



THE
SACRED LAND
PROJECT

**information pack for
project groups**

an ARC and WWF project

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Why this information pack?

When the Sacred Land Project was initiated in April 1997, we could not have foreseen the immense interest and enthusiasm this project would inspire. Earlier than we anticipated, the project has taken on a life of its own, and our thanks go to the many groups whose support and enthusiasm has made this happen. In both town and countryside, colleges and communities, there is a growing recognition of the value of sacred space, and our project in many cases has simply acted as a focus and catalyst for developments and ideas that were already there. But we are encouraging new thinking about what sacred space is and how new sacred spaces can be a crucial part of community life. As always, our aim is to work closely with faith communities, offering guidance, networking and advice, but encouraging groups to develop their own identity and independence as their project evolves.

What is special about Sacred Land?

There are probably thousands of environmental projects in progress in Britain, some independent, some under the auspices of Local Authorities and perhaps a score or more of national or international environmental organisations. They are doing excellent work, and many have produced useful action packs. So why is the Sacred Land Project offering yet another umbrella organisation, yet another information pack?

The Sacred Land Project is about spiritual well-being, and the ways in

which the environment, especially the natural environment, feeds and promotes that well-being. It is about individuals and communities finding, or creating, places that nurture them spiritually, and about caring for those places so that they can continue to nurture all who wish to go there. As far back as we can find out, and in all the faiths and cultures that we know about, people have celebrated sacred places, have made wayside shrines, have undertaken long and often arduous pilgrimages. Many non-believers are impressed by the sense of awe, of an accumulation of prayer through the centuries, when they visit an ancient place of pilgrimage.

The idea of sacred land seems to be part of our human heritage.

The story of Abercynon (see overleaf) shows the enduring nature of 'places where prayer has been valid'. It is the sense that a sacred site is never really lost which underpins much of what the Sacred Land Project is trying to do. It seems that there is something special about a place where thousands of people have wholeheartedly worshipped and prayed, whatever its status may be now. The people we met at Abercynon are elderly, they may not have the energy or resources to restore the path, find the springs, or clear the weeds. But they must talk about it, value it, pass on their knowledge of what a special place it is. Sometimes a Sacred Land project may be no more than that, and the value of that sort of 'preservation' should not be underestimated.

Maybe at some stage the river bank can be better cared for. Perhaps in spite of the invading non-native plants a valuable habitat has been preserved by the locked gates, and a new sort of sanctuary might be created, with involvement from a new generation, perhaps a wider community. The shrine at Abercynon will probably never again be as Father Baillie and his parishioners first created it, but in a very real sense their work still lives, and will continue. Your work, too, is likely to have echoes that you may never be aware of.

How can we help you?

The Sacred Land project is all about communities looking at and caring for their own environment, rather than a 'top-down' approach. Our resources are limited and already stretched, partly because of the wonderful response we have had to our ideas. But even if we had large amounts of money, the effect of coming in and taking over a project would not be good. We hope to inspire your thinking and encourage your

Why this information pack?

enthusiasm, as well as allowing all the groups to do the same for each other. Your participation in the project is the most valuable resource we have, and your experience and example are crucial to its continuation.

The two most common questions asked by groups approaching the Sacred Land Project are 'What can we do with this site that we value?' and 'How can we get money for our project?'. There will be some suggestions to help you answer both those questions later on in this pack, but we suggest that they are not the best way to start your thinking. Instead ask first of all 'Why do I want to do something about this?' That is why we start with a discussion of the thinking behind the Sacred Land Project. Then we show you ways to explore what your local site means to you, to your fellow-workers, and to those who went before (Questions to ask about your special place—Page 6). From that we move on to suggest how you can develop a plan based on those meanings, (Making it happen—Page 10) how to find partners whose expertise and enthusiasm will complement yours (ditto), how to plan any changes you need to make, and only then do we look at how to find the money to do what needs doing (Finance—Page 16).

We are working to bring about a change in the way people and communities look at their own environments and also in the way they work with groups like ours. A community project must be run by the community rather than by an outside body, and there are far better prospects of continuing support if a large section of the community have been involved in bringing it about.

However, don't panic! This is not as hard as you might think, and we have certainly no intention of abandoning

you to sink or swim. This pack sets out to show you how to make the right contacts, get the information you need, get support for your project, both in enthusiastic volunteers and funding. Some of the information you will be seeking may be very specialised and not covered in this pack. Do ask us if necessary. If at any time you feel daunted by what you are taking on, look forward to

the feeling of satisfaction you will have when you can say 'we did it' rather than 'someone did it for us'. Although it can often be a long, slow process, the companionship and support of a group, which is part of the process that brought the project about, can make it an enjoyable experience.

Abercynon: bringing a sacred

Seventy years ago, a small immigrant community lived in an industrial landscape where two rivers met, both dirty and black with the coal washed down from the workings upstream. Their faith was in a minority in that area, and their place of worship was some distance away. There was discrimination against them, and one woman who was a child at the time recalls how she longed to be part of the majority.

But then their priest decided that they should build their own place of worship. As Tessa recalls, 'this place was built with threepenny bits.' Week by week, the families saved and gave what they could. The men would come to worship covered in dust and dirt from their work, and afterwards would set to with what building materials they could find, and with the mining, shoring-up and strengthening skills they had learnt underground, and built their own place on the river bank. This was South Wales in the 1920's, and the mining industry was riven with disputes, strikes, lock-outs, unemployment, and a struggle for safer working conditions. When the Irish miners had no work to go to, they would give their time and labour to building the Catholic church at Abercynon. The bank sloped down steeply to the river below, and as they cleared the land and built on it, they discovered two springs of clean water just above the level of the blackened and polluted river.

Was it this that gave Father Baillie the idea, or had he always intended to build a shrine honouring the Virgin Mary, overlooking the river? Maybe there were earlier traditions in the area about the healing properties of the River Cynon, although no-one knows of them today. For whatever reason, Father Baillie organised his parishioners to build 'the Welsh Lourdes'. They built wells to hold the spring water, and just as in the French pilgrimage town, a statue of the Virgin Mary stood high on the bank looking down over them. A winding path and steps were made from the top of the bank down to the wells on the river's edge, and Stations of the Cross (scenes from the last journey of Jesus through Jerusalem to his crucifixion) were moulded in concrete and set up along the path for prayer and meditation.

In a remarkably short time, word spread that healings had taken place at the shrine. Skin diseases and physical disabilities had been cured. People began to come in coach-loads from many parts of South Wales. Theresa, who lived close by the church as a little girl, remembers how almost every day there was something going on. All the children turned out at weekends to weed and take care of the path to the shrine. There were processions carrying the Blessed Sacrament from the church to the wells at the bottom of the bank, with girls scattering flowers in front as they went. 'This place was our whole life,' she recalls. There was an atmosphere of prayer, joy and celebration.

Networking, advice and information

We can put you in touch with groups working on similar projects, or grappling with similar problems, so that groups can share experiences.

Sacred Land is issued twice a year, and gives news of some of the activities throughout the country.

The development of these links will

largely be up to you, the different groups working in your own way. Get in touch with as many like-minded people as you can, discuss, argue, exchange ideas, encourage and inspire each other.

This pack gives an overview of the major issues which will have to be addressed in any project, and some guidance as to how to set about this, but every project is different in

scope, aims, circumstances and people, so you must expect the unexpected. Good planning is the best way to cope with the unplanned.

So get thinking, talking, reading, researching, looking and learning. We can promise you an exciting time and some fascinating discoveries, even if in the end you make no physical changes at all to your 'special place'. It will mean more to you and more to others because of the work you do.

Using this pack

We are not suggesting that everyone should read this pack from start to finish, since every group will have different needs, knowledge and skills. We do strongly encourage everyone involved to read the introductory sections so that you can clarify any questions of aims, objectives and methods before you go too far. Disagree with us if you wish, but get agreement among yourselves!

