

‘Orchard Meadow’ was acquired in 2008 and at the time was Tolpuddle’s only official public open space. As part of a planning deal, the land was dedicated to the parish on a long-term lease of 999-years which is held by the area parish council. There is also a 106-agreement related to its use as a public open space.

The site was a former orchard identified as such in the 1840’s title map hence the design has intentionally maintained this link with the new fruit tree plantings (which were all sponsored).

The initial management and maintenance plan was produced by representatives of TOSCA (Tolpuddle’s Open Space Community Association) with the assistance of the Parish Council. TOSCA was a fully constituted body which was formed to assist with the development of the open space for the community which ceased operating in 2010. Martin Cooke and Rob Brunt have continued to work on the management of Orchard Meadow through the Parish Council assisted by other volunteers from the community.

Previous Management Plans have been produced, (2009 & 2019), this document replaces both and covers the overall site management, management of the natural features, play equipment and other ‘hard’ structures. The document provides an overview at the end of 2023 of all play equipment.

1. Purpose of the open space

The need for an ‘open space’ for the village was identified in the Village Appraisal in 1996.

Following strong views by villagers, planning officers of West Dorset District Council supported the plan for this area to be developed as public open space with the alternative housing development sited at the eastern end of the village.

The community were fully consulted regarding how the open space would be used and the information was presented to a landscape architect to incorporate these wishes into a design for the area. There was clearly a wish for children’s play equipment, an open area with plenty of short grass for safe play, good access and seating, and provision for quiet appreciation of the view and observing wildlife. It was also preferred that dogs be excluded from the area. It was important therefore that these were the main purposes of the open space and should not be deviated from, unless formally decided by the community and keeping within the terms of the lease.

2. Legal constraints

Section 106 Agreement. 999-year lease (Commenced 1st July 2008)

3. Management arrangements

Orchard Meadow is leased and managed by Puddletown Area Parish Council.

Work within Orchard Meadow will be carried out by:

- Parish Council approved contractors
- Parish Council approved RPII inspector (Register of Play Inspectors International)
- Parish Council Playpark Caretaker, and
- Local volunteers.

Work carried out on site by the Grounds Maintenance contractor is:

- Grass cutting
- Strimming
- Path Maintenance,
- Hedge maintenance
- Weed Control, on paths, Pétanque area,
- Removal of cuttings from volunteer working parties can be arranged at an extra cost.
- Swale Clearance of reed along with any scrub e.g., Willow.
- Coppice of shrubbery.

For specific details of the Grounds Maintenance contract, please contact the Clerk for a copy of the contract documents.

Work carried out on site by Parish Council Contactors other than Grounds maintenance contractor.

- Operational Inspection and Annual Inspection of all playground equipment by RPII Inspector
- Play equipment repairs.

General site repairs.

Work carried out on site by the Caretaker / Parish Council member is:

- Routine inspections
- Minor playground equipment repairs.
- Minor general repairs.

Work carried out on site by the Volunteers:

- Fine pruning of hedges
- Fine pruning of fruit trees
- Weeding in Herbaceous and Long grass area.
- Willow Tunnel pruning / training
- Fine trimming of shrubbery (Annual Coppice from Contractor)
- Minor playground equipment repairs.
- Clear access to storage area
- Bramble & nettle clearance
- Litter Picking

Volunteer work parties have historically occurred on a Sunday morning 3 times a year. Sessions are generally held in November/ December; February; and early July ahead of the Martyr's rally.

4. Maintenance: (Area's indicated on map)

4.1 Short Grass Areas - Area 1 – Toddler Play area, Area 2 Main play area & Area 8 Grass Paths

This area includes, the toddler play area, the main field play area, Under the seats, Grass strips adjacent to paths, Area around nest swing and roundabout, Area to south of pumping station & Paths around meadow.

