

Community Orchard Committee Report

July 2026

Updates

- The revised Safeguarding Policy has been approved by Somerset Community Foundation.
- A useful health check has been undertaken and guidance received from a member of Westbury Tree Nursery

Scattering of Ashes

Members considered allowing the scattering or burial of ashes in the orchard, discussing ecological impacts, legal considerations, the potential for memorials, and the effect on other visitors. While recognising the orchard as a peaceful setting, it was unanimously resolved **not to permit the scattering or burial of ashes**. The orchard regulations will be updated accordingly.

Orchard Grassland Maintenance

The draft Grassland Maintenance Policy was well received. Members agreed that heavily used areas should be mown every 2–4 weeks depending on growth, while uncut wildlife areas particularly in the south-east corner and western end of the orchard would be created. The plan will be updated on an ongoing basis.

Five-Year Orchard Plan

A draft plan has been prepared including:

- Trees will be inspected by an experienced local fruit grower.
- A professional orchardist will be consulted on pruning.
- Advice will be sought on pest and disease management, with organic treatments prioritised.
- An arborist inspection will be considered in due course for insurance purposes.

Autumn Planting

Plans for autumn planting include cherry trees, pear trees, a quince, field maple and a Laxton apple tree. Trees may be planted in regular patterns to aid maintenance. A site visit will confirm tree locations, plaque positions to reduce strimmer damage, monolith and information board placement, and bench placement to maximise views and accommodate future seating.

Opening Event

The committee agreed in principle to hold the orchard opening event on **Sunday 25**

October, coinciding with National Apple Day. The event will celebrate the orchard and acknowledge those who contributed to its creation.

Bollards

Two removeable Manchester bollards will be installed to support free access to the orchard. The existing gate will remain for flexibility in managing the car park and exit.

Overflow Car Park

A management policy will be agreed.

Funding

Members welcomed the successful award of two grants:

- **£1,500** from the Somerset Association of Local Councils Health and Lifestyle Team.
- **£1,000** from the Somerset Community Foundation through Mendip Hills National Landscapes.

These additional funds will support the continued development of the project.

Pathway and Central Island

The work is expected to commence in the third week of July. Edging can be incorporated in the future if deemed necessary.

Commemorative Plaques

The plaques have been ordered.

Orchard Information Boards (Monoliths)

The draft layout for the orchard information boards has been agreed, should include a map of the orchard and oak would be the preferred material. Final decisions on the number and design of the boards will be made once the pathway, benches and second phase of planting have been completed.

Benches

Councillors Bullen and Dearden will investigate suitable bench options. Metal benches were preferred, particularly those capable of incorporating sponsorship plaques. The final number, size and locations of the benches will be determined after the hard standing has been installed.

Bramble Management

Members agreed that chemical treatment should not be used at this stage. Regular cutting and strimming will continue until the autumn, with mowing already improving the site. If further control is required later in the year, a targeted herbicide may be considered. Further perimeter and bank strim will be undertaken as need arises.

Site Management

Members approved the purchase of a strimmer to support ongoing orchard maintenance.

Financial Management

Grant fund reserves have been set up within the accounting software and are updated as expenditure is incurred.

Next Meeting **27th July 2026**