After this, different sections of the pack will become useful at different times. People working on different aspects of your project may need specific sections to give them an idea where to start. This pack is a guide to the sorts of questions you will need to ask, and where to start asking them. Since projects vary so much, you may have no need of some sections of this pack. As you go on you will probably find you have less and less need of it as you make useful local contacts yourselves. As you do so, let each other know where you have found helpful people, where there was enthusiasm that might be tapped. Update the information we give here with what you have found yourselves, and share it widely amongst the group, and with other projects.

Once you have reached the limits of the information in this pack, don't hesitate to contact us again for more specific advice and information.

site back to life

Today the church still stands, and still serves the needs of the Catholic community in Abercynon. The statue of the Virgin Mary still overlooks the waters of the Cynon, now free of the coal-dust which clogged them seventy years ago. But the path down the bank is crumbling and dangerous. The gates near the top were locked for safety some time back, and no-one knows where the key is now. The bank is overgrown with Japanese knotweed, and there is no trace of the wells. A few years ago Theresa, returning to her childhood home, searched for them, using familiar trees as landmarks. She and the priest could find nothing at all. Perhaps winter floods had washed it all away, and during the war years there was no-one to care for the shrine.

Diana wrote to tell us about Abercynon, and to find out whether there might be a possibility of restoring the shrine. We were intrigued, for the newspaper cuttings she sent us described the creation of a new sacred site, not in the distant, mythological past, nor in the hopeful future of our own developing Sacred Land Project, but just about within living memory. How was it done? What did it feel like? What did it mean to the community then, and how and why did it crumble away? What might its future be?

We travelled to Abercynon, and over cups of tea and mountains of sandwiches and Welshcakes a handful of those who were children in the 'glory days' of the late twenties and early thirties talked about their memories. Some of the story is probably lost for ever, for they were not born or too young to remember the original building process - they only knew what their parents had told them. Their devotion and sense of community shone through as they talked about the old days. 'It was alive then - you could feel the faith coming from everyone.'

'But those days are gone,' they said regretfully, as we asked about what happened later, what happens now, 'You can't get people to be so involved nowadays.' So it would seem, looking at the overgrown river bank, the locked and rusty gates. But as we talked, a different picture began to emerge. In the hands of the Virgin Mary's statue were the remains of a posy of flowers. 'Oh, yes, people come,' they told us. 'Not just parishioners. Quite often we see a total stranger here, praying or just sitting. They might leave some flowers, and then they go.' Tessa told us, 'Sometimes people quietly get up from Mass and go to pray at the statue. If I go there alone I get the same feeling as if there were a hundred people with me.' A while ago a man used to visit regularly from Cardiff, spending long hours at the weekends repairing the path. 'He didn't talk. We offered him tea, but he said he had brought his own. We thanked him for what he was doing, and he said he wasn't doing it for thanks. He had made a promise to the Virgin, and this was its fulfilment. He came regularly until the job was done, and then we didn't see him again.'

Starting the process

Questions to ask about your special place

The first step should always be to find out what is on the site at present and what was there in the past. You may feel that you know this site already: after all, you have begun a project because you know and love this place. But everyone approaches a place in a different way. You may have been attracted by the religious history of the place, and not be fully aware of its ecology. Or you may be aware of the need for a 'special place' for your community, and only discover as you investigate that the spot you have chosen had religious significance in the past. Many church communities taking part in the Living Churchyards project (one of the partners in Sacred Land) have been surprised and thrilled to discover what a unique wildlife habitat was provided by their familiar, quiet churchyard. At Llantwit Major, in Wales, what started as a local history project relating to the oldest known monastic site in Wales was later taken up by the church as a Sacred Land project.

Each site will have meanings to the group who wish to create a project on that site, and the nature of the project will reflect those meanings. Research will help to focus those meanings into practical ideas.

This is also your opportunity to begin to make contact with enthusiastic and knowledgeable people who may be significant partners in the project. When you contact archaeological officers, natural history societies, librarians, county records officers, talk with them, explain what you are doing, invite their participation. They are often enthusiasts who will be delighted to take part in something a little out of the ordinary

What does it mean to me personally?

As far as possible, each member of the group should clarify and explain what the site means to them. You have come together because you all care about this site, but you may care in different ways. Ask each member of the group to prepare a brief summary of what the site means and why they want to do something about it.

What's already there?

Maps and plans of the site.
Map and describe any points of interest.
Describe the wildlife and ecology of the site (see info sheet).

- Maps and plans of the site can be gained from two sources: the local authority, such as the district council's planning department, and the county records office. These maps will have details on how the site has developed over the years. Additional information can be got through other sources such as county libraries and books such as Pevsner's guide to the counties.

- Map and describe any points of interest: even urban 'waste land' can produce interesting features, whether on the site itself or in the surroundings. For example, the following description of a project site in Bristol links the site with its physical surroundings and with its past:

'St. Luke's church lies nestled beneath eight high rise blocks, whose residents make up most of its parishioners. On the south side of the church is a patch of grass about twenty by forty metres in which are interred

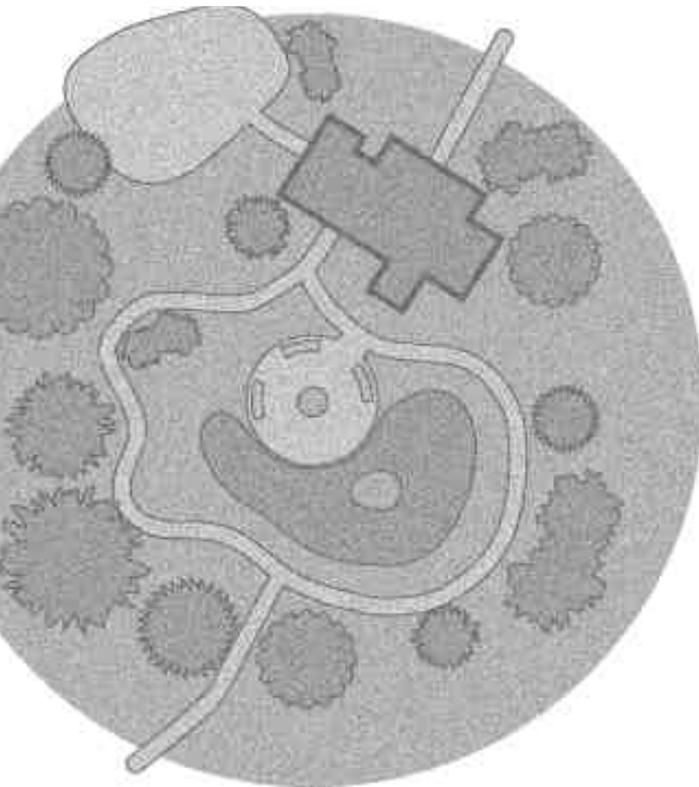
around nine hundred people from 1843 to the 1860s. Yet there is only one headstone to be seen, up against the wall. They were too poor to afford headstones. Around four hundred of them were children under five. Many died of the cholera and typhoid that were rampant at the time...'

- Describe the wildlife and ecology of the site. Ecological data is as much about collecting information from the site as it is about finding sources of information. This can be difficult, but talking to the local Wildlife Trust or English Nature along with the numerous natural history societies is a good first step. Gathering more detailed ecological information may be best done by a professional.

- If experts are coming to look at the site, you will gain an enormous amount from accompanying them. They will benefit from your enthusiasm and knowledge of the site, and you may well learn far more than any report could tell you.

Who uses it? How?

Depending on the type of site, the present use may be something you want to preserve and encourage, or quite the contrary! Either way, it is important to find out. The best way is simply to be there as often as you can, at different times of day, in and out of school holidays. Whoever the present users are, it is important to take them into account when planning any changes, and if at all possible to get them involved



History and Archaeology?

What was the site like in the past? What was its meaning in the past? How was it used and who by? (see info sheet)

Look in:

- County Records offices
- the local history section of the library
- local bookshops, especially second-hand bookshops.

In the course of this, talk to anyone who might help you, get them involved in the project.

