



# Ash Meadow Five Year Plan 2021-2026

This plan is in two sections:

Section A – for those unfamiliar with our history and financial situation

Section B – future development and plans

## Section A

### Background and legal responsibilities

Ash Meadow was kindly donated, under a 60 year lease, to Ashprington Parish Council by Messrs Lawson and Ash on 30th July 1993. Other than some conventional clauses within the lease, the Parish Council can develop and adapt the land in accordance with Clause 3.6, which states use as a quiet recreational benefit for Ashprington Parish. It is worthy of special note that development of permanent additional footpaths or use for exercising livestock or animals is a specific exclusion under Clause 3.7 of the lease.

Ashprington Parish Council is the body responsible for all maintenance, insurance and legal responsibilities associated with the site. Whilst it can delegate that responsibility, this does not absolve it of the legal aspects of the lease. Insurances relevant to the meadow are held in the Parish Council's name.

Currently the management and development of the site is under the charge of the Ash Meadow Committee, which is deemed a subcommittee of the Parish Council.

The committee consists of nine residents of the Parish, including a member of the Parish Council. It has recently become a Community Interest Company (CIC), of which Parish Council members are the Trustees. Clearly, as a formally constituted body we are obligated to certain actions which are mentioned within this report.

## Development history

The site is just over 3.5 acres in size and has been developed since 1993 to include the following areas:

- An orchard with many fruit trees covering the southern area of the meadow edged by Duncannon Lane, the Ashprington cemetery, and the property known as Greys.
- Two copses running on the central edges of the meadow and one further copse on the northern edge running beside the external farm track. These copses were planted with a selection of trees many years ago and have since developed to a well established area of trees. Sadly, however, 36 of the Ash trees have recently had to be removed due to being infected by Ash Dieback disease.
- Funding was applied for and received which enabled the development of a play park area over several years consisting of climbing frames, swings and a play hut, with separate funding at a later date which provided outdoor adult exercise equipment.
- A container was obtained which is used for the safe locked storage of all equipment.
- Electricity was installed.
- In conjunction with South Hams District Council, the committee introduced and built a composting facility designed to collect and store green waste from members of the Parish. This waste is then shredded and stored for several months before being sieved for the use of anyone as garden compost. In this way the committee earns income from the council based on the number of compost bags taken away. This income enables the committee to have funds to maintain the meadow in the manner required for community use.
- The most recent development was the installation of an Air Ambulance Emergency Landing site in 2019, built in conjunction with the emergency services in order to assist their requirement to have an emergency landing site in our area.

## Equipment in place to date

Over the years, various equipment has been purchased and donated to facilitate the maintenance and support of social gatherings associated with the meadow.

Equipment currently includes:

- A storage container
- Fencing and green waste containment areas
- Electricity connection box
- Two motorised mowers - one donated
- An electric-powered compost sieve
- BBQ equipment
- Tables /Chairs /picnic benches
- Garden tools

- Two electric extension cables
- Ladders
- Water hoses
- Signage
- Gazebo - donated
- Children's goal posts
- Play and exercise area equipment

## Community and environmental activities

The Ash Meadow committee has for many years arranged annual activities for the estimated 488 residents of the parish, whilst encouraging the use of the meadow by the community for their own entertainment and activity. It is used by families for birthday parties, picnics, BBQs and games. Our young people have enjoyed games in the copses and learned much about nature. Arranged activities have included village sports and picnic days, a wintertime Wassail, Bonfire Night celebrations and Easter egg hunts, as well as cricket, football games and boules.

As regards the natural environment, the development of the orchard and the wild grasses within the area have done much to support wildlife and the teaching of young people about care of our nature and environmental support.

## Financial situation

Our current financial year runs from 18 February 2021 (the date on which the CIC was established) to 17 February 2022. This Five Year Plan will be updated at the end of each financial year, in order to reflect current developments.

At the end of December 2021, the balance in the Ash Meadow account with the Co-operative bank was £5,892.56. Our annual income from composting (assuming no change to the present rate paid by South Hams District Council) is about £3,000.00.

