

## **People for Nature, Nature for People at Newport Methodist Church:**

A proposed management plan for the outside spaces Sep. 2023

### **Introduction**

Newport Methodist Church is a Victorian building (foundation stone laid in 1879) constructed of Bembridge limestone, fronting the southern end of Quay Street, Newport; there are also brick-built additions of various dates to the rear of this building.

The site is NW – SE aligned, and the boundaries are mostly brick walls, either of other buildings or free-standing. There is one slate-hung wall adjacent to the car park and some sections of close-boarded wooden fences on the east side, behind the kitchen and around the rear courtyard. Seven spaces have been identified around the building and their locations are shown on the accompanying plan. The surfaces of the spaces are generally hard materials including stone paving, concrete, paving slabs and cobbles. The path to the side entrance is bordered by gravel.

Following a site meeting of a small group of people interested in developing the site for people and nature, a variety of potential ideas were identified with the principle of sustainability being foremost in the thinking. Any ideas should be developed with low-maintenance and minimal cost in mind. They should benefit both users of the building and nature. Obstacles to be overcome were also discussed. A list of species seen on the site has been made and will be added to as more observations are made. Species records will be added to national database via an internet-based system (i-record). They are listed in Appendix 1.

The present and potential uses of the areas are listed at the end of the plan in Table 1. All of these areas presently require a degree of attention throughout the year to maintain a safe and tidy appearance.

### **Consultation with the congregation**

A display was constructed and placed in the main worship space from the middle of August to early September 2023, inviting the congregation to consider and comment on the possible uses identified. They were asked if they could contribute time, materials, plants and/or expertise. There were 18 response slips completed and a number of conversations and tours of the premises: a very positive response. People were also asked to indicate what they thought the priorities for action should be, by attaching coloured stickers to the display. Three areas emerged as priorities: area C the main pathway from the side gate to the entrance porch, area D the continuation of this pathway to the Victoria Room entrance and area E, the courtyard off the Victoria Room.

### **Proposals**

For each of these areas, more detailed proposals have been drawn up.

Each proposal includes:

- Current use and maintenance required.
- Vision for future use including
  - How could more use be made of the area?
  - What will stay the same?
  - What are the challenges to be overcome e.g. access, Infrastructure required
  - What are the costs in terms of tools, materials, plants, time?
- An outline plan drawn on a scaled map.
- A timescale for the work.
- A risk assessment for the proposal and estimates of ongoing maintenance.
- Communication and publicity

## **Area C: between the wrought iron gate on Quay Street and the porch**

### **1. Current use and maintenance required.**

This area is visible from the street through the gate. It serves as the entrance to the halls which are used by a wide range of groups hiring the premises. It is the location of the refuse bins.

Footfall largely keeps the paved pathway clear of weeds. However, wind-blown seeds quickly grow in the gap between the slabs and the path edge, and the gravel. These are largely small annual plants which germinate, flower, and set seed within a few weeks. To maintain a tidy appearance, these weeds need to be removed by hoeing approximately once every 6 weeks during the growing season.

There is also a considerable seeding of buddleia into the edges of the path. There is a buddleia bush rooted in the top of the brick wall of the neighbouring property which is probably the source of most of the seed. However, buddleia growing in street edges is a common problem throughout the town centre, as this plant seeds prolifically.

There are also low-growing species (ivy-leaved toadflax, procumbent yellow sorrel, annual pearlwort and a liverwort) which grow in the mortar of the walls which it will be inadvisable to remove as this may damage the structure. They have attractive flowers and can form part of the overall scheme.

### **2. Vision for future use**

The proposal involves planting out low-growing species directly into the gravel. These plants are hardy perennials or annuals which seed readily and naturalise. They have been selected for their tolerance to dry conditions and their suitability to be a food source for insect pollinators. The planting scheme also aims to have colour for as long as possible during the season, attractive to people as well as insects. A tree constructed from, and decorated with, recycled items can be placed in the area over the Christmas period. Details of this are in Plan C.

The area has different levels of light and warmth, so shade tolerant plants will be grown nearer the gate and those requiring more light and warmth will be planted nearer to the porch.

Trial investigations have revealed a pipe in one area but mostly the gravel is underlain by stones and soil.

Once the plants have established, some weeding will be required but no more than at present and possibly less. There will be a need to tidy up the plants once flowering is over; again not necessarily any more work than at present.

There are offers of suitable plants from members of the congregation and further varieties might be forthcoming in response to a specific request.

The scheme will not require any infrastructure if we plant into the gravel. Should watering be required there is a water butt in the adjacent area.

The tools required are hand trowels and forks for the planting, and a hoe and patio knife for weeding. This is similar to the present requirements and generally those who have helped on work days have brought their own tools.

There will continue to be a quantity of vegetation to be disposed of from time to time. There is a fold up collection bag on the premises which is used to collect the material when the clearance is done. Arrangements have then been made to take this to a home compost bin or, if larger quantities, to the Civic Amenity Site at Lynnbottom. The volume of plant material to be disposed of is unlikely to be sufficient to make a compost bin in the church grounds a viable proposition, even when the clearance of all the areas is considered.

### 3. Planting plan and timescales

Precise timing will depend on the progress of the season, weather and availability of volunteers.

Action	Approximate timing	Work hours required to complete action	Cost
Tidy up the gravel	End of October when further growth is unlikely	x hours	Time
Plant Dryopteris fern, winter jasmine, cyclamen and hellebores in shady areas	End of October when plants are lifted from gardens	x hours	Time; plants donated
Tidy up the gravel	April	x hours	Time
Plant lavender and globe thistle	April	x hours	Time; plants donated
Scatter poppy seed			
Tidy up gravel/plants	June	x hours	Time
Tidy up gravel/plants	August	x hours	Time
Tidy up gravel/trim lavender	October	x hours	Time

### 4. Risk assessment.

Operation	Risk	Minimising risk	Likelihood of risk	Severity of risk	Overall risk
Weeding	Injury from hand tools, especially if children are involved.	Correctly maintained tools.	1	1	1
		Tools used by adults or under adult supervision.	1	1	1
Planting	Underground pipes which could be an obstacle.	Check carefully before digging hole and reposition if necessary.	1	1	1
	Injury from hand tools.	As above. First aid kit available.			
Planting	Plants fail to thrive.	Plant at the correct time of year. Review planting plan for following year and modify as required.	2	1	2

### 5. Ongoing maintenance.

As detailed above.

### 6. Communication and publicity.

Progress of the project is reported:

- on church website, updated at monthly intervals
- in weekly notice sheet at intervals
- Static noticeboard in foyer and rooms used by outside groups
- QR code displayed nearby and on noticeboards to take smartphone users to web page

### 7. Review of plan Annual in autumn