

Eco Church

Case Studies



St Peter and St Paul, Dry Drayton:
A carefully balanced landscape



The Church of England
Diocese of Ely



Dry Drayton is a small rural village to the north-west of Cambridge. Mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, and now with a village hall, primary school and around 600 locals who call the village home. At the village's centre stands St Peter and St Paul, a parish church that continues to play an active role in village life. While modest in size with an electoral roll of around 35 and a regular congregation of approximately 20, the church continues to be very present in the community.

The church building is open daily during daylight hours, welcoming visitors, walkers, and residents. The churchyard lies along the Pathfinder Walk, and with its mown paths and accessible layout, it is well-used by those passing through as well as those who come intentionally.

A Living History: The Story of St Peter and St Paul

St Peter and St Paul has deep historical roots, with parts of the present building dating back to the 13th century, including its west tower and much of its nave.

Earlier records suggest a small stone church existed on the site by around 1200, reflecting the long-standing importance of worship in the village. Over time, the church developed with additions in the 13th and 14th centuries, before undergoing significant restoration in the 19th century, and the beginning of the 21st century.



A Churchyard shaped by change and opportunity

The PCC developed an intentional strategy to churchyard management. The current approach to the churchyard began not as part of a long-term strategy, but as a practical response to change. Following the loss of a long-standing gardener, the church faced a significant challenge. With a relatively small congregation and PCC, there simply was not the capacity, either in time or energy, to continue maintaining the entire churchyard as closely mown grass. What could have become a burden instead became an opportunity to think differently.



Rather than trying to reproduce what had been done in the past, the church took a step back and asked what was realistic, manageable, and meaningful for their capacity as a church.

Working in partnership with the Wildlife Trust and a local contractor, the church began to develop a new approach to management one that has steadily evolved over the past ten years. Importantly, this was not a one-off choice, but a gradual process of learning, adapting, and building confidence.

At first, the changes were relatively small: allowing certain areas to grow longer, experimenting with what flourished, and observing how people responded.

Over time, this developed into a more intentional pattern:

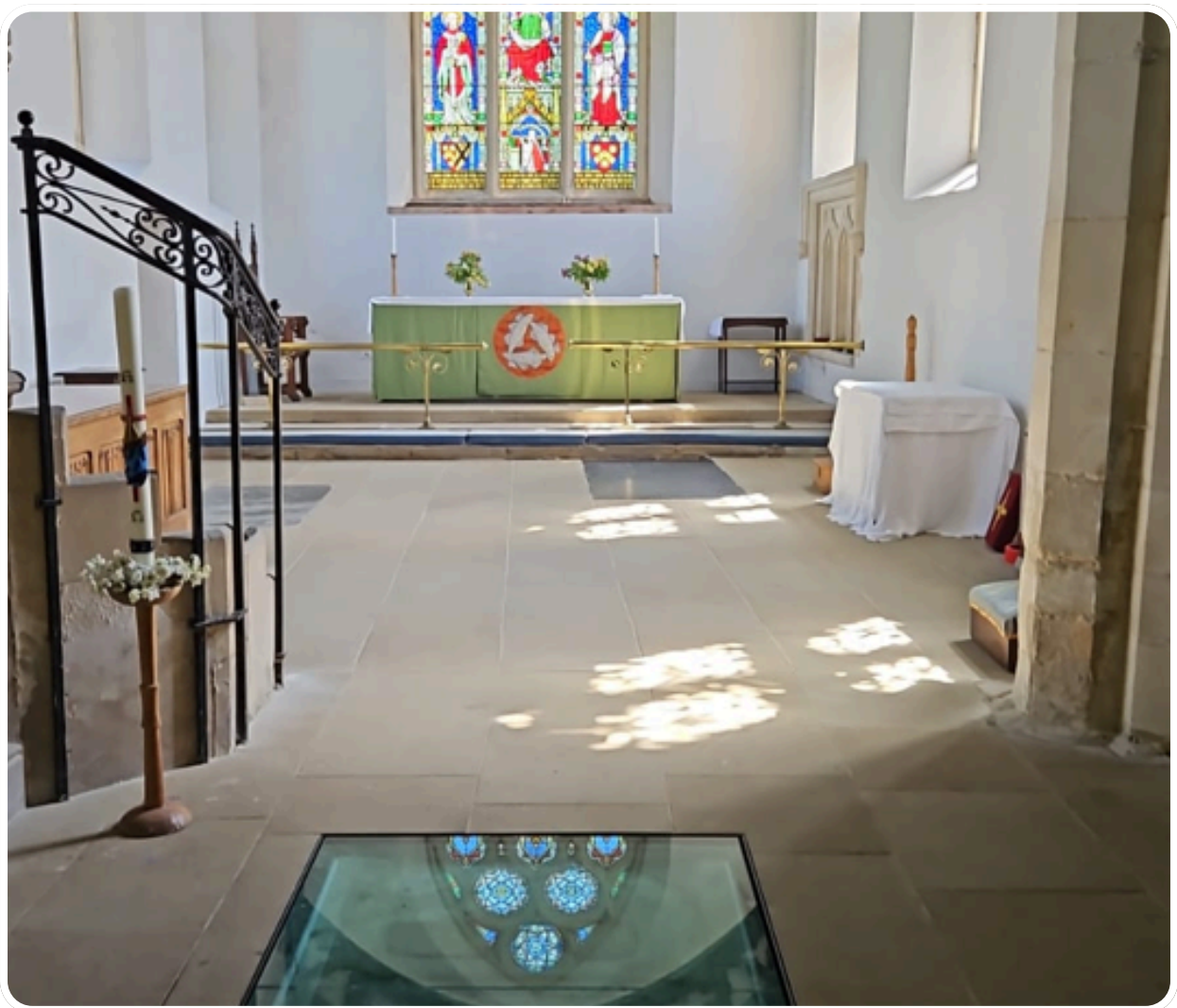
- Areas of the churchyard are now left longer to encourage wildflowers and native planting
- Other areas particularly sections with new burials and key access points are kept short and well-defined
- Mown paths are maintained throughout, ensuring the space remains navigable and welcoming