It is worth noting that many county record offices and special library collections do not allow the pens when consulting documents: you have a pencil with you. has a potential archaeological

interest, contact the county archaeology department. Important archaeological finds can be very exciting, but may mean that you have to limit or adjust your plans (see info sheet):

- the county archaeology department (generally attached to the county council)
- English Heritage
- any local historical societies

It is worth doing this to check before you think about planting trees, which could disturb any archaeological remains. Important archaeological finds may mean that you have to limit or adjust your plans.

Who owns it and what controls are there?

You may need to clarify who owns the property, and whether it is subject to any specific planning or wildlife designations (see info sheet).

If the owners of the land are not already involved with the project, you will need to 'sell' the idea to them.

- If you are not sure who owns the land, the first port of call is the Land Registry Office of your Local Authority. Not all land is registered, but if there is a doubt, they will be able to advise you about further investigation.

- The planning authority is legally obliged to draw up a unitary plan which details all existing and proposed uses of all land within the authority. They should therefore be able to tell you about any

development plans they may have for your site. If such plans do exist they can be changed.

- The planning authority will also have a note of listed buildings, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and other designations which might affect what can be done with the site, or carry with them a particular duty of care. Some of these are listed in the appendix.

- If the owners of the land are not already involved with the project,

you will need to 'sell' the idea to them. But do not despair if the initial response is not encouraging. One Sacred Land project began when a householder wanted to fill in an old well which he felt was spoiling his front garden. The local civic society told him of their interest in it as the oldest Anchorite well in the county, asked him to allow them to renovate it instead, and he is now extremely proud of what he has, and is happy for people to come and look at it.

Defining objectives

Feedback

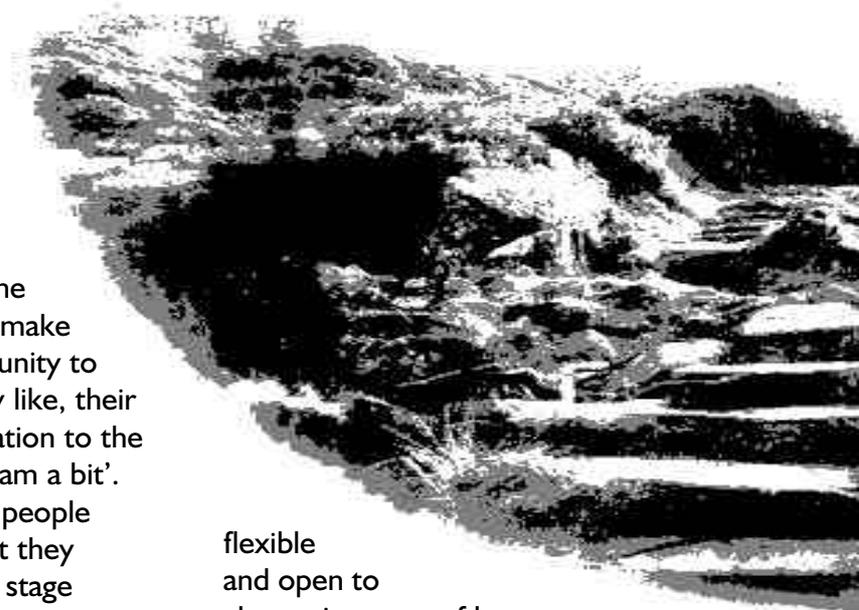
In order to bring together the information which has been gathered by different people as outlined in the previous section, ask each group to present their findings in as accessible a way as possible. This might be at a meeting, or if there is a suitable space, as a display showing all aspects of the site. Encourage people to be imaginative about this, to use photos, diagrams, maps, dramatic reconstruction, a guided walk to point out features, or whatever will best get their information across in an interesting way. Obviously the presentations should not be too lengthy, but it is worth taking plenty of time at this stage to help people understand what the possibilities and limitations might be. Depending on the amount of information unearthed, it may be worth taking several meetings for this. Publicise these meetings in the local community and use them as an opportunity to get more people 'on board'.

Dreaming

As part of this process, after all the information has been presented, make space for members of the community to express, by whatever means they like, their own feelings and meanings in relation to the site, with the opportunity to 'dream a bit'. Encourage brainstorming, where people can put forward ideas about what they would like to see, without at this stage criticising an idea or worrying about practicalities. Of course, you will have to get practical soon, but a bit of imagination to start with is essential.

Defining

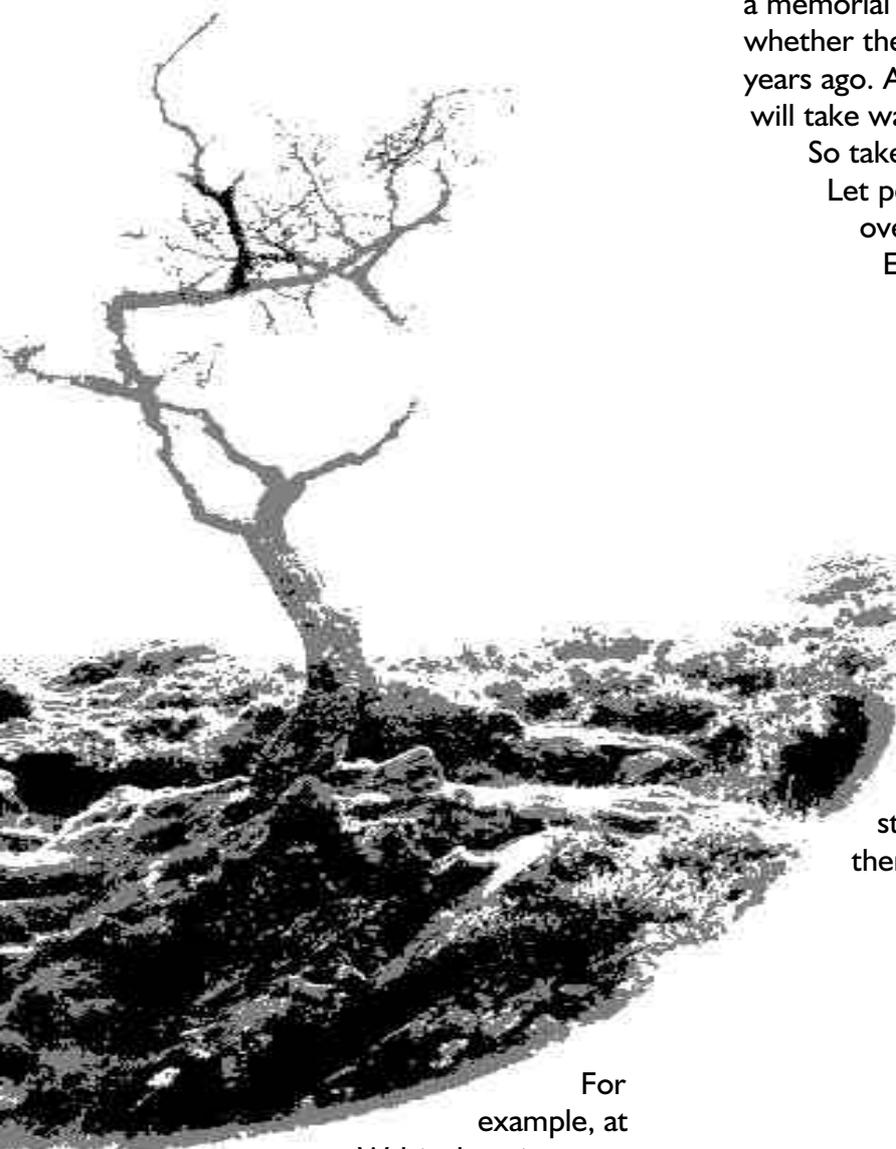
It has taken some time to get to this stage, because once the overall objectives have been decided, they should not be changed, so you need to be sure that everyone is pulling in the same direction. Any plan will need to be



flexible and open to change in terms of how the objectives are expressed or how to achieve them, but it is no good setting out to make a prayer garden, for

example, then deciding part way through that a children's play area would actually be a more fitting use of the space!

