

Bainton and Ashton Parish Council

Ten Year Nature Recovery Plan



The Bainton and Ashton Nature Recovery Plan has been drawn up as part of the John Clare Countryside (JCC) Project, first proposed by the Langdyke Trust in 2019.

The Project has the active support and participation of Natural England, Langdyke Countryside Trust, Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, Sacrewell Farm, Peterborough Environment City Trust (PECT), Nene Park Trust, Peterborough City Council, Burghley Estate, Walcot Estate, Milton Estates and our local MP Shailesh Vara. In July 2021 the JCC Project was awarded a major grant of approximately £250,000 from the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund.

The JCC area lies between the Welland valley to the north and Nene valley to the south and reaches to Stamford in the west and Peterborough in the east. A key aspect of the project involves the linked participation of all the parishes within that area.

Each Parish Council in the area has been invited to draw up a ten-year Nature Recovery Plan for their parish. Bainton and Ashton Parish Council has agreed to take part, and this document is the first stage in developing our local plan.

For further details of the vision for the John Clare Countryside see: <http://langdyke.org.uk/projects/john-clare-vision/>

Broad Geography

Bainton and Ashton Parish covers an area of approximately 7 square kilometres from Lolham Mill and the Maxey Cut in the north to Stamford Road (Ufford to Marholm Road) in the south, Barnack Parish in the west and King Street in the east. The parish is crossed by the B1443, the Peterborough to Birmingham railway, the East Coast mainline railway, the River Welland, Maxey Cut and many small streams and dykes.

The variation in geology, topography and land-use history provide a varied range of habitat opportunities across the Parish

Although the parish covers a relatively small area, the underlying geology is diverse and quite complex. Bainton village lies on clays and a band of sandy/silty strata whereas in the Welland valley to the north river gravels and alluvium overlie these clays. Ashton and the land to the south of Ashton is very different with heavier clays in the village itself, and a range of Jurassic limestones to the east and at the top end of Highfield Road. Bainton village sits on the edge of the Welland valley on the slightly higher drier ground whereas nearby Ashton lies alongside streams on wetter ground. Close to the River Welland the land is about 11 metres above sea level rising to a modest 36 metres on the limestone 'upland' on the southern boundary of the Parish. All this variation in geology and topography, together with the land-use history, provides a varied range of habitat opportunities across the Parish, which is reflected in its diverse natural flora.

For further details of built environment and historical land use see Appendix 1

Current Wildlife Habitats

- * **Torpel Field**, the site of Torpel Manor and an ancient monument, a grassland site managed for wildlife by Langdyke Trust.
- * **Bainton Heath**, managed by Langdyke Trust also on site of early 20th Century gravel workings – a wildlife rich scrub and heathland area with ponds.
- * **Watercourses**: Old Welland River, Maxey Cut flood alleviation channel, many smaller straightened streams, dykes and ditches.
- * **Bainton Fishing Lakes**, also on the site of early 20th century gravel workings
- * **Woodlands**, including some ancient woodlands: The Jubilee, Rough Raven's, Lawn Wood, Grossmith's Spinney, and Hilly Wood, and the linear woodland and shrub near the East Coast mainline and Bainton Lakes.
- * Lots of **mature trees** within the confines of the two settlements.
- * **Hedges** (of variable quality), some with **standard trees** and/or **headlands** in the arable landscape.
- * **Meadows and permanent pasture with hedges** surrounding the settlements and close to the Welland, mostly used for grazing sheep and horses. Includes the Ashton Hedges and Meadows County Wildlife site.
- * **Road verges and green spaces** in the villages and surrounding countryside. Including two areas of County Wildlife Site verges: **limestone grassland** on the wide verges of Highfield Road and **neutral grassland** on Bainton Green Road (west).
- * A privately owned and managed nature **conservation area of around 7.9 hectares**, created in 1988, with ponds, reed beds, grassland and woodland.
- * **Flora rich churchyard**. A wide range of both native and garden species, with abundance of spring flowers, some rare, which provide important source of nectar for solitary bees. The churchyard also acts as a natural seedbank for surrounding grassland in village centre.
- * **Gardens** – large and small.
- * **Bainton's historic village centre** built of **local limestone** with limestone boundary walls and medieval Buttercross. These structures support important ferns, as well as mosses, lichens and small annual plants.
- * **Ashton – historic rural hamlet**, with narrow country lanes and retaining network of small fields surrounded by hedges dating back to at least end of 18th century, many veteran willow pollards, plus ash trees and veteran oaks.

