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Background

Teignbridge, like the rest of Devon, used to be famous for its apple orchards and every farm would have at least one - mostly stocked with cider apples. Nearly every farm had its own large apple press as well as storage for many large barrels; cider used to be part of a farm workers pay! Cider was an important local industry and it was exported to the rest of England and abroad. During World War 2, very little farm land could be spared for growing barley for brewing beer, so cider and cider orchards were highly valued!

From the 1950s right up to the present time, orchards have been grubbed out to make space for more profitable and intensive farming, or for house-building - and now more than 90% have gone. Their **enormous** wildlife value is only just being appreciated; many birds that have now become very rare had depended on orchards for their nest sites as well as for their feeding grounds. The 3-dimensional and very **mixed** habitat provided by small, traditional orchards with good hedges around them is a huge loss to lichens, wildflowers, insects, birds and mammals.



A traditional Devon orchard.



A modern orchard with Bush trees.

Over the last 60 years, very few commercial orchards have been planted in Devon, whether for dessert or cider apples. There have been a few planted in the last 20 years - mostly providing dessert apples for apple juice. But all new commercial orchards are planted with apple bushes, grown in neat rows - and frequently fertilised and sprayed against pests and diseases. Their value to wildlife and landscape is very small, but the harsh economics of the modern food industry mean that the old 'standard' trees, (which only start producing good crops at about 10 years old, but live for 100 years or more) can't compete economically with apple bushes, which start to produce good crops at 3-4 years old.

Having orchards with a wide mixture of varieties is also a thing of the past; it seems that we now demand a uniform product - whereas wildlife needs a mix of varieties with a wider range of flowering and fruiting dates. For example, windfall apples from 'keeping' varieties provide food for wildlife (from deer and badgers to fieldfare to voles) right through the winter, until March, when other food sources, such as catkins, leaf buds and worms appear.

From the mid-1990s until around 2007, Teignbridge District Council gave local-variety, standard, apple trees to traditional orchard owners who were trying to maintain their old orchards. The scheme was popular and helped rejuvenate some of our local orchards.

Some orchards are protected through being within a built Conservation Area, or within the 'curtilage' of a Listed Building (the area surrounding and associated with the Listed building). Only non-commercial orchards can be protected with Tree Protection Orders (TPOs), but the District Council can only make a TPO on an orchard (or any other trees) that are of amenity value and under threat. Orchards do have some protection through the Local Plan, but it is still often difficult to prevent them from being built on.

Common Ground championed orchards from the late 1980s. For more background information, including the wonderful photos taken for them by James Ravilious, see <https://www.commonground.org.uk/save-our-orchards/>

Wildlife Wardens can start Community Orchard projects, as well as encouraging farmers, landowners and gardeners to plant orchards of many types and sizes!

If starting an orchard project interests you, get in touch with Audrey (audrey@boveyclimateaction.org.uk) or Flavio (flavio@actionclimateteignbridge.org) as we may be able to find out more from earlier surveys in your Parish.

A. Creating an Orchard:

Are there any sites in your Parish where it might be possible to plant or restore an orchard? In a Public Open Space standard trees work best, because when they are mature people can walk **under** and **through** them; you would have to walk around half-standard or bush-trees. They need to be well-spaced - at least 8 metres apart - to allow room for growth and space between them.

Planning a Site:

- Apple trees do not like wet ground, frost pockets or very exposed sites.
- Consider the space available; standard apple trees should be planted 8-10 metres (10-12 yards) apart.
- Never plant trees under or near power or phone lines and try to avoid underground services, especially drains.
- When filling gaps in an existing orchard, avoid planting the new tree in exactly the position where an old tree has recently been lost. Plant a couple of metres away where the soil will be less 'tired'.
- Don't remove old trees to plant new ones – a bit of care and pruning will usually revive them. Enjoy their irregular beauty and the lichen living on them; even if a tree has fallen over it will probably still survive and it may even be the last specimen of a rare variety!

What sort of orchard will you plant?

Apples grown from seed rarely have useful fruits and will usually grow too tall for gardens.