Regular outgoings are forecast to be:

Grass mowing and compost shredding	-	£400.00
Electricity supply	-	£100.00
ROSPA annual inspection	-	£100.00
Hedge cutting	-	£100.00
Brush cutter hire	-	£300.00 (but no cost for 2022?)
Routine maintenance	-	£300.00
Fireworks (net of gate receipts)	-	£100.00
Forecast Outgoings during 2022	=	£1,100.00
Balance (approx)	=	£7,700.00

We need to set aside £500.00 of this for the Devon Air Ambulance sinking fund and keep about £1,500.00 as a reserve. This suggests that we have about £5,700 available to spend on improvement projects. Due to recent grants and cost savings ,this figure could now be in the region of £10000 which will be identified and confirmed in the next financial year

In future years (assuming no change to present income and expenditure levels), we can expect the amount available for projects to increase by about £1,600.00 each year.

## Section B

### Future development plans

#### Vision

The vision for Ash Meadow Committee vision has always been to protect our valuable asset by providing a facility where we will ensure we maintain and provide the meadow to encourage use by our families and young people whilst at the same time supporting the environment and wildlife needs. The tasks involved in ensuring proper management and maintenance are considerable and listed as Appendix B.

We have been successful in introducing and developing the vision but not previously had a Five Year Plan in place stating our intentions. This we believe is important for an understanding of our historic development and, of course, future needs and possible funding requirements, especially for anyone who may wish to become part of the committee in the future. It is also important to be able to provide such a plan to prospective funders and as part of our obligations as a CIC.

There are many tasks associated with the management of Ash Meadow. Some are necessary and legally required by our new structure as a CIC and some in order to ensure the management of the space is both effective and disciplined. These are listed and available if required.

One of our members has put together an environmentally specific Ash Meadow forecast to fit with this Five Year Plan. This is available in its totality if required and meanwhile is summarised below.

The plan, with some minor amendments, has been formally agreed by the committee. It was decided to segment the meadow into four designated areas namely:

- 1) Orchard and wildlife areas
- 2) Meadow, social and games areas
- 3) Play and exercise areas
- 4) Composting area

This segmentation drawing is attached as Appendix A. The contents of the plan covering specific requirements of Areas 1 and 2 are summarised as follows.

#### Woodlands

- We have already built and formalised wood brush piles which will continue to be supported and developed.
- We have established a three metre wide strip of uncut vegetation around the woodlands. This is to be maintained as far as possible except around the play and

exercise areas where maximum space is required to ensure the benefits for our young people can be developed in the future.

- We will initiate a plant survey to categorise and list the plants, shrubs and trees we have in the meadow.
- We will obtain guidance to:
  - Facilitate and implement small scale thinning to increase understory and woodland flowers plus improve the quality of standing trees and predominantly Hazel understorey.
  - Set up bat and bird boxes so that they have the highest likelihood of being used, perhaps including a box building session with younger community members
- Since the removal in 2021 of 36 trees through Ash Dieback disease, we intend to plan for 3-for-1 replanting where appropriate.

### Hedges

- We have undertaken some hedge laying in 2019 which will be maintained on a 10-15 year rotation.
- We will encourage hedges to heighten and thicken where appropriate, especially along the western boundary to the main meadow where we may also encourage an extension of the cross country cycle track currently only in the wooded copse at the north end of the meadow.

### Orchard fruit trees

We will maintain membership of Orchard Link, which has proved very useful for guidance and advice.

- Regular pruning will be maintained and undertaken on advice from Orchard Link
- We have constructed and will maintain insect habitat piles of neatly stacked prunings, in order to encourage wildlife habitat.
- Apple tree labelling by name and classification will be maintained, using an updated map to label any trees that have lost their labels.
- We have introduced and will continue an annual tree weed around the base of each tree to avoid damage by close strimming.
- We will consider adding other traditional fruiting species
- Current mown paths through the orchard area will be maintained to the width of the large mower used by South Hams District Council. We will cut in the same manner and timeliness as the meadow. The triangle of uncut grass between the play area and exercise area will be mown in the future.
- Orchard meadow will be cut annually in the autumn, with a brush cutter to facilitate the seeding up of wildflowers. Simple to implement wildlife improvements include the following:
  - Trial areas of under planting with Yellow Rattle has taken place and if deemed successful will be extended.

