

St Ives Community Orchard & Penbeagle Nature Reserve CIC AGM

25 March 2025



Location: The CORE, 6.00pm

Attendees:

Phoebe Sampson (Chair) (PS) - Director, Elise Langley (EL) - Director, General members - Sue Smith (SS), Mattie Pochee (MP), Gisela Agar (GA), Rachel Osborne (RO), Lynn Archard (minutes). Four non-members – Jo Howard, Louise Vallis, Jeffrey Smith, guest speaker Viv Stratton.

1. Welcome from the Chair to the 2025 AGM

- Thank you to Viv Stratton for being here
- Apologies: Rupert Manley, Phil Heasman, El Worrall, Josh Quick, Ginny Johnson, Andreas Priestland, Pene Richardson, Angela Challacombe, Sarah Taylor, Trace Chandler

2. Minutes of previous AGM

- The minutes of the previous meeting on 16 April 2024 were agreed and adopted

3. General Report April 2024 – April 2025

- EL presented the **St Ives Orchard and Forest Garden report**
- Our Community Orchard and Forest Garden is now very well established, many of the trees are over 11 years old and mostly very healthy and well cared for with lots of mulching and occasional pruning
- This last year we've planted quite a few fruit trees, fruit bushes, vines, herbs and perennial vegetables. We now have incredible variety – a printout list was available
- We have a new fruit tree nursery where we have planted 25 fruit tree saplings and 90 rootstocks - thanks to a donation from Gould Orchard
- Apple yields were a lot lower than the previous year, but many other orchards reported the same. We pressed around 250 litres of apple juice with the help of volunteers, Resilient Orchards team and local cider makers Matt Barton and Chris Parker. Most of the juice was enjoyed at Apple Day and other events, while 100 litres were fermented into cider over several months by Duwayne Langley, most was sold at the Wassail. We've saved some for Beltane and the Nature Reserve opening
- We have now purchased our own 72l rack and cloth cider press and large electric apple mill (scratter) meaning we'll be able to press all our apples on-site
- We had hundreds of kiwis, Chilian guavas, aronia berries and raspberries as well as a good amount of medlars. A small amount of plums and 1 pear!
- **Vegetable Garden:** The orchard's veg garden has expanded and produced a great selection of veg last year. All shared with volunteers, cooked up for events and the rest given away to foodshare
- Last spring we got permission to use the Junior school polytunnel, growing enough seedlings there for our veg garden and theirs. We have recently leased two areas of land from LiveWest in the town to grow more veg and

are working with Foodshare to plant fruit bushes in a few more parcels of land. We've continued to increase our compost production and a new large compost bin was donated and installed

- GA asked for the list of varieties of fruit trees to be circulated
 - Action (EL)

Volunteering report:

- Work parties continued twice a week and we signed up 47 new volunteers over the past year, bringing our total to 146. Regarding active volunteers, we have approx. 40 active volunteers who have contributed over 3000 volunteer hours. This includes volunteers from St Ives High School, DofE students and Learn2Cornwall students. We appointed 3 new Work Party Team Leads – Gisela Ager, Paul Richards and Pene Richardson. Rupert Manley, Trace Chandler and Josh Quick have also led work parties. Trace has also done great work leading on veg garden growing. It's been wonderful to have this support.
- There's been lots of other types of volunteering happening alongside this - in the Core, cooking, cleaning and serving, working on paperwork at home, doing accounts and invoicing, collecting food waste, pressing apples, making cider, woodwork etc.
- Thank you so much for everyone's efforts, we make a great team and a wonderful contribution to the community