When you buy an apple tree, it has been grown from a stem taken from a selected trees variety (for example, a Bramley) and grafted onto a root-stock; the type of root stock (**not** the apple variety) decides how big the tree will be - you can buy the same variety on either standard, half-standard or dwarfing bush rootstocks.

Chose varieties that give the types of fruit you want – eating, cooking or cider – and a mix of varieties that will cross-fertilise each other (See 'Choosing fruit trees, below).

Most apple trees are bought as 'maidens' (a 1-year old stem) or as 2-year old trees; maidens are cheaper, and establish well.

Orchards will only have a high wildlife value if they are grown organically - and all community orchards with free public access should be grown organically for safe wildlife and safe eating!

Pruning regularly will increase fruit yields, but reduce wildlife value (wildlife likes dense foliage).

Occasional hard pruning will produce strange-looking trees, with tall shoots that branch into 'trees in trees'.

Growing some other fruits, such as pears, cherries, quince, medlars and plums in your orchard will give you a more varied diet - and will also provide pollinators with a more varied diet! Plums flower a couple of weeks earlier than apples, and so are very useful for early insects, such as bumble bees.

Bottling surplus fruit is an easy way of enjoying species and varieties that don't keep for long. (Email Audrey for more details).

1. Traditional Orchards:

Traditional Devon orchards were planted with 'Standard' trees.

- They will usually be on M111 or M25 rootstocks
- These grow tall - prune them so that their first branches grow from about 2 metres high
- They need to be planted 8-10 metres apart - or neighbouring trees will get their branches tangled!
- Mature orchards have a high wildlife value
- They take some 20 years to grow and mature
- They don't produce large quantities of fruit until they are about 10-15 years old
- Harvesting fruit is quite difficult because of the height of the trees
- They make a good 'community space' for play and socialising, because people can walk under them as well as around them - they are 'in an orchard'!

2. Half-standard Orchards

- These will usually be on MM106 rootstocks
- Prune so that the first branch grows from 1-1.5 metres from the ground.
- Plant at least 5 metres apart
- Mature half-standard orchards have quite a high wildlife value - especially if not pruned too much!
- Mature half-standard orchards crop well from about 8 years
- They are good for a community orchard - providing plenty of easily harvested fruit and a good social area if given a little extra planting space (6-7 metres).

3. A Bush Orchard

These are grown on dwarfing rootstocks. See <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/pdfs/rhs-growing-apple-trees.pdf> for advice

- They will usually be on M26 rootstocks (M9 and M27 are very dwarfing - more suitable for containers and 'espaliers' grown against a wall)
- Prune so that the first branch grows from about 75 cms
- Plant at least 4 metres apart
- They crop well from about 4-5 years
- These have a lower wildlife value, with less nesting opportunities for birds and mammals.
- They are good for a community food-growing projects, but less good as a social area/public open space.

Choosing fruit trees

- Grow several different species and varieties if you can, but make sure that you have compatible pollinators for all of them. Some varieties are self-fertile, but many need to cross-pollinate with trees that flower at the same time. See <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?PID=330> for a download showing pollination groups.
- Decide whether you want eating, cooking, keeping or cider-making apples. A mixture is good - you want some that you can store for using into the New Year and, if you make juice or cider, including some eating and cooking apples will not be a problem.
- Go to <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=972> for information about different species - but be aware that peaches and apricots need much more shelter than most orchards can provide; growing against a wall or in a polytunnel or greenhouse is more likely to work.
- Check the suitability of varieties for your area and conditions see <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=331>

Planting Season

- Planting is most successful between late November and late February when trees are dormant - whether your trees are bare-rooted or pot-grown.
- Planting should never be carried out in frosty or water-logged conditions.

Before Planting

Buy **'bare-rooted' trees** - they will have been carefully dug up from the tree nursery before delivery and should have a good, strong, root system. It is worth waiting until winter, when bare-rooted trees can be safely dug up - you will get a better tree.