### Grassland

The top of the meadow north of the designated orchard area is used for all social and games activity and will be maintained as such, with priority being given to community use.

- Where appropriate, we will continue to leave a wide unmown perimeter around woodland edges, with the exception of the edges of the play exercise areas and some edges of the meadow.
- We will endeavour to always pick up the mowing mulch in order to ensure clean and safe areas for use by the public and youngsters for a multitude of ball games.

In this way and by adopting the ideas within the plan above we believe the plans and changes we wish to make should help to enhance Ash Meadow as a valuable community resource for residents, whilst also supporting a wildlife rich area.

The plans for Areas 3 (play and exercise) and 4 (composting) are as follows:

### Play and exercise areas

Currently we have installed a children's play hut, climbing frame and swings. We also have some more recently installed outdoor adult exercise equipment.

### Current situation

With regular use since its installation, the play equipment is beginning to show signs of wear and tear, especially the wooden climbing frame. This has recently undergone a safety inspection and whilst safe to use is showing signs of wear and rot so we will need to replace sooner rather than later.

New portable goal posts have now been installed which are much more suitable for children of all ages. We have decided on mobile posts, as opposed to the fixed ones we currently are using, as they will enable more flexibility for other activities such as sports days, cricket and boule. The exercise area is relatively new and not in need of any immediate attention or improvement.

### Future development

We are keen to ensure the meadow has sufficient modern and useful facilities for our children's development and entertainment as well as providing a wonderful place for all members of our community of all ages. To that end, as a committee which has the responsibility of managing Ash Meadow, we are keen to pursue the following plans. In order to progress such plans we have to assume no members of the Parish has any strong objections unless of course such feelings are made known to us in which case they will be discussed at the time.

### Play equipment replacement

The committee has agreed that we will within the next twelve months need to consider ways of redeveloping and subsequently extending and modernising the play equipment. In this way we will overcome the possibility of having to close the play area due to unsafe equipment and we will also provide for the younger members of our community by bringing the equipment up to date, over a larger area, for generations to come.

### Type of equipment

We have yet to determine exactly what equipment we would wish to install but we will be ensuring the final choice will enable our children to safely develop their fitness and interaction with their peers.

Four members of the committee are charged with researching equipment to best suit our needs and to investigate funding opportunities to facilitate purchase. One of the options which has been considered previously is to install a long slide perhaps on grass banking. This needs to be compared with the slides which are common on play equipment but tend to be too short and only suitable for younger children. A member of the village has offered to provide some suitable material for building the necessary slope to support a longer slide if required. This would also enable some “climbing ladders “ on the banking which children have always enjoyed on such slopes as experienced on other play areas we have investigated.

### Play hut condition

The current popular play hut is now constantly in need of repair and was recently damaged during winter storms. Whilst safe it will need to be considered for replacement within the next two to three years. We may have an opportunity here - subject to grant availability - to provide a suitable accommodation which would facilitate open air education facilities and provide cover for those attending. Some local schools and nurseries of which we are aware have shown interest in this opportunity for educational supplements associated with the environment and wildlife.

### Cycle track

There has been, for many years, a track through the top copse which has been built by the younger members of our community and is used regularly. This is a very popular activity and the committee favours the extension of this track down one side of the playing field, alongside a hedge, which would not impinge on the space available for other games. This is being discussed with the children and may be developed over time. The track is highlighted on the map in Appendix A.

### Site access

Whilst site access is good from either the bottom pedestrian gate or the top composting area access gates, we believe we should investigate opportunities to improve access where at all possible, whilst at the same time being able to protect the meadow from unwanted occupation.

To that end we plan the following:

- Investigate opportunities to improve the bottom gate access (off Duncannon Lane) to include pedestrian access involving wheelchairs, prams, etc.
- Improving the same access from a safety point of view whilst entering Duncannon Lane from the meadow.
- In the event of our investigation proving positive and achievable, we will investigate funding options, as the work is likely to be quite expensive.
- Trial and circulate eventual final plans before proceeding to users of prams or wheelchairs to assess suitability.



