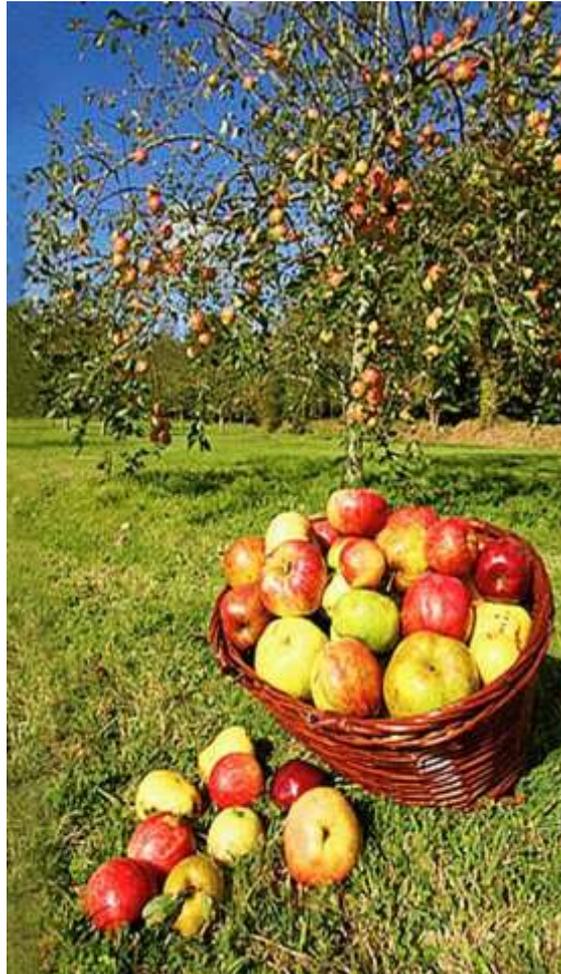


## St. Davids

### Community Trust



### Orchard Project

## OUTLINE PROPOSAL

### Community Orchard. St. Davids

#### Proposal:-

To make use of land that is currently not being utilised in St. Davids, for the purpose of planting an orchard. The orchard will contain a wide variety of fruit bearing trees and bushes with the aim of providing a succession of organically grown fruits for much of the year. These fruits can then be made available to local people to pick from as needed.

#### Objectives :-

- 1) To establish a perpetual living food bank for current and future residents of the area.
- 2) To produce a variety of organically grown fresh fruits that can be made available to local people at no charge.
- 3) To ensure that all local families, regardless of income, have access to good, healthy local produce that is uncontaminated by chemical pesticides and fertilisers.

- 4) To reduce our dependence upon imported goods, processed foods and large national supermarket chains.
- 5) To form close working links with other local producers like Caerhys Organic Farm, Caerfai Dairy Farm, Really Wild and others, in order to promote and increase the range of locally produced food and other goods.

#### The Inspiration For The Project:-

- 1) The “Food Forests” of Vietnam. Vietnam has a tradition of planted food forests from which local people harvest food as they need it. Some of these food forests are as much as 400 years old and exist within cities as well as in rural areas.
  - 2) The realisation that as much as 90% of all the fruit consumed in the UK is imported from abroad, some from as far away as South Africa and New Zealand.
  - 3) These imported fruits have been sprayed with a cocktail of toxic pesticides and fertilisers and subjected to processes intended to extend their shelf-life and profitability. We then feed these chemically contaminated and irradiated foodstuffs to our children.
  - 4) When I calculated my own family’s annual expenditure on supermarket apples alone, the total spent would have been sufficient to buy at least 10 fruit trees.
  - 5) There are some fruits I avoid buying, or buy very rarely due to their high cost, eg. raspberries, and some fruits that are seldom, if ever supplied in the shops, eg. gooseberries, damsons etc. that will grow and crop perfectly well in our climate.
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- 6) The increasing contamination of the world’s food crops with genetically modified organisms (GMOs), has currently unknown consequences for human health or the survival of food crop species. By planting known and established non-GM fruit varieties, local people will know exactly what they’re eating.
  - 7) It is known that families on low incomes have the greatest difficulty in feeding themselves with nutritious food. This project aims to level this disparity, with all families having equal access to good quality organic food.

