

**MINUTES OF PARKEND COMMUNITY ORCHARD PROJECT MEETING HELD AT THE MEMORIAL HALL,
PARKEND ON SATURDAY 11-02-23 @10.30am**

A committee meeting preceded the main meeting and agreed the following.

The volume of group correspondence to Nikki's personal e mail has become totally unsustainable recently. As with immediate affect no further Orchard group e mails will be answered from Nikki's personal e mail address. In future a separate new e mail address will be set up for all Orchard group correspondence. This new e mail account will issue a standard thank you reply immediately. The account will then be checked approximately just once a week and relevant e mails will then be directed to whichever member of the committee they concern, for a reply. Meanwhile until the new account has been organised please send any e mails to contactus@parkendvillage.uk and mark them FAO Orchard Group.

The Orchard Group now has a Facebook Page and it is also on The Parkend Village Website (listed under projects). We also have a very inspiring newsletter showing just how much we have achieved since we began. Many thanks to Elaine for all her hard work in making all of this happen.

1 Welcome and Introductions—Pete welcomed our new member Julie Thomas who has a background in horticulture and whom we are sure will be a huge asset to the group.

Present Pete, Martine, Elaine, Mark, Mike, Nikki, Magda, Ann L, Bob, Jane, Julie, Dave, James, Julia, Miranda

2 Apologies – Emma, Lisa, Laura

3 Community Builder Grant Award – Pete/Nikki/Elaine

This grant has to be spent and all the work completed by the end of March 2023.

Nikki outlined the background to this grant which came about very unexpectedly. We had actually initially enquired about the possibility of a much smaller grant for the café, but on speaking to the Community Builder team we were advised that our cafe would not fulfil that particular grant requirements. However, as we explained the PCO project in more detail, they informed us that we would almost certainly qualify for consideration of a Community Builder Grant instead and that they would be very pleased to support our application. Our application had to be submitted within 3 days. As is usual in these instances the application had to include a clear statement of the purpose of the grant (the grant can only be used for the purpose stated, otherwise it has to be paid back), together with detailed info regarding costs of work and also quite a large section on what attempts the group themselves are making to fundraise and how much money they thought that they could raise from their own efforts.

We decided that we would ask for the full grant of £3000, anticipating that we might be allocated a proportion of it. As we had only £150 immediately available to us (from the proceeds of the book sale) to pay for 10 tree guards, then these were an obvious first priority.

4 Tree Guards Installation – Pete

10 gold standard tree guards have now been installed and are doing their work. These have come in at a cost of £1800 inc vat. Some of the remaining 6 unguarded trees have just started to be nibbled by the animals, so Pete has purchased some temporary plastic tree guards to try to protect them until we can arrange more permanent protection.

5 Spend of remainder of the grant - Pete

At our December meeting it was discussed that a quote for 4 gravel car parking spaces within the field had been received from Trevor Jones. This quote came in at £1000 plus vat. As the cost was so prohibitive it was decided by the meeting that it was a project that would have to be put on the back burner for the present time.

We therefore decided to ask for funding for potential car parking spaces from the grant. The committee have agreed that a plastic grid bedded in to the ground, would be preferable to gravel, because as the grass is allowed to grow through it would become less obtrusive.

Members position regarding parking

The meeting then proceeded to discuss the possible provision of parking on the site and despite a previous vote last year in favour of parking, members now were very divided as to if it was actually a good idea. The objections are the very valid concerns that Parkend is already swamped by the parking of the cars and vans of visiting cyclists (this problem has unfortunately become much worse since parking charges were introduced at Cannop ponds). Some members feel that it is just inevitable that car parking at the orchard will become abused in exactly the same way. This will then create a real problem for the group and would be very difficult to prevent. However, our constitution clearly states under Equal Opportunities that the project should be available to all and therefore we should try to make some provision for those with poor mobility or poor general health to be able to access the site.

FE position regarding parking

Miranda explained that FE are very behind on their applications to grant licences and our project is apparently stuck in the backlog. Until the licence is sorted then FE will be unable to allow us to install parking and in any case they would want us to use one of their preferred groundwork contractors, rather than a fencing contractor such as Trevor Jones. (We were completely unaware that Trevor was not an approved FE groundworks contractor)

FE were also concerned that if the orchard parking were to be abused, then would there be implications for FE? eg if a camper van tried to use the site and stay overnight.

