

Ash Millennium Wood

Ash Parish Council purchased the site in 1998 from Somerset County Council, and following consultation with local residents decided to establish a community wood and wildlife area.

The site was a plot of rough grassland about 1½ ha in area, immediately to the west of Ash, hedged around three sides and with arable farmland on two. Volunteers planted approximately 120 native trees in the first year. There were a few initial losses but the trees have grown well and are now contributing significantly to the local landscape. A series of mown paths and interpretation boards were installed to enable people to access the site.

Initially, the site was left to fend for itself, except for twice-yearly mowing, and as a result, scrub and rough grassland became predominant. The Parish Council therefore agreed, at the end of 2012, to appoint a manager for the community woodland and later agreed a strategy and work programme.

Volunteers carry out the majority of maintenance tasks; however, Ash Parish Council make an annual grant to cover the maintenance cost for contractors to cut the vegetation on site. Funding for on-going project tasks and maintenance (such as the purchase and repair of tools) has been obtained from a variety of sources, including from the Parish Council, SSDC, The People's Postcode Lottery, as well as local community groups such as the "Friends of Millennium Wood".

The strategy looked to increase the diversity of habitats by managing the open spaces; this included:

- setting up log and stone piles to encourage invertebrates;
- increasing the diversity of tree species and improving the structure of the woodland through planting new trees and shrubs such as hazel, hawthorn, dogwood and guelder rose;
- creation of an informal orchard area with the planting of fruit trees;
- a new hedgerow of 120 plants, as well as woodland bulbs such as bluebell and snowdrop;
- establishment of a wildflower area, with the seeding and/or planting of species such as ox-eye daisy, knapweed and musk mallow; and
- creation of a damp area, incorporating a part of the site that floods regularly, attracting dragonflies and other aquatic insects.

The biggest challenge has been taming the original grassland in the "meadow area", which is mainly a coarse mix of semi-improved grasses. This is being tackled by contracting an annual cut of the meadow area, carried out through a mechanical scything regime, followed by a bailing process (a form of 'cut and collect') to lower the fertility of the meadow, thus allowing the grassland to diversify and give future wildflower planting a greater chance of success.

For more details on the project, visit [here](#), and to view the five-year management plan click [here](#).

