

St Ives Community Orchard & Penbeagle Nature Reserve CIC AGM

16 April 2024



Location: The CORE building, the Orchard, 11.30am

Attendees:

Phoebe Sampson (Chair) (PS), Elise Langley (EL), Rupert Manley (RM), Sue Smith (SS), Mattie Pochee (MP), Angela Challacombe (AC), Sarah Taylor (ST), Gisela Agar (GA), Andreas Priestland (AP), Rachel Osborne (RO), Ken Rogers (KR), Jo Riley (JR), Trace Chandler (TC), Phil Heasman (PH), Lynn Archard (minutes)

1. Welcome from the Chair to the 2024 AGM

- Apologies: El Worrall, Josh Quick, Ginny Johnson, Duwayne Langley, Gabby McVey

2. Declarations of Interest

- None other than those previously noted

3. Minutes of previous AGM

- The minutes of the previous meeting on 15 November 2022 were agreed and signed off

4. General overview

- EL reported that it has been a very exciting year for the orchard and extended a huge 'thank you' to all the volunteers, for all the hard work looking after the land, working on projects, sharing ideas, giving valuable input and making our events a great success
- 30 new volunteers have signed over this last year bringing the total to 146. The number of active volunteers has increased and Sue has recorded 2610 hours of volunteer time over the year - 800 more hours than last year
- So proud of this beautiful, incredible building and excited about the different opportunities it will bring in the coming years and a place for all of us volunteers to enjoy
- Special thanks to all the people who have put so much hard work and dedication into this build. Thank you in particular to Phoebe who has been an incredible build Project Manager, coped with all the paperwork involved plus some fine carpentry skills. Also, a huge thanks to Sue for the huge amount of work on the finance side
- Insurance for this year is £1871pa. It has increased as it is more comprehensive – covering land, building and people. We will now also have electricity bills (solar helping with that) and water bills and there are plans for the CIC to become an employer and to provide earning opportunities for self-employed trainers. But the building is rent free and income generating whilst also providing a space for community use
- We created our first official volunteer t-shirts and a new logo for the Core (thanks to Freya & Lizzie Fox for help with this)

- Our project is getting more well known, with 1500 Instagram followers, and 2300 Facebook followers. Are regularly featured in the Times & Echo and now have 236 newsletter subscribers
- Have held 9 community events over the year with great support from other local business and groups at our events. Tate St Ives, The Leach Pottery and St Ives Library have supported with free workshops. Josh from Wild St Ives has provided wonderful foraging walks. The Lions Club and St Ives Foodshare have run BBQs with all profits going to the orchard
- Volunteer training is ongoing. Congrats to Gisela, Rupert, Alex and Paul who qualified in First Aid and to Trace who has completed a safeguarding course. We also had some scything training for a large group of volunteers
- New volunteer roles include Trace taking on the Veg Co-ordination role and Mattie is the official Meadow manager in Koos Govenek and up at the top of the hill
- Sarah Stevens worked with us to put together a [Mission/Vision/Values](#) statement which is now live on the website. Print outs were distributed and further input is appreciated. We will aim to finalise it before our next general meeting

5. Treasurer's Report

- The accounts for the year 1 May 2022 to 30 April 2023 have been completed, approved and filed with Companies House. The accounts were formally adopted – proposed by PS and seconded by KF. The accounts can be viewed [here](#). Further finance reports were circulated with the agenda and please contact Sue with any questions
- It was agreed that the next AGM will be held in November providing the accounts are available at this time. Will aim to have a public speaker attend the next AGM

6. Nature Reserve Report

- RM reported that despite the worry of drought last spring the vast majority of trees survived. We successfully cared for the young trees through the critical summer months, helped by Cornwall Council holding a Volunteer Day for staff here last July, arranged by Alex Forrester of the Forest for Cornwall team
- We also began the restoration of a heathland meadow on the top of the hill, scything back bracken and brambles and piling up the cuttings in a stack. The resulting bracken mulch was harvested last Sunday for use in the veg garden
- 39 trees were planted this past winter on the nature reserve, mostly hawthorn along the boundary of the Symons yard. A further 14 trees, mostly hawthorn with a few hazel and blackthorn, have been planted along the hedge between the CORE and the road. 8 hazel were also planted in the orchard for coppicing
- With the tree planting scheme largely complete on the nature reserve, and following discussions during Viv Stratton's bird walk around the Palemon-Best grounds about the desirability of increasing the diversity of trees in the area, 31 surplus trees were planted in the area above the fire station, around the skate park and football pitch. These included 5 hazel donated last year by someone called Lucy