With the current FE position and given that we need to start again with contractor's quotes etc it would be challenging that we can get FE approval and the work done in the very tight timeframe before the end of March. As stated earlier the grant money can only be spent on the works outlined in the original application and if it is not used for this purpose it has to be repaid. If we are unable to meet current deadlines we could potentially (subject to advice) go back to the community builder team and ask for more tree guards (as we have actually received 16 trees, instead of the original 10 expected) and perhaps some water butts instead if there is any money left over? (see AOB) . Once appropriate information has been obtained the group can then be consulted on the way forward.

6 Fencing Progress – Elaine

We have received confirmation that The Build Back Better grant has definitely been awarded. We are waiting for our own bank account to be operational (see later notes). As soon as we request payment then it will be paid in to our account within 3-5 days. Trevor Jones the fencing contractor will therefore be booked to complete the work during March when our bank account should be in place.

7 PCO Bank Account – Mike

Mike has set up a Lloyds Treasurer's Account which is free to use. Primarily this will be an online account, but it will also have a cheque book should we need it. We are 3 weeks in to a 4-6 week timeline before the account will be fully operational. Ultimately 3 signatories will be arranged - Chair, secretary and treasurer - but in order to set up the account speedily, at present Mike, as our treasurer, is the sole signatory.

8 Need for Emergency Plan for all Workparties - Pete /Miranda

Miranda has said that she will help us to set this up as it should accompany a risk assessment for all our working parties on site. [Our First Aid Kit is always kept in Mike and Magda's porch.](#)

9 Possible Grazing –Pete /Miranda (on behalf of Emma)

FE always require a formal agreement between themselves and any grazier who brings their livestock to the site. **Miranda** will find out which sort of livestock would be the most beneficial to graze the site and at what time of year and for how long? As the only access to York Lodge is through the Orchard then cattle may be less appropriate as some members would be frightened to walk through them. York Lodge should not have to pay to stock proof the domestic fences surrounding their property. We may have to pay for some types of livestock to graze??

10 Offers of plants / bees / seeds– Nikki (on behalf of Susan Swan)

Members would be delighted to accept Susan's very kind offers of wildflower plants (ox eye daisies, water avens, primroses and ragged robins) Golden Willow cuttings to build a willow arbour or tunnel and Bird's Foot Trefoil Seeds (main food for the caterpillars of the Common Blue Butterfly). Members would like a little more information about Red Mason Bees.

[Susan will be ordering the seeds for herself shortly, so if any member would also like to try growing them at home please e mail Susan directly on \[msusanswan@gmail.com\]\(mailto:msusanswan@gmail.com\) and she will also order some for you.](#)

11 Woodchip for mulch – Nikki/Elaine (on behalf of Ann H)

If any member has access to some free woodchip for mulching the newly planted trees then please could they contact the new e mail site to let us know?

12 Feedback - Beat the Winter Blues Café – Nikki

As mentioned in the recent update e mail the further café dates in February and March have been cancelled . Members discussed what they would like to do as group fundraisers instead and it was decided to hold a Booksale, Seedswop and Plantsale, together with a Community Café on a Saturday 11.00am – 2.00pm in March or possibly a date in April.

Julie also very kindly offered a pruning and cuttings workshop to help fundraise

13 AOB

Water source – we need to access water for the orchard trees in the Summer. **Pete** will contact Severn Trent to see if they offer any support to Community Projects. Could we put water butts at the Memorial Hall, International Timber and possibly The Baptist Chapel??

Thanks to Dave the hedgehog ramps are now in, but each section of the grid still needs to be cleared and Dave is valiantly working through that slowly. Lifting the grid is not a good idea because of its weight and also the safety aspect.

Mark – is the venison store building safe? Are there any issues with safety as it is near the gate in to Nagshead Nature Reserve. **Miranda** will ask FE to review it.

Ann L – do we need a locking storage facility on site long term? Members can view the storage used at the allotments adjacent to St Paul's Church for possible ideas. We have now learnt that we have a pop up gazebo which we can use for shelter as and when necessary if the weather turns suddenly or if it should be very hot when we are on site.

Martine – consider sponsoring a tree or tree guards.

Julie – soft fruit hedging?

All - Possible Group ideas suggested for activities later in the year- Autumn meal/ Bring and Share / Barbecue / Making Sloe Gin/ Elderflower champagne

There being no further AOB the meeting closed at 11.45am

14 Date of next meeting – the committee will meet before but probably April for the next group meeting