Although **pot-grown trees** can be planted outside of the usual season, they will have a smaller, weaker root system and may even be 'pot-bound' from having been in the pot for much too long. Once roots are in a tangled ball in the pot, it is hard for them to grow outwards - which they must do in order to hold the tree in strong winds and supply it with water and nutrients extracted from a large area of soil.

Trees should always be handled with care - roots are easily bruised and damaged and must never be allowed to get dry. Trees that are dormant and have NOT started to produce new feeding roots are not so susceptible to drying out.

- If necessary, add water to the bags when they are delivered.
- Dunk in a bucket of water before planting.
- As you plant, keep the roots in a plastic bag or bucket of water.
- They are best kept inside two plastic bags - a white outer bag and a black inner bag. (This keeps them at the right temperature).
- Take them out one at a time, at the last second. Exposure to a cold wind for even a few minutes can kill a tree.
- If the trees cannot be planted within 2-3 days then they should be "heeled in" in light, moist soil until planting is possible.

Planting

- 1) Prepare the planting area by removing weeds and grass, which would compete with the tree for light and water. Clear an area 1 metre (about 3 feet) in diameter around each tree. Strip the turf using a spade rather than by using herbicides. *(If you do use a herbicide, make sure you leave long enough for the herbicide to wear off, this may take a few weeks; always follow the instructions very carefully).*
- 2) If your orchard will be grazed, each tree should have a substantial guard to stop stock from damaging/eating the trees. It is best to put the posts for the guard up before planting so that you don't damage your tree during the building works.
- 3) Dig a hole that is slightly larger and deeper than the size of the root system. Do this just before planting – if a hole is left open, rain or frost can damage the soil structure. Square holes are better than round holes as the corners actually encourage the roots to grow out into the surrounding soil, rather than just going round and round in the hole.
- 4) Young fruit trees need stakes to stop them from bending over when they start to bear fruit. Use a 1.5 metre / 5-foot stake, driven in for a third of its length.
- 5) If you have very poor soil, mix in a bucketful of well-rotted manure, compost or soil enricher. Don't overdo it though – apple trees are not heavy feeders. Too much compost may discourage the roots from spreading out into the soil around and the tree will not anchor itself properly.
- 6) The young trees' roots should be kept moist in a plastic bag or bucket of water until seconds before planting. Exposure to a cold wind for even a few minutes can kill a tree.
- 7) Plant the tree to the same depth as it was in the nursery – look for the old soil mark on the stem. Make sure the graft (which looks like a knobbly lump) is above soil level. Spread the roots out in the bottom of the hole. Plant the tree 3 inches away from the stake, to allow for tree growth.
- 8) Replace the soil, firming it in gently as you go so that it makes good contact with the roots. Water well so that the soil settles around the roots.
- 9) Put on a tree guard to protect trees against voles, rabbits and strimmers (avoid plastic guards - plant plastic guards are available - see below).
- 10) Use a rubber tie or a pair of old tights to tie the tree to the stake – make sure it doesn't chaff against the stake.
- 11) Mulch an area 1 metre (3 feet) in diameter and about 5cms (2 inches) deep around the tree. This will help keep moisture in the soil. Use compost, bark chippings, leaf mould or a piece of wool carpet. Please don't use plastic tree mats and synthetic carpets, which will leave micro-plastics in the soil. Make sure the mulch stays just clear of the tree stem to avoid any danger of the tree rotting.

After Care

- Young trees need to be kept weeded for at least 3 years, either by hand weeding or by using mulch (you may have to add more mulch from time to time) or a vegetable fibre mulch mat.

- Strimming the area is not a suitable method as the tree is likely to be bruised and "ring barked", which may well kill it. Similarly, mowing is not a good method as grass thrives when mown and will take valuable ground moisture from the young tree.
- For the first few years the trees should be watered in very dry weather - 5 litres (half a bucketful) of water once a week is better than a litre a day, as slightly dry conditions stimulate root growth.
- Each year prune off the lowest branches until the 'trunk' is your required height.
- Check and mend tree guards as necessary.
- Check any tree ties twice a year and loosen if necessary.
- Remove the tree tie and stake after 5-7 years, but keep the livestock guards.
- Don't be tempted to let the trees fruit in the first 3 years. Heavy fruits can snap a young tree's branches and sap its strength when it should be growing. Pick off the small fruits as they start to form - be patient now for a better tree later on!
- When the trees are old enough to fruit, give them a little organic manure spread above the roots each spring. (Farmyard dung is fine.)