## Further suggestions

Other ideas suggested by villagers include:

- Basketball hoops on a hardstanding area, one of which is in place and has been donated by a member of the community.
- Zip wire
- Volleyball nets
- Cricket practice nets
- A permanent BBQ and picnic area to facilitate family gatherings
- Boules pitch
- Adult picnic area with new tables and benches
- Memorial benches where appropriate (although it may not be possible to have one bench per person, one bench could facilitate several memorial plaques, for example)
- Introduction of a community social event associated with apple pressing which may also be run in conjunction with our landlords at The Sharpham Trust.

All of the above will be included in discussions and considered as time and funding allows. The committee is always willing to discuss preferences and ideas with members of the parish.

## Composting area

The composting area is very important to the community and also, at this time, to the income to maintain the meadow in the manner required. We have regular monthly volunteer work parties which ensure maintenance and upkeep are up to date.

The area is also used in times where council services are not being maintained for green waste disposal and this will continue. Having such a facility available is of great value to the parish, especially in times of challenge such as COVID and council cutbacks. It does, however, need to be managed and we have and will continue to have a team of volunteers that assist.

Consideration as to the improvement and maintenance of this area will be recognised as part of this plan, perhaps to include:

- Stronger fencing
- Weather protection especially for sieved areas
- Improved signage
- Better use of the small shredded wood which is not suitable for compost.

## Future risks

We do not anticipate any substantial risks which threaten the future of Ash Meadow, due to having a lease until 2053. However, we are a non-profit making CIC and a subcommittee of the Parish Council so we are aware of a potential risk to our income if South Hams District Council were to withdraw from the current arrangement of paying a set sum for each bag of sieved compost. This income, reduced of late, currently equates to £3000 per year.

## Overcoming the risk

Our village residents have always appreciated the benefit of the wonderful facilities we have in Ash Meadow, including the composting, since its inception and we believe the residents may be prepared to assist financially to retain it should it be necessary in the future.

However there are several approaches we could take.

These plans include:

- Consider increasing the Parish Council precept contribution to account for any loss of income. This would spread the reduction across every household in the Parish and therefore minimise the cost to individuals.
- Individual donation requests during social events
- Donation box at the entrances
- Charging modest fees for the compost being taken away
- Charging modest fees for depositing green waste
- Running a 100 club or similar
- Ensuring all funding opportunities from local councillors are exploited
- Running specific funding events in the village
- Ensuring all funding that may assist is applied for.

## Personnel resources and responsibilities

The development of the new formal Community Interest Company requires a more formal structure than was previously required. We are required to have:

- Three designated trustees - these are from the Parish council officers and are currently in place as part of the initial set up of the Community Interest Company (CIC)
- Three formal designated officer positions of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer - these will be from the Ash Meadow Committee and are currently in place and voted on every year
- Formal accounts presented and audited once per year.

## Contact

Should any member of the Parish or interested party wish to discuss the contents of this plan, share ideas for development or wish to volunteer services please do so through the current Chair Ian Bentlett via telephone on 07434412731 or email to

[ianben.7070@gmail.com](mailto:ianben.7070@gmail.com). General information about Ash Meadow can be found on the [Parish Council website](#) and on [Facebook](#).

