

The hundredth urban orchard will be planted this winter

Development funding of £48,800 has been awarded by the HLF to help The Urban Orchard Project progress its plans to apply for a full grant of £671,300 at a later date.

A Celebration of Orchards aims to restore a total of 30 orchards over three years, during which 3,500 people will be trained in orchard skills.

The charity has risen to prominence by planting urban orchards across the capital, many of them in deprived areas. The 100th urban orchard will be planted this winter.

Kath Rosen, CEO of The Urban Orchard Project, said: “There is a huge resurgence of interest in planting and restoring orchards and learning about heritage fruit growing skills, particularly in urban areas. Old maps show orchards all around the capital and even in the centre.”

London, Surrey and Middlesex used to be primary fruit growing regions, and many old varieties were developed in South and South East London, a history echoed today by varieties with names such as Merton Joy and Hounslow Wonder.

The Lea Valley and West London also used to have vast orchards – the latter replaced by Heathrow Airport's runways, just a few metres away from the cemetery where the gardener who developed the Cox Orange Pippin is buried.

The orchards planned for restoration include: ones at Down House in Bromley, Charles Darwin's house where he used apple trees to demonstrate artificial selection and Bethlem Royal Hospital, also in Bromley, where there is a mature orchard of over 200 fruit trees.

Sue Bowers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund London, said: "The Heritage Lottery Fund is delighted to support a project which will stimulate people's interest in nature. Through A Celebration of Orchards the community will learn new skills, discover new passions and play their part as custodians of our wonderful natural heritage."

Notes to editors

A first-round pass means the project meets HLF criteria for funding and HLF believes the project has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award.

On occasion, an applicant with a first-round pass will also be awarded development funding towards the development of their scheme.

About The Urban Orchard Project
The Urban Orchard Project is the only organisation solely dedicated to promoting orchards in urban areas in the UK.

Its vision is of urban areas swathed in fruit trees; with a high-quality of life for all, where the interrelation between the natural world and people is enhanced, where orchards act as a positive force for community development and cities are prepared for a changing climate.

As a result of the charity's tree planting and community engagement model a very high tree survival rate has been achieved of more than 90 per cent, much higher than levels achieved by local authorities or other tree planting charities.

People involved with having a community orchard have said:

- It has raised the standard of living
- It has raised the interest in growing and responsibility for food production
- It is a community asset
- People like the idea of looking out upon it, and the thought of it bearing fruit
- It has brought people together
- Our community are beginning to reclaim the site for them to enjoy
- The area has been transformed into a place where people have picnics, parties and sunbathe
- Dog owners are keeping it cleaner and mess-free and more children are seen in there. It has ensured that it won't be used as a storage or dumping site and helps safeguard it from developers
- We are now planning to make it into a wildlife area
- It's in the heart of our estate so visible to all. It's great to have something special for the community on the estate as opposed to the usual low maintenance shrubs
- The best thing about having an orchard is the opportunity for our inner-city children to have an understanding of how things grow and ultimately to see and eat the fruit. This is especially important, as many of our children do not have a garden
- The children have learnt about how to plant trees and take care of them. They were excited about having a tree for each class to look after

- We've made or deepened our links with neighbours and the wider community in a very significant way. And we've become good friends

Visit the Urban Orchard Project website for more information.