Tree Protection

Individual tree guards can be expensive; however, it is never worth planting fruit trees unless you can give them good protection.



Tree guards protecting trees from people (vandalism)!



Tree guards protecting trees from livestock.

Tree Guards

Here are links for non-plastic tree guards that should protect trees from voles and rabbits without leaving micro-plastics in the soil (nb the links below aren't recommendations, as we haven't tried them yet):

[biodegradable tree guards](#)

[strong cardboard tree guards](#)

Beware of 'degradable' guards which are made of plastic and break down after 3-4 years; even some labelled 'bio-degradable' are also made of plastic!

Tree guards/cages that will protect fruit trees from vandals and grazing stock are more expensive. They can be made using strong fence posts with weldmesh, chestnut paling or pallets (see the pictures above).

Tree protection in urban areas

In urban areas, trees may only need guarding against strimmers, people, voles and rabbits. Large plastic bottles may be adequate; cut off the top and the bottom and use one on top of another if rabbits are a problem. It is better to cut along the bottle vertically to wrap around the tree, rather than knocking off buds and twigs as you feed the tube down from the top of the tree.

Tree protection in the countryside where there are livestock or deer

Sturdy timber tree guards are best for long-term protection and are essential where livestock is present. Cattle, sheep and ponies will lean and rub against the guards so it's worth taking time on their construction. If properly made, they should last 10 years.

Before you make your tree guard:

- Think ahead, as it is difficult to upgrade your guard at a later date, so make sure all likely damaging animals are taken into account.
- If using pallets, use them so that the slats are vertical - as sheep and deer would otherwise climb them, injuring themselves and eating the tree!
- Use a mulch on the vegetation within the guard, so animals aren't tempted to reach inside to eat grass.

Pruning

Maiden trees will need to have their lower branches removed to your chosen height (standard, half-standard or bush - see 'What sort of orchard will you plant?')

The RHS [pruning apple trees](#) link is good if you are growing for fruit production. If wildlife is a high priority, then you may not want to prune much at all - and you may let ivy grow on some of your trees which will increase wildlife enormously. Pruning by cutting off the end of a branch will result in lots of buds growing near the cutting point - which results in even more crowding! Cutting out a branch completely will let light and air in. Leaving it will let wildlife in!

B. Grants for planting orchards

Farm orchards:

- The Countryside Stewardship Grants for farms include planting and restoring orchards where appropriate for the area. They are usually given as part of a whole-farm stewardship plan. See <https://www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants/creation-of-traditional-orchards-be5> <https://www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants/planting-fruit-trees-te3>
- The new ELMS (Environmental Land Management Scheme) will be phased in around 2024-25 and may include payments for orchard creation and restoration.

Community orchards and orchards not benefitting from farm grants

- <https://ptes.org/campaigns/traditional-orchard-project/orchard-grants/>
- <https://www.theorchardproject.org.uk/about-us/meet-our-partners-and-funders/>
- <https://www.applesandorchards.org.uk/community-orchards/>
- Contact your local District Councillors and County Councillors, who may have money available for Community schemes.