The areas under arable production provide little or no wildlife value.

Key species in these areas include:

- * Dry neutral and damp neutral grassland flora, calcareous grassland flora, Bainton Heath grassland flora. Associated invertebrates and small mammals. Rare Concolorous Moth at Bainton Heath.
- * Ancient Woodland - trees and ground flora.
- * Wetland birds.
- * Dragonflies and Damselflies.
- * Woodland edge and farmland birds.
- * Veteran pollard willows.
- * Water voles and otters.
- * Swifts
- * Bats
- * Hedgehogs

Landscape Heritage features

- * Extensive Pre-historic and Romano-British archaeological features evidenced by cropmarks on aerial and satellite images in the Welland Valley north of Bainton and around the village.
- * Site of Torpel Medieval Manor and Torpel village site, and associated Deer Park and 'Lodge'.
- * Moated 13th century homestead site in Bainton.
- * Ridge and furrow field systems around Bainton and Ashton, and further evidence of medieval field systems to north of the railway line.
- * Buttercross and historic Sheepwash

Please note: Many of the locations mentioned above as Wildlife Habitat and Landscape Heritage Features are on private land and inclusion in these lists does not imply that there is public access.

Strategic objectives of 10-year Recovery Plan

1. To make Bainton and Ashton Parish an even better place for nature and for local people. Recognising that access to nature helps improve our health and wellbeing.
2. To gather and share information about our local landscape and nature to **inform, inspire and encourage the active participation of the community** in helping nature to flourish and biodiversity to increase in the Parish. Playing our part in helping to halt habitat loss and species reduction across the UK.
3. Develop **joint partnership working** with Peterborough City Council, statutory bodies, NGO's and other parishes.
4. Seek to **increase and protect biodiversity** in and around the two linked villages, in gardens, verges and green spaces, allotments, churchyard, stone walls and structures such as the Buttercross, and the surrounding pastureland and hedges.
5. Encourage the development of **wildlife corridors** forming east-west and north-south corridors across the parish to neighbouring parishes and linking key wildlife habitats, incorporating verges, watercourses, hedgerows and headlands by working with local tenant farmers and landowners (including Bainton Poors Estate) plus the Highway Authority. Wildlife corridors will enable wildlife to spread out from key habitats and move between habitats across the Bainton and Ashton Parish and beyond into the wider countryside. It is a major focus of the Langdyke Trust and its partners in the John Clare Countryside Project. Key habitats include Bainton Heath and Torpel Field, Bainton (Nature) Conservation Area, the Maxey Cut and environs, plus meadows, woodlands, churchyard, species rich verges etc.
6. The **water environment** - working with Welland Rivers Trust, Welland and Deepings Internal Drainage Board, Environment Agency and local tenant farmers and landowners. Identify potential for creating flower rich buffer strips alongside the watercourses and wildlife corridors. Flora and fauna monitoring of watercourses with landowner permission. Seek opportunities for creation of winter wetland, scrapes and ponds and for reducing rapid run-off after heavy rain. Support the return of veteran pollard willows to pollarding regimes.
7. **Grassland** - support best practice in management of grassland.
8. **Hedgerows** – support best practice in management of hedgerows and infilling of gaps in hedgerows.
9. Recognising the connection between Ashton and ash trees and the threat to the landscape from **Ash Die-back** disease – plant new native trees in the landscape.
10. Be supportive of the Langdyke Trust in their management of Nature Reserves in the Parish, and local landowners in their management of Ashton Hedges and Meadows CWS, Bainton Conservation (Nature) Area, churchyard and woodlands.

11. Support the setting up of a cycleway link from Helpston through Bainton and Ashton Parish to Barnack and beyond to Stamford. Encourage the incorporation of trees, hedges and wildflowers along the route.
12. Review footpath network with a view to adding missing paths to the Definitive Map prior to the deadline of January 2026.
13. Seek to understand and record the history and heritage of the parish, particularly in the way that it has impacted the landscape, natural environment and nature we have today. Submit proposals to Peterborough City Council for additions to the Local List. The local list, or more formally the 'List of Heritage Assets in Peterborough' is a register of buildings, features or sites that contribute to the Historic Environment within Peterborough City Council area.

