

HTC Special Projects Proposal

Lion Green Community Orchard

Background

In September 2019 Haslemere Town Council declared a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency, which included a commitment to seeking ways to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Methods suggested in the declaration to achieve this included adopting wildlife-friendly land management practises and promoting education within our local community, to inform and encourage actions to help resolve the problem. The Council further resolved to lead by example.

Project Description

To promote locally-sustainable practises and environmental awareness this initiative is to convert the little-used but very pleasant corner at the northern tip of Lion Green into a "Community Orchard". In place of the existing vegetation - currently mostly mown grass with a large patch of rhododendron and bramble at top end - we would plant a small selection of high-quality Heritage fruit trees for community benefit, along with encouraging new areas of grass and other vegetation to grow unmown to encourage pollinators, and potentially designating selected areas for seeding with wildflowers. A mown path looping around the space would facilitate public access and enjoyment of flowers, fruit and visiting insects etc, and a small HTC/information sign would complete the area.

This particular space is ideally suited for the purpose. South-facing with a flowing stream (arguably the source of the Wey!) on one side, and modest oak and other trees to the north, fruit trees and other plants of interest would grow readily. The area is extremely easy to access from Lion Green and surprisingly large when visited, measuring approximately 20x25 m (500m²) including the currently overgrown area at the rear. It is also directly opposite Shottermill Infant School, and only a short walk from Shottermill Juniors, such that as it matures it could feasibly be used for environmental educational purposes.

A mown path has several advantages over the wood-chip alternative. Over time it invariably looks smarter, and Lion Green is already regularly mown by contractors, so given the net reduction in effort required it should be possible to slot this in to their mowing schedule at little or no additional cost. If necessary very clear instructions will be provided to protect the management of wildflowers. Finally, the route of the path can be altered in subsequent years in accordance with how the orchard matures, creating a striking difference in the appearance of the space from season to season for residents to explore and enjoy anew. A few of the small row of 5-6 cottages on Lion Lane immediately behind the area currently enjoy access to the green through their back gardens, which could be preserved. Technically although there is no need to consult these residents about community orchard idea, it will be courteous to do so informally and at least one resident is already aware of it and strongly supportive.

Preservation of the existing brambles (managed as an edible hedge) and other non-tree flora may be agreed to enhance the community orchard. The possibility of adding wildlife-related information boards and/or making more of a feature of the adjacent stream might also both make good future options to further improve the site.

To be done properly the initial works of scrub clearance (including rhododendron and possibly minor tree surgery), tree planting, and effective sowing of wildflower/other seeds would require a limited amount of professional support. However these tasks could also be supported by community volunteers, potentially involving the nearby schools, and a scout or guide group task.

Cost estimate – Lion Green Community Orchard

- Assorted Heritage fruit trees x5 including planting, supports and tree guards: £350
- Professional vegetation clearance / tree management: £1000 (subject to professional assessment)
- HTC information sign including installation: £200

Estimated total cost: £1550

Note: Due to the existing management of Lion Green this plan is not expected to incur any new or increased recurring costs. A community interest group would be established with the goal of looking over and reporting on exciting developments in the community orchard. This group might also then perform minor works on a voluntary basis as required, as with the Lion Lane HTC community phone box.

Site Map and Photographs (small rectangle at far north end of Lion Green, beyond path)



