

Shotley Parish Council

Shotley Community Orchard - Update July 2020

The Shotley Parish Council has been informed by the Group that, unfortunately, a number of trees within the Shotley Community Orchard may have perished.

The Council Chairman has attended a number of meetings with various experts, who have kindly taken the time to visit the site and make some helpful observations and recommendations.

One of the problems appears to be the drought experienced this Spring and Summer. Although all effort has been made to water the trees as much and as often as possible, this may not have been sufficient to mitigate the extremely dry and hot seasons we have experienced.

In addition, a small number of trees came from a site which had been water-logged after the very wet winter and may not have been able to cope with the extreme changes in the environment.

However, something unknown also appears to have been added to the water butts which were being used to water the trees. Two Socks, weighted by square metal nuts, were found at the bottom of both receptacles.



It can be evidenced that weeds around the trees are suffering and showing paler colours than anywhere else. One of the experts who visited the site, and looks after orchards professionally, ascertained that the water remaining in one of the butts was of a significantly different water quality (hardness) to any tap water in this area, despite the fact that it had been filled from a hose pipe connected to a domestic tap.

This matter has been duly reported to Suffolk Police who are investigating it, and it would be wholly inappropriate to comment any further. Closed circuit television is in the process of being installed by the Group and this should deter any further criminal damage.

Experts were of the view that all the above factors could have contributed to the present situation and that the cost of carrying out further tests to establish specific information would be too high to be considered.

In order to address natural causal reasons, the Orchard Group has been advised to continue their diligent watering protocols and to utilise fertilizers and soil improvers. A combination of both should not only secure the wellbeing but promote the recovery of some of the trees. The replacement of some of the trees has already been agreed by one of the suppliers and it is hoped the remaining will be funded by supporters of the scheme.

The Shotley Parish Council has supported the Community Orchard Project by providing the land and match-funding the initial purchase of stocks and materials. The Parish Council does not manage or administer the Community Orchard Group and as such, its involvement is very limited.

Reports and updates, as provided by the Group, will continue to be shared with our Community via the Parish Council website but any specific enquiries regarding sponsoring trees, volunteering or fund-raising activities should be made directly to the Group.