

Eco Church Report for the APCM 2026

Following a decision by the PCC to join the Eco Church programme, both St. Edmund's Church and St. Mark's Church were registered as Eco Churches on Monday 10th November 2025. A Rocha UK's Eco Church programme is committed to equipping Christians and Churches in the UK to care for their environments. A Rocha UK is a Christian charity working to protect and restore the natural world and to care for creation. Wootton Parish is now in the early stages of following the Eco Church programme, which will look at how we put our faith into action in these areas:

- Worship and teaching
- Buildings and energy
- Land and nature
- Community and global engagement
- Lifestyle

The next step is for the PCC to affirm our commitment as an Eco Church with a Statement of what we believe are our responsibilities as a Church community and create an Action Plan explaining what we are going to do and why. This will first need be discussed and then approved by the PCC. It is encouraging that the Churches in Wootton are now both Eco Churches, joining Whippingham as the other Eco Church in the Plurality.

One of the aims of Eco Church is to involve the wider community in the care of Churchyards and encouraging wildlife to flourish within Church grounds. We are so fortunate to have some beautiful areas in our care. On 5th March 2026, Tina Whitmore 'The Wilder Communities Officer' for The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT) visited by Churchyards and the Copse opposite St. Edmund's. Tina's role is "Supporting and encouraging communities to give nature a helping hand and make spaces more wildlife friendly." Tina was delighted to see the lovely grounds and noted many signs that show wildlife is already thriving there. Following her visit, Tina has offered to create a bespoke '*Making Space for Nature*' report to help with our future planning.

In early March 2026, The Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, asked the PCC for permission to collect the seeds of narrow-leaved lungwort (*Pulmonaria longifolia*) this summer for The Millennium Seed Bank, based at Wakehurst in Sussex. The collectors will be careful to keep the sampling limit to less than 20% of the available seed on the day of collection, so that they do not affect the reproductive potential of the population of the plants.

On 2nd March 2026 Ruth Valerio, an environmentalist and theologian spoke at an evening meeting arranged by 'Creation Matters' at Carisbrooke Priory. Ruth is one of the founders of Eco Church. Her main message was 'Every little bit we can do for the environment really does help, because all these small actions together do make an impact.'

I have written an article for the April edition of *The Bridge* to keep the wider local community informed about Eco Church and hopefully also involved as we move forward with this project.

Erica Hall, March 2026