#### How Will The Project Work?

It is proposed that each household that wishes to take part in the project would pay an annual membership fee of approx. £25. This equates to less than 50p per week. This sum would be sufficient to purchase 1 fruit tree. There would be provision for single person households and pensioners to contribute a reduced fee of approx. £12 per year. This would enable the project to purchase a row of raspberry canes or some berry or currant bushes. All members of the project would then be able to harvest what they need from any of the fruit trees or bushes at no cost. Anyone who is put off applying for membership because they are unable to pay the full cost up front will be welcome to pay on a half yearly or quarterly basis. It is the intention of the project that no-one should be excluded from taking part. The project would be operated as a co-operative, with each member holding one non-transferable share. The members would be investing in the purchase of fruit trees with the purpose of growing fruit for their own use rather than for sale. Produce grown for sale is subject to numerous EU restrictions and regulations that do not apply to produce grown by individuals for their own use.

#### What Is Needed For The Project To Succeed?

Land :- A piece or pieces of land, centrally located and easily accessible for local people, preferably within walking distance of the centre of St. Davids, that would be suitable for planting with fruiting trees or bushes. If there are any farmers or landowners who have land they are not making use of, we would ask if they may consider making it available to the community for the purpose of an orchard. The landowner may choose to gift the land to the community, whereby a community trust will be established to hold the land for community use only, or the landowner may choose to retain ownership of the land, with an agreement that it is planted and harvested by the community. It would be possible for the community to pay rent to the landowner in the form of produce. In the event that the community ceases to use or maintain the orchard, it would become the property of the landowner and may be harvested for their own commercial gain.

A number of different areas may be used, with various pieces of land being used for different purposes. A main orchard would be best suited to a sheltered site or ideally within a walled enclosure, as the walls provide protection from the wind and also retain heat, helping the fruit to ripen. A piece of land need not be completely enclosed, but a South or West facing wall would also serve the purpose. It may be possible to use a piece of land on which a walled enclosure may be built. There will be a need for consultation with the National Parks Authority regarding the building of any structures, but there are a number of walled gardens already in existence in St. Davids, eg. The Grove Hotel, The Warpool Court Hotel, to the rear of High Street, and the majority of gardens within the Cathedral Close, therefore walled gardens have been an existing feature of the St. Davids landscape for centuries. Land that may not fit the requirements of a fruit orchard may still be suitable to be planted as a nuttery or as a foraging area for local people. It could be planted with Hazelnuts, Chestnuts, Elder (for flowers and berries) Blackthorn (for Sloes) Crab apples, Cider apples, Medlars, Quince, Rowan (for berries) and a wide variety of wild native plants that have been harvested from rural areas for generations. This will add greatly to the variety of local foods available. A small parcel of land suitable for this purpose has already been offered to the project and the landowner has expressed an interest in it being planted as a nuttery.

If the community expresses an interest in doing so, and if suitable land is made available to the project, it would be possible to plant a vineyard. This could provide not only local organic wine, but also fresh grapes for eating and dried fruit for cake making. It is possible to grow grapes on quite poor soil, but they do require a South facing position for maximum sunlight. Sloping sites are quite suitable for grape growing.

Water :- In order to grow fruit it will be necessary to have access to a supply of water, either mains or a natural source, in order to irrigate fruit trees, soft fruit bushes and vines. Foraging areas will not need an additional water supply.

Fruit Cage :- In order to prevent soft fruit bushes being stripped by birds, it will be necessary to enclose them within a fruit cage. These can be quite expensive to buy but it is possible to add extension units to fruit cages. Members will be given the choice as to how much money they wish to have spent on equipment rather than on trees as the project starts up, and may choose to net soft fruit initially, before investing in a fruit cage at a later date.

