

ST IVES COMMUNITY ORCHARD CIC - ACTIVITIES AND IMPACT REPORT

Year Ending: 05 April 2025

GENERAL

This year marked the first full year since the completion of our new community building, the CORE. Thanks to generous funding and the support of our volunteers, we have had a very active and positive year, running workshops, events, and activities that continue to strengthen our community.

VOLUNTEERING

Work parties took place twice a week throughout the year in both the Orchard and the Nature Reserve. We welcomed 47 new volunteers, bringing our total to 146, with 10 new volunteer roles created. Volunteers contributed over 3,000 hours. We supported 4 Duke of Edinburgh volunteers to achieve certification. Also provided volunteer sessions for a group of 20 students from St Ives Secondary school as part of their Be inspired project.

We are deeply grateful to every person who contributed their time, skills, and energy.

ST IVES COMMUNITY ORCHARD & FOREST GARDEN

Many of our fruit trees are now 11 years old, with additional trees and bushes planted over the years. We now care for 55 varieties of apple trees, 15 other fruit tree types, 13 fruit bush varieties, and 13 useful perennial plants, plus perennial vegetables and herbs. All these are documented on our website.

ORCHARD PRODUCE

Apple yields were smaller this year (similar reports across many orchards), but we still produced around 100 litres of cider and 120 litres of apple juice with support from St Ives Cider and other local cider makers. We invested in our own large cider press and electric scratter, enabling us to process all our apples independently in future years.

VEGETABLE GARDEN

Our vegetable garden expanded significantly, producing abundant food shared with volunteers, cooked at events, and donated to Foodshare.

Seedlings were grown collaboratively in the Junior School polytunnel, supporting both our garden and the school's. A gardening club for the school children was started at the school due to the improvements made to the veg garden.

We leased two new vegetable growing sites in St Ives from LiveWest Housing association.

Composting capacity increased with the installation of a new large compost.

EVENTS & WORKSHOPS

We hosted seven free community events: Beltane, Summer Solstice, Orchard Open Day, Apple Day, Anti-Waste Pumpkin Party, Songs from the CORE, Repair Cafés, and Wassail. Collaborations included Leach Pottery, Tate St Ives, St Ives Library, and St Ives Foodshare, broadening our reach and partnerships. Hosted St Ives Infant School students as part of their "Learning Where Food Comes From" activities.

PENBEAGLE NATURE RESERVE

On 23 January 2025, Cornwall Council formally declared 28 acres of Penbeagle Hill as a Local Nature Reserve,

following many years of campaigning.

Key activities this year included:

- Regular bracken and bramble clearance to support young trees.
- Meadow restoration to encourage wildflowers and heathland grasses.
- Planting 125 new trees, including 40 donated by Cornish Riviera Holidays for their 40th anniversary.
- Planting a further 13 trees in Palemon-Best Recreation Grounds.
- Propagation of 113 trees in our nursery, most of which were planted locally.
- A walk-over mine survey identified no dangerous mine workings, though a disused granite quarry was noted as a possible pond site.

THE CORE – COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRE

Our beautiful new eco building was officially opened on 19 April 2024. It has quickly become a thriving hub:

- Workshops: Over 40 nature-based workshops (crafts, cooking, foraging) with more than 550 attendees, largely free or low-cost through Shared Prosperity Fund support.
- Room hire: The CORE was hired over 60 times for yoga, music, wellbeing groups, sewing, and meetings for local organisations such as Steeple Woodland Nature Reserve.
- Events: Hosted film nights, provided a chill-out space for larger community events, and supported catering through its fully equipped kitchen.
- Community space: Used as a drop-in social space alongside volunteering, for local musicians who have set up a regular Core-chestra session, a homeschool group and a 'Bag factory' sewing group.
- Food hygiene: Awarded a 5* food hygiene rating.

THE CORE'S NEW TEACHING GARDEN:

Designed by Hortus and landscaped by Des Preston Groundworks, this new safe, accessible garden was planted with hundreds of medicinal, herbal, and useful plants. It will serve as a valuable educational and community resource for years to come.

TRAINING, POLICIES, PROCEDURES:

- 4 volunteers completed an outdoor first aid course.
- 3 volunteers obtained DBS certification.
- A full governance review was undertaken, including workshops on the CIC's Articles of Association, roles and responsibilities, and ensuring strong member participation.

FUNDING

Our progress this year has been made possible thanks to funding and donations, including:

- UK Shared Prosperity Fund – supporting the CORE, the Teaching Garden, events, workshops, and our first paid staff.
- St Ives Community Fund – completing the kitchen.
- Tesco – funding three community events.
- Cornwall Community Foundation – supporting social enterprise development.
- Cornish Riviera Holidays – tree planting.
- National Lottery – funding for the Teaching Garden, training, tools, and volunteer support.
- Volunteer Cornwall – funding physical activity sessions

- Bo - for trees and children's activities.
- St Ives Town Council – ongoing support and promotion

STAKEHOLDERS:

We continue to work closely with:

- **Volunteers and members** – engaged through meetings, messaging groups, and work parties.
- **Local residents and visitors** – regular conversations, events, and feedback.
- **Local authorities** – St Ives Town Council, Cornwall Council, and Palemon-Best Trustees.
- **Town Deal Board** – regular meetings and updates.
- **Local cultural organisations** – Tate St Ives, Leach Pottery, St Ives Library.
- **Community groups and charities** – including St Ives Community Foodshare and Steeple Woodland Nature Reserve.
- **LiveWest** Housing association – land leased for food growing.
- **Schools** – collaborations with St Ives Junior, Infant, and Secondary Schools, including gardening clubs and learning visits.
- **Healthcare providers** – referrals from social prescribers at the Stennack Surgery.
- **Local businesses and craftsmen** – collaborations through workshops, composting waste products from businesses (coffee chaf, brewery grains, sawdust), and events.

CONSULTATION & FEEDBACK:

- **Communications:** Regular newsletters (240 subscribers), Facebook (2,400+ followers), Instagram (1,600+ followers), and local media (St Ives Times & Echo, The Cornishman, Coast FM).
- **Events:** Feedback collected at community consultations and through event forms helped guide the design and operation of the CORE.
- **Website:** www.stivesorchard.co.uk provides up-to-date project details, contact forms, and feedback options.

SUMMARY

2024–25 was a year of major growth and achievement for St Ives Community Orchard CIC. With the CORE now fully in use, the Teaching Garden established, and the Nature Reserve officially recognised, we are entering a new phase of deeper community impact, environmental stewardship, and organisational maturity.

We look forward to building on this strong foundation in the year ahead.