

# WICKHAM MARKET PARISH COUNCIL

Report from Environment and Leisure Working Group  
for WMPC Full Council Monday September 15th 2025

**Cemetery Memorial Garden: proposal to agree the principle of replacing the infected and declining Box hedge with a new hedge, to seek three quotes based on a full specification and plan, and to seek grant funding for some materials.**

## 1 Introduction and background

- a. The Memorial Garden is one of two located within WM Cemetery. The earlier ashes area is grassed with some issues around keeping the tablets free of grass. The 1998 garden was designed as a gravelled area, enclosed by the box hedge.
- b. The parish cemetery is designated as a Local Green Space in the WM Neighbourhood Plan (Policy WICK7) and as a non-designated Heritage Asset (WICK8).
- c. The more recent Memorial Garden is enclosed with a box hedge on four sides with openings. The garden is laid with gravel over a matting and contains the memorial tablets laid out in four quarters.
- d. The 'garden' was originally designed by P Clarke (landscape architect) as part of the cemetery extension at that time for WMPC Clerk C Caudwell. The rectangle measures approx. 8.2 metres square.
- e. The box hedge has been managed collectively by Norse (now ESSL), handy person and volunteers and has until last summer 2024 looked fabulous. In 2023 the mainly healthy box provided a dense evergreen hedge.

## 2. Problem: Pests and disease

- a. In June 2023 the hedge was cut by the Cemetery group volunteers and well mulched with mushroom compost. It was noted at this time that a patch of box blight had infected the hedge on its west side. This causes box to lose its leaves and die back. Control measures are to prune in June, feeding and keeping moist with mulch.
- b. In 2023 the first signs of box-tree moth (*Cydalima perspectalis*) and the caterpillar damage also started to appear, and this damage increased slowly in 2024. The species was first spotted in 2007 in Kent and originated from SE Asia. The box moth has several cycles of breeding each season which makes it a very damaging species.
- c. In late 2024 E&L considered replacing the blighted section with privet but delayed this due to the increasing caterpillar damage.
- d. This year/2025 the box moth caterpillar damage has got progressively worse with large sections affected. The leaves are shredded and die back completely.

- e. The damage from blight and box moth have been highlighted in previous E&L Cemetery Group & Tree Warden reports.
- f. Along with careful management and possible hard pruning the treatment can include spraying and setting moth traps. Neither of these options are particularly desirable or practical in areas such as the cemetery and there is no guarantee of success.

### **3. Recommended actions**

- a. At the last E&L WG meeting we agreed to monitor for the summer and set out actions. As the damage is progressing, we are reporting to September Full Council with the recommendation to replace with a new hedge.
- b. This would require the following actions:
  - Removal in Autumn, root grubbing out, soil preparation and rest.
  - Re-planting later in the year or early 2026 once the ground has had a chance to absorb moisture, and organic matter.
- c. Replanting and mulching to follow a line approximately 450mm wider from the current centre line without compromising the space around the hedge for maintenance. We were aware of the proximity of the hedge to the tablets (particularly the SW quarter) so a wider space would help with space for growth without compromising tablets and tribute space.
- d. Mulching and vermin protection is likely to be needed in the short term (2 years) so shrub shelter tubes may be needed although the recommended species is generally avoided by deer and rabbits.
- e. There is likely to be a need to refresh the timber gravel board which secures the mat and gravelled surface. It is hard to ascertain its current condition as the box hedge is masking the board.
- f. A variety of species (see 5.) could be used to create a similar hedged effect, be relatively easy to manage (one/two cuts per year) and establish well on the soil type.
- g. Replacement with a new hedge would retain the enclosure and align with local climate and biodiversity objectives, creating and renewing greenery and hedge habitat. See 5 c.

### **4. Other options**

- a. Other options to replacement with a new hedge have been considered:
- b. To cut the box to ground level and see if it re-grows. Box is generally deer resistant so it might grow back if slowly but with no guarantee of ultimate success.
- c. To remove the box hedge, leave the garden open. The weakness of this would be the lack of a barrier and wind break to contain both the gravel and the varied tributes which are left for the deceased.

- d. To replace the hedge with a low fence in timber or a metal railing such as shown in Annex 1. Costs have been considered by E&L WG at their meetings in June and August (full report prepared).
- e. All options require regular weeding of the gravelled area where the tablets and tributes are laid. This is currently undertaken when time permits at the Cemetery work parties. Ideally the gravel and hedge would be managed by the ESSL under the contract with WMPC.

