

Nick Bradley
Chair Ide Parish Council

From: Peter Cloke
Chair Ide Community
Orchard Working Group

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Ide Community Orchard - Progress Report

- 1 Substantial progress has been made since my last report. Councillors will be aware that we now have the necessary funds to purchase the Orchard and the Option Agreement has been exercised with an indicative completion date of May 1st from which date the Orchard is owned by the Parish Council.
- 2 This is seminal moment for the village. After six years of discussion and negotiation with the Church Commissioners' Agents, and many delays and frustrations, we are now able, on behalf of the Village, to take forward the development of this wonderful green space. I would like to note the exemplary work of Nick, your Chair, and David Howe, whose expertise, patience and perseverance have been instrumental in getting us to this position.
- 3 From the moment the Parish Council takes on the ownership of the Orchard, Andy Bragg ceases to be its tenant. We are indebted to Andy for taking on this role so helpfully on behalf of the Working Group and the Parish Council.
- 4 Following our meeting with the Commissioners' Agents, we have heard nothing further from them regarding the Variation to the Option Agreement to install an electricity cable to run from the substation to the Pynes farm development. In all probability the need for this will be overtaken by events as the Option Agreement is implemented.
- 5 We have pressed ahead with the purchase of kit for the Orchard funded by the RHS. Three owl boxes and ten dormouse boxes will be installed this Sunday 13 March and new tree guards will be installed the following weekend. We are commissioning a contractor to install new gates,
- 6 A professional tree pruner visited the Orchard on 26 February and looked at all the new plantings, pruning and tidying up each tree. He identified that some - up to 6 – are not thriving and might well be replaced. Rachael Herbert is working on securing some Jubilee apple trees to mark the Platinum celebrations in June and it would be good to be able to obtain and plant these by late spring.
- 7 Thought is being given to an opening ceremony, with the potential to link this with the Village's Platinum celebrations in June. Although the orchard could officially be 'ours' and therefore open for use from May 1st the attraction of doing an opening event in the Orchard with the involvement of Viridor and RHS, as well as the community, on the Platinum weekend in June is compelling.
- 8 We are working up some guidelines for using the Orchard. These will be designed to be pragmatic without sounding too restrictive or burdensome, but we do need to protect neighbours from undue disturbance, and set out some clear expectations for dog walking and timings for access.
- 9 We are also giving thought to grass management. Longer term we are planning to create some wild flower and uncut areas whilst keeping the picnic area and paths more tightly cut. In the shorter term we will cut the grass later this month and in July, with, potentially, sheep grazing off the late summer grass.

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