

MINUTES OF PARKEND COMMUNITY ORCHARD PROJECT MEETING HELD AT THE MEMORIAL HALL, PARKEND ON SATURDAY 03-12-22 @11.00AM

1 Welcome and Introductions– Pete

Those present- Pete, Martine, Mike, Magda, Elaine, Nikki, Julia, Jane, Bob, Dave, Ann Harris

2 Apologies – Lisa, Tamsin, Miranda, Laura, Ann Linden, Mark

3 Signing of the Constitution by the Committee – Pete.

Almost all of the committee were present at the meeting to sign the constitution. **Pete** will obtain Mark's signature asap.

4 Proposed Placement of donated Memorial Bench – Nikki

FE have agreed that they will supply the bench at cost. Nikki and her brother have already paid for it and the bench will bear a plaque stating the names of their parents. Those present then discussed their preferred location for the bench within the field - it was felt that an elevated position in the top area of the fields, near to the dead cedar tree, would be the most appropriate. This would allow the best views of the village and also be close to the access gate to Nagshead.

NB White Field Stakes have now been put in place indicating where the group would like the bench to be sited, but this will of course need to be approved by FE.

5 Progress of Fencing – Elaine

The fencing along the top border with RSPB Nagshead has now been fenced with boardproof and stockproof fencing and the section along Hughes Terrace has been strengthened with additional posts to the metal posts near the telegraph pole. This was completed with the WDPC grant. Two new self-closing pedestrian gates have been supplied paid for and installed thanks to Forestry England and which give the community easy access from Hughes Terrace to Nagshead near the dead cedar tree.

However, we have now been advised that the remaining fencing along the bottom edge and side up to York Lodge boundary is barely stockproof. Therefore we have applied for a GCC Build Better grant through Beki Hoyland our local GCC Councillor who has allocated us £2500 from her constituency grant funding. When the finance is approved then we will have enough to fence the rest of it with a little left over to go towards 6ft deer guards around the orchard trees when they arrive. A quote has been requested from TJ Fencing for these guards.

6 Existing Funds - Elaine and Mike

Assuming that we do receive the GCC grant, we will have approx. £490 left, after we have paid for all the remaining fencing. To date The Memorial Hall has acted as the receiver of our grant funds, however, long term we do need to have our own bank account. **Mike** will investigate this. Ann also mentioned the possibility of applications for further small conservation grants eg. ? The Chestnut Fund? that our group could explore in the future.

7 Tree Planting – Martine

Martine deferred this topic to Ann Harris – see item 8

8 Location of Orchard Trees – Ann Harris

The aim of this should be ‘the right tree for the right place’.

Following a successful application to FE we have been given an initial allocation of 2 x plum, 2 x apple, 2 x pear all on traditional rootstocks, 2 x quince, 2 x mulberry and 2 x medlar (mulberry, medlar and quince are all self fertile). **There was debate regarding 1 or 2 each of quince, mulberry and medlar, but the group believe that they eventually settled on a request of 2 of each of these bushes please ?** The medlar, mulberry and quince are more bush like in nature and should be sited nearer to the York Fields entrance. We do not have a choice of the variety of each type of tree. The trees will arrive with a stake to help keep them upright and a basic tree guard (protective sleeve). At present we are unsure if the trees will be delivered bare rooted or pot grown. If bare rooted the trees must be planted or healed in within 7 days of their delivery. From the list of dates provided to us the group selected the arrival of the trees for the w/c 23-01-23. Trees to be widely spaced at a minimum of 8 metres apart on a grid pattern. A further 2 x walnuts (plus an additional walnut tree to be donated by Julia) have been sourced – these will grow in to taller trees and because of this they will be planted separately to the orchard trees. The group have a responsibility to ensure the survival of 85% of the trees allocated. It will be possible to obtain more trees from further grants next year and we are hoping that people within the village may also like to sponsor/ dedicate a tree in future.

We need to avoid areas known to be important for wildflowers, notably the lower flanks of the northern field, an area rich in cowslips, areas adjacent to the existing woodland edge or quieter areas of the site where deer and boar pressure may be greatest, not forgetting areas which could cause shading issues adjacent to York Lodge.

The meeting considered how planting the trees might impact upon the landscape and concern was expressed that the trees could potentially cause damage to the stone culverts that run down the field and under the Hughes Terrace cottages to protect the cottages from flooding. In their quest to seek out water could the tree roots ultimately break up pipe work? It was explained that the orchard trees should serve to help infiltration and slow the flow of surface water down towards Hughes Terrace.