PS presented the report on the **Community Learning Centre – The CORE**

- This beautiful Core building had it's official opening on 19th April last year (with the building having been signed off on the 16th March). There are still a few finishing touches to complete, but it has functioned brilliantly as a welcoming space for our community
- Since our opening we have hosted over 40 nature-based workshops including crafts, cooking, and foraging, enjoyed by over 550 attendees. Most of these were free or low cost to attend thanks to funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund
- We have hired the Core out over 60 times since it's opening for yoga, music, wellbeing, sewing groups, Leach Pottery and to other local organisations like the Steeple Woodland Nature Reserve for meetings. We ran a couple of successful film nights and are looking forward to opening the Core to the public on Tuesday mornings as a social meeting space alongside the existing volunteering session. The Core has also supported our community events through providing an alternative "chillout" space and the kitchen has been really useful for cooking and serving food and drinks at these events
- We are very happy to announce that we've been given a 5* food hygiene rating in our CORE kitchen. Up to now we've had 4* which wasn't bad for a shed and a pizza oven in a field
- Finishing jobs still to do in here: kitchen tiling, building cupboards, painting, possibly porch and some more shelves in office area
- **New Teaching Garden:**
Completed in January this year, and also funded by the Shared Prosperity fund, our new community teaching garden links the Core beautifully to the Orchard and vegetable garden, and has been designed to be a properly accessible space for everyone to enjoy

- Hortus Garden Design and Des Preston Groundworks, along with volunteers, created the garden using beautiful slabs of West Cornwall granite, accessible pathways, and a huge range of medicinal, edible, and other ethnobotanical plants. We are excited to watch this space grow, and looking forward to sharing plant knowledge with this fabulous resource
- **Community Events:** We've hosted 9 free community events in the Orchard and Core over the last year: Beltane, Summer Solstice, Open Day, Apple Day, Pumpkin Party, Songs from the CORE, a couple of Repair cafes and Wassail. We've had wonderful collaborations with the Leach Pottery, the Tate, St Ives Library, Global Jamming and St Ives Foodshare
- Viv Stratton noted that the daffodils on the tables, picked from the Palemon Best recreation ground, were planted in the 1950s

MP presented RM's **Nature Reserve Report**

- Above the community orchard lies the granite tor-topped Penbeagle Hill. Formerly part of Penbeagle Farm and bequeathed to Cornwall Council as an open space for the benefit of the community by Palemon and Ernest Best, the hillside was left to nature many years ago. We will hear more about the farm from Viv Stratton shortly. The proposal that the hillside become a Local Nature Reserve was first made to the then Penwith District Council in 2007
- Following the formation of the community orchard group in 2014 further approaches to Cornwall Council were made, gaining new momentum with the commissioning of a habitat survey and management plan from Cornwall Environmental Consultants. However, renewed efforts seemed to fall on stony ground and it wasn't until James Ruddick of the Nature Recovery Team at the Council pushed it forward, with the 28 acre Penbeagle Nature Reserve finally being formally declared as a Local Nature Reserve by the Council on 23rd January this year. An opening celebration for the reserve is planned on Friday 9th May
- Other than this major news, it has been a relatively quiet year in the reserve. Last summer saw the cycle of tree care continue, with our dedicated volunteers successfully clearing bracken and brambles from around each recently planted tree, sometimes with the help of school pupils and Duke of Edinburgh students. The meadow area on the top of the hill was again cleared of bracken, allowing wild flowers and heathland grasses and heather to return
- Through the winter we planted a total of 125 trees on the lower slopes of the hillside above the industrial estate, including 40 planted in association with Cornish Riviera Holidays to celebrate their 40th anniversary. A further 13 trees were planted in the Palemon-Best Recreation Grounds. The small tree nursery in the Orchard produced 113 trees with the majority of these being planted on our site
- In October, Matt Birchall of the Penwith Landscape Recovery Project team visited the site and put it forward for inclusion in this government funded long term Environmental Land Management Scheme focussing on the West Penwith Moors. The outcome is still awaited but, if successful, it should unlock access to resources and funding to effect the management plan for the reserve

- In December, Wheal Jane Consultancy conducted a walk-over mine survey of the orchard and nature reserve, finding no visible evidence of mine workings. However, a second, shallower probable granite quarry was identified which again might be suitable for a small pond
- With the tree planting program now virtually complete, once the young trees are big enough to be independent, we can focus on keeping paths clear through the summer months and expanding the meadow areas, improving year-round access to the site and biodiversity. A longer term vision is to connect the reserve with neighbouring wildlife habitats such as Steeple Woodland Nature Reserve and Rosewall Hill by forming wildlife corridors which would significantly improve the resilience of wildlife populations in the area