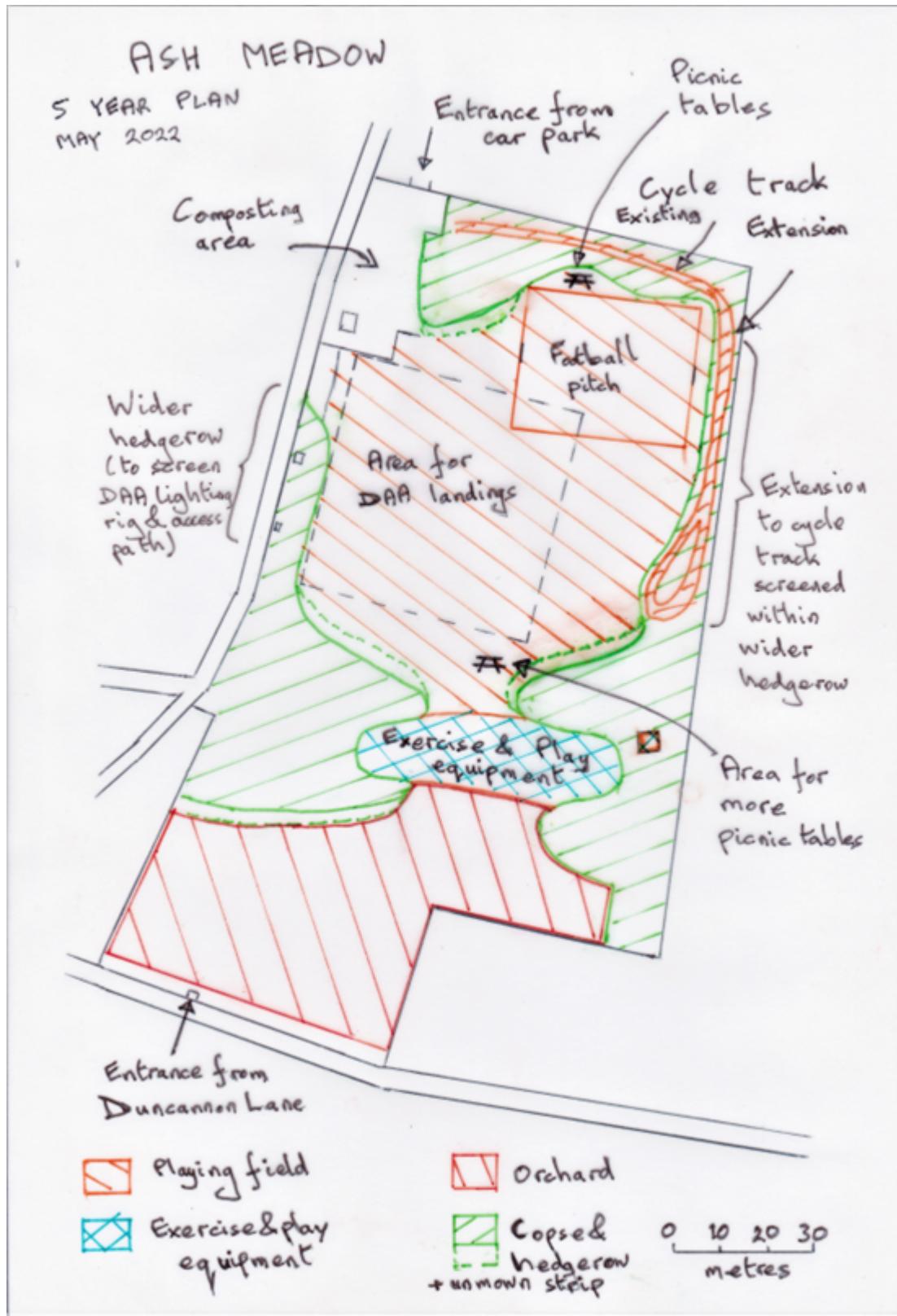
## Appendices

- Rough Plan of meadow with designated areas - Appendix A
- Summary task List - Appendix B

The following documents are also available for any interested parties but have been excluded from this plan.

- A contact list for the current committee (subject to Data Protection restrictions)
- Full environmental plan from Nigel Paterson
- Contact list volunteers (subject to Data Protection clearance with each individual)

# Appendix A



## Appendix B

### Ash Meadow work maintenance requirements

[illegible]

Distribute unsuitable material to copses				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Burn unsuitable material				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Composting area fence maintenance	x	x										x	x
<b>Container</b> maintenance	x	x										x	x
Painting container												x	x
<b>Equipment</b> Maintenance				x	x			x	x			x	x
Lawn mower service	x	x											x
Electrical cupboard maintenance	x	x											
Electrics check	x	x											
Air ambulance equipment light checks					X				X				X
PAT testing all electrical equipment													x
<b>Administration</b>													
Annual budget setting							x						
AGM budget /committee vote								x					
Maintenance advice to volunteers	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Annual charity report preparation					x	x							
Annual charity report submission							x						
Quarterly meetings	x				x			x			x		
Refreshments provision work party				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Funding assessment / application									x	x		x	x
Events organisation / contact							as required						
Improvements / future planning													
Parish Council reporting				x			x			x			x