SERPENTINE COMMUNITY GARDEN SOCIETY

High Peak CVS
Community & Voluntary Support

High Peak Borough Council
working for our community

Community Climate Change and Nature Action Fund

Planting

We will plant two bare-root apple trees, selecting a variety known to do well in Buxton's climate, in a patch of untended land in the old depot. The soil is poor, formed of 'made' land, raised from the surrounding parkland with dumped road scrapings, old tarmac and asphalt: basically a patch of brownfield site left to grow wild for many years. We have drawn on advice, sometimes conflicting, from visiting experts in soil science on the feasibility of raising produce from this area. Conclusions from research papers online also vary. We propose a small scale, but long-term, community science study to explore the issue for our own interest and for sharing with others working to rewild or cultivate brownfield sites. One tree will be planted directly into the 'made' soil. The other will be set in good soil in a ton bag located in the same area with same access to sunlight.

The addition of two fruit trees to our Community Garden is a modest contribution to HPBC's aim for significantly increased tree planting. The potential impact for informing new planting and tree care more widely is more significant. We will be planting into poor soil, possibly laced with contaminants common to other brownfield sites. Lessons we learn will be applicable to more extensive planting schemes elsewhere.

Propagation

The second element of the proposed project focuses on sharing knowledge and skills for plant care and propagation. We plan a series of workshops on site from early spring into autumn 2023 to include:

- Seedy Saturday exchange of seeds;
- tree planting;
- mulching and composting - including mini-beast hunt;
- living hedges including bird box, bat box and gourd (bird) home creations;
- seed planting and propagation from cuttings, including bee seed bomb balls, microgreens, potatoes;
- Apple Day.

Research

- soil analysis - three samples from depot area analysed for asbestos, general inorganics, heavy metals content and petrochemical hydrocarbons. Report with comments on suitability for planting. Conducted by Peak Environmental Services;
- ph testing - three samples from depot area taken and tested by volunteers;
- seasonal compare and contrast exercise between the two trees;
- analysis of transmission of identified toxins into roots, leaves, flowers and fruits.

Timing and Costs

The project was approved by High Peak CVS in November 2022. However, it's taken time to secure formal approval for tree planting from the Arboricultural Officer. He is now on board and has also approved work to prune an overhanging branch of willow shading part of the site. The funding of £500 will contribute to the costs of soil analysis, plus purchase of the trees and stakes. An initial report on progress will be made in autumn 2023. The research will continue for as long as the trees live.

* * * * * * * * *