

## **Sandford Community Churchyard Path** **PAVING THE WAY**

Over the years the cobbled path from the Fanny's Lane entrance and into all three church entrances has begun to deteriorate badly and various applications have been sought to make it safe – the first being to 'tarmac over the existing path' in 1984. Not surprisingly, that was turned down. The churchyard path is used by a range of people including school children, mums with prams, dog walkers, families visiting their graves and memorials and people who just want to sit in the churchyard enjoying the rolling Devon hills in peace and tranquillity.

And it is of course used by folk wanting to enter St Swithun's for church services or coffee mornings, bell practice or flower arranging, history groups or those exploring their family genealogy.

The present unevenness of the paths makes access a precarious business for anyone but especially for wheelchair users, those with mobility problems and the elderly. And of course the cobbles themselves need constant hand weeding so that they don't become slippery as well as uneven.

With a Grade 1 listed building, there are numerous bodies who have an input and whose agreement is needed for work to happen – the Diocese of Exeter, the local authority planners, archaeological approval, the Victorian Society, Historic England and the local water authority (SW water). It is costly in both time, effort and money

However we have at last got all the approvals we need and are busily fund raising and applying for grants to begin work. Our application to the Lottery Heritage Fund will include community projects like CCTV to monitor the swift boxes in the tower, protecting and increasing the wildlife friendly areas of the churchyard with bug and bat boxes, and hedgehog shelters and to monitor these. There are also plans to explore paths and bridle ways in the parish, as well as the old road to Crediton with the involvement of the Heritage group and children from Sandford School. We hope to start the work in the summer and complete it by the end of the year. The full cost will be over £100,000 and we have raised half of that.

We are asking for your continued interest and support for our fund raising projects. The **PAVING THE WAY** plans are on display in the church and if you want to talk to anyone about the details our church warden Chris Tucker, or Stephen Miller or Jim King will be glad to do so.