

Allotment Site Visit – 31 March 2026

1. Purpose of Report

To update Council on the joint site visit undertaken by the Open Spaces Committee, the Allotment Committee and Trees in Time on 31 March 2026, and to present recommendations requiring Council approval before any works can begin.

2. Background

Recent hedge works at the allotment site prompted a review of the boundary, the condition of the bank, and the potential use of the additional cleared plot. The site visit was arranged to consider options and gather information; no decisions were taken on site.

Since the visit, the Allotment Committee has successfully secured grant funding from the council for the creation of a communal area, and the Clerk has secured 120 free trees from the Woodland Trust for hedge regeneration. The grant can be declined if the Committee does not wish to proceed, but an early application was necessary due to high demand.

All proposed works would be carried out by volunteer allotment holders.

3. Summary of Key Points from the Site Visit

3.1 Proposed Use of the Additional Plot

- The Parish Council previously cleared an allotment plot with the intention of re-letting it (five people remain on the waiting list).
- The Allotment Committee advised that the level of root removal required makes re-letting impractical.
- Tenants were consulted and expressed a preference for creating a communal area comprising:
 - one-third of the plot for a Trees in Time tree nursery
 - a deadwood hedge for shared use to reduce bonfires
 - a small orchard (approx. six fruit trees) with seating
- Advice on suitable fruit tree species will be sought from resident expert.

3.2 Access and Public Use

- Increased deer activity and unauthorised public access to Kinsmans Dale have been observed since the hedge works, resulting in dog fouling on site.

- The Allotment Committee requested signage stating that there is no right of way to Kinsmans Dale and will draft suggested wording.
- A post-and-rail barrier was proposed to discourage access.
- Deer fencing was considered but deemed too expensive.

3.3 Hedge and Bank Condition

- Approximately 20ft of bank has collapsed. Two options were discussed:
 - rebuilding the collapsed wall/bank, potentially involving young people seeking work experience
 - using a mini-digger to steepen and stabilise the bank for replanting in autumn
- A working party will clear the area to allow access.
- The upper section of the hedge requires banking up; Cllrs Austin and Keep have potentially offered to undertake this work.

3.4 Hedge Regeneration

- Trees in Time estimate the fence line at 88m.
- A full replant would require approx. 264 trees, but with existing growth retained, around 150 new trees are likely to be needed.
- Suggested species: hazel, rowan, oak, spindle, and possibly hawthorn (noting reservations about suitability for future laying).
- Grant funding opportunities were discussed, including contacting Devon Wildlife Trust for tree stock.
- Involving local youth groups (Scouts/Youth Club) in planting was suggested.
- Trees in Time will prepare costings and a species list to support a grant application.

4. Officer Considerations

- Formal Council approval is required before any change of use, volunteer works or grant applications proceed.
- Insurance and risk management considerations apply to volunteer labour and hedge/bank works.
- Signage and access-management measures require Council approval as they relate to public access and land management.

- A clear decision on the preferred method of bank restoration is needed before any works can be scheduled.

5. Recommendations

Council is asked to resolve the following:

5.1 Use of the Additional Plot

That Council approves in principle the allocation of the cleared plot as a communal area comprising:

- one-third for a Trees in Time nursery
- a deadwood hedge for shared use
- a small orchard and seating area

5.2 Volunteer Works

That Council authorises:

- the Allotment Committee's volunteer working party to undertake root and weed removal
- Trees in Time and approved volunteers to carry out hedge-related works
- volunteers to construct the deadwood hedge and install orchard planting and seating

5.3 Grant Funding

That Council approves the preparation and submission of grant applications to support hedge regeneration, orchard planting and communal-area improvements, with officer support as required.

5.4 Signage and Access Management

That Council approves:

- installation of signage stating that there is no right of way to Kinsmans Dale (final wording to be approved by the Clerk)
- installation of a post-and-rail barrier to discourage unauthorised access

5.5 Hedge and Bank Restoration

That Council selects and approves one of the following approaches:

- **Option A:** rebuild the collapsed wall/bank, potentially involving young people seeking work experience

- **Option B:** use a mini-digger to steepen and stabilise the bank for replanting in autumn