Please note: *Bainton and Ashton Parish Council does not own any land but looks after some areas in the Parish on behalf of Peterborough City Council. Other private areas which could be part of the plan with the agreement of owners, are identified in general terms only.*

Community Engagement

- Share information through the Parish News magazine, the 'Nature Recovery' page on the Bainton and Ashton Parish Council Website, the Bainton and Ashton Nature Recovery Facebook Group and occasional newsletters delivered to homes.
- Have a stall at Bainton and Ashton Family Day in September 2021. Explore ideas for further community projects with the community.
- Involve local volunteers for work parties, litter clearance and surveys.
- Invite speakers to talk about topics including nature and wellbeing, local natural history, encouraging nature and restoring habitats, and how we can play our part in helping to mitigate habitat and species loss.
- Devise and publish guides to parish footpaths, particularly focusing on our flora and fauna and landscape history and heritage.
- Hold a Parish Festival in Summer 2022 to celebrate and advance our local nature and landscape. Including for example: nature reserve visits in Bainton and Ashton, nature walks, moth counts, a photographic exhibition, children's activities, a local landscape history exhibition, local farming etc.
- Support the JCC 'Thank You Nature' initiative as a way of acknowledging the importance of access to nature during the pandemic.

Projects Commencing in 2021

1. Gather information

- Prepare the Parish Map and survey of habitats – carry out a detailed review of habitats across the parish, summarise in map form with additional notes. (Surveys carried out via public rights of way.)
- Gather information about observed or now missing flora and fauna in our Parish: including local sightings in gardens and wider landscape and surveys of publicly accessible land
- Gather further information about geology, local history and pre-history.

2. New mowing regimes and improving verges as wildlife habitats and corridors.

- **Areas currently mown by Bainton and Ashton Parish Council.**
 - * *Verges around the church on Tallington Road, Church Lane and Pinfold:* Continue mowing regimes from 2020 to allow summer flowering of orchids and other wildflowers and spring flowering of planted bulbs and naturally occurring wildflowers. Co-ordinate with summer cutting of churchyard, if possible, to avoid reducing nectar sources simultaneously. Timescale ongoing.
 - * *B1443 south-side verge between Paddock Cottage and Stoneycroft's garden verges:* Plant native shrubs to add to trees planted in 2019 and 2020 to improve the visual amenity and provide habitat for birds and invertebrates. Timescale 2021.
 - * *Bainton Green Road, Ashton, south-side from Thatched Cottage to village green:* clear rank vegetation and fallen branch debris, encourage the development of more diverse flora. Phase one of this project was carried out in October 2020. Timescale: 2021-2023.
 - * *St Mary's Close corner:* This small area has recently been cleared of dead and dying shrubs. Review how this area could be developed to provide a wildlife habitat and improve visual amenity. Timescale: review during 2021.
 - * *Tallington Road verges to the north of Church Lane junction:* Review mowing regime. Can mowing frequency be reduced in some areas for summer wildflowers? Timescale: review during 2021.
 - * Review Parish Council mowing contract to incorporate the new mowing regimes and removal of arisings. Timescale: prior to 2021 mowing season.
 - * Flora surveys to monitor. Timescale: ongoing.

- **Areas managed by Peterborough City Council Highways on B1443, Tallington Road - railway crossing to Welland, Bainton Green Road from B1443 junction to edge of Ashton settlement and Highfield Road, Ashton:**
 - * Encourage mowing regimes beneficial to wildflowers, including the control of Hemlock which is taking over some of these verges.
 - * Participating in John Clare Countryside Verges Sub-group with Peterborough City Council to work towards these objectives.
 - * Peterborough City Council has agreed to introduce an additional spring cut on two sections of the Highfield Road CWS as a trial. Participate in flora surveys to monitor effectiveness of this strategy in halting the loss of specialist limestone flora to more aggressive species. Timescale: ongoing

- **Ashton Verges**
 - * **'Snowdrop' verge**, - Reducing dominance of nettles and increasing biodiversity. (From Thatched Cottage to Penny Farthing on Bainton Green Road). Timescale: ongoing
 - * **Bainton Green Road West verges** - Review and revise verge management on Peterborough City Council Council's County Wildlife Site verges on both sides of the road between Ufford Road and the Ashton village sign, to benefit wildflowers and wildlife. Timescale: ongoing

- **Other areas where mown by householders:**
 - * Encourage mowing regimes beneficial to wildflowers and wildlife Timescale: ongoing

3. Bainton Buttercross

Management plan implemented, with the agreement of Peterborough City Council's Conservation Officer, Planning Services, to retain small annual plants, unusual mosses and small ferns that set themselves on the structure. While regularly removing any ivy, and seedlings of larger annuals and woody plants. A presentation on the management can be seen on the Nature Recovery page of the Bainton and Ashton Parish Council Website.

