



## **Chair of the Management Committee Report 2026**

I was honoured to be elected as the chair of the management committee in July last year and I am pleased to be able to present my first report following a wonderfully successful year.

### **Committee**

Over the last year the committee has seen several changes. We welcomed Carl Taylor, Beatrix Jennings and Nicola Martin to the committee all of whom have played a significant part in our progress over the last 12 months. Sadly, we also had some members stand down. Nicola was unable to stay with us. Piers Cooke-Yarborough, Bob Greggs and Graham Burgess left the committee. Three people who made significant contributions to the orchard from the start and without whom we would not be where we are today. I want to express our profound thanks for all they have done and continue to do as orchardeer volunteers.

### **In the Orchard**

Past year

Last summer saw a sunny but dry few months. Due to the handwork of the volunteers keeping the trees and hedging well-watered they all thrived and produced a lot of blossom and fruit. The latter was reduced to ensure the trees could manage but nevertheless there was enough for people to pick, particularly the apples, and enjoy this important aspect of a community orchard. The wild meadow areas attracted a range of pollinators including butterflies and we were pleased to provide charts and forms to enable people to take part in the national butterfly count. Whilst we cannot be sure how many were submitted, we provided 50 forms and all were taken. Later in the autumn we increased the meadow areas by 50% and planted more wildflower seeds including yellow rattle that was harvested from those already growing in the orchard. Bluebells and wild daffodil bulbs were also added to the hedgerow which made a wonderful display this spring.

With the trees coming along nicely the committee has been concentrating on more of the infrastructure that will encourage more visitors to spend time enjoying the space and enable more activities, both educational and recreational, to be held. The second information board was purchased and installed by the main gate, we repositioned the water tap, a little more out of the way, and installed new posts to hold the hose pipe. We have also been able to purchase three picnic tables which, as well as enabling families and others to spend more time enjoying the space, have been positioned so groups such as the school, scouts and others can use them to run educational activities. We have also been able to purchase and had donated tools for the volunteers to use at the working parties.

Coming year

In the coming year we are replacing the tree labels with more robust versions that also contain additional information about each variety and are standalone in front of each tree. A significant project will be the installation of a secure storage shed to house the tools and other equipment, to make it readily available for volunteers to use. Thanks go to the Parish

Council for giving their approval for this venture. We will be planting more wild daffodil bulbs and further increasing the wild meadow areas as per the two-year plan. We continue to work towards having a shelter in the educational area to provide additional facilities for schools and other groups to use. An accessible pathway has so far proved to be too complex and so the committee decided to put that project on hold.

### **Fundraising**

The orchard does not have any direct income and what has been achieved to date has almost entirely been paid for from grants. This has continued in the last year with funds provided from District and County councillors as well as the wonderful support of Hidden Gardens of Grayshott. These grants cover what can be described as capital projects, but we also have ongoing maintenance and smaller developments, and this has required us to increase fundraising activity. Thanks to the immense efforts of the committee and many other volunteers this has been tremendously successful and included; adopt a tree scheme, providing refreshments for Hidden Gardens, during which the orchard featured as one of the venues, an amazing quiz night and a raffle at the village Christmas lights event. A big thankyou to two village businesses, Rooks Construction and Seymours who have provided sponsorship and other support including running the bar at the quiz. A massive thanks must go to all those who helped, especially at the quiz, which took months of planning and a lot of hard work on the night. A particular mention to Ruth Holden who has led on all the fundraising efforts.

### **Organisational Update**

It was clear that, as time and the orchard progressed, the constitution adopted for the organisation at the start needed to be updated to provide clarity and defined procedures in certain areas. The committee therefore decided to seek a review and develop a new constitution. It was also felt that, after over two years in existence, it was appropriate to review the organisational structure of Grayshott Community Orchard Project. Currently we are an Unincorporated Organisation which has limitations and as the assets we own have increased in a way, perhaps not initially expected, it has been identified that a change of status to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) would be beneficial. To do so, a new constitution would also be needed following a template provided by the Charities Commission. Therefore, the latter informed the development of the new constitution which has been approved by the Parish Council, as required by the current constitution, and is being presented as this year's AGM for adoption. We will then be able to progress to the next stage of becoming a CIO thus providing greater protection of the assets and the committee members, clarity and procedures on many issues and access to more funding opportunities including tax breaks such as Gift Aid.

### **Conclusion**

It has been another extremely busy and successful year for the orchard. This has been due to the tremendous support of those providing financial backing and the work of many volunteers and committee members past and present. We look forward to continuing the work in the next year and beyond so we can establish the orchard as a significant community asset for many years and generations to come.

Thank you

Andy Haymes

Chair