Objectives need to be specific, but expressed in general rather than detailed terms.



For example, at Walsingham in

Norfolk, an important and popular pilgrimage site, the overall objective was to make the final stages of the pilgrimage

a safer and more spiritual experience, rather than a dangerous and noisy walk along a main road. The development of the idea to use an old railway track was one of several possibilities explored for achieving this. At Barton Hill, Bristol, the objective is to turn the piece of grass into a memorial to the people of Barton Hill, whether they died recently or over 100 years ago. Again, the specific form this will take was worked out more slowly.

So take plenty of time at this stage.

Let people think about and mull over all the suggestions made.

Encourage those with specialist knowledge to comment on each idea in terms of practicality - but with a view to solving any problems rather than scuppering the idea.

Once the overall objectives have been defined and approximately what they will consist of in practical terms e.g. a garden of remembrance, a sensory wildlife garden etc. the next step becomes how to bring them about.

Making it happen

Planning the Work

Everything we have described so far may take many months work before anything actually happens on the ground. This is no bad thing, since it allows you to consider your objectives carefully and build the right structure to bring them about. It may be that your project is more about promoting what is already there and organising activities around it. However, once it is agreed that there is a need to change the site in some way then planning that change becomes important, and work becomes much more practically orientated.

Whether you are working on an existing site, where the existing flora and fauna form the major part of your project, or creating a new site, it is advisable to draw up a management plan. This will help continuity for different people managing the site, by stating the objectives which they will need to follow. A management plan will normally involve an original survey and record keeping so that you can tell what should be there, what works, and what doesn't. An individual gardener often makes plans by this same process, but working from memory rather than with written records. Groups may have collective memories but these are more likely to be subject to interpretation and re-interpretation, so it is better to write something down. Try to standardise the collection of data so that it is easily comparable., and store the data collected as this will build up a valuable history of the site and ensure continuity or well-considered change.

Two dangers to guard against:

- i) creating a document that is so dense in detail that it strikes fear into those who are asked to use it and so never comes off the bookshelf;
- ii) following a document so rigidly that you forget the environment is dynamic, not static.

When well produced a management plan acts as a good guide to a site's management but that shouldn't stop you thinking about the needs of both your group and the site. A simple breakdown of a plan could look something like this:

Religious input

Think about exploring partnerships with any religious organisation which might have an interest in the site, both within your own faith and others.

Specialist activities on the site

for example, arts groups, educational uses

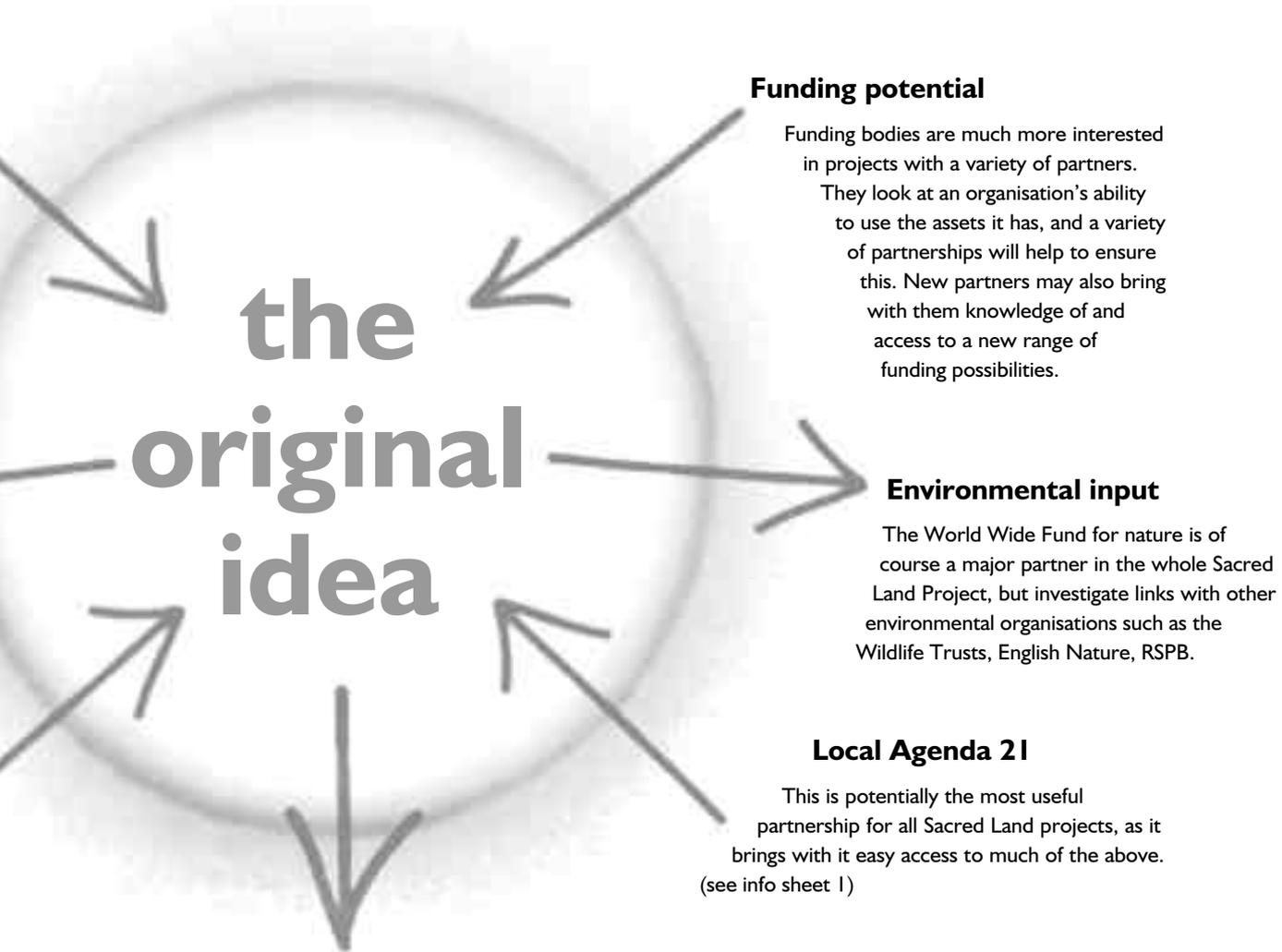
Technical knowledge

Local archaeological units, Wildlife Trusts, historical societies.
Local colleges and schools: do they run a course which might be relevant? Might their students appreciate the chance for some 'hands on' research or experience? Do they have people learning skills which you could use (Map-making, model making, local history, horticulture, religious studies, ecology, for example)?

In Wales, students taking a course in Celtic Christianity had a major part in developing plans for a pilgrimage route and researching plants used in monastic gardens.

Building partnerships

Every Sacred Land project should be aiming to develop partnerships as widely as possible with voluntary, commercial and government bodies. It would be too complex to try to anticipate every conceivable partnership any project could enter into, but at every stage as the project develops you should be thinking about whether additional partners could be brought in. Partnerships are valuable because they may give a fresh angle on any idea, and for a variety of specific reasons:



Funding potential

Funding bodies are much more interested in projects with a variety of partners. They look at an organisation's ability to use the assets it has, and a variety of partnerships will help to ensure this. New partners may also bring with them knowledge of and access to a new range of funding possibilities.

Environmental input

The World Wide Fund for nature is of course a major partner in the whole Sacred Land Project, but investigate links with other environmental organisations such as the Wildlife Trusts, English Nature, RSPB.

Local Agenda 21

This is potentially the most useful partnership for all Sacred Land projects, as it brings with it easy access to much of the above. (see info sheet 1)

Managing the site in the long term

This might be achieved by partnerships with voluntary groups or with the local authority.

At Pershore in Worcestershire, students of the horticultural college helped St. Andrews Church create a mini-arboretum to rejuvenate a run-down area of the town.

