

Most of our work since January's Newsletter has been concentrated on preparations for the planting on the community orchard site next Sunday in Levenshulme (Kersh Avenue/Crayfield Road entrances). Readers on line should already have received an email from Dick Venes itemising the different tasks to be carried out. Members are welcome to come and help or just cheer on the work any time from 10.30 am onwards. Most of this edition of the Newsletter will be taken up with letting you know about the work that has already taken place to get us to this planting stage, and to thank the many people and groups who have been involved in it.

Preparation of the site

First off to be thanked are **Sustrans** and **Peter Green** of the Manchester office for providing such a brilliant site for the orchard, and supporting us throughout. The first stage of preparing the site, involving the removal of large numbers of self-seeded saplings, was carried out in January by **Community Payback**, who have also been involved more recently in filling the planting holes with compost and topsoil (see below). Clearance of the site was completed at our work day on 19 February, when 16 of **our members and local residents** were joined by the **Sale and Altrincham Conservation Volunteers**, to remove more saplings and litter, and cut the turf to mark the planting sites. Finally, at the end of last week, **Sustrans Warden Tom** used a mechanical digger to dig out 30 substantial holes for the established trees, and three long trenches which will eventually house the smaller grafted fruit trees. The excavated soil contained a huge amount of rubble, and this was sorted by the Community Payback team, alongside filling the holes with the previously delivered topsoil and compost. Our special thanks to Tom for his work at each stage of the preparation. His time has been provided free to the project by Sustrans.

Publicity

We are most grateful to the **Growing Levenshulme Group**, **Friends of Levenshulme** and the **Levenshulme Community Association** for giving such great publicity to the orchard project, also to the local **Residents Associations** in the neighbouring streets, **Bristol and Gloucester Avenues**, **Four Avenues** and **Delamere Road**. Besides the formal site meeting we held in December, informal contact with local residents and passing Loop users has been made whenever we have been working on the site. Together these contacts have generated enormous local interest and enthusiasm in the project. We hope to have the local press on hand at the planting event itself next Sunday.

Tree purchase and sponsorship

Our thanks are due to the **Big Tree Fund** for the grant which has enabled us, together with our own funds, to purchase the established trees and rootstocks, and the materials needed for planting them. Our own funds have included the £300 we won for our environment work in the **Pride of Manchester Awards**, 2010. Because we wanted to source some high quality trees from the local **Bud**

Garden Centre (run by Brenda and Severine at Omar Drive, Burnage), at a higher cost than our target price, we invited tree sponsorships from our members and local residents to make up the difference. The response has been overwhelming. Thanks are due to the **following sponsors** who have donated money, sponsoring either on behalf of themselves or their children, spouses or other relatives:

Bob Barker, R. H. Barnes, David Beetham, Chris Bishop and Susan Cragg, Dorothy Brown, John R. Brown (Levenshulme Community Allotments Project), Angelique Bueler, Delamere Road Neighbourhood Group, Dympna Dumbleton (in memory of her father Frank Cunningham), Kevin and Lucy Flynn, Rosemary Fox, Jack Holt, Steve Keeney, Frances McCann, Roger Moyle and Jennifer Scott-Russell, Anita Pacheco, Kate Reigate, Felix Schmid and Bridget Eickhoff, James Schumm, Jamie Summers, Vincent Walsh.

Apologies if we have left anyone off this list inadvertently. Management of the orchard project so far has been carried out by David Beetham, Colin Bennett and Dick Venes on behalf of the Friends' Committee.

Lattice Bridge Renovation

The section of the Loop running east from the community orchard site leads quickly to the Lattice Bridge, linking Highfield Country Park and the footpath to Broom Lane. The original plan when the Loop was constructed was to cut out the bridge, rotate it through 90 degrees and drop it into the cutting. It would have provided a solid path over what tends to be wet ground at the bottom, as well as doing away with the potential liability any structural engineer will tell you a bridge represents.

The Friends of the Fallowfield Loop protested, on a number of grounds. One was that the link between Broom Lane and Highfield and also St. Andrews primary school, while not being severed, would mean going down into a deep dip, and then climbing back up again. Another objection was that the bridge is a rare example of such a type, in such a setting, and is potentially an aesthetically attractive feature. There are two similar ones crossing the Mersey in south Manchester, at Jackson's Boat in Chorlton and Simon Bridge in Didsbury, both of which have been successfully renovated. But 'our' lattice bridge is special because it goes over where the trains ran. After lobbying for its preservation, we were successful in getting the decision reversed, and the bridge has remained where it has been for 100 years, but in an increasingly decrepit condition. Getting it renovated has been a top priority for us.

Thanks again to Peter Green and his colleagues, Sustrans recently obtained a large grant for refurbishment of the bridge. Work commenced on 5th March, and a visit during the week showed plenty of activity by contractors. The work is extensive enough to render the bridge unusable for a short period – diversions for users have been signposted. The contractors have removed the tarmac covering the deck to reveal a metal base which is corroded in places. Hopefully this is repairable within the project budget. Trees which were in danger of affecting the foundations have been removed and scaffolding has been erected to enable access for brickwork pointing. It's great to see one of our longstanding priorities coming to fruition at last. (Thanks to Dick and Cos for this item)

Stop Press: Monday 19 March: Members' Meeting, 7.30 pm, Union Chapel, Wellington Road, Fallowfield. All welcome to review orchard progress and plan our spring calendar of events.