

Information Digest



To: Community Overview and Scrutiny
Date: 23 November 2022

Community Orchards

Councillor Joe Porter
Lead Member

David Smith
Head of Communities and Climate Change

1. Reason for the Report

- 1.1 The project's objective is to establish community-run orchards across Staffordshire Moorlands.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Members note the content of this report and progress in introducing community orchards across Staffordshire Moorlands

3. Executive Summary

Orchards helping to sow seeds of nature recovery.

Since adopting a Green Infrastructure Strategy in 2018, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council has worked with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to map the District and prepare a delivery plan which includes an ambitious list of around 60 [potential projects](#).

The community orchards are amongst the first of these projects to be delivered – and over the last two tree-planting seasons a total of 570 fruit and nut trees have been planted in 22 different locations.

Volunteers of all ages, including school and youth groups, have helped to plant some of the orchards highlighting the importance to our wellbeing of connecting with nature and encouraging younger people in particular to understand more about where food comes from.

As well as leaving a lasting legacy for local communities, the orchards will also help put the Moorlands on the map nationally as they will be registered as part of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative which encourages people across the UK to plant trees to mark the historic Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II.

4. How this report links to Corporate Priorities

- Corporate Plan Aim 4
- Climate Change Plan
- Green Infrastructure Strategy
- A Plan for Nature - Biodiversity Strategy (in development).

Neil Rodgers
Executive Director (Place)

Web Links and Background Papers

See report to cabinet May 2021 establishing the second phase of the [Community Orchard Scheme](#)

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5. Detail

- 5.1** The value for communities of green spaces – parks, orchards, allotments, gardens etc – has become well recognised and access to these spaces the subject of public policy. The health and social benefits have been promoted as well as the benefits for the natural environment and tackling climate change.
- 5.2** As part of the Council's response to Climate Change and the associated ecological crisis, and recognising the potential of community orchards to engage local communities in these issues, as well as the wider health and social benefits, the Council has established 22 orchards across Staffordshire Moorlands. These orchards are in both urban and rural locations.
- 5.3** In order to raise public awareness and interest in advance of consultation the Council, during the late 2020/21 planting season, took the opportunity to pilot a number of orchards. The aim was to test out elements of the proposed scheme (within the limits imposed by Covid-19). Seven orchards were planted in the first phase, totalling 144 trees of various fruiting varieties.
- 5.4** The second phase of the scheme realised a further fifteen orchards with a total of 426 trees planted. In this phase more participation from community groups was realised, resulting in better ownership of the ongoing care of the trees (and providing more of a "community orchard").
- 5.5** The scheme is part of a series of measures to tackle Climate Change and address biodiversity along with the Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- 5.6** The initial aim was to create community orchards across the district with 5 in each of the three towns and one in each parish. Totalling around 30 orchards. Each orchard has around 15 to 40 trees of various fruits, suitable to the Moorlands climate.
- 5.7** Community ownership of management is encouraged and phase 2 saw an increased engagement from communities leading with the planting of these new orchards. They are responsible for maintaining the trees.

- 5.8** 22 orchards have been planted with a total of 570 trees. Targets have been reached for the three towns but parishes have been slower to adopt the project.
- 5.9** Orchards on council land were fully funded while that on non-council land needs to have 50% match funding raised by the community or land owner (such as Parish Council).
- 5.10** Communities need to commit to manage the trees in the long term especially those which are planted on non-SMDC land. This will involve careful grass cutting operations around the new trees as to not damaged the stems; watering in periods of prolonged dry spells (especially in the first two or three years) and pruning as and when the trees increase in size. The fruits which are grown should be utilised as much as possible by the community. It is hoped that events and / or educational activities could be organised around the new orchards in the future.
- 5.11** The orchards must be publicly accessible and not on private land.
- 5.12** Any future tree planting on SMDC land should be agreed and driven by a future Biodiversity Strategy and / or evidence led data from suitably qualified persons relating to the Council Green Infrastructure Plan. Resource pressures for suitable quality management needs to be taken in to consideration.
- 5.13** The Community Climate Fund is a means for community groups to apply for funding for orchards or woodlands or other projects which demonstrate biodiversity net gain/ improvement or a learning resource.
- 5.14** The costs detailed below do not include AES charges to plant and maintain the trees as these activities are included in the existing contracts with AES. Consideration to capacity must be considered when planning additional orchards.

5.15 Cost Breakdown of Planting

Orchard Project 2020/21

Number	Site name	Area	SMDC Land	Number of trees	Date planted	Cost (£)	Redeemed 50/50	Community planted
1	Haregate Community Centre	Leek	Yes	25	Mar-21		No	No (AES)
2	Brough Park	Leek	Yes	21	Mar-21		No	No (AES)
3	Wettenhall Road	Leek	Yes	20	Mar-21		No	No (AES)
4	Campbell Road (Woodcroft)	Leek	Yes	12	Mar-21		No	No (AES)
5	Fernwood Drive	Leek	Yes	21	Mar-21		No	No (AES)
6	Cauldon Canal	Endon	No	25	Mar-21	472.5	Not yet	Yes
7	Kingsley Recreational Ground	Kingsley	No	20	Mar-21	367.2	Not yet	Yes
TOTAL	7			144		839.7		

Orchard Project 2021/22

Number	Site name	Area	SMDC Land	Number of trees	Date planted	Cost (£)	Redeemed 50/50	Community planted
1	Newpool Meadow	Biddulph	Yes	25	05/12/2022	510.95	No	Yes
2	Halls Road	Biddulph	Yes	35	20/23/2022	717.2	No	Yes
3	Biddulph Grange Country Park	Biddulph	Yes	25	20/03/2022	512.95	No	Yes
4	Biddulph Valley Park	Biddulph	Yes	35	20/03/2022	717.2	No	Yes
5	Mill Hayes Playing Fields	Biddulph	Yes	40	17/03/2022	856.1	No	No (AES)
6	Dorset Drive	Biddulph	Yes	30	05/12/2022	613.85	No	Yes
7	Glebe Road	Cheadle	Yes	35	27/03/2022	717.2	No	Yes
8	Beswick Close	Cheadle	Yes	18	27/03/2022	388.92	No	Yes
9	Millhouse Drive	Cheadle	Yes	25	26/03/2022	510.95	No	Yes
10	Stanfield Crescent	Cheadle	Yes	30	26/03/2022	613.85	No	Yes
11	SM Leisure Centre	Cheadle	Yes	10	26/03/2022	205.8	No	Yes
12	St Edwards School	Cheddleton	No	25	17/03/2022	530.95	Not yet	Yes
13	All Saints Church	Dilhorne	No	23	19/03/2022	498.77	Not yet	Yes
14	Land between A52 and Stonehouse Road	Werrington	No	40	12/03/2022	836.1	Not yet	Yes
15	Bank End	Brown Edge	No	25	27/03/2022	520.95	Not yet	Yes
	Cauldon Canal	Endon	No	5	n/a	78.25	Not yet	Yes
TOTAL	15			426		8829.99		