Bee Hives :- Bees will be necessary to pollinate the fruit trees in order to get a good crop of fruit. There will need to be one bee colony (hive) for every acre of fruit trees, or at each growing location if a number of sites are to be used. We would need to have an experienced bee keeper available who would be willing to look after the hives. It would then be possible for the project to offer members organic blossom honey and other bee products, in addition to fruit.

Buildings :- It would be desirable to have some inside space available, preferably in close proximity to the main orchard site, from which to operate the project. This could be used for the storage of tools and equipment, storage and distribution of harvested produce, and, if a kitchen area were to be made available, a space in which to make jams and preserves or dried fruit, in order to make the best use of any surplus crops. It would also be desirable to have a reference area or "reading room", where members could go to access information on the correct way to prune a fruit tree, manage a bee hive or find a recipe for a glut of a particular fruit. This would help with the good maintenance of the project.

Volunteers :- The project welcomes volunteers with all manner of skills and experiences. It is hoped that the project will establish a skills exchange within the community, whereby individuals with skills and experience will be willing to pass their knowledge on to others who wish to learn. This would ensure the continuation of those skills through the younger generations within the community. Anyone with a knowledge of fruit growing, bee keeping, jam making, preserving, cooking and baking will be welcome but volunteers who could assist in setting up a website or in issuing a regular newsletter will also be of value, as will anyone who is a willing pair of hands. As the project is intended as a facility for the whole population, it will be necessary to build paths suitable for wheelchair access and to enable everyone, including children and the elderly, to pick fruit whilst remaining dry underfoot. If anyone has the skills necessary to lay such paths, we will be happy to hear from you. Anyone who wishes to become involved with the project in any capacity, even simply deriving joy from it, will be most welcome .

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### What kinds of fruit could be grown?

If sufficient suitable land were to be offered to the project, it would be possible to grow any of the following :-

Apples, Pears, Plums, Cherries, Apricots, Peaches, Nectarines, Figs, Rhubarb, Gooseberries, Currants, Grapes, Hazelnuts, Almonds, Walnuts, Sweet Chestnuts, Raspberries, Strawberries, Blackberries, Kiwi Fruit, Blueberries, Cranberries, Lingonberries and “Superfood” plants ie. Goji Berries, Acai, Honeyberries and Pomegranate. It would be possible to grow a small number of citrus fruit if they could be brought into an unheated greenhouse over the Winter months.

#### What kinds of fruit will not grow?

It will not be possible to grow citrus fruits in any great numbers if our climate remains as it is at present. We will also not be able to grow Bananas, Pineapples, Mango , Papaya, Coconut, Lychee, Dates or any other fruit considered to be “tropical”.

#### Do I need to live in St. Davids to join the project?

No, anyone who wishes to may become a member. If you live in the surrounding area or further afield, you can choose to become a member of the St. Davids project, or you are welcome to use this proposal as a framework for setting up a similar project in your own community.

#### Who is the project aimed at?

Everyone. It is to be hoped that the whole community will become involved in the project to produce our own food. All local schools in the area will be approached to see if they would be interested in using the project as a learning resource, with pupils involved with tree planting, harvesting, fruit tasting days and lessons around bee-keeping or plant cultivation. It may be possible for Ysgol Bro Dewi to grow some fruit bushes in their sensory garden to the front of the school, enabling the children to watch the trees blossom and fruit, and then pick fruit for eating or cooking with. This will help them to understand that their food does not originate on supermarket shelves, but can be found in the environment that surrounds them. The various Care in the Community residents of the city would make a valued contribution to the project, and it would be hoped that they would derive a great deal of pleasure and purpose from their involvement. It is intended that the project will enhance the lives of all sections of the community and be of benefit to all.

