

## Minutes of Parkend Community Orchard Project held at The Woodman , Parkend on 14-06-23

### 1. Welcome and Introduction – Pete

### 2. Apologies – Ann Harris, Lisa, Magda, Martin

3. **Present** – Penny Laver, Jane and Bob Mortley, Julia Caley, Jess Collins, Dave Preest, Emma and Rob Bligh, Mark George, Miranda Thomason, Ann Linden, Dave Craze, Laura Schroeder, Elaine Highfield, Pete Sherrard Smith, Martine Bewhay, Nikki Rudge , Mike Andrew.

### 4. Grants- Elaine, Nikki.

The works paid for by the Build Back Better ( fencing) and the Community Builder Grants ( tree guards, water harvesters, wheelbarrow, hose and watering can purchases) have now all been completed. Receipts and updates on the project have been submitted to the donors by Nikki and Elaine.

**Mark** requested that we have ready a wishlist for grant funding, rather than coming up with ‘ideas on the hoof’ when a suitable grant funding stream is identified. He will then have a ready prepared outline of our needs and can press straight ahead with the appropriate application.

The following wishlist was identified by the committee and members, subject to the draft management plan (see later notes)

1 We still have 5 unprotected crab apple trees and deer get in to the orchard most days as our fencing is stock and boar proof only. Future grant applications need to include more tree guards for these unprotected trees.

2 Further training for correct pruning and maintenance of trees and that the trees require proper durable labels detailing the tree variety (a hard paper copy of this is also necessary). **Miranda** will advise in the first instance of any suitable FE training available.

3 It would be good to purchase some more fruiting trees, eg Damson, Greengage, Pears etc. Mark explained that if we were to ask for Heritage variety trees, then this would allow us access to Heritage focused grant funding pots, in addition to the normal grant funding schemes.

4 Approach the Severn Trent Community grant scheme for an additional water supply to the field as the water harvesters are totally climate dependant. With climate change this is proving difficult as we face increasingly long dry periods during our Summer months - **Pete**.

5 Storage Box (dimensions to be agreed) to be sited behind the Water Harvesters– for water hoses and any other tools that can’t be easily secured from theft .

### 5. Working Parties – Pete.

**The key for the padlocks is 2022** – the year that the orchard project began.

The watering rota is working well (Thank you to Penny, Jane and Bob, Pete, Ann L , Chris, Nikki and Glyn) and a special thank you to Chris for access to his water supply. **Mike** has offered to help cover when members of the rota are away on holiday.

An overall management plan is urgently needed for the Orchard. In the meantime a list of tasks for immediate attention by working parties were agreed

1 Undoing some of the tree guards to allow access to stakes and tree bases. Guards will then need to be re-secured after this to ensure that they are still deer proof – **Rob**.

2 Correctly staking the guarded trees – stakes need to face towards the prevailing wind and need to be driven much further in to the ground for better support.

3 Weeding the areas around the base of the trees and then mulching these newly weeded areas to help retain moisture. (**Ann H** has offered to access suitable mulch). Dave C explained that this will be needed for the next 5 years.

4 Identifying and sorting areas where the tree branches are rubbing against the wire of the tree guards as they grow. If this is not addressed then it will leave the trees prone to disease.

5 It was agreed to first pilot 1-4 on one guarded tree to determine success – **Pete, Ann, Rob**

6 Bracken bashing with whips – this needs to be done extremely regularly (Dave C explained that is needed 1 x a week for 14 weeks of the year) and will be an ongoing task that has to be prioritised to allow the wildflower meadow and orchard to flourish. It was agreed that local cadet, scout groups and the youth arm of Glos wildlife trust, who may all be looking to be involved in environmental projects, could be asked to help with this – **Mark** will approach them. Meanwhile members are asked to help with this (Whips are available and can be found next to the Water Harvesters)

7 Keeping the bottom gate in to the orchard free of nettles

8 Numbering the trees

Friday afternoon working parties have not been at all well supported and will be abandoned. **It was agreed that for the time being regular working parties would take place on the first and third Wednesday and Saturday every month 2.00 pm with immediate effect. Those unable to manage Saturdays may be able to make Wednesdays instead? Many hands make light work, so please can all members try to support at least one of these a month – even 30 minutes of work can make a valuable contribution**

#### **6. Benches – Pete and Miranda**

A bench in memory of Jeff Mowatt is planned and will be sited half way up the meadow, close to the path, allowing those with reduced mobility to benefit from easy access. The siting of this bench was approved by all members present.