Making it happen

The design process

Finding a landscape designer who you can work with is important. You may be able to find someone locally who is in tune with what you are trying to do, or Sacred Land

can make some suggestions, but every team is different and every site is different. A designer might not necessarily share your beliefs, but should be someone who understands the value of sacred space. Look for someone who asks the right questions.

Ecological Considerations

The basic ecological consideration is simple: always check what is there first before you start any project.

Make sure that the project that you are planning fits in with the local environment: for example, do not destroy a potentially good piece of meadow land to put in a butterfly garden.

If planting a garden make life easy for yourself and pick plants that are going to grow well without a struggle, so check aspect, moisture content and soil type.

Historical considerations

You may wish to include in the design some reference to earlier use of the site, either to incorporate existing features, or to act as a reminder of events there even if there are no physical traces. The historical and the religious often combine so, for example, several Sacred Land projects are re-creating monastic gardens on monastic sites.

It can happen that historical or archaeological considerations limit what can be done, or are in conflict with the religious use of the site. In one pilgrimage route in Ceredigion there has been a great deal of debate about a historically important stone which had been removed to a museum, although some feel that its presence in its original location is important for the religious significance of the site. In cases such as this compromises will have to be made. Two suggestions have been the provision of a replica on the original site, or a new sculpture to mark the spot.



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Do not be overwhelmed by expertise - a designer must produce something that you can understand and feel happy with. The designer's job is to embody your ideas, so share your feelings and ideas freely, show your enthusiasm, discuss how you see the

site in 5, 10 or 50 years.

A good source of ideas and advice is the booklet *Sacred Gardens* published by the Sacred Land Project (details in Resource List). While this is looking primarily at Christian sites, much of it is relevant to all.

Religious Considerations

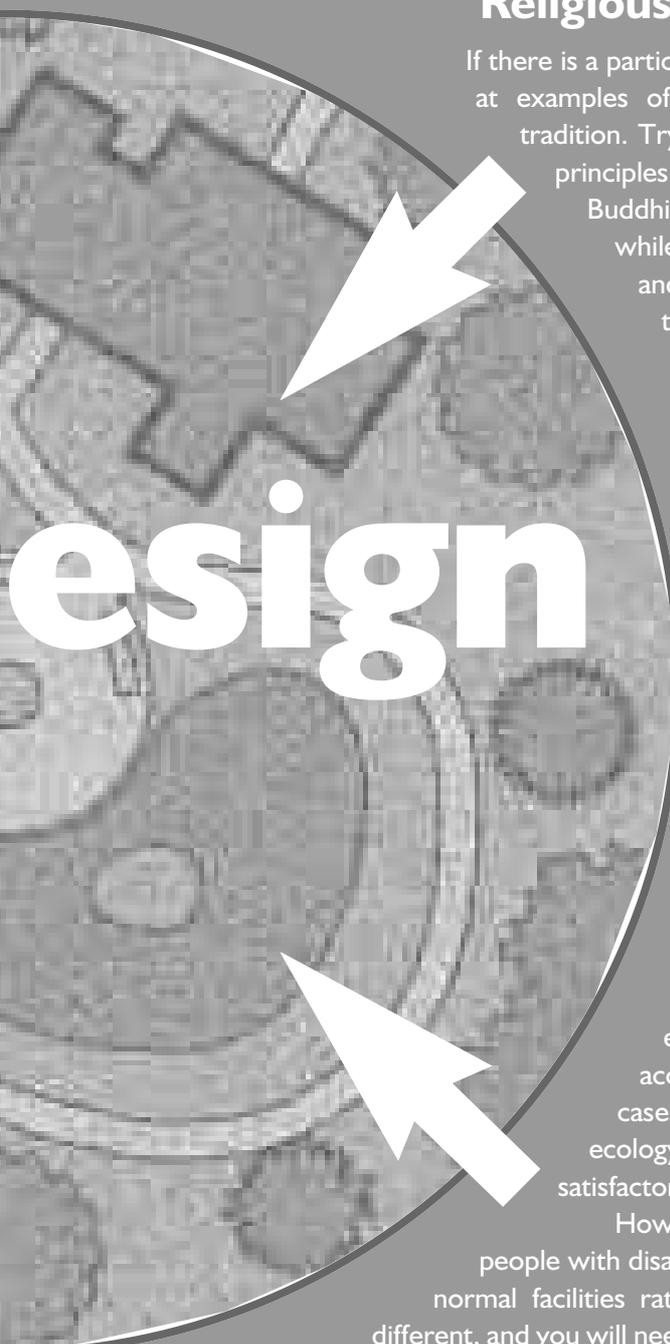
If there is a particular religious tradition associated with the site, look at examples of the landscape, art and architecture from that tradition. Try to summarise for the designer's benefit particular principles which characterise that tradition. For example, Buddhism seeks to calm the emotions, senses and desires, while some traditions of Christianity seek to stimulate and use all the senses in worship. These different traditions give rise to very different designs.

Public access

It is an important aspect of Sacred Land projects that as far as possible, the site is open and accessible for all. Obviously what is possible varies considerably between cases. In the example of a well in someone's front garden described above, the well can be seen by all from the road, although there is no public access to the garden. A site does not have to be fully open and accessible all the time. In other cases, such as where the creation of a meditation garden was essentially for private use, the Sacred Land Project has decided not to become involved.

Many Sacred Land projects are taking place in fairly wild and remote spots. In these cases the difficulty of the journey is often part of the experience of the visit, and car parking or too easy access would be against the spirit of the place. In many cases there is a trade-off between preserving the ecology of the site and providing public access. Usually a satisfactory balance can be reached.

However, you need to give serious thought to access for people with disabilities, and as far as possible this should be through normal facilities rather than 'by special arrangement'. Every case is different, and you will need to take advice. Your local authority or local library will be able to put you in touch with organisations and groups which can help. There may be grants available specifically to provide disabled access.



esign

Example of simple management plan

If Step 1 reveals anything of biological importance you must contact the relevant authorities and be guided by their regulations as these are often legally enforceable. For example it is illegal to endanger or destroy certain types of habitat.

Although most sites of value are already documented, new discoveries are made from time to time.

Step 4 will include regular tasks such as grass cutting, and occasional ones such as tree thinning which might only need

to be done every few years.

Some introduction of plants and wildlife may occur naturally, and you should study their impact on the site and whether they are detrimental or beneficial to the ecology of the site.

Step 1

Site survey and description

If anything of biological/geological interest is found, notify the appropriate bodies, eg. English Nature

Step 2

Consider the options

1. What are the themes of the project?
2. What are the project's objectives?
3. How are these to be reflected in the physical landscape?
4. What changes to the site are required?
5. How are these to be developed?

Step 3

List work required and timescale and funding arrangements
(see chart opposite)

Step 4

List management tasks
Record regularity/frequency of tasks and occasional tasks and timetable of reviews

Step 5

Record and store data of all changes and review steps 3 and 4 on the basis of these evaluations

The work programme

It is highly unlikely that you will have all the funding you need before you are ready to start work, but it is very frustrating and supporters can lose momentum if everything is on hold until all the money is available. You therefore need to

draw up a modular plan, working out which parts of the work must be done before anything else can go ahead, which can be worked on gradually, perhaps with volunteer labour, and which can wait until funds become available.

A schematic guide to a work programme for a project

This assumes that the objectives of a scheme are worked out and site works are now being considered.

Step 1

List all site works required and their costs as far as possible in chronological order.

Step 2A

List all existing resources and the estimated timetable for the acquisition of all remaining resources required.

Step 2B

Produce a programme of work assuming all required resources were available.

Step 3

Working with the results of steps 2A and 2B prioritise a programme of works that will be able to work within the existing resources at any one time. Bear in mind that there are three main categories of work:

- a) site preparation, eg. clearing site
- b) outlining the site's main areas and laying structural works such as paths and raised beds
- c) finishing works, eg. planting (some of this may be considered as b) eg. planting woods if the site is large).