#### Will there be enough fruit for everyone?

The more members we have, the greater the number of trees we can plant. It is to be expected that the crop will be limited in the first year after planting but that crop yields will increase year on year as the orchard matures. It is therefore unlikely that the community will be self- sufficient in fruit from the outset. There will also be some trial and error regarding the fruits and varieties that will be most in demand, and those that are less popular. However, it is likely that even in the first year, members will be able to harvest fruit that exceeds the value of their membership fee.

#### Who will decide which trees are planted?

When it has been established how many members the project has and how much money can be spent on buying trees, an initial list of prospective varieties will be drawn up of the most popular fruits eg. apples, pears, plums etc. with a view to providing the longest harvesting period for those crops. The list will then be circulated to members for their input. As the project is a co-operative with the intention of growing crops for our own use, all members will be able to request a variety they wish to have included if they have a particular favourite. Members will then decide if they wish to replace a variety on the list with the one that’s been requested, or to make the requested variety a priority in the next year’s planting schedule. No member will have a request for a particular tree refused.

#### Will fruit be available throughout the year?

Fruit crops are seasonal and therefore do not produce fruit throughout the year. In order to extend the possible harvesting season, fruit varieties will be selected to fruit at different times with some early croppers, some mid-season croppers and some late season and storing varieties. This will extend the availability of fruit over the longest possible time period. However, the greatest variety of tree fruits will be available from the Autumn months, with soft fruits being available through the Summer. Throughout the Spring, there will be no fresh fruits available other than rhubarb and any remaining apples that have been successfully stored. It is therefore imperative to preserve as much fruit as we can when it is available.

#### What will be done with surplus fruit crops?

As indicated above, it is intended that as much fruit as possible is preserved in various ways in order to make the best use of it. Fruits can be preserved by jam and chutney making, freezing, drying, fruit cordials or bottling in syrup or alcohol. These are all traditional ways of preserving produce for use throughout the year. I'm sure there will be members who will be willing to share their knowledge of these methods with others who wish to learn. These preserved fruits could then be sold to the project's members at a price that covers the cost of the additional ingredients used and preserving jars etc. The cost of preserving jars could then be refunded to members if they are returned for re-use. All members will, of course, be able to take home whatever fruit they need to preserve for themselves. This could result in St. Davids acquiring a reputation for such artisan produced preserves.

#### Will the project damage the trade of local businesses?

It is the intention of the project to make locally produced food available to local people. It is hoped that this will lessen consumers' dependence on having to buy from large national supermarket chains and also to free local farmers from having to bear the brunt of the supermarket's price wars. It is hoped that as people become used to sourcing their produce from within St. Davids they will reduce their expenditure in Haverfordwest and increase their expenditure locally, thus boosting the local economy. If local food producers and farmers expand the range and diversity of produce they offer, and local retailers source their stock from within the local area, it could establish the basis for a strong local trading system and the re-emergence of a bustling high street.

It is appreciated that certain local retailers of fruit may be impacted when the trees and bushes in the orchard are cropping heavily and it is understandable that they may be concerned about this. It may be possible to limit their losses by carefully adapting purchasing patterns so that they don't overstock with a particular fruit when it's cropping locally, and to stock more fruits we are not able to grow, eg. bananas etc. When local fruit is out of season there would be a window of opportunity to increase sales of imported fruit.

It is likely that the majority of members of the orchard scheme will be currently doing a large weekly shop in Haverfordwest and "topping up" from local retailers. It is hoped that by increasing the amount and range of food that is produced locally, this pattern can be reversed to the ultimate benefit of farmers and retailers. There are likely to be fluctuations in local trade as the transition from one pattern of buying to another takes place but it should gradually increase in favour of local shops. As the orchard becomes established it may be possible for it to grow sufficient produce to supply local businesses with locally grown fruit. However, it may take a number of years after planting before the project is in the position to do so.

#### How do we stop people taking more than their share, or ensure the fruit doesn't get stolen or the orchard vandalised?

