

## **CORSTON COMMUNITY ORCHARD UPDATE:**

### **for The Corston Parish Council Meeting**

The Corston Community Orchard is in the final stages of securing a long term lease on a 3.5 acre green space from the Duchy on the north western edge of the village. The forming a Community Interest Company (CIC) with 6 directors with all the work this entails is also well under way.

The aim of the Orchard is to maximise the wildlife and landscape value of the site and to encourage low-key quiet public recreational use of the site as a way of building community and in turn helping the environment.

With the climate and ecological crisis firmly in our minds and the devastating effects of the Covid 19 pandemic exposing the weaknesses in our society at large, this project will bring environmental benefits of trees and wildlife to the village and offer a focal point for people from the community to gather together. The idea is that the orchard will be inclusive, open to people of all ages and situations who would like to enjoy the space. We would like to see it used for community events and activities, for example apple juicing days, picnics, treasure hunts, wassail or harvest suppers, and to provide people with the opportunity to develop new skills, such as pruning, or learn about wildlife. We also hope to build links with other local organisations such as Grow for Life that provides gardening sessions for people affected by low confidence, depression or isolation, Avon Wildlife Trust and other community orchards.

The Orchard business plan demonstrates capital set-up costs and how on-going revenue costs required to maintain the orchard will be achieved. We are identifying grant funding opportunities, as well as exploring community investment ideas, such as tree sponsorship and community share offers.

We have had initial planning sessions to help us start work on a detailed design that fulfils the community's wishes.

We were recently delighted to receive our first grant to the value of £1000 from the B&NES Ward Councillor Empowerment Fund - we are very grateful to Duncan Hounsell, councillor for Saltford, for his support of our project. We are also in advanced discussions with Forest of Avon to fund our hedge and tree planting via their Trees for Climate fund.