Step 4

Prepare management plan

Aftercare

You need to make some plans for the upkeep of your site. There are four main points to bear in mind:

1. There will inevitably be changes in the use and character of the site as things settle down, so the plan needs to be flexible.

2. A complicated plan will simply not be followed, so keep things as simple as possible. As we mentioned above, simplicity and ease of care should be part of the original design.

3. A plan that depends on the knowledge and dedication of one individual cannot work for long. However committed a person may be, circumstances and abilities change. We have known projects which foundered when a key person unexpectedly became ill.

4. Many groups are concerned about the risk of vandalism or inappropriate use of the site. Over many years, the experience of a wide variety of environmental and community projects has shown that it is essential to get the co-operation and involvement of any potential vandals. Where this is done, and the time and energy of young people are committed to the project, vandalism has not been a serious problem. Because vandalism is so distressing, it has often been perceived as a more serious problem than it actually is.

Questions to be asked:

What are the objectives?

What maintenance will be needed?

Who is responsible for maintenance?

Who will do the practical work? (e.g. volunteers, paid workers)

What tools/materials will be needed?

How will maintenance be funded?

Finance

Raising funds for a project is never easy, but remember: projects do get funding, so why shouldn't yours be one of them?

There are many sources of funds for community based projects, especially those working to improve the environment. However, we have to recognise that there are more groups applying than there is money to go round. Raising funds for a project is never easy, but remember: projects do get funding, so why shouldn't yours be one of them? It is not an impossible task. Information Sheet 3 gives useful addresses and books for fund-raisers.

In almost all cases of successfully funded projects two factors are present:

1. The group persisted. Each time they got a refusal they looked at what they were saying and refined it to meet the funder's criteria.

2. The funds were arrived at by assembling a strategy that first broke down the project into fundable areas and then used one successful application to support another. Devising this package is time-consuming and takes imagination and an open approach to how a project is going to be realised.

But to make matters even more complicated there are also some funders that only appear to respond to very conventional requests. Fund-raising is an art form and no one approach will work for all situations! It is hard work that gets results: first in working out what you are applying for, and then in deciding who it is most appropriate to apply to. Having worked these out, however, a single application can usually be sent to a number of bodies, with only minor changes.



Work out how much you can achieve without cash funding: literally thousands of pounds could often be saved on a project simply by exploring the talents of the group and its supporters. Think about the value of a friendly solicitor making a quick call to the local authority planning department about land ownership or planning consent etc. Don't underestimate the value of work in kind, and keep a record of these donations with an estimate of their cash value, since they can often be presented as a monetary value for matched funding when you are offered a grant on condition that you can match its value from other sources.

Local firms such as builders, garden centres, equipment hirers, may be happy to give or loan tools, materials, plants etc. Local sponsorship can bring the benefits to both the project and the sponsor through favourable advertising. Make sure their contribution is highlighted in any press coverage of the project. Any pamphlet or display board used on site should list all the sponsors.



2

Show what you can do

Make sure that you use these resources to the full. An ability to use local resources, or any resources, is often referred to by grant giving bodies as the project's resource capacity. Funders will look at how much you have achieved with what you already have available. Then use the support you have gained locally and in goods and services to underpin applications to national bodies.

3

Start-up funds

Sometimes even local supporters need to be convinced of a project's viability before they will give resources, and you may need funds to develop documentation and detailed plans to show them. When you go to a garden centre manager to ask for plants you want him or her to be able to see, through a plan, the beauty of what is being created and where and how the firm's support will be used. Sacred Land can be helpful in this area because of our knowledge of what has

worked best for similar projects. Our magazine Sacred Land can also use this documentation to bring publicity to the scheme. There are a number of organisations that can help with these set-up costs although the further you can get before approaching them, the better your chances will be.

4

National bodies, large sums

Applying to national bodies such as the lottery for large sums is a complex and time-consuming affair but groups are generally given more support by the granting bodies. They do for example generally indicate quite early on whether they are likely to support a proposal or not. But be prepared - a huge amount of supplementary information is required to support an already very detailed application form. Another factor is that the criteria for support are both more complex and more strictly adhered to. On top of this the timescale from the start of the application to receiving the money can be lengthy. Expect for example, an application to the Lottery Commission to take up to 18 months before you receive funds.

When applying to the major trusts that are linked to

corporations like Marks and Spencer, British

Airways, Banks and finance houses etc., the picture is similar to the other trusts. In addition, however, a commercial operation will be seeking a good image from its charitable efforts. In practice this means identifying what benefits there may be for the funder in supporting your project. Many companies only fund projects in the areas of their operations in this country. It is worth approaching any large concerns that operate in your locality even if they have no record of supporting projects.

5

Feedback to funders

You will, of course, have to keep careful accounts of what money you have received and how it has been spent, but funders vary in how much detail they require. Don't forget to acknowledge receipt of any donation, with a note of thanks. In addition, some funders will like to be kept up-to-date with progress, photographs, any publicity the project has received, number of visitors, and any other information that tells them how well you are using their money.

Spreading the word

The amount and type of publicity you seek for your project is up to you. But the Sacred Land Project is all about changing people's perceptions and their ideas of what is possible. This is a community project and the local community must know of the resource you are planning. The need to let people know what is here and what is happening should be part of your whole planning process. It is also important to keep partners and volunteers interested and up-to-date with what is happening or being discussed.

Where?

Local schools, churches, libraries

If they are not already involved, think about:

- a sheet on the notice-board
- a display panel with photos and descriptions
- someone involved with the project to go in and give a talk.
- an article in the church or school magazine

Local media

Local papers, local radio and television (BBC and commercial) are always keen on this kind of story. Think about sending your information sheet (see above) to the religion correspondent, the community affairs reporter, the environment reporter or even the travel editor in some cases. It's a good idea to phone the newspaper or station to find out the name of the reporters concerned. If there isn't one specific person covering any of those areas, then send the materials to the editor of the publication, or to the news editor or series editor of a particular radio programme. Follow it up with a phone call - you won't be being a nuisance, and hearing a voice gives reporters a better 'feel' for the item.

Once you have something that will make good pictures, contact the wider regional magazines, such as Dorset Life or The Dalesman.

Specialist magazines and newsletters

Many of the partnerships that you form will give access to these: conservation magazines, gardening magazines, Women's Institute magazine, religious papers, LA21 publicity, etc.

PUBLIC

Networking

One of the prime functions of the Sacred Land Project is to spread information and new thinking about Britain's sacred sites. We need your input, and this will help both you and other groups. Let us know what you are doing and we can put you in touch with other groups who may be grappling with similar problems.

Keep in touch with all your partner groups to exchange news and ideas, and with local organisations with related interests. The more you tell other people, the more you can learn from them and get their help.

CITY

How?

We suggest that right at the beginning you appoint an archivist, to keep a diary (not just minutes) of what happened, to keep photos (professional quality if at all possible) of appropriate stages of the project, to record people's feelings and discussions about the project. This will be an invaluable resource in any publicity you undertake. Don't just record the good bits, but the setbacks and the disappointments as well, for these make a story more interesting for everyone, and more helpful for any group seeking to follow your example.

Identify someone in your group who will be a good spokesperson for the project, who will be happy talking to anyone who enquires, or who has a good personal story to tell. Think through what story you want to get across. What are the essential points?

At different stages of the project, produce a 1-page description of what you are doing, what stage you are at, what was the site like before, what you hope it will be like in the future, who is involved, etc., and above all, who can be contacted for further information. After you have distributed this (see 'Where?' opposite) follow it up with a phone call - don't expect people to get back to you. Your own enthusiasm and commitment will go a long way to get other people interested, so don't be afraid of being a nuisance!

Remember that journalists are looking for a good story. Plan what you want to say so that they hear the story you want to tell. Give them some 'human interest' if at all possible, and let your own enthusiasm show.