The area should be maintained to a sward length of around 2-3cm throughout the growing season, normally 1st March to 31st October, by regular mowing as required (which at times may be as frequently as weekly). This will also involve strimming of grass around structures such as play equipment, seats and fences, but excludes the area within the low fence around the old apple tree. The contractor should take extra care around fruit trees when strimming so as not to ring-bark the trees. The contractor should be required to remove the arisings.

4.2 Long Grass Area - Area 3.

Areas include, the area within the low fence around the old apple tree; The areas adjacent to the fence by the stream, The slopes of the swale from the low barrier down but as not to damage any of the plants in the swale & the Roadside verge

The area should be cut once a month. This will involve strimming of grass around structures. Care should be taken to ensure the contractor is aware to look for any signs of basal leaves of bee orchids and if seen to ensure a small patch is not cut to preserve the bee orchid. The contractor should be required to remove the arisings.

4.3 Basketball Area – Area 4

Vegetation growth on the surface will be control by spraying, by a Parish Council approved contractor.

4.4 Hay Meadow – Area 5

The area includes the area around fruit trees, there is no set boundary. The area should be cut once annually in August/September. Except for every fourth year the area should be cut monthly (2023, 2027 etc). The contractor is required to remove the arisings.

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4.5 Hedges / Shrubbery - Area 6

All trees & shrubs will be inspected by a Parish Council contractor, any major work identified will be carried out by an approved Parish Council contractor and minor work identified can be carried out by either a Parish Council approved contractor or the volunteer group.

- Boundary hedges could be trimmed once lightly during growing season and again at the end of the growing season to maintain a height of 1.2m. The Beech hedge running along the norther boundary with the Highway should be trimmed internally to allow access to maintain the fence.
- Internal shrub boarder running along the western boundary (in front of the houses). The boarder is established and should be trimmed once lightly during growing season and again at the end of the growing season to maintain a height of 1.2m. Sides should be trimmed to allow access between the boarder and fence line to the pond.
 - Willow hedge, Willow Tree & Dogwood

The mature Willow trees (including the far side of the Swale) should undergo a crown lift annually to stop any low branches rooting. The Willow hedge & Dogwood should be coppiced annually in late winter.

4.6 Willow tunnel – Area 7

- The willow tunnel should be trimmed to its original shape every year once the leaves have fallen, generally December.
- Ensure that there are no pointed cut stems on the inside or entrance of the tunnel that may cause injury.
- Consideration should be given to periodically cutting down the willow tunnel to ground level to encourage regrowth and replanting it with stems cut at its annual pruning.

4.7 Paths - Area 8 & 9

- Grass - Area 8
Grass paths to be short grass paths. To be cut at the same time as area 1
- Stone – Area 9
Growth on the surface will be control by spraying, by a Parish Council approved contractor.

4.8 Electrical Cable grounding – Area 10

Access to the cable should be kept clear at all times. Brambles and weeds should be removed. Work to be carried out by Parish Council contractor.

4.8 Swale – Area 11

The swale should be kept open and free of sallow scrub growth. Environment Agency (EA) requires the swale to be kept 'reasonably clear'. Over the year reed has developed in the swale, possibly from adjacent thatch. The reed along with any scrub e.g., willow should be removed, annually in the late summer/autumn by brush cutting and removing, the arisings. The entrance to the swale from the stream should not be obstructed and any build-up of debris avoided. In April 2019 a chestnut paling fence was place around the swale following health and safety advice.

4.8 Fruit Trees

All fruit trees should be lightly pruned once a year between 1st November – end February.

4.8 Seat, Fences, Gates, Viewing Platform, Safety Barrier, Tool Shed, Utilities Unit, Wooden play equipment.

Maintenance / repairs may be carried out by either a Parish Council approved contractor, the Parish Playpark Caretaker or volunteers after consultation with the Parish Council. All wooden structures should be cleaned and treated yearly to enhance longevity.