What has emerged is a carefully balanced landscape, one that reflects both care for biodiversity and care for people.



For a church of this size, this approach has also been about sustainability in the fullest sense. By working with a contractor for key tasks and supporting this with regular volunteer work parties, the church has created a system that is manageable for a small group, rather than dependent on a few individuals. The way that the churchyard is managed now not only is more bio-diverse but is also more interesting to outsiders, easier and more enjoyable to manage, requires less intervention, and sparks more conversations.

This gradual development has been key: not attempting to do everything at once, but allowing change to happen step by step, season by season.



What the Group Does: Practical Care and Community Involvement

Work is carried out by regular volunteer work parties and contractors. Activities include:

- Managing areas for native species and biodiversity
- Maintaining mown paths and accessible routes
- Developing a community herb garden
- Exploring projects such as community bulb planting
- Coordinating regular maintenance and volunteer activity

The churchyard is used daily by walkers, visitors, and residents, offering a place for reflection, exploration, and informal connection with the church. The churchyard is seen as an important tool for the church to continually connect with visitors, and is their ‘friendly face of welcome.’



Communication, Identity, and Visibility

The church clearly explains its approach through signage which explains what is happening in the church and churchyard, and how visitors can find out more, show support and get involved. They also offer an e-newsletter with notes on the churchyard. Crucially they also continue to model their values as both an Eco Church and Fairtrade Church.



Partnerships with organisations such as the Wildlife Trust, links with the local school, and connections with nearby natural spaces (including a local wood) help extend the reach of the church and their biodiversity projects.

Despite its small size, the church has created a well-used, visible, and welcoming community space that reflects its values. The move toward longer grass and biodiversity has sparked conversation in the community, raising awareness and inviting engagement. The road has not always been easy, with some in the community not liking the appearance of the churchyard, but through gradual steps, clear explanations of what is happening and why, and invitations to get more people involved, many both in and out side of the church have come to value and love the space and appreciate the special nature of what is being attempted.



What St Peter and St Paul would say to other churches

- Start small
- Work step by step
- Be patient
- Use native species
- Work with partners
- Build gradually