Contrary to popular belief journalists do not normally twist what you say in order to make a sensation, but do be careful not to say what you don't mean. If you are having difficulties with the council, for example, do not suggest, even in joke, that they might be corrupt! Don't gloss over the difficulties, but explain how you are hoping to bring them round to your point of view.

If the story is followed up it can take up a great deal of someone's time, especially with television. Be prepared and patient.

Interpretation

Specialist interpretation is increasingly being offered at historical and other sites, but it is up to you to decide whether this is appropriate for your project. In a religious site interpretation might be out of place in many cases, since the value of the place depends on the individual's reaction to it. Visitors will certainly benefit from having available the information you have gathered about the past use of the site, and the visions you have for its present and future, but it is probably a mistake to impose these too explicitly on visitors.

When?

As well as timing your publicity to cover significant stages in the project, think about features to coincide with a festival such as a Saint's Day, an anniversary (50th, 100th, 500th), or a season (e.g. is the site at its best at a particular time of year?)

Postscript

At the time of writing, many projects have yet to come to fruition under the Sacred Land banner. These things take time. The following letter from Dr. Peter Barber will, we hope, be the first of many similar reports:

The Pilgrims Way, Walsingham

I am very pleased to be able to omit the word 'proposed' from the above named project.

The ideas and aspirations of a small group, of the shrines, of the communities of Walsingham and Barsham have been realised as the surfacing of the disused railway line nears completion. This summer, for the first time, Pilgrims and local people will have an alternative route to use, for the important 'Holy Mile' between the Slipper Chapel and the Anglican Shrine. For the first time it will be possible to go on foot, or by wheelchair, and enjoy the beauty of the Glaven Valley, the wildlife, the rural peace, free from the noise and hazard of road traffic. Pilgrims may now have the chance to connect 'the landscape of the quiet of the sky...' and feel at last a true sense of 'tranquil restoration.'

The Sacred Land Project has played a vital role in ensuring the success of the project, both in its encouragement of local initiative, and its financial contribution. The Sacred Land Project has acted as a catalyst to guide and sustain the commitment of both the Churches and the County Council.

In the earliest meetings, notwithstanding Robin Sayer's formidable enthusiasm and energy, the means of funding the project always remained a little uncertain. Undoubtedly the involvement of the Sacred Land project as a 'partner' in the scheme was directly instrumental in securing County Council and Countryside Commission funds.

In sum, the Pilgrims' Way has been transformed from a vision into a reality. I am confident that sufficient interest and momentum has been generated to build on what has been achieved.

I would like now to develop a network of circular walks, radiating from the Way, to offer further opportunities for visitors and local people to explore the adjoining countryside. I am also putting together some ideas for a leaflet, a brief guide to the Pilgrims' Way - and to offer interpretation of the local wildlife and countryside management.

In conclusion I would like to thank you and your colleagues for your valuable help, and I hope we will be able to arrange some sort of celebratory 'opening' of the route in the not too distant future. I look forward to seeing you at that event, if not before.

Books

As well as the books mentioned here, a good general guide to the wildlife of your area, from mosses to mammals, would be useful, depending on the nature of your site.

Carling, Chris

How to Run a Voluntary Group

A guide to successful organisation and management, How To Books Ltd. (3 Newtec Place, Magdalen Road, Oxford OX4 1RE, 01865 793806), 1995, ISBN 1 85703 135 0

Excellent, readable, accessible, encouraging

Creighton, Sean

Environmental Action Pack

Community Matters, (8/9 Upper Street, London N1 0PQ, 0171 226 0189), 1996, ISBN 0 900787 50 3

Not all relevant, but some good ideas about getting people to look at environment with new eyes, involving young people, cultural and historical activities.

Edwards, Jo, and Palmer, Martin (eds.)

Holy Ground: the guide to Faith and Ecology

Pilkington Press, 1997.

Anthology on religion and ecology, including the Assisi Declarations and Windsor statements from nine world faiths

Forbes, Duncan, Ruth Hayes and Jacki Reason

Voluntary but not Amateur

A guide to the law for voluntary organisations and community groups, London Voluntary Service Council (365 Holloway road, London N7 6PA) 1998 ISBN 1872584444

Detailed and fairly technical, explains the legal situation, choices to be made, what you can and can't do. Well-written and clear.

Goldsmith, Selwyn

Designing for the Disabled; a new paradigm

Oxford, Butterworth-Heinemann, 1997. ISBN 0750634421

Mabey, Richard

Flora Britannica

Sinclair-Stevenson, 1996. ISBN 1856193772. Details the social and cultural relevance of most British plants.

Manning, David

Sacred Gardens, A living growing memory

The Sacred Land Project, 3 Wynnstay Grove, Fallowfield, Manchester, M14 6XG, price £1.00

Palmer, Martin

Sacred Britain, a guide to the sacred sites and pilgrim routes

Piatkus. London, 1997. ISBN 0-7499-1706-7

The book that started it all!

Palmer, Paul, and Elizabeth Hoe

Voluntary Matters, Management and good practice within the voluntary sector

Directory of Social Change (24 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2DP, 0171 209 5151, fax 0171 209 5049; email info@d-s-c.demon.co.uk)

A comprehensive text-book. Lots of detail of the law and efficient management. Not for beginners, but may be useful as you progress.

Pevsner, Nikolaus

The Buildings of England

There is a guide for each county, published by Penguin

Resources

Organisations

This list includes merely a selection of organisations to help you start making contacts. Local and specialist organisations will also be important. There is such a wide variety of religious organisations that we suggest you start with your own local and religious contacts, as well as asking in your local library for groups active in your area. Sacred Land may be able to help with specific requests for religious contacts.

Access Committee for England

12 City Forum, 250 City Road, London EC1V 8AF
0171 250 0008

Contacts with local disability groups, may be able to advise locally on access problems

British Ecology Society

26 Blades Court
Deodar Road
Putney
London SW15 2NU
0181 871 9797

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

36 St. Mary's St.
Wallingford
Oxfordshire
OX10 0EU

Church and Conservation Project

The Arthur Rank Centre
National Agricultural Centre
Stoneleigh Park
Warwickshire CV8 2LZ
01203 696969; fax 01203 414808

Also includes the Living Churchyard and Cemetery Project, which has a range of information, posters, slides and audio and video cassettes

Common Ground

PO Box 25309
London NW5 1ZA
0171 267 2144

Encourages community involvement in local conservation, with ideas, information and inspiration

Community Matters

(used to be National Federation of Community Groups)
8/9 Upper Street, London N1 0PQ
0171 226 0189

Conservation Foundation

1 Kensington Gore
London SW7 2AR
0171 823 8842; fax 0171 823 8791

Creates and manages a wide range of projects covering environmental interests

Council for the Protection of Rural England

Warwick House
25 Buckingham Palace Rd.
London
SW1W 0PP
0171 976 6433

Countryside Council for Wales/Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru

Plas Penrhos
Fford Penrhos
Bangor
Gwynedd, LL57 2LQ
01248 385500; fax 01248 355782
e-mail: library@ccw.gov.uk
National nature conservation body

English Heritage

23 Savile Row
London W1X 1AB
0171 973 3000; fax 0171 973 3001
Responsible for the built heritage in England

English Nature

Northminster House
Peterborough PE1 1UA
01733 455000; fax 01733 568834
National nature conservation body

Environment Agency

Rio House
Waterside Drive
Aztec West
Almondsbury
Bristol BS12 4UD

Environmental protection and improvement, merging the National Rivers Authority with pollution and waste regulation authorities

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group

National Agricultural Centre
Stoneleigh
Warwickshire CV8 2RX
01203 696969; fax 01203 696720

Charity employing farm conservation advisors.

Geological Society

Burlington House
Piccadilly
London W1V 0JU
0171 434 9944; fax 0171 439 8975

Accredits university degree courses, organises scientific meetings and houses the largest geoscience library in the UK.