4. Treasurer's Report

- The accounts for the year 1 May 2023 – 30 April 2024 were presented to the meeting by the directors for review. The accounts have already been approved. PS proposed we adopt the accounts and EL seconded them.
- Permission was requested to reappoint our Independent Examiner, Rupert Taylor. SS proposed and PS seconded. We use an Internal Examiner rather than an official accountant as the size of the organisation is currently too small
- This was the year we built the Core building, thanks to the hard work of many people, so the numbers in the report are unusually large
- Have since changed the date of our financial year end to the end of March so this current year will be of 11 months and will end in a few days
- In the period since the end of these accounts this year has been about activities in the Core. The CORE building, teaching garden, many of our events, workshops and our very first paid employees (Community Engagement, Volunteer Management) - were all made possible by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- We also received funding from St Ives Community Fund to complete the kitchen; Tesco have funded three of our events; CCF (Cornwall Community Foundation) for Social Enterprise development; Cornish Riviera holidays helped plant some trees; National Lottery funding for the teaching garden, training, volunteer expenses and tools; Volunteer Cornwall for physical activities and £100 from Bo for trees and children
- We had our first payroll as we now have some employees which feels like a very grown up thing to do
- PS expressed thanks to SS on behalf of the group for all of her hard work
- Link to our accounts - [Treasurer's Report - accounts for the year 2023 / 2024](#)

5. Policy amendments

- PS noted that we did so much work last year that we don't have any new policies to approve at the meeting, instead these will be reviewed and added to as necessary over this coming year

GA presented PH's report on Policies and Governance

- Over the last 5 months we've been doing a thorough review of the organisational/structure arrangements of the CIC to enable us to meet new and expanded responsibilities and operational needs of the organisation

- We've had three workshops to consider all 'Governance' matters. This covered revising the CIC's 'Articles of Association', clarifying roles and responsibilities, duties and powers of members and directors, to ensure appropriate checks and balances - and prioritise the 'voice' of members
- Thanks to everyone who has contributed especially Phil who has done a huge amount of work on this Governance
- PS thanked PH for the amount of time he has put in to this which has resulted in some very hefty documents that are going to be very useful for us. These documents are very accessible and we are keen to make the organisational structure non-hierarchical.
- Link to full report: [PH's report on Policies and Governance](#)

6. Election of Officers

- Due to the work that PH has done on the structure of the organisation, PS has asked PH to chair future meetings. PS proposed that PH is elected as Chair. EL seconded
- Treasurer (SS) and Clerk (LA) were happy to continue in post. These were proposed and seconded. Quorum directors in agreement and will seek approval of absent directors via email

7. AOB

- GA asked if we can help support Mark who runs the [Herland Roots](#) veg stall at the St Ives Farmers Market. He is relocating his whole operation to Helston and is asking for help from the community. This could be by buying his vegetable boxes, helping to pack up his site and helping develop his regenerative beds on his new property. The meeting expressed their support and GA to find out when he needs help and report back.
 - Action (GA)
- EL reported to the meeting about the Foodshare plans to plant on various sites around town. This is in addition to the 2 plots we have already been granted at Tregwarry and Carnellis. Foodshare have secured funding for an 8 week project. Meeting in the Core every Wednesday at 3.30pm, initially discussing how to operate and have a walk around the sites and litter picking. The 10 x 10 metre plot at Tregwarry Road will be planted with purely vegetables. Area was thick with brambles which LiveWest have cleared. The Carnellis site is behind the flats and is aprox 20 x 20 metres and has previously been looked after as an allotment. Plan to have a few more areas in Penbeagle planted with permission – areas open for the community to come and pick produce. Have money for trees/fruit bushes, compost, Core hire and teas, coffees and cake
- EL invited Viv Stratton to help spot wildlife
- PS noted it would be helpful to have a lockable box for tools if capital allows

Meeting ended 6.45pm / above apologies noted / break for plate of food

- Viv Stratton gave a talk about his life growing up around Penbeagle Hill and his new book 'The Chronicles of a Cornish Farmer and Naturalist'

Date of next AGM: November (date tbc) – daytime

Outstanding action points:

EL	Circulate list of variety of trees, bushes and vegetables etc
Directors	Email approval from 2 absent directors for the re-election of Officers
GA	Liaise with Mark at Herland Roots and report back on logistics of assistance