Information on funding for apples and orchards

- Contact your local council's Community Development Officer to discover if there are any small grants for local schemes which your project may be eligible for. They should also have access to national directories of grant making trusts and other funding databases.
- Tree sponsorship – offering this to your local community is a proven and popular way to cover start-up costs. We recommend asking for £25-30 per tree as this will cover the cost of one tree, plus a wooden stake, soft rubber tree tie, a plastic open-mesh tree guard and some cable ties to attach it to the wooden stake. Local businesses will often donate towards tree costs and equipment for community orchard schemes. They may also donate machinery to help with site preparation, as well as volunteer labour.
- Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) – is the national charity and umbrella organisation for county rural community councils. These, or their equivalents, exist in most counties and are a useful source of free information and advice regarding funding opportunities for rural projects, particularly at a local level. www.acre.org.uk. and in Devon email. info@devoncommunities.org.uk
- The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) – a helpful web site listing funding opportunities. Some counties have their own local branches offering free advice. www.ncvo.org
- Awards for All (National Lottery) – the Big Lottery Fund supports community projects through this scheme offering grants of between £300 and £10K. www.biglotteryfund.org.uk
- Landfill Communities Fund – funding may be available if your proposed community orchard site is near to a landfill site. The scheme is overseen by Entrust. www.entrust.org

- Biodiversity Partnerships – these county-based partnerships sometimes grant-aid community orchard schemes, school orchards and individual projects where they are beneficial for biodiversity. Contact your county wildlife trust for more details.
- This Government Community Orchard Guide from 2011 is rather old but has some useful information.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/11466/1973262.pdf

School Orchards

The Tree Angel Orchards Fund <https://treecouncil.org.uk/take-action/grants-for-trees/> plus planting info for schools: <https://treecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/School-Orchards.pdf>

Stockists:

Here are some local nurseries that sell fruit trees. Inclusion on the list should not be taken as a recommendation.

<https://www.adamsappletrees.co.uk/apple-tree-accessories/apple-tree-ties-stakes-guards/>

<https://www.adamsappletrees.co.uk/planning-an-apple-orchard/rootstocks.asp>

<https://www.perriehale.co.uk/shop/fruit>

Bibliography:

Community Orchards: <https://ptes.org/campaigns/traditional-orchard-project/orchard-network/community-orchards/>

<https://www.theorchardproject.org.uk/>

Orchard Link is a Devon organisation. It offers its members technical advice, a programme of events, courses and activities, and makes key items of equipment – mills, presses and pasteurisers – available for hire. Click on [Orchard Link](#)

'Orchards - a year in England's Eden' by Ben MacDonald and Nick Gates. This is a lovely and very readable book, with the inspiring sub-text that we could save wildlife if only we planted/protected enough organic orchards (and we could share the fruits with wildlife too!).

C. Finding out where your local orchards are:

1. Make a desk-based survey of your parish orchards, starting with some detective work! Use the Devon Environment Viewer to take a close look at your Parish maps/aerial photos from 1945 onwards - check where the orchards were and whether any have survived (orchards were clearly marked with little rounded trees on old maps). You can use an OS map's contour lines to find out their aspect and likely drainage.

2. Map them in relation to Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings. Being within a Conservation area is one of the best ways of protecting village orchards. You can find Conservation Areas here: <https://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/planning/heritage-assets/conservation-areas/information-about-each-conservation-area/> But will have to search for nearby Listed buildings.

3. Ground-truthing:

What condition are the orchards in? If you can see them from a road or footpath, or if you can get permission to visit them, try ground-truthing any that may have survived. Record:

- Whether there are still enough trees remaining (there should be one approx every 8-10 metres).
- Are most of the trees very old? Are there any younger ones? Have the young ones been given protection against grazing sheep and cattle?
- Are the trees mostly alive? What number are standing, how many have fallen or are leaning?
- Do they show signs of being pruned - or even butchered?
- Do they have a lot of lichens and ivy? (Ivy is great for wildlife, providing berries/pollen and safe nesting sites, but too much ivy may make an old fragile tree vulnerable to wind-blow).
- Is the grass green and uniform, or are there different species/textures/mosaics there? If it is uniform, it may have been sprayed and or fertilised with chemicals (rather than just dung).

- Are the trees festooned with brambles, showing long-term neglect?

Teignbridge Case Study: Here is Broadhempston Conservation Area from a 'recent' air photo (2015 or later). You can see that the orchards to the south of the village have been included in the Conservation Area boundary (here, drawn in by hand). More historical information can be found on title Maps and other early maps, using Devon Environment Viewer.