Three potential sites were identified and debated: 1. on the land to the right of the drive (as you enter the site); 2. as an avenue either side of the drive; 3. as a linear orchard running along the top of the northern field.

A vote was taken and Area 1 was almost unanimously supported, one member abstained from the vote, their preference being to leave the area uncultivated with minimal intervention. This location in particular gives a sense of place to the orchard – the orchard will be visible from and close to the entrance and easily accessible for future management, the widely spaced trees will increase connectivity creating a ‘bat link’ with the mature hedges surrounding the northern field. Should there be a need to manage the land separately in the future (e.g. to avoid conflicts with grazing the wider site) the orchard could be temporarily fenced off as 2 boundaries of the triangular area already exist and the area is large enough to accommodate additional trees in the future. Watering of the trees will be necessary in the first year and there is an old water trough in this area to assist with this.

The areas identified for the walnut trees were towards the top of the site to the south of the old venison store and / or in the northern end of the northern field.

Next steps for the community:

1. To mark out the locations of the trees with stakes – this will give a visual representation and allow the locations of individual trees to be considered in terms of landscape and sight lines. Invite comments from the wider community and FE and adjust if necessary. **Stakes were put in by a small working party on Sunday 4th December. Please could members of the group now visit the site to inspect the positioning of these white stakes before Christmas, to ensure that they are happy with their placement? If members have any objections to the positions of the stakes after their site visit, then please could they let Pete or myself know asap.? We will hope for final approval for the positioning of the stakes from Forestry England in the New Year.**
2. Source quotes for protective tree guards – all trees will need to be protected against deer and potential grazing livestock (Ann will send photos of suitable protective fencing). ? ?Ann estimates that the guards might cost in the region of £50 - £80 each??
3. Once the final locations have been approved by all the parties involved, rough holes can be dug in advance of the trees arrival- this will help advance the planting particularly if the site becomes frozen as the winter progresses.
Please could members of the group think about possibly organising themselves in to pairs/families to dig holes? The ground is likely to be hard to dig and there are several holes required. In order to share the workload equally amongst the group it would be great if each pair of members/ family could make a commitment to dig a hole at just one or two stakes? We can organise the times for working parties etc. once we have received approval from Treescapes and FE.
4. Plan for a community planting – Ann can provide guidance as necessary, a bit of a ‘blessing’ with perry or cider always seem to help establishment!

Next steps for FE / Treescapes:

1. To check and agree final locations of trees,
2. To continue to provide support and guidance as necessary.

9 Further Proposed Working Party Projects for 2023 – Pete

A working party to clear the cattle grid will be required before the Spring when the vegetation will start to take hold again. A parking area for 4 cars is planned to the Right of the grid and a quote of approx. £1000 for this work has been received from TJ Fencing.

10 Possible Monthly Beat the Winter Blues Café for January, February and March – Nikki

As a social wellbeing activity, fundraiser and to raise the group profile within the village the meeting agreed to hold a café at The Memorial Hall, Parkend on one Sunday morning a month during the months of Jan, Feb and March 2023.

This will take place at 11.00am on the following Sunday mornings – 22nd January , 26th February, 26th March (4 th Sunday of each month) In addition to tea, coffee, cakes and biscuits, we can also sell jigsaws, books and puzzles (donations welcome). Please put these dates in your diary, do come along and bring a friend or neighbour.

11 John Watkins Visit – Wed 07-12-22 @9.30am Cattle Grid, York Fields– Nikki

This has now taken place. John Watkins from USA grew up at York Lodge and is extremely interested in learning about and supporting the project. Tamsin had arranged to meet up with him and a number of us were able to join her. We were also able to meet Miranda, who will be taking over from Tamsin in the very near future. Whilst we were there **Tamsin** noted the condition of the dead cedar tree and the proximity of this tree to the Nagshead gate - she will ask a specialist from FE to check it over. Tamsin and Miranda also looked at the condition of the historic venison store building which is covered in ivy and has a tree growing through it at present.

12 AOB

Dave requested that a Hedgehog ramp be placed in the orchard and will advise regarding the construction and placement of this.

Emma has requested that the Meadow Group Survey should be on the agenda for the next meeting.

Future communication - Some members felt it would be useful to have a Whats App group to keep in touch. **Nikki** will set this up for those members who are interested.

There being no further AOB the meeting closed at 12.50pm.