Timescale: Implemented 2021.

4. Thank You Nature Projects

- **Washdyke and Sheepwash Thank you Nature Area**
 - * Sheepwash - repair of fences and grid
 - * Sensitive management of Bainton Brook (the Washdyke) for water voles – liaise with Welland and Deepings Internal Drainage Board.
 - * Create mini wildflower meadows in Sheepwash enclosures
 - * Bird and bat nesting boxes
 - * New seat
 - * Off-road path from village to start Public Footpath
- **Swift Nest Boxes** Install swift boxes on houses close to the known nesting area in Bainton and also in Ashton.
- **Thank You Trees** Find an accessible site for a specimen English Oak tree in Ashton. The removal of a dying tree on the Pinfold in August 2021 provides an opportunity for planting a Thank You tree in the centre of Bainton – species of native tree to be decided.

Timescale: 2021/2022

5. Promote action for nature in gardens, allotments, pastures, on common land and in the church yard.

Including:

- Supporting and promoting the Langdyke Trust 8th Nature Reserve
- Hedgehog routes and boxes
- Bird nesting boxes e.g. swifts, owls, house martins etc
- Bee and bug homes
- Bat boxes
- Wildflower areas
- Hedges and trees for winter food supply for birds and for nest sites.
- Find village champions to help to promote each of these areas by sharing information and success stories.

Undertake a survey of gardens in the parish by inviting householders to complete a questionnaire. This will give a baseline understanding of how wildlife is faring in our gardens and find out the level of activity and interest there already is for encouraging wildlife in our gardens. Timescale: 2021 onwards

6. Heritage and History Initiatives

- **In addition to the nature recovery initiatives - undertake a review of the unique crop mark features.**

The Welland valley is one of the most important sites in the country for pre-historic crop marks. Much has been lost through gravel extraction (after archaeological investigation), but in Bainton and Barnack the crop marks are still extensive and visible, at certain times even at ground level. Transpose the crop mark features from aerial photos and satellite images create a composite image of these overlapping features, covering Neolithic to Romano-British eras.

Liaise with Peterborough City Council Archaeologist and English Heritage to ensure all the features are recognised for their heritage importance. Explore the possibility of research project to explore the significance of these features and what they can tell us about the people who lived here. Timescale: 2021 onwards.

- **Local List** – Submit heritage and amenity features to be incorporated in the Peterborough City Council Local Heritage list. Timescale: Oct 2021
- **Heritage walk leaflets and information** – Connect with initiatives being explored across JCC.
- **John Clare Links** – John Clare poem on new Sheepwash seat

Budgets

'Thank you Nature' Projects

| Project Name | Materials | Cost Estimate | Notes |
|---|--|---------------|---------------------|
| Swift Nest Boxes | 5 nest boxes @£40 each | £200 | Funded by JCC |
| Sheep-Wash area: Ufford Road northside from the junction with Bainton Green Road to the public footpath. | Establish wildflowers in the Sheep-wash area and make improvements to the area for wildlife. Sensitive management of Washdyke/Bainton Brook for water voles Timescale 2021 – 2023 | ? | |
| Washdyke | Inspection and repair to Sheepwash grid | With B&A PC | Material costs only |
| | Repair of craftsman made Sheepwash enclosure fences – post and rail (no nails!) | With B&A PC | Material costs only |
| Washdyke con'd | | tbc | |

| | | | |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| | New bench seat, possibly with an inscription depending on cost Repair or replacement of existing streamside bench – to be inspected. Litter bin? New information sign – JCC standard | With B&A PC tbc tbc | Would need to negotiate emptying of a litter bin with PCC. |
| 'Thank You Nature' trees - one for Ashton and one for Bainton | Feathered Standard or young standard native specimen tree Substantial tree guard may be required to protect from livestock or horses | £120 tbc | Checking whether B&A PC have any funds left over from Bainton in Bloom for trees and shrubs. |

