden and external areas have improved because of the work of the Church Eco Team. These new areas can be seen in the plan at **Appendix 3**.

## Engagement

We encourage members and the local community to nurture and protect the environment.

### *Church members*

The members of the church are fully supportive of our work. This has been achieved over the course of time by presentations to and discussions with the church council and church members. There was initially uncertainty from some members about transforming areas of the lawn into a wild area but having seen the results all are now supportive. The church council approved a budget for the Eco Church Team. This budget is enhanced by fund raising activities.

### *Lifestyle*

The team presented and discussed the ARochaUK approach to lifestyle to church members:

*Changing our personal lifestyles is essential if we're to worship God with heart, soul, mind and strength – and love our neighbours as ourselves.*

*'We all need to make a complete, radical and honest audit of our lifestyles, their impact on the poor and on the planet,' said A Rocha UK co-founder Dave Bookless, 'and to ask God to pinpoint where we should start making changes.'*

The Church Council endorsed the approach and approved a lifestyle survey which the congregation completed in 2023. This was updated and we received 10 completed surveys by church members in August 2025. **See Appendix 4.**

### *Church users and the community*

We engage passers-by in discussion about what we are doing, and they have shown interest and encouragement. Many have commented on the improvements that have been made to the garden. We have also put up signs letting passers-by and users know why we have some 'untidy' areas in the garden and explaining about our drainpipe wetland/rain garden.

### 3. ACTION PLAN AND NEXT STEPS

The plan for future action can be seen at **Appendix 5**.

#### Highlights

Some of the highlights for the coming year include:

- Presentation of the Land Management Plan to the March Church Council
- Installation of garden benches for church and community to use
- Installation of Swift Boxes made by one of our church members
- Installation of a new pond or rain garden with help from Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
- Improvement of Elm Road boundary with tree work required. Advice sought from the Arboricultural Association recommended removal and replacement of conifers to something more appropriate. We have had discussions with GCC about plans for the new Elms care home
- Maintain dead hedge by Elm Road bus stop pending Elms redevelopment
- Installation of pots/troughs to grow cut flowers to use in Church arrangements following guidance from **Sustainable Church Flowers**
- Regular management of weeds, grass, raised beds and drainpipe wetland.
- Monthly working parties: we have agreed not to use weedkiller or other chemicals, but this does increase the workload by having to remove weeds manually.
- Follow up priority recommendations from 2024 Quinquennial inspection within budget projections.
- Repeat Travel survey in 2026
- More detailed audit of flora and fauna.
- Sow more wildflower seeds and increase the variety of plants eg foxgloves, to attract different species.
- Carry out a RSPB bird survey in January
- Hold an event in the garden to celebrate our eco achievements

### 4. SUMMARY

Excellent progress has been made by Stonehouse Methodist Church to improve its land and to manage it on a sustainable green basis. This plan shows the action we will take in the year ahead to build on this work and build on the momentum that has been established. There are many opportunities to actively improve our environment and to engage our church and local community in improving God's creation.

Google Earth view of Stonehouse Methodist Church

Park Road  
Stonehouse  
Gloucestershire  
GL10 2DW



## CHURCH GARDEN

### LIST OF IMPROVEMENTS, TREES/PLANTS/FLOWERS

#### 2018-2019

When starting the Eco Church programme our garden was fairly neglected with the lawn grass cut during the summer, a tall beech hedge around the main garden and large sycamore and conifers on the Elm Road boundary. An unused area next to the Hall was overgrown and rubbish had been dumped in this area. There is a flowering cherry tree inside the corner of the beech hedge and a variegated maple near the front gate.

The newly formed Eco Church Team got together and when looking at the land outside decided there were some simple and low-cost things we could do to improve the garden.

Put up Bird Feeders – Junior Church keep filled

Organise Litter Picks around the garden boundary

Plant spring bulbs – tulips – along fence to Hall entrance

#### 2020

##### **February – applied for Bronze Award – approved 25<sup>th</sup> March**

When the covid lockdown happened, our Church was closed for worship and most activities. A few of us were able to tidy the garden and we asked the gardener to leave a 1 metre strip unmown around the edges of the lawn to see what flowers would grow.

Bees, butterflies and caterpillars were seen and photographed eg Gatekeeper butterfly

We contacted Stonehouse Town Council about the donation of a tree – an Alder *alnus spaethii* which was planted on 12<sup>th</sup> December as part of the Stonehouse Community Arboretum. It is a good medium-sized tree, has interesting leaves and bark, catkins in spring and is good for bees. Junior Church continued to maintain bird feeders.

