

## Rother District Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Climate Change Steering Group
<b>Date:</b>	25 April 2024
<b>Title:</b>	Coronation Community Orchards Grant Scheme
<b>Report of:</b>	Climate Projects Officer
<b>Ward(s):</b>	All
<b>Purpose of Report:</b>	To update the steering group on the progress of the delivery of the Community Orchard Grant Scheme.
<b>Officer Recommendation(s):</b>	It be <b>RESOLVED:</b> That progress and timeframes of the scheme be noted.

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### Introduction

1. In October 2023, the Council was successful in an application to Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) Coronation Living Heritage Fund for Community Orchards. A grant of £49,024.50 was awarded, to deliver an onward grants scheme to local groups for the planting of Community Orchards in Rother.
2. At Cabinet on [11 December 2023](#), delegated authority was granted to the Director – Place and Climate Change to accept this funding and award grants as appropriate to deliver the Community Orchard Grants scheme, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder.

### Details of the scheme

3. The scheme opened for applications on Monday 1 April 2024 and is operating on a first come first served basis.
4. Applications are invited from properly constituted, non-profit organisations for grants of £500 to £5,000 towards the capital costs of planting fruit or nut trees in a new or existing community orchard.
5. Eligible Coronation Community Orchard projects will involve the planting of 5 or more trees and provide a benefit to a Rother community. A benefit could be engaging the community in setting up, planting, or maintaining the orchard, or giving the community free access to the orchard on a permanent or occasional basis for leisure and recreation, activities, and events or to harvest the fruit.
6. Eligible grant expenditure includes trees, tree protection (e.g. spirals, canes, fencing etc.), soil enhancers (e.g. mulch or compost), equipment (e.g. spades, gloves, benches etc.) and signage to dedicate the site to the Coronation of King Charles III.

7. The grants do not cover expenses relating to salaries, consultancy fees, staff/volunteer expenses, land purchase or rental, or costs relating to the establishment and maintenance of the trees beyond initial planting.
8. Full details and the application form can be found on the [Coronation Community Orchard Grant Scheme webpage](#) and [Coronation Community Orchard Grants Scheme Eligibility page](#).
9. Guidance for designing and [planning a Coronation Community Orchard](#) has also been created, signposting applicants to specialist advice and encouraging the planting of local Sussex fruit varieties.
10. To ensure this scheme is accessible to a wide variety of community groups, including those that may have little or no financial reserves, 75% of the grant award will be paid upfront upon signing a grant funding agreement with the Council, with the final 25% paid on project completion.

### **Scheme Conclusion**

11. The application window will remain open until either all available grant funding has been allocated, or until midnight Friday 28 June 2024, whichever is sooner.
12. Projects must be completed and grants claimed in full by 1 March 2025.
13. The Council must submit details of each grant-funded Community Orchard project to DEFRA no later than 31 March 2025.

### **Implications**

#### **Financial Implications**

14. The Community Orchard Grants scheme is included in the Council's Capital Programme with a budget of £49,024.50. The scheme does not require additional capital investment by the Council over and above the DEFRA grant award.
15. Failure of any applicant to complete a project will result in a request for repayment of any funding received in full. Any unused capital funds as at 31 March 2025 are to be returned to DEFRA.

#### **Legal Implications**

16. Successful applicants will be subject to a formal grant funding agreement with the Council. Full terms and conditions will be provided to organisations once an application has been approved.
17. All necessary consents including planning are the responsibility of the applicant.

#### **Other Implications**

18. Environmental: Community Orchards provide a focal point for community activities whilst improving the natural environment and increasing biodiversity. The Coronation Living Heritage Fund seeks to create green spaces and

connect communities with nature as a permanent reminder of the coronation of King Charles III, linking with the King's lifelong support of the natural environment.

19. DEFRA stipulates that trees under this scheme must be purchased from a certified [Plant Healthy nursery](#), with the aim of halting the spread of damaging plant pests and diseases. There are three certified nurseries in Sussex.
20. Equalities and Diversity: The scheme encourages applicants to consider the outdoor accessibility guidance produced by The Sensory Trust in the planning of their orchard. This offers advice on how to make the outdoors accessible for everyone, regardless of their disability, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, or belief.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	Yes
Crime and Disorder	No	Consultation	No
Environmental	Yes	Access to Information	No
Sustainability	Yes	Exempt from publication	No
Risk Management	No		

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Appendices:	None.
Relevant previous Minutes:	None.
Background Papers:	None.
Reference Documents:	None.