Broadhempston in about 2015, showing about 8-10 separate, but very sparse orchards.



Not much different in 1999 with about 10 sparse orchards.



But very, very different around 1946, when the orchards were full of trees (some of them probably quite young trees) and they had a considerable local economic value. There are at least 25 separate orchards there. It is likely that most of the trees in the newer photos were also in this 75 year old picture.



D. Restoring Orchards:

Restoring an old orchard is a great project for a Wildlife Warden or a local team! Research the orchard and find information from sources such as www.theorchardproject.org.uk/ . Don't damage or 'tidy' old trees unless they are dangerous - and then leave any cut boughs near the tree so that wildlife, such as lichen and beetles can gradually move to other trees.

For the best possible inspiration, read 'Orchards - a year in England's Eden' by Dominic Macdonald and Nick Gates. One of the best nature books ever (Audrey's opinion!).

Here are some key points, using information from Natural England's guide - it is easy to download and has a lot of very useful information: [Traditional orchards - Natural England publications](#)

- The condition of the orchard and its trees must be assessed carefully before deciding what work should be done.
- The poor condition of a tree may be caused by a number of different factors, often acting in combination and over a long period of time. The outward symptoms are often similar and it may not be possible to identify the causes of the problem straight away.
- Where a tree is in poor condition it is worthwhile trying to save it. Where this involves pruning, any work should be carried out with care and spread over a number of years.
- Reducing the height of the tree and/or balancing its shape to prevent wind throw is often the only restorative pruning required.
- Planting new trees is usually an important part of the long-term restoration of an orchard. They should never be planted in the same place as an old tree, as the soil may be diseased.

Restoring old orchards, most of this information is from https://www.theorchardproject.org.uk/guides_and_advice/restoration-of-old-orchards/

- Fruit trees don't live as long as other hard wood trees such as oaks - only to about 100 years. This means that they develop veteran tree characteristics (hollowed out heart wood, rot holes) earlier in their lives. The holes and rotten wood are wonderful habitats for a range of wildlife and shouldn't be cut off or tidied away!
- Fruit trees in orchards have been shaped by people through pruning; therefore, their shapes are not natural. As a result, if the trees have been neglected, new growth may have caused imbalance and overcrowding in the canopy. Old branches that have become hollowed out naturally may be overburdened with vertical 'water shoots' that have been left to grow into large diameter branches. These young branches, 'trees on trees', are dense and their weight, combined with a large crop of fruit can be enough to break the whole tree apart.
- The key aims for restoring a fragile tree are to: reduce the height of the tree, reduce the weight load on the branches (especially the vertical 'trees on trees') and, if absolutely necessary, to remove some diseased and dead material.
- Do not be too quick to remove all dead wood from the canopy; standing deadwood (as opposed to dead wood on the ground) is a valuable habitat for a range of organisms. Some small diameter wood (branches, twigs) can be taken out, but larger diameter dead wood that is obviously safe, in the sense that it won't fall onto someone, should be left as habitat.
- Veteran trees may be shocked by the removal of too much wood in one year, so only 20% of the canopy should be removed in any one year. The whole restoration may be carried out over a period of three years or more.
- The work should focus on essential work, such as taking the weight off major structural branches.

Funding Orchard restoration: See the funding section at the end of Section A as some of these apply to restoration.

E. How Orchards are protected:

If you think that an orchard or an important fruit tree, or group of fruit trees, is being threatened, talk to the site owner or with local residents. You can also contact your Local Authority's Tree Officer.