#### 2021

January – installed a water butt to save rainwater and use to water our new tree

##### **February – applied for Silver Award – approved 21<sup>st</sup> March**

Put up a birdbox on the Hall wall – made by the husband of one of our Eco-Church Team

April – Installed 2 raised beds and planted up free strawberry plants and rhubarb using peat free compost

Installed 2 Compost bins

Gardener left 1m border unmown around lawn as last year.

June – We built a drainpipe wetland garden along the Hall wall using the guide from the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust magazine. We sent a photo of it to WWT and it was printed in a subsequent magazine

October – planted more spring bulbs in the garden – crocus, daffodils and tulips

Sowed yellow rattle along some lawn edges and around new tree

Junior Church continue to maintain bird feeders

## 2022

March – Installed 2 more raised beds

Damson tree ‘discovered’ in overgrown area between Hall and Elms boundary

Junior Church continue to maintain bird feeders and put up a small bee hotel

October – Beetle Bucket for insects to hibernate in during the winter put in garden near hedge by Junior Church

November – Planted climbing rose *Mamma mia* to commemorate HM The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee and her passing

## 2023

January – The beech hedge had become overgrown and unmanageable, so our gardener reduced the height to around 75cm. We wanted to retain the wildlife habitat whilst making the church and garden more visible and welcoming.

March – tidy up session, removal of litter, drainpipe wetland garden rebuilt. New potatoes and tomatoes planted in raised beds

May – sowed wildflower seeds – poppies, cosmos, safflower, corncrake, candytuft

Planted *buddleia* in gap in hedge to encourage butterflies, yellow rattle growing well in several areas

August – wildflowers include ragwort with cinnabar moth caterpillars

November – planted daffodil bulbs along Hall wall for spring colour

Junior Church continue to maintain bird feeders

## 2024

Removed old and broken fence, cleared a large amount of fly-tipped rubbish from Elm Road boundary with former care home.

Moved compost bins, tidied hedge and removed litter

Pots planted up by front door to church

Weeded, mulched and watered Alder tree and Rose bush *Mamma Mia*

The gardener left a central meadow area in one part of the lawn for some of the summer

Junior Church made and planted some seed bombs and continue to maintain bird feeders

In lawn and meadow area we noticed self-heal flowers growing, good for bees and

pollinators. In shady corners ragwort had grown again and a number of cinnabar moth caterpillars were seen and photographed.

**August – applied for Gold Award – approved 28<sup>th</sup> October**

November - Scarified an area of lawn and sowed wildflowers and put up another bird box

## 2025

Planted 2 small locally grafted heritage apple trees: *Laxton’s Fortune* and *King of the Pippins*

Planted *William Morris* rose

Planted a 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Rowan *Olympic Flame* tree

