

Lockton Community Orchard Management Plan

- Objectives:**
- Provide a focal point for community interest and involvement
 - Provide a corridor to improve wildlife movement within the local area
 - Provide a sustainable wildflower resource from under-planting of native species

Rationale

Agricultural practices over centuries provided a wide range of habitats which were rich in plants, insects and birds. Increasing pressure on agricultural land has resulted in some of these habitats becoming fragmented and often pushed to field edges and roadside verges. This loss of habitat has resulted in previously common flowering plants, insects and birds becoming increasingly rare and in some cases locally extinct.

The creation of the community orchard, under-planted with native wildflowers and surrounded by native hedging, aims to reinstate some of this lost habitat in Lockton, supporting pollinating insects, invertebrates and small mammals.

The North York Moors National Park Grubs Up! project has supported Lockton's small, community led initiative to improve biodiversity in the village and help with wildlife corridors on unfarmed land.

Situation

The community orchard is sited on Lockton Parish Council land, adjacent to the village cemetery and cricket pitch, with surrounding farmland. Previously used as a playing field, the changing village demographic led to the area being unused and left for rough grazing. The orchard has now been securely fenced, with maintained access via a footpath.

Prescriptions

Wildflower meadows are usually low in nutrients. The cutting and removal of grass for hay and grazing by sheep reduces nutrients which favours the presence of finer grasses and herbs.

The orchard will have an annual cut and rake after flowers have set seed, with flexibility over timing due to seasonal conditions.

The cut material will be used as a source of seed with the remainder being carefully disposed of to ensure minimal nutrients are retained on the ground.

A perimeter and central path will be maintained to allow access to a carefully sited bench to enable visitors to fully appreciate the planting.

Produce will eventually be available for volunteers and residents to enjoy.

Future plans

An information board will be designed and produced to inform visitors about the orchard and what it aims to achieve.

Plant surveys will take place annually to assess the change in species and ascertain if further seeding or planting is required.

Additional fruit trees may be planted to increase the diversity of produce grown.

Hedges will be carefully maintained and laid when necessary.

Volunteers will be encouraged to carry out relevant tasks and ongoing maintenance of the orchard area as required.

An information day will be held to enable visitors to speak to volunteers about the orchard.

Actions – to end of 2027

Yellow rattle and other desirable plant species seed collection

Brush cutting/strimming of majority of the area and removal of cut material to edge of site/off site

Replacement of any failed trees

Carry out vegetation survey in line with NYMNP survey parameters

Develop a site information panel

Source additional funding as required

Install gate at the site entrance

Hold an information day

Consider any expansion of the orchard