

Report to Full WMPC Council meeting 20th April 2026 Tree Wardens A Westover and S Exton

Cemetery Working Group

The working group (led by a councillor) has since 2014, provided an important role and link with the WMPC and volunteers with the annual and other meetings taking place with contractors regarding management and specific work items. Topics have included tree management, rabbit control, memorial garden, biodiversity, wildflowers, measuring the grave lines with the cemetery clerk, grave levels, stray tributes and grass cutting. All agreed with WMPC and Clerk.

There is still a need for this group to input into a management plan to incorporate landscape, and biodiversity matters along with the burial function. A link with the Climate Group would also be highly beneficial.

Some members of this group may wish to step back whilst two regular volunteers would like to join.

I recommend that the WMPC seek clarification from the current members and those wishing to stand forward.

I recommend seeking a visit and advice from Suffolk Wildlife Trust ecologists who offer free visits, preliminary surveys & advise on environmental management, with a written report. I have seen/used their inputs into Suffolk churchyard and cemeteries management with staff providing expert knowledge of biodiversity matters. The contact information was passed onto E&L working party in 2025. The Gods Acre project also provides support for enhancing wildlife, flora and fauna in Cemeteries.

I had input into recent work by Cllr Jenkinson of Tree Safety surveys requirements/project brief. Update on this matter particularly in relation to passing on information regarding potential 'target trees' is awaited, along with input into tree management.

Cemetery working party ('Green Gym')

These Green Gym events take place generally the last Thursday of each month with many extra visits undertaken. Primarily to care for the landscape of the cemetery (an historic Local Green Space and non-designated heritage asset).

Regular tasks completed/underway/ongoing include the following:

Tree care both young and semi mature, pruning, protection, mulching, canopy raising (only where essential).

Many varieties of tree have been planted across the cemetery over the last 30 years (and prior to that too!), positioned and planned with care around visible and past burial rows.

Tree inspection, informal monitoring takes place to pick up on trees of concern and to develop management specifications.

Beech tree monitoring due to Meripilus and significant dieback. Discussion will be needed on how to manage its decline. A cherry on northern boundary is in decline (one was removed in 2022).

Removing ivy, bramble and elder from the Irish Yew.

Adding nest boxes for birds and bats.

Bulbs, protection and increasing the drifts with new bulbs; native snowdrop, daffodil and crocus. ESSL operatives have recently confirmed that no bulb drifts create any cause for concern in terms of grass cutting operations.

Collecting stray/scattered tributes and cleaning the bin area. Help from WM Wombles group will be welcomed.

Advice from Clerk and Climate Wombles Group needed regarding the use of appropriate bins for rubbish and recyclables. At present all items are placed in the mixed three wheeled bins.

Topping up the composters and removing inappropriate items i.e. non compostable.

Hedge care such as the new Lonicera nitida hedge (once East Suffolk Services Ltd work is complete).

Funded by Nature First Grant

Bier House clean and tidy, future tasks to add hooks and paint walls inside (SH and DL).

Pruning hawthorn hedge next the building.

Enhancing the reptile/beetle log hibernacula.

Barbed wire removal (SH and DL).

Collecting, stacking deadwood. This is essential for invertebrates and is a crucial component of healthy ecosystems, supporting fungi, invertebrates, and birds.

This acts as a vital nutrient recycler, carbon store, and habitat for biodiversity.

Plans for further trees, understorey tree belt shrub planting, wildflower and bulbs need to be developed and refined with the Clerk and Working Group to ensure ongoing enhancements are planned and funded.

Tree Warden activities and Green Gym work parties

Trees have been tended and replenished as needed in various 'out of Village' locations on farmland, Simons cross sports field boundary and cemetery. The tree line and spinney on Green Lane is looking fabulous, and we plan to extend this.

The Clerk has facilitated the potential removal of 220 metres of plastic spiral rabbit guards from a 20-year-old hedge on Green Lane. This is to be carried out by Community Payback group. Await confirmed dates to ensure some oversight. Sadly, this plastic will fragment badly and cannot be recycled.

Surplus village grown native trees have been passed to Framlingham and Knodishall for their projects. Nursery trees to be potted on and grown on for next seasons plantings. Host gardens needed for potted trees, a shady place where they can be kept moist and weed free.

Response submitted for Simons Cross proposed development and concerns expressed regarding significant hedge and tree loss. Follow up on Pill Box enhancement and potential for bat hibernaculum to be followed up with East Suffolk Council. Responses given regularly for ESC Tree works applications via Cllr Jenkinson.

New projects and ideas for the following years to be discussed with local landowner:

Edge of village site and Pettistree.

Mill Lane/Sandy Lane and Natural Flood Management (NFM) planting.

Potential to discuss NFM planting further with SCC and Env Agency on May 12th.

Sonya Exton to establish availability of HP) for 2026 bat monitoring in open spaces.

Input into biodiversity action plan to be finalised by Climate WG.

I recommend that a wider landscape enhancement should be planned/designed. This will be essential given the pressure for impactful developments in the area. This can be guided by the WM Neighbourhood Plan (objectives) and with support and hopefully assistance from WMPC.

Anne Westover Parish Tree Warden 14th April 2026 V2