

SALISBURY CATHEDRAL AWARDED ECOCHURCH GOLD AWARD

Dear Members

Last week, The Cathedral became the first cathedral to win this award, having gained bronze and silver awards in recent years. Whereas the first two awards were gained by self-assessment, the gold award requires a church visit by the assessors at A Rocha, who developed the ecochurch scheme. The scheme is designed to encourage churches to take steps to preserve wildlife and to address the threats of climate change.

The Society and the Close Residents' Association (CRA) have been involved in supporting the ecochurch initiative for over two years. The ecochurch resources advocate that, before planning what steps to take to improve your church land for wildlife, first find out what you have got and then plan accordingly. This resulted in the Society and the CRA jointly working on appropriate surveys and producing a report entitled "Close to Nature" in late 2019. It was a substantial piece of work, with surveys of the soil, trees and plants, birds, bats and moths in The Close. It involved Wiltshire Wildlife Trust; The Wiltshire Bat Recorder; Plantlife, the national wildflower charity head-quartered in Salisbury; volunteers from the Society and the CRA; representatives of the RSPB; the Salisbury & District Natural History Society; the Cathedral Archivist; and the children from the Cathedral School.

The report included some interesting recommendations from Plantlife about changes to grass mowing regimes, both to encourage wildflowers and to save carbon emissions from the mowing process – and potentially saving some money as well! There were also various ideas put forward such as a small area or two of wildflower meadow; planting of pollinator friendly flowers and shrubs; and the installing of bug houses; bird and bat boxes; and hedgehog houses. A number of these have already been installed, with more to follow.

Meetings were convened to work on what the priority next steps should be, in the light of the report. Then Covid-19 happened, and everything ground to a halt. However, some of the steps have been acted upon and others are now back under discussion. One such step would be the production of an ecology engagement and management plan, to carry out some of the objectives decided upon by the Cathedral, which should be reviewed and re-assessed every three years, going forward.

The Chair of the CRA, Julian Hepplewhite, his wife and I (as chair of the Society) were amongst those interviewed by the eco church team last week, and it was a very interesting day. I even got to go up onto the roof of the Cloister to see the impressive solar panels.

The press release is accessible by clicking on the link below.

<https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.salisburycathedral.org.uk%2Fnews%2Fnatural-winner-salisbury-first-uk-cathedral-receive-eco-church-gold-award&data=04%7C01%7C%7C1822a71b83db409ff51008d93308cb82%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637596935124666735%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Ikk1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3>

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I thought that members might be interested in this news. The Cathedral also participated in Plantlife's national "No Mow May" campaign, resulting in lots of wildflowers appearing where the grass was not cut. A fresh wildflower survey was carried out in May and it will be very interesting to see what the results of that will be.

Heather Olsen – Chairman.