- The tree nursery in the orchard produced 94 trees this year, 33 of which we planted around the site with a further 43 being donated to St Ives Junior School for their rewilding scheme and the remainder given to near neighbours of the Penderleath Community Woodland
- Following the successful defeat last May of an appeal by the developer that wanted to build a hotel and 63 holiday chalets on the neighbouring fields, having the nature reserve formally designated would hopefully make any future development of the adjoining fields even less likely
- We are still waiting for Cornwall Council to officially declare the nature reserve as a Local Nature Reserve. The first approach to the Local Authority requesting this was back in 2008 and we have kept trying since. The Government Agency, Natural England, has agreed that the site meets their criteria for designation and all that is needed is for Cornwall Council to 'declare' the nature reserve. The Council is currently reviewing all its assets and until this process is complete, it seems no decision can be made
- The plan is to write to St Ives Town Council, our County Councillor Andrew Mitchell and the leader of the Council, Linda Taylor, asking them to support the declaration of the nature reserve and enclosing a letter of support kindly supplied by Viv Stratton, whose family was the last to farm the hillside
- Thanks were expressed to Rupert for his patience with and continued work on this designation project
- Our future plans for the nature reserve are to nurture the trees into a young woodland, to gradually expand the area we manage as heathland or meadow on the top of the hill and to enhance the 'edible woodland' area above the Skate Park by keeping on top of the undergrowth. We will explore the possibility of creating a wildlife corridor linking Penbeagle and Steeple Woodland nature reserves. We aspire to keeping the paths open throughout the year – always a challenge in the summer months!

7. Orchard Report including events

- EL reported that it's been a bumper for fruit in the orchard. Loads of apples, 100s of kiwis, loads of medlars, raspberries, Chilean guavas, aronia berries and gooseberries. Our fig tree and blueberry plants produced their first little fruits and we had our first pear and tiny grapes
- Learnt a lot about fruit trees, grafting and rootstocks, we've identified quite a few of our unknown apple varieties, learnt which were our late season picking apples and set up a new labelling system
- Set up a new nursery of young grafted fruit trees and a bed of 100 rootstocks, ready to graft lots more fruit trees. Thanks to Gould Nursery for the large donation
- Herb garden is doing well and we recently fixed the willow dome
- Mattie has created a new addition to the orchard - a rockery with medicinal and useful plants like plantain and sorrel. This will be a great education tool
- Apples – have pressed a lot of apples this year. In previous years St Ives Cider did all the pressing, cider making and bagging up for us. This year we did most of this on our own with help from Matt Barton and his small hydraulic press and electric scratter. We bought our own pasteuriser and bags and spent many sessions washing, pressing, pasteurising and bagging up the juice. David from St Ives Cider helped us press a final load

- We collected about 75 crates of windfall apples, another 40 crates picked from the trees plus a further 15 crates from David's trees in Halestown. Quite proud that our apple juice and cider has absolutely no additives at all and the cider used only wild fermentation
- Made approx. 150 litres of apple juice and about 300 litres of cider. Also approx. 30 bottles of apple juice and Sue made lots of jams. Bags of apple crates were distributed via St Ives Community Foodshare and we encouraged local people to collect apples for their own use
- Compost – have made loads this year. Approx 20 kg of spent grain a week are added by local Mine Brewery Company. St Ives Foodshare regularly adds a large amount of food waste and Jo Riley collects kitchen food waste from various places in town on her electric bike. Jo fundraised for an electric bike for the orchard to expand this enterprise and is recruiting volunteers willing to use this bike to collect kitchen waste to increase the amount of compost we produce. Have also received a few ton loads of chippings from Mark Nankervis which are put around the trees and on pathways
- Events – had 9 in total this year. Singing with the Tate, World Bee Day, Summer Solstice, a Pumpkin party organised by St Ives Foodshare, a Plant Social, Winter Solstice, Wassail, the Big Garden Birdwatch and a Seed swapping Spring Equinox. Had some great bands perform at these events – Sandy Acre 7, The Hokum Boys, Global Jamming, Keskorra, Raffidy Dumitz, the Petty Criminals and musicians Tom Lacy and Nicole Tesseyman plus the wonderful Squashbox Theatre
- Thank you to everyone who helps with all these events, the arts and crafts, cake baking and with everything in the Orchard, all your hard work and creativity is so very much appreciated. We can be very proud that we are creating something so beautiful together