## 5. Hedge species and approximate cost estimates

- a. Suitable hedge species could be:

Ilex crenata, a promoted species to replace box but it is not always vigorous.  
 Pittosporum, look good but are expensive and slow, prefer moisture rich soil  
 Fagus, Purple beech, will get bulky but would look good close to copper beech tree.  
 Carpinus, Hornbeam, also gets bulky but forms a good hedge with autumn colour.  
 Potentilla, flowering but would need greater care.  
 Garden privet, vigorous, easy to grow and prune but only semi evergreen.  
 Lonicera, Shrubby honeysuckle. This is the recommended species see below.

- b. Lonicera nitida (box honeysuckle) is widely used as a low hedging plant and is currently a favoured alternative to box in landscape schemes. It forms a dense, evergreen, shiny (hence Nitida) small leaved hedge.
- c. Lonicera nitida can contribute to biodiversity by providing food and shelter for wildlife. The flowers attract pollinators, the berries are a food source for birds, and the small leaves/dense foliage offers nesting potential for robins and wrens who tend to nest low down in thickets and hedges.
- d. It will require regular pruning twice each year to keep it compact and upright.
- e. Both the supply costs of the hedge plants and tree tubes could possibly be covered by a Nature first grant from ESC. There is a possibility of adding this to a second grant application which is planned. WM Partnership are content to accept and process nature grants if required to do so.
- f. Project costs will need to include grubbing out box hedge, soil preparation, replanting, new gravel board, mulching, and protection.
- g. The chart below is a quick '**best estimate**'/ballpark figure received from a local nursery/contractor and does not consider any volunteer input or grant funding.

<i>Work Item</i>	<i>Volunteer input</i>	<i>Cost labour inc</i>	<i>VAT 20%</i>	<i>TOTAL COST</i>
Grub out hedge with 1.5T mini excavator and replenish soil with compost.	Possible cost saving by cutting box to GL and burning prior to grubbing out roots but a big task.	£1875	£375	£2250
Gravel board insert. May be <b>optional</b> with		£875.00 Inc labour	£175	£1050

a new hedge. Existing condition will be checked but likely to come out with box roots.				
Replant 36m hedge inc. plant materials	Labour costs could possibly be saved by volunteers if available c £308.	£635.00	£127	£762
<b>Cost of plants only not added in to total</b>	<i>Lonicera nitida x 72 approx.£453 inc. VAT</i>			
Mulch use rotted wood chip in cemetery bunker, more will be needed from local TSS	YES from the wood chip bunker			
Grants through ESC Nature First or CP funding	YES possibly for plants and protectors.			
Approx max total ballpark figure. Note h. below.		<b>£3115</b>	<b>£623</b>	<b>£3738</b>

- h. Quotes from other local contractors inc. from ESSL are likely to **result in lower price**. Using volunteers (if available) and applying for ESC grants is an option for reducing costs.
- i. It would also be advisable to insert a leaky pipe for watering purposes. This cost has not been included.  
A hose to connect to the Cemetery tap could also be purchased for use when required. This would also be beneficial for young tree watering in the future.

## 6. Compliance with Parish Council Climate Action Strategy

- The Strategy action No. 1 states that Councillors should refer to the Climate Action Strategy (CAS) when making decisions and minute that consideration has been given to environmental factors, The Strategy state that the parish council would like to ensure that its climate and nature restoration goals are at the forefront of any decisions made by the Parish Council with residents' support.
- This report recommends that the hedge be replaced with a new hedge, creating and renewing greenery and hedge habitat. Para 5 c explains how a hedge contributes to biodiversity.
- A new hedge is therefore considered to comply with the councils Climate Action Strategy.
- The WMPC needs to consider the requirements of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and compliance with the WMPC draft biodiversity action plan as reported in February 2024: *Public authorities who operate in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. This is the strengthened 'biodiversity duty' that the Environment Act 2021 introduced.*

## 7. Recommendation

The recommendation is to:

- To agree the principle and ballpark figure for replacing the infected and declining Box hedge with a new hedge. This would be the option most in keeping with the character of the cemetery green space and biodiversity requirements.
- Proceed with preparing a final specification for seeking four quotes from known local contractors for all works required including materials as set out in Section 5 g.
- Investigate and apply for the Nature first grant to cover some material costs, plants and shrub shelter tubes.
- Encourage and support volunteers to assist with some elements of the work required in order to reduce cost.

Environment and Leisure Working Group  
Report for WMPC Full Council Final 3<sup>rd</sup> September  
15<sup>th</sup> September 2025

### Sequential Photographs follow:



January 2024 pre box moth attack.



January 2025



July 2025



Box moth gets a hold in 2025.

The hedge contains the tablets and tributes



Replacement species proposed, Lonicera nitida, dense small leaf evergreen hedge plant.

## Annex 1 – Metal fencing options

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30mm (2") square Fence Posts that can either be concreted into the ground or bolted down are also available.