Groundwork National Office

85-87 Cornwall Street, Birmingham B3 3BY
Sponsorship from companies, promotes environmental partnership initiatives

Learning Through Landscapes

Third Floor
Southside Offices
The Law Courts
Winchester
Hants. SO23 9DL
01962 846258; fax 01962 869099
Provides advice and information relating to school grounds development

National Council of Voluntary Organisations

0171 713 6161

National Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens

0117 923 1800

A network that sends out regular material about funding and other useful information.

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

The Lodge
Sandy
Beds. SG19 2DL
01767 680551; fax 01767 692365

Scottish Natural Heritage

12 Hope Terrace
Edinburgh EH9 2AS
0131 447 4784; fax 0131 446 2279
National nature conservation body

Shell Better Britain Campaign

Victoria Works
21a Graham Street
Hockley
Birmingham
B1 3JR
Encourages action by local people to improve the quality of life at neighbourhood level

The Wildlife Trusts

The Green
Witham Park
Waterside South
Lincoln LN5 7JR
01522 544400; fax 01522 511616
The national office can give details of county branches

World Wide Fund for Nature

Education Department
Panda House
Weyside Park
Godalming
Surrey GU7 1XR
01483 426444; fax 01483 426409

Resources

Information sheet 1

Planning Designations

SSSI – Site of Special Scientific Interest

These are designated by English Nature and their purpose is to protect species and habitats from development. The destruction of any SSSI can result in court action and a heavy fine.

SAM – Scheduled Ancient Monument

These are designated by English Heritage and are the archaeological equivalent of the SSSI, designed to protect special areas of archaeological interest

AONB – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

These are designated areas of countryside which have been identified by the Countryside Commission. The purpose of AONBs is to alert a planning authority to specially attractive areas of countryside so that they take extra care when dealing with applications.

Conservation Areas - These are areas of Cities, Towns and Villages which are viewed as being either particularly attractive or architecturally significant, locally or nationally. In practice this means that there are stringent rules about the cutting or pruning of trees and the erection or repair of walls or buildings.

TPO – Tree Preservation Order

This is a designation placed on an individual tree or group of trees by the local authority which protects the designated tree or trees from removal or surgery without prior reference to the council.

Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation

Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation or similar names are Local Authority designations which identify sensitive areas and protect them. They are generally placed on areas of local significance which do not warrant an SSSI designation.

Greenbelt

This is a ring of countryside around the outskirts of some towns and cities which was set aside from development in the 1950's. Housing development on these sites is restricted although recent developments mean that this could change.

Listed Buildings

There are three categories of listed buildings designated by English Heritage. The purpose for all of them is the same: to protect and preserve buildings of architectural and historical importance. The listings are as follows:

Grade 1

These are buildings of exceptional interest.

Grade 2

These are particularly important buildings of more than special interest.

Grade 2

The are buildings of special interest which warrant every effort made to preserve them.

Information sheet 2

Agenda 21

What is Agenda 21?

The concept of sustainable development took centre stage at the United Nations' Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. 178 heads of state agreed to 'an action plan for the 1990's and well into the 21st century, ... to hold and reverse the effects of environmental degradation and to promote environmentally sound and sustainable development in all countries.' This is Agenda 21.

Agenda 21 covers a multitude of areas, including, among others, combating poverty, changing consumption patterns, the problems of rapid urbanisation, protection of the atmosphere, land resources, forests, mountains, seas and coasts, fresh water, biological diversity, and environmentally sound waste disposal. The document stresses how important it is to include groups such as workers, business and industry, and farmers. It also includes a chapter on promoting education, public awareness and training.

What does it mean at local level?

Much of Agenda 21 depends on local rather than global action. In this country, every council must prepare its own Local Agenda 21, a strategy to achieve sustainable development

in consultation and co-operation with local groups and individuals, with particular emphasis on involving women and youth. It is a two-way process: local authorities aim to increase awareness of these issues in every household, while learning about the concerns and priorities of their citizens. The local authority's role is described as 'educating, mobilising and responding to the public to promote sustainable development'.

What does it mean for a Sacred Land Project?

Each local council should have an Agenda 21 Office to encourage and support community-led environmental projects, though funding levels vary dramatically from council to council. It's worth finding out what kinds of projects a particular Agenda 21 office is supporting to see if your Sacred Land project fits their funding criteria. If little Agenda 21 activity is underway in your area, challenge the local council to expand its current commitments.

Examine your Sacred Land project in the light of the principles outlined in paragraph 2. Clearly it is a local initiative - a good start. It will almost certainly have a major role in raising public awareness and because of its faith dimension, not just awareness but committed involvement. Which of the action areas does your project

touch on? Which local groups and interests does it address? Have some of these groups had a low profile in decision-making up to now?

Local Agenda 21 is for local groups and projects to use, develop, challenge and change if necessary. It can also help make links at both a local and national level, so LA21 and a Sacred Land project could make ideal partners, each giving and receiving much of value.

Resources

Information sheet 3

Funding bodies

Useful books and leaflets

The local reference Library should have a copy of **A Guide to Major Trusts** published by the Directory of Social Change (24 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2DP, 0171 209 5151, fax 0171 209 5049; email info@d-s-c.demon.co.uk), which lists all the funding trusts and the criteria they work to, as well as the size of funds they give. There are thousands of them and the book has regional volumes as well as a national section. You need to be systematic when working through so that you don't waste time applying to inappropriate bodies. There are no generalisations to be made here as the trusts are so diverse.

An extremely useful list **Sources of Grant for Environmental Projects in the UK** is available from the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 123 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6DE. Many of the bodies mentioned below are included, and there is also general advice about making applications.

Start-up funds

If the project is in the rural domain, the **Countryside Commission's Grants and Payment Schemes** is a very useful guide and can be obtained from:

Country Commission
John Dower House
Crescent Place
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL50 3RA

The **Civic Trust** who have a Local Project Fund are mostly concerned with the urban environment. Details of the LPF can be obtained from:

The Civic Trust
17 Carlton House terrace
London
SW1Y 5AW

Shell Better Britain Campaign's main criteria for funding are that projects promote and develop sustainable practices and thinking. They fund up to 150 projects annually to a maximum of £2000 and are also happy to give money to community groups to kick-start a project. We recommend that every group register with Shell as they regularly send out useful information including updates on grant schemes:

Shell Better Britain Campaign
Victoria Works
21a Graham Street
Hockley
Birmingham
B1 3JR

The LA21 Office of the Local Authority (See Information Sheet 2). These vary from authority to authority and many have no funds to speak of but some are able to give out anything from £50 to around £200. Again it is worth registering with them regardless of their own funds as they may have a local network of funders or other bodies that can help out.

Specialist Funders

A few other bodies may have funds to give out for ecological conservation or enhancement:

It is worth contacting your local **Wildlife Trust**. These are county-based organisations; the National Office should be able to put you in touch with the relevant group, tel. No. 01522 544400. They may be able to help you with work in kind, and will know about possible sources

of funding locally.

The local Wildlife Trust can also put you in touch with **Rural Action for the Environment**. Each county has its own.

The National Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens is a network that sends out regular material about funding and other useful information. To register with them ring 0117 923 1800.

Landfill taxes can be paid to environmental projects near the landfill site. For more information and to register your project contact **EnTrust**, the body which administers funding financed from the Landfill tax. (154 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9TR; tel. 0171 823 4574).

If your project includes built structures then ask **English Heritage** 0171 973 3267, **Cadw** (Wales) 01222 500200 and **Historic Scotland** (0131 6688600).

National bodies for larger sums

The most useful lottery contact number is for the **Heritage Lottery Fund** on 0171 6041/2/3/4.

If you want to make an application for public art works which may be incorporated into your project (or even be an environmental arts project) phone the **Arts Council** on 0171 312 0123 for an application form.

The **Millennium Commission** now has offices in all the regions to promote local projects. The local number can be obtained from the national office on 0171 880 2001.

Notes

The Sacred Land Project
3 Wynnstay Grove Manchester M14 6XG
tel 0161 248 5731
fax 0161 248 5736
e-mail icorec@icorec.nwnet.co.uk