5 Inspections

5.1 Play Equipment.

Regular checks are undertaken on all playpark equipment / structures. (Weekly inspection by approved RSII Outdoor Routine Inspector, quarterly inspections by an approved RSII Outdoor Routine Inspector & an annual inspection by an approved RSII Outdoor Annual Inspector. Large maintenance / repairs will be undertaken by a Parish Council approved contractor. Minor maintenance / repairs

may be carried out by either the Parish Playpark Caretaker or volunteers after consultation with the Parish Council. An item may need to be closed if urgent repairs cannot be undertaken immediately. Past RSII inspections reports can be viewed by contracting the Parish Council.

5.2 Seats Fences, Gates, viewing platform, Safety barrier, Tool shed, Utilities Unit.
Inspection should be carried out in line with the play equipment inspections.

5.3 Paths, Reinforced track & Signs
Inspection should be carried out in line with the play equipment inspections.

6. General

6.1 Services

Within the Utilities Unit adjacent to the trackway is a water supply and a 6-socket electricity supply. This unit should be locked at all times, with access only with prior approval from the Parish Council before each event.

6.2 Shed

Within the tool shed behind the Pétanque area, basic hand tools are kept by the volunteers for their working parties. The shed should be locked at all times, with access only with prior approval from the Parish Council approval.

6.3 Reinforced trackway

From the entrance gate southwards towards the kickwall is a reinforced trackway suitable for large and heavy vehicles

6.4 Seats

There are several seats / benches around the area.

6.5 Budgets

The Parish Council are financially responsible for all repairs and maintenance within Orchard Meadow.

6.6 Bat Boxes

Two bat boxes have been installed within Orchard Meadow. These are not to be disturb by any party without the correct licence.

6.7 Third Party events

Events organised by third parties are required to submit a booking form to the Parish Council.

Puddletown Area Parish Council

Orchard Meadow – Management Plan – Adopted November 2023

4 Timetable of annual maintenance

TASK	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	OPERATOR
BRAMBLE & NETTLES													
Clearance		■					■				■		V
FRUIT TREES													
Prune		■									■		V
GRASS AREAS													
Cut / Strimming			■										PC-C
HAY MEADOW													
Cut								■					PC-C
HEDGES / Shrubbery Borders													
Annual Cut back											■		PC-C
Mid-Season - Fine Prune					■								V
Willow Hedge - Coppice		■											PC-C
Dogwood - Coppice		■											PC-C
HERBACEOUS & LONG GRASS AREA													
Weed Control		■					■				■		V
LITTER PICKING													
Litter Picking		■					■				■		V
PATHS													
Weed Clearing			■										PC-C
Maintenance	■												PC-C
PETANQUE													
Weed Clearing			■										PC-C
Maintenance	■												PC-C
STORAGE AREA													
Clearance of area		■					■				■		V
SWALE:													
Remove scrub growth									■				PC-C
WILLOW TUNNEL:													
Trim											■		V
Weave in stems											■		V
WOOD CLEAN / TREATMENT													
Clean / Treat Wood			■										PC-C

Key	
V	Volunteers
PC-C	Parish Council - Contractor

Map



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Red Lines Orchard Meadow Outer Boundary


Area 1 - Yellow Lines– Toddler Play Area (1 area identified on map).


Area 2 - Orange Line – Play Area (3 areas identified on map).


Area 3 - Pink Line – Long Grass Area – (5 areas identified on map).

Area 4 – Black Lines – Basketball Area (1 area identified on map).


Area 5- Cream Line – Hay Meadow (1 areas identified on map).


Area 6 –  Hedge / Shrubby borders - 4 areas identified on map.


Area 7 –  Willow Tunnel

Area 8 –  Grass path to cut at same time as area 1 (3 areas identified on map).

Care when cutting grass to be taken west of area 4 as Bee Orchids found here.

Area 9 –  Stone path to be kept clear of weeds and edged. (1 area identified on map).

Area 10  Electrical Cable grounding (1 area identified on map).

Area 11  Swale – Seasonal Wet land (1 area identified on map).