Orchards and fruit trees only enjoy statutory legal protection if they are:

- in a Conservation Area (visit your Local Authority website – usually the planning dept section)
- located within the boundary of a Scheduled Ancient Monument (see englishheritage.org.uk) or a Listed Building (look on the Council website [Listed buildings](#))
- the subject of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) (see your Local Authority planning dept.)
- in a National Nature Reserve (NNR) - these are legally protected by Natural England
- in a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (see naturalengland.org.uk)
- in a designated Local Nature Reserve (LNR) (see your Local Authority planning dept. or County Council environment dept.)
- in an Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB). Teignbridge does not have an AONB. (see www.landscapesforlife.org.uk)
- possibly if they are in a National Park

Useful links:

<https://www.applesandorchards.org.uk/learn-more/protecting-orchards/>

<https://ptes.org/campaigns/traditional-orchard-project/orchard-network/protecting-orchards/planning-protection-toolkit/legal-structures/>

Policies in our Teignbridge District Council Local Plan that can be cited to help protect orchards **Teignbridge Local Plan.**

It is not often possible to TPO orchards, because of the horticultural need to prune them - requiring an application via the Tree Officer for permission every time. This is enshrined in the legislation, (rather than local policy), but it may be possible to get a non-commercial orchard TPO'd if it is under threat and is of amenity value.

However, various Policies in the Teignbridge Local Plan may be useful for protecting orchards from development; they can also help get new orchards planted in public open spaces that have been provided as a result of new development. Wildlife Wardens should let the Coordinator know if they feel that the ACT Wildlife Warden Scheme should comment on planning applications that might harm traditional orchards, or to ask for creations of new traditional-style orchards.

There are also various national and local, non-statutory (mainly advisory as opposed to legally binding), regulations/policies that apply to orchards and fruit trees, especially when they become the subject of planning applications. These are mainly to help protect the landscape from inappropriate development. See the [Teignbridge Local Plan](#)

EN8 Biodiversity Protection and Enhancement

The Council will work with statutory and other partners to protect, enhance and restore the biodiversity of the area, as follows:

- a) ensure that decisions on development are taken in the light of proportionate biodiversity information and assessments about the site;
- b) seek net increases in biodiversity in association with new development through habitat enhancement and creation, and through the introduction of appropriate biodiversity offsetting measures;
- c) investment in habitat management and creation particularly within important existing habitats, green infrastructure networks, and other priority areas;
- d) minimise fragmentation and maximise opportunities to provide more, bigger, better and connected habitats, particularly of local, regional or national priority (including connections to those outside the Plan area);
- e) identify and map components of the local ecological networks, prioritising areas of growth e.g. the Heart of Teignbridge;
- f) apply policy EN9 to the protection of existing biodiversity and the approach to mitigation and compensation;
- g) development proposals where the principle objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity or geodiversity will be supported in principle; and
- h) recognise ecosystem services and the benefits they provide.

Teignbridge Local Policy EN9 can be useful to defend traditional orchards from development, as **Traditional orchards are listed nationally as a 'Habitat of Principal Importance'** under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC Act) 2006.

Section 40 of the NERC Act contains a statutory duty for local councils and others:

"Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity." e purpose of conserving biodiversity".

Section 41 of the NERC Act requires the Secretary of State to list 'Habitats and Species of Principal Importance', to provide guidance for local authorities for the implementation of their statutory duty under Section 40.

EN9 Important Habitats and Features

To protect and enhance existing areas of biodiversity and geodiversity, development proposals will take account of the importance of any affected habitats or features, taking account of the following hierarchy of sites:

- a) internationally important sites including existing, candidate or proposed Special Protection Areas, Ramsar sites, Special Areas of Conservation, European Marine Sites plus sites required as compensatory measures for adverse impacts on such sites;
- b) nationally important sites including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves and Marine Conservation Zones;
- c) locally important sites including county wildlife sites, local nature reserves, ancient woodlands, county geological sites, and other identified priority habitats;
- d) the network of linear and other linking features important for wildlife movement and climate change adaptation, including wider identified priority areas; and
- e) other areas of land or features of value to biodiversity.

Development which would be likely to directly or indirectly harm such a site or feature will not be permitted unless, taking account of the weight to be attached to the site's protection:

- f) the public interest benefits of the development outweigh the harm;
- g) the benefits cannot be provided through an alternative, less harmful location, design or form of development;
- h) losses are mitigated where possible;
- i) any unavoidable losses are fully compensated; and
- j) for internationally designated sites favourable conservation status must be maintained.