Rehomed an unwanted fig tree and planted in pot

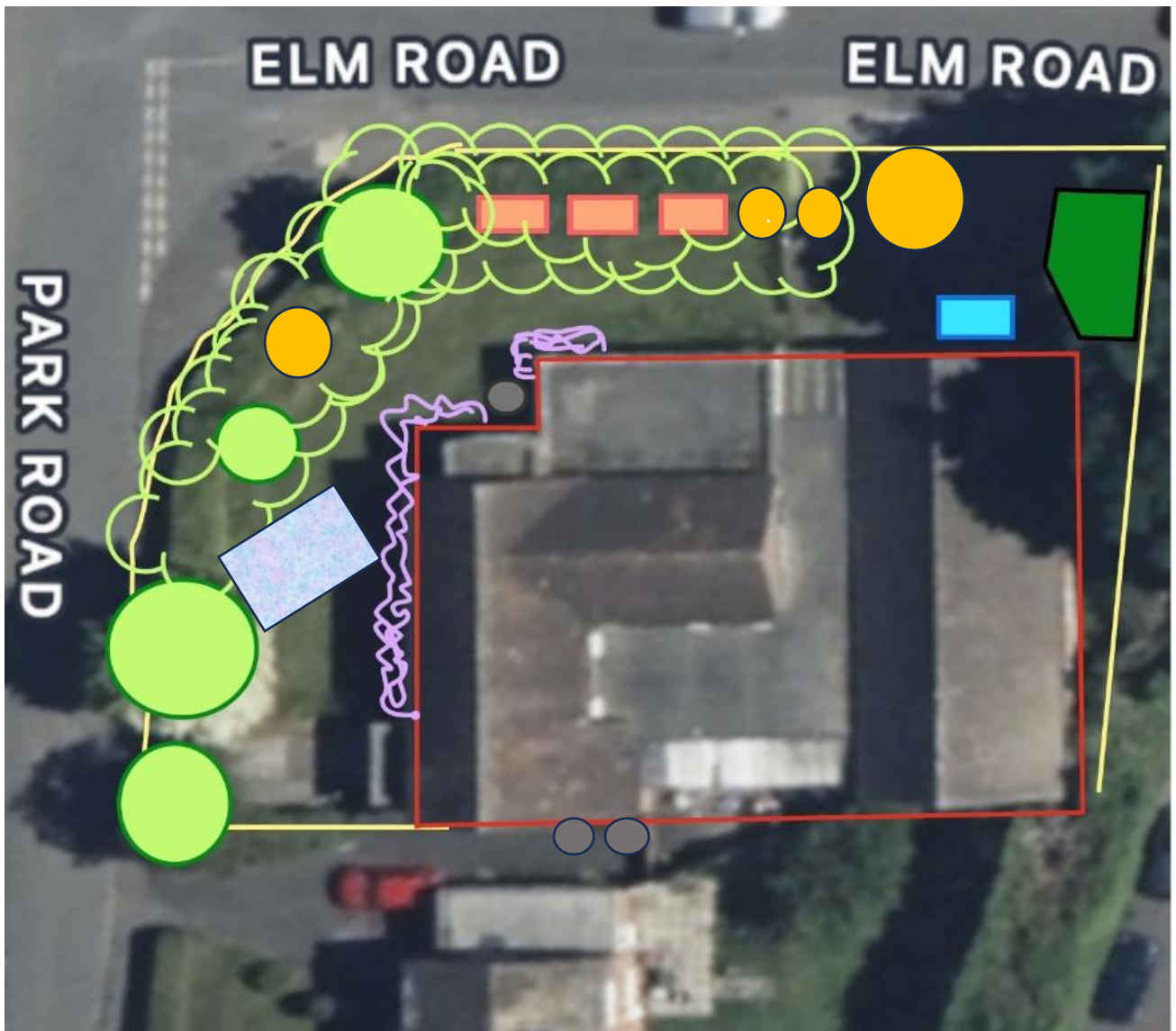
Spotted orchid seen in garden

Attended Sustainable Church Flowers Demonstration




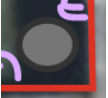





Installed 2 more water butts on rear patio

Put up a bat box

Built a dead hedge and leaf basket



Key:

- |                                                                                     |              |                                                                                      |                    |                                                                                      |                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
|  | Trees        |   | Trees planted 2025 |  | Hedge             |
|  | Water butt   |  | Drainpipe wetland  |   | Raised veg beds   |
|  | Flower beds. |   | Composting area    |  | Wild flowers area |

### ECO CHURCH LIFESTYLE SURVEY - August 2025

As we are a Gold Award Eco Church we, as a congregation should undertake a regular lifestyle audit to renew our personal approach to creation care. We hope you will participate as part of Stonehouse Methodist Church’s life together.

An introduction- from the ARochaUK website: *Changing our personal lifestyles is essential if we’re to worship God with heart, soul, mind and strength – and love our neighbours as ourselves. “We all need to make a complete, radical and honest audit of our lifestyles, their impact on the poor and on the planet,” said ArochaUK co-founder Dave Bookless, “and to ask God to pinpoint where we should start making changes.”*

Please would you reflect on the last 12 months (since August 2024) and despite the challenging times we have had, please answer the questions below as far as you are able. Your responses will be much appreciated by the Eco Church Team. They can be anonymous and any comments or suggestions are welcome. Thank You.