8. Veggie Garden Report

- TW took over the management of the veggie gardens approximately August last year. Since then, we have extended the lower veg patch by moving the dry hedge line out. The new area has been prepared using the natural farming method
- The existing veg beds were cleared of some weeds and other plants relocated to increase space so that we have space for high demand veg. A lot has been cleared as sympathetically as possible
- Horse manure was collected and spread on some of the existing beds, with a layer of cardboard underneath in the top and lower veg gardens. Lots of digging out of brambles
- Since March 2024, a log of planting has been kept and will be recording harvesting. This can be viewed on request
- Planting started with broad beans and potatoes in the lower patch. Done a second plant of broad beans and potatoes
- A new growing arrangement has been made with St Ives Junior School and we have planted a range of seeds in their polytunnel, using some soil from the orchard. Leaf litter was collected and added to the school's bed. Work here is carried at on Thursday mornings
- On-going clearing around veg patches. In the top patch have planted garden potatoes, everlasting spinach and some miscellaneous seeds
- During the Natural Farming Event this weekend will give the new area in the extended garden the natural farming treatment

- In the coming year will continue to care for the veg plants and continue planting as appropriate. Need a watering rota for dry periods
- Aim to build frames for squashes and tomatoes and evaluate our successes and failures
- Harvest, share and possibly cook. Ideas include an elder flower party or blackberry day. Work on the veg garden mostly happens during the Tuesday morning work party
- Consider new areas for expansion of veg growing – the importance of learning how to and growing more of our own food is especially important with the threats of climate change and land use affecting food security

9. Community Learning Centre Report

- PS reported that the most exciting thing is that this time last year we had cleared the site but not broken ground. The groundwork was started on approximately 22nd April last year. Since the last AGM have built a sustainable building
- Signed off by building control on 14th March. Although it is not finished it is useable. It is of timber frame construction with ground screw foundations, green roof, solar panels, Warmcel insulation and is accessible
- Few months ago had to decide between green roof and a kitchen so went for the green roof as the scaffold was up for the roof
- Kitchen is not finished – seeking further funding. Cooker would be good and tiling needs to be done
- The Grant Funding Application signed in May 2023 now received and spent a total of £345k funding received from St Ives Town Deal Fund
- Of that fund, approximately £250k has gone to the Cornish economy – local tradesmen and Cornish businesses. Approx £55k to Cornish branches of national organisations (e.g. Jewsons, Bradleys, Eagle, EWS, Plumbase, Screwfix). Approx £17k has gone to Devon. A big chunk of the money has been kept 'local'
- After consultation the building has been called The CORE (St Ives). The many acronyms for the name can be fluid. Thinking of setting up a social media presence for the building so that it has its own identity.
- Looking ahead, have work to be done outside – supported by a teaching garden. Yet to secure funding but funding applications are in progress
- Now need to fill it with fun and interesting workshops and community events, that align with our mission, vision and values. The number one priority is to help people connect with nature
- JK suggested linking up with [The Gardeners' House](#) in Morrab Gardens, Penzance as they are embarking on renovating an old coach house and have similar goals
- Are looking for an electric cooker – with a range large enough to take big pots and the tiles made by volunteers at the Leach Pottery workshops will be put up once the kitchen is in
- The planting around the building will be edible, weaveable and dyeable
- The solar 'fusebox' speaks to the cloud and as it has now been a year since initial sign up with BT can change to a renewable tariff. Possibly OVO or Octopus
- Potential fundraising for a new cooker. Contact Heartlands or Crowdfunding
- Put a funding bid in to the Screwfix Foundation for £5k for the kitchen