Other 2021 Projects

| Project name | Materials | Cost Estimate | Notes |
|---|--|---|-----------------------------|
| B1443 verge alongside Stoneycroft | 12 native flowering and fruiting shrubs @ £2.75 each | £33 | See thank trees note above. |
| Compost area for grass cuttings at allotment site | Materials and construction | £300 (purchased April 2021 using JCC grant) | |

Other Funding

| Project name | Materials | Cost Estimate | Notes |
|---|--|--------------------|---|
| Verge and green space management | Specialist equipment for managing larger areas of grassland as meadows | To be investigated | Explore possibility of sharing of specialist grass cutting and collection equipment with other parishes and Langdyke Trust. |
| Regenerative re-pollarding of veteran pollard willows | Specialist tree surgery to re-pollard overgrown willows. Match-funding with tree owners. | | Lodged with JCC partners. Awaiting opportunities for grants. |

Note: It is anticipated that costs directly linked to nature recovery will be covered by grants received through JCC partners. £1000 was awarded to Bainton and Ashton Nature Recovery in February 2021 with a further £250 for the nest boxes provided. JCC partners will receive approx. £250,000 from the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund to be used in the 18 months from Autumn 2021.

What will the current projects achieve?

Sensitive management of verges and green spaces will increase the diversity of the flora and increase populations of invertebrates, small mammals, birds and bats. Removal of arisings will reduce fertility and competition from vigorous grasses and rank vegetation. Linear meadows along verges particularly within the villages are accessible so can be enjoyed by local people and visitors. Will create wildlife corridors through the two settlements and countryside.

Sheepwash and Washdyke Thank you Nature Project – Protection and management of the varied habitats for increased diversity of flora and wildlife benefit. Also making this a place for people to enjoy nature close to village.

Swift boxes – Will enable the expansion of the small existing swift colony in Bainton helping this threatened species. Swift boxes in Ashton hope to encourage a new colony.

Thank you trees – Oaks host the most biodiversity of all our tree species. Most existing oaks in the parish are mature or veteran specimens, adding young oaks will aid the long-term continuity of oak as a local species.

Ongoing Development of the Plan

Add to and revise 10-year Plan strategic objectives and projects after initial information gathering and community engagement period. See Appendix 2. Timescale: Autumn 2021

Appendices

Appendix 1

Broad Geography - Historical perspective

Local limestone is the main feature of the older buildings in Bainton and Ashton villages, many of which were farmhouses with their associated outbuildings. The church dates to the late 11th to 12th centuries and was extensively re-built in the 14th and 15th century. There is an historic limestone Buttercross in the centre of Bainton of medieval origin, and the village has many limestone boundary walls.

The area has been used for human activity, settlement and farming for at least 4000 years. There is archaeological evidence in the form of crop marks of late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano-British farming in the Welland valley around Bainton. From medieval times almost to the end of the 18th century there was a landscape of strip field cultivation, meadows and common land for grazing, surrounding the two gathered settlements of Ashton and Bainton. By the end of the 18th Century the land had been enclosed and began to look more like it does today. Since the middle of the 20th Century modern farming techniques have opened up much of the landscape to large open arable fields. However, the two settlements are surrounded by grass paddocks many enclosed by hedges which are mainly used for grazing for horses and sheep. A large area in the Welland valley was worked for gravel extraction in the first half of the 20th Century. The northern section now comprises a number of fishing lakes which are a County Wildlife Site. The southern section owned by National Grid was infilled with fly ash from power stations and rubble cleared from Blitz sites, this has created an unusual and species rich habitat of heathland and ponds which has been managed by Langdyke Trust for nature over the past ten years. The Maxey Cut flood alleviation channel means that regular seasonal flooding no longer occurs in the Welland Valley.

Appendix 2

Some examples of further projects that could be a part of the Parish Nature Recovery Plan:

- Community orchard
- Open air meeting space
- Designation of an area as a local nature reserve
- Hedge and Tree Planting
- Ponds and waterways

Last revised 2.9.21

**This version of the Nature Recovery Plan
was approved by Bainton & Ashton Parish
Council on 29th September 2021.**