Development which includes or impacts any such site or feature will be required to include measures to protect, manage and enhance it where possible.

EN12 Woodlands, Trees and Hedgerows

Development should contribute to the protection and enhancement of woodlands, trees and hedgerows in the area. The loss of woodland, healthy trees and hedgerows with visual, historic or wildlife importance will be resisted. Particularly strong protection will be given to ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees.

Development proposals should:

- a) incorporate important woodlands, trees and hedgerows into the overall design and landscape scheme wherever possible;
- b) prevent damage to root systems and ensure a satisfactory spatial relationship between trees and hedgerows and new development, taking account of expected future growth;
- c) where possible incorporate retained trees and hedgerows within public open space rather than private space to safeguard their long-term management;
- d) ensure protection measures before and during the development process and appropriate management and protection thereafter; and
- e) take opportunities for new planting consistent with landscape, wildlife and historic interests.

Wildlife Wardens could argue for the retention of an Orchard as a Heritage Asset in its own right, especially if they can quote historic maps that the orchard appears on and say that it is valued by local people as part of the local landscape and heritage.

EN5 Heritage Assets

To protect and enhance the area's heritage, consideration of development proposals will take account of the significance, character, setting and local distinctiveness of any affected heritage asset, including Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Historic Parks and Gardens, other archaeological sites and other assets on the Register of Local Assets, particularly those of national importance.

Development should respect and draw inspiration from the local historic environment responding positively to the character and distinctiveness of the area, important historic features, their settings and street patterns. Where appropriate development should include proposals for enhancement of the historic environment including key views and actions identified in Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans.

Orchards count as Green Infrastructure, which should be protected and enhanced

WE11 Green Infrastructure

To achieve the maintenance and expansion of a comprehensive green infrastructure network, promoting good accessibility to green infrastructure for all, the following will be promoted through determination of planning applications, infrastructure investments and by partnership working:

- a) providing new or protecting, and extending existing green infrastructure assets;
- b) enhancing the functionality, quality, connectivity and accessibility of green infrastructure assets;
- c) establishing and safeguarding a network of accessible, multi-functional green corridors for movement of people and species and the provision of eco-system services, as identified in the Teign Green Network strategy, Exeter area green infrastructure strategy and future green infrastructure strategies;
- d) residential development will provide at least 10 square metres per dwelling of children's and young persons' play space plus any specific requirements set out in a site allocation policy;
- e) provision of about 100 square metres per dwelling of other forms of green infrastructure, including laying pitches, allotments, parks, biodiversity enhancement and natural greenspace;
- f) public open space should be designed as part of the overall green infrastructure and layout of the site, taking advantage of the potential for multiple benefits including enhanced play, wildlife, sustainable urban drainage, tree planting and landscape provision. The form and function of green infrastructure will reflect a site's characteristics, nature, location and existing or future deficits;
- g) appropriate suitable alternative natural green spaces required by habitat regulations to relieve recreational pressure on European sites; and
- h) strategic and detailed design requirements delivered as part of green infrastructure to mitigate for loss.

F. Eat, Drink and be Merry:

Standard and large half-standard orchards make great community areas, which are suitable for picnics, mini-beast safaris and bird-watching. They are also great for community events, such as apple pressing (for juice or cider). Neighbouring Parishes may be able to share an apple press (the bigger the better, as everything has to be taken apart in between batches) or hire one for a day or two. Orchard Link may be able to help www.orchardlink.org.uk .

Wassails are usually held in orchards around Christmas time, on Twelfth Night, New Year's Eve or even in mid-January. There may be a procession to find the oldest and biggest trees, while traditional songs are sung. Cider is then drunk to toast the health of the fruit trees for the coming year, protecting them from evil and disease; then the trees have cider poured around their roots!

Maybe if we ate more local apples, instead of imported ones, we would value our orchards more highly, plant more and look after the surviving old ones?

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ACT supports Teignbridge District Council, town and parish councils, community groups and residents to make the district carbon neutral, sustainable, resilient and healthy.