- Any ideas to explore fundraising in the local business community would be greatly welcomed
- Opening event on Friday 19th April, selling teas, coffees, apple juice and cider. QR code for donations and via card machine. Direct business neighbours have been invited

10. Policy amendments

- PH has been reassessing and conducting an overhaul of all policy documents. Main changes have been editing and updating. Kept as bespoke as possible and tried not to include things we 'can't do'. They are up to date with statutory guidance and regulations
- There is now a consistency to the structure, layout and language and have kept them as accessible as possible
- Two in particular have been overhauled – the Volunteer Policy and the Safeguarding Policy. The Volunteer policy raised questions about the structure of the organisation and there may be more work to do with an Organisational diagram and description of roles. The Code of Conduct (part of the Volunteer policy) was distributed. Adapted from Greenpeace and PH noted it was nice that we were already operating in this way
- There is a statement of intent at the beginning of each policy document and some 'active' words setting out how we intend to achieve this
- The Safeguarding Policy was worked on extensively. With thanks to Rupert for his guidance
- The Policy documents are to be reviewed every 2 years as there are sometimes legislative and statutory guidance changes. Would be helpful to have someone acting as a watching brief to keep them up to date
- Version control is important, especially if physical copies are kept in multiple place
- No need for procedures sitting alongside them as the policy is clear containing links and contact numbers of external contacts so that it is direct as possible to get the information
- PS noted that the adoption of the Policy documents should be the responsibility of the directors. Will get agreement via email from the 2 directors not present
 - Action (Directors)
- RM recommended the group adopt the Policies, PS seconded and all agreed

11. Election of Officers

- The post holders of Chair (PS), Treasurer (SS) and Clerk (LA) were all happy to continue in post. All quorum directors happy and email approval will be sought from the 2 absent directors
 - Action (Directors)
- The Leads for the other areas will be discussed at the next meeting
- PH noted the need for an organisational diagram but not traditionally structured. Need a bit more work to define 'Officers' and 'Leads'. It was suggested we have an organisational design workshop session for this. PS happy to co-ordinate and PH to assist
 - Action (PS & PH)

12. AOB

- Following a discussion of the vote on whether to apply for a grant of £2000 from South West Water, it was put to the vote and the majority agreed. TW would like to ask for PPE and steel capped boots for volunteers. Clarification needed re policy on such workwear and liability. Instead, may be better to offer volunteers a contribution towards buying their own
- MP is keen for a regular session for the local neighbourhood to get together in the Core. PS confirmed that this was one of the big things we were asking for when applying for the community levelling up funding so the awareness is there. Will ask for people's input at the opening event
- JR is holding a seed swap event on 4th May at the Core, as part of the Beltane celebration. PS has many jars that whilst not suitable for storing herbal medicines as they are not brown, could be used for tinctures and dried herbs
- The first workshop will be held in the Core the weekend of 20th and 21st April – the Natural Farming workshop. Approximately 40 attendees, some travelling quite some distance
- GA asked if there was a policy relating to animal welfare with regards to food served at the events. In policy terms we could say wherever possible and signage would be the first step. Would be great to eat what we grow
- RM reported that the Steeple Woodland are arranging a visit to Ladock on the evening of Friday 7th June for a guided walk of the Cornwall Beaver Project. The cost is £20 with £10 payable up front to reserve a space. Please contact Rupert directly if you would like to go
- Invasive species of montbretia and winter heliotrope. RM reported the Steeple Woodland have access to a professional treater as part of the Woodland Trust. Cost is £170 per day and involves the use of glyphosate. For it to be effective it would have to be done now as it is currently well contained in a small area. A vote was held and it was decided to go ahead and treat the affected areas

Meeting ended 1.20pm

Date of next committee meeting: Tuesday 4th June (early evening)

Date of next AGM: November (date tbc)

Outstanding action points:

Directors	Seek agreement of adoption of Policy documents from 2 directors unable to attend meeting in person
Directors	Email approval from 2 absent directors for the re-election of Officers
PS & PH	Arrange an organisational design workshop