This will largely be an issue of how the project is perceived by local people. If the project is viewed as a community asset and resource, there is the likelihood that people will behave responsibly towards it. It is not intended that fruit be shared out equally between members, but that fruit is picked according to need. It is accepted that some will have a greater need than others but the scheme will work because once someone has paid their membership, ie. bought a tree, they are then free to pick from any of the other trees as they come into season. This extends the overall benefit for all members to a far greater extent than if they had bought a fruit tree and planted it in their garden. For example, if you planted an apple tree in your garden, you would never be able to pick plums. The community orchard is a way of everyone being able to do just that. If people can be made to understand the philosophy behind the project and are then trusted to participate in it for the mutual good, they are more likely to honour that trust than if they were being strictly monitored. Once it is understood that fresh produce will be available for them as it is needed there will be no need to stockpile. Similarly, for those in greatest need of food, it is hoped that they would recognise the benefit to them of becoming part of the project, rather than feeling the need to steal from it. It is considered important to involve local schools in the development of the project, tying in with the school curriculum wherever possible. This will ensure that local people of all ages will feel that the project is part of the community they have contributed to, and have a stake in protecting. If it becomes evident that certain individuals are abusing the facility then it will become necessary to find a way of dealing with the problem, but it is hoped that the project will be valued by all as an important community resource and used accordingly.

#### What will the orchard look like?

The orchard will not look like a commercial orchard as it will not have a single crop that is harvested by machine. The orchard will be designed so that individuals of all ages and abilities will be able to pick fruit easily as it ripens on the trees. The majority of trees will be grown on dwarfing rootstocks to limit their growth and to enable easy picking. All trees will be labelled with the fruit type and name, season of cropping and best uses ie cooking, dessert etc. The overall appearance of the orchard should be that of a formally laid out kitchen garden with paths, wall planting if possible, and some structures for climbing plants. Flowers will need to be grown around the trees so that the bees have a food source at times of year other than only in Spring when the fruit trees are in blossom. This should ensure that the orchard is a very beautiful place in which to spend time. The project would be happy to plant “memory trees” or install seats dedicated to the memory of those who’ve passed.

The foraging area will be more natural in appearance with no paths or structures and planted with native plants.

If grapes were to be planted, wine varieties would be best planted in rows in a vineyard, whilst dessert varieties could be planted over pergolas or against a wall in the orchard.

#### How will the project make money?

It is not the intention of the project to make money, it is the intention to grow a food supply for the local population. It is not anticipated that the project will provide any profits as the community will be planting and harvesting food for their own use rather than for selling on. It will only be possible to purchase trees and equipment out of the funds received from the annual membership fees.

#### How might the project develop in the future?

The orchard will be a further step towards a system of community sponsored agriculture, whereby local people support local farmers to produce their food, rather than depending upon outside sources with unknown provenance.

It is intended that the orchard work to establish links with other community initiatives like Caerhys Organic Farm or Really Wild, and local farmers and producers, with a view to promoting locally sourced produce within the community by the joint staging of events and pooling of resources for mutual benefit.

The project is being developed with a view to potentially establishing St. Davids as not only a centre for history, music and culture, but also as an integrated community of artisan producers and craftspeople. There is the potential to establish a thriving local economy, producing a variety of high quality specialist foods, ceramics, glassware, artworks, knitwear and woven textiles (we have a local alpaca farm) and a wide range of locally produced and handmade items. There is also the potential to develop a local currency or goods exchange scheme for the benefit of the community. The establishment of an “Artisan’s Hub” could supply mutual support and advice to those interested in developing their ideas, and a pooling together of marketing material and events intended to promote St. Davids to potential customers and visitors beyond Pembrokeshire.

#### If you’re interested

This is currently a draft proposal, if you think you may be interested in becoming a member of such a project, or wish to put forward any ideas, comments or concerns, please contact Melanie on:- 01437 721848

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