Miranda explained that members need to decide how many benches they would like for the orchard in total. FE gave a generous reduction in cost to the first two benches to start the Orchard off. However, from now on this discount will not be available and any future applications will have to pay the normal cost from FE, approx. £1500.00.

#### **7. PCO Bank Account – Mike**

Unfortunately Mike was unable to stay to the main meeting but at the committee meeting he advised that our current account balance is £282.28. All the grant monies received have been spent, so this position is largely due to the considerable fundraising efforts of our Booksales - thank you Elaine. **Pete** will become a second signatory to the account.

#### **8. Grazing and Mowing – Pete and Miranda**

The orchard needs to be mown and raked before grazing and **Miranda** will enquire if FE will do the mowing again this year. Dave C explained that a finger mower as opposed to a flail mower is required and then members will need to rake up afterwards.

Miranda has consulted with FE regarding grazing and anyone who grazes the orchard will need to be FE approved and linked to the Commoner's association. Ann H has suggested that ponies or cattle grazing would be preferable. **Emma** will make enquiries with the Dean Meadows Group and the Glos Orchard Group

#### **9. Offers of Beehives – Martin**

Unfortunately Martin was unable to be present but the members agreed to this in principle for the future ( Mike has requested that they are sited well away from York Lodge) as long as FE agree, but stated that they needed to be part of The Orchard Management plan which has yet to be drafted. Laura explained that any hives need to be sited 0.5 acres away from any habitation and sited so that their flightpath does not cross any footpaths.

#### **10. Orchard Management Plan and FE licence – Pete and Miranda**

The FE licence is still in progress and will need to include the Water Harvesters - **Miranda**

**An Orchard Management plan is urgently required and considerable discussion centred around this.**

Could we use the management plans of another group as a template to help us? – **Miranda** will ask Berry Hill. Orchard Trust may be able to help? – **Emma**. Enquire with Ann H the availability of the original draft management plan – **Emma**.

The following members expressed a possible interest in being part of a working party on the management plan

Emma, Julia, Pete, Mark, Penny, (Dave C. - as required), Jane (when available)

#### **10. Possible Allotments/ Vegetable Growing Area – Martine and Pete**

Historically there were allotments in the triangle next to International timber until the 1970's. However members unanimously agreed that we have a considerable amount of work to be done in the orchard area itself and now is not the time to be considering any further growing projects. In addition a members vote was taken only a year ago, agreeing that we would not be pursuing this avenue any time soon.

#### **11. Date of Summer Picnic – Nikki**

**Weather permitting members agreed to hold this on Saturday 22-07-23 at 4.0pm at the bench area in the orchard and to open it to the village community as well.** It will be advertised on Facebook and the village website and posters –**Elaine**.

**The picnic will take the form of BRING and SHARE. Please also bring your own drinks, cutlery, picnic tables and chairs, rugs etc. NO DOGS PLEASE.**

#### **12. AOB**

**October Forest Show- Elaine** – members agreed that they would try to support this.

**Forest of Dean Sustainable community Food network Workshop 30-06-23**– Mark will represent us at this as he will be attending anyway

**St Pauls Environmental Weekend takes place on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> June**

**Forest of Dean Orchestra 30th Anniversary Gala Concert Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> July 7.30 pm St Pauls Church, Parkend** – the orchestra will donate their retiring collection from this concert to the Orchard – thank you FOD orchestra.

**Orchard gates not self-closing and often found left open** – the gates are supposed to be self-closing. **Elaine** will speak to Trevor the contractor regarding this? needs a better spring ?

**Composter** – we have acquired a composter from Jeff Mowatt's old house. This will be placed at the rear of the Water Harvesters. Any composted material it makes will not be suitable to be used as a mulch around the base of the orchard trees as it is too rich in nutrients, but members are very welcome to take some of it for their own use at home.

**The committee would welcome further ideas from members for future grant funding projects**

There being no further AOB the meeting closed at 8.45 pm

**13. Date of next meeting - Wednesday 6th September 7.30pm ( committee to meet at 6.30pm)  
Venue TBC, but will be at one of the village pubs**