Question	Yes	No	Sometimes/Unsure
I consider an ethical lifestyle part of living out my Christian faith			
I walk or cycle to church services and events			
I try to reduce my car use when possible (including sharing lifts)			
I use a diesel/petrol/hybrid/electric vehicle (please delete as appropriate)			
I limit my waste by recycling regularly (kerbside collection)			
I try to reuse items and recycle others eg soft plastics, ink cartridges, blister packs, coffee pods			
I seek to purchase <b>Fairtrade</b> goods where possible			
My home electricity is from a renewable resource			
I have solar panels/heat pump/gas heating (please delete as appropriate)			
I have completed - or will aim to - a personal carbon footprint audit			
I have made changes to my diet to be healthier and more sustainable (eg less meat, buying local or organic)			
I seek to purchase ethically where possible eg check source, bulk buying/less packaging			
I try to buy locally grown, organic, animal friendly products			
I consider where I put my money by using ethical banking, savings etc			
I participate in community activities with an eco agenda eg litter picks, other groups (please specify)			

Which of the following Stonehouse Methodist Church activities have assisted and supported you in living a more environmentally friendly lifestyle (circle all that apply)

Sermons	Prayers	Fairtrade Refreshments
Café Church Services	Items in Weekly News	Recycling Facilities
Church Facebook page	Fundraising activities	Eco Church Events
Church Website	Book Exchange	Church Garden

Please tell us about any other resources you have found helpful in living an environmentally friendly lifestyle

Being a church family, it is great to inspire and learn from one another. Please tell us about anything you have done, or learned in the last year, to care for creation

Do you have any plans for the future or any pledges, to respond to creation care?

If you have any other comments or questions, or would like more information on our future Eco Church plans, please let us know here

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey

+++++

**SUMMARY OF 10 RESPONSES RECEIVED**

The main question that was not answered ‘Yes’ was question 10 – *I have completed – or will aim to – a personal carbon footprint audit.* The Eco Church Team will aim to provide information on how/where to do this – perhaps in an eco themed service in 2026. Also more information could be provided to help with question 14 - *I consider where I put my money by using ethical banking, savings etc.*

Responses to: *Being a church family, it is great to inspire and learn from one another. Please tell us about anything you have done, or learned in the last year, to care for creation* included:

- Using grey water from the kitchen during the dry summer;
- Not cutting grass so much;
- Offsetting my carbon footprint when renewing car insurance;
- Limiting the number of emails, including storage and deleting;
- Going on the Prayer Walk;
- Using eco-friendly laundry and personal care products including SMOL;
- Recycling more things, including toothpaste tubes;
- Repurposing unwanted items.

## Garden Management Plan Year 2026

DATE	ACTION
January	Monthly working party Weed and mulch trees Bird survey Trim hedge and collect moss from lawn (for flower arranging)
February	Monthly working party – prune roses, feed and mulch Check compost bins and turn over Tidy/weed raised beds and top up Tidy hedge – powerwash footpath to front doors
March	Monthly working party – wildflower/cutflower seeding Plan out new rain garden planter with GWT Land Management Plan to Church Council Plant potatoes in wire cage
April	Monthly working party – planting in raised beds Put up Swift Boxes on Morley Hall wall by car park Mowing regime agreed with gardener Plan pots/troughs for Patio area
May	Monthly working party – May Fayre (9 <sup>th</sup> ) Weeding hedge and litter picking No mow May – leave meadow area in lawn and other small areas Renovation of Bench(es) from The Elms for community use in garden
June	Monthly working party – watering Installation of new Rain Garden with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust Harvest strawberries and rhubarb Churches Count on Nature 6-14 June – Wildflowers and Plants
July	Monthly working party – watering Church Anniversary Eco Service Check mowing plan and cut flowers for church arrangements Wildflowers and plant survey
August	Monthly working party – watering Insect/Butterfly survey Check drainpipe wetland
September	Monthly working party – weeding, pruning, planting Trim hedges Regular mowing retaining wild area Check bird and bat boxes
October	Monthly working party – plant bulbs and perennials for spring Hedgehog house set up Rebuild dead hedge
November	Monthly working party – clearing leaves and add to wire basket Raised beds tidied up removal of dead plant remains
December	Monthly working party – tidy up Review work required on Elms boundary

# Photo Gallery

Communication about wild areas



Garden tidy up removal of brambles



Garden tidy up and weeding



The Eco Church Team led an Eco Service on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Flowering cherry



Water butt – we used a dumped old tyre as a base



Lawn border left to grow wild in 2021/2022

Climbing rose '*Mamma Mia*' planted for HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee



New tree *alnus spaethii* planted December 2020



Cinnabar moth caterpillars on ragwort

Meadow area left in lawn summer 2024. Variegated maple in foreground



Lawn meadow and weeded/watered mulched Alder



Rebuilding the drainpipe wetland and tidying the raised beds spring 2024





Rowan '*Olympic Flame*'  
planted in July 2025 to mark  
the Church's 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



Appendix 7

