

# Member's Guide to Meadow Orchard



The Meadow Orchard Project

Form issued by: Trustee board

Version: 010825-1

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## 1. Welcome & Overview

Welcome! This guide is a companion to help you move through our organisational structure with clarity and intention. Amongst other things, it explains:

- ways you can participate,
- how we make decisions and how you can have your voice heard, and
- how to hold trustees accountable when needed.

We are member-led; by those who turn up, who repair fences and weave willow, who dream into what the meadow orchard could become and join in making it happen. If you're holding this guide, it's because you are part of that dream, and we believe your voice, energy, and way of seeing the world are essential to its unfolding.

Everyone in this organisation is a volunteer, although we don't all contribute in the same way. There is no hierarchy of worth here, only different forms of stewardship.

- **Trustees** are elected members who help hold the legal and ethical shape of the project. They're stewards of structure, making sure we follow our constitution, the law, and remain rooted in our purpose.
- **Members** are voting participants - people who help shape decisions, carry out changes, hold each other accountable, and keep our community culture evolving. Members are not just a list, they are the lifeblood of this project.
- **Volunteers** are non-voting contributors who give time, skill, and care in countless ways. Their value is immeasurable. Some may become members, while others may remain beloved co-creators outside the formal structure.

Some of this guide may feel a little formal at times. For example, we utilise forms as tools to help us track what's being asked, follow up clearly, and make sure nothing falls through the cracks. When we mention them below we want you to see them as an invitation to participate, to create something new, and to help shape our charity. You don't need to use them to be heard, but they are here if you want help making something happen.

If you want to view our full constitution, you can do so here: [\[Constitution of the Meadow Orchard Project 2025\]](#), and you can read our members' guide to the constitution here: [\[Clause by Clause Guide\]](#), if you would like to see the clauses elaborated on.

As a member you must also adhere to our policies and expectations around conduct. You can find our relevant policies here: [\[Policy Compendium\]](#), and you can also view the site use agreement here: [\[Site Use Agreement\]](#) - just so that you have the full context.



## 2. So Much More Than Meetings

*As a member, you have many pathways available to you, to help shape our project with your hands, your voice, or your presence*

### 2.1 Site leading and events

**Lead volunteer days:** Offer to lead a site volunteering day as a “site leader”, which is how we stay open! As a site lead, you will help set the rhythm for others to join in: orienting new volunteers, ensuring safety, and building connections through shared work. Most offer their time 5-8 times a year, and we need each member to do this at least twice a year if they can.

**Organise events or activities:** Run a seasonal celebration, host a workshop, or create a gathering that brings people into the orchard’s spirit. From solstice gatherings to composting talks, you don’t need permission to share what you’re passionate about - just some coordination.

Start with a chat - with a trustee, another member, or someone who’s hosted before. You can use the [\[Site Use & Event Form\]](#) to map out your plans and make sure everything’s aligned.

**Why this matters:** Our space is held by people showing up, sharing food, stories, and purpose. The life of the orchard depends on people creating moments for others to connect.

### 2.2 Join or Create a Subgroup

**Join a subgroup:** Step into an area of shared care. Composting, events, fundraising, finance - subgroups are where things happen, and where energy becomes action. Ask who’s already involved - you don’t have to “join officially” to start helping. Begin with a conversation to see where help is needed and what lights you up.

**Propose a new subgroup:** If no one’s holding something you think matters - from building repair to education outreach - you can propose a new subgroup. You’ll need a few committed members and a clear focus. The subgroup structure is simply a tool to ensure you have the decision making power you may need to carry out important work. It may look a little daunting at first, and remember that the trustees are here to help!

The [\[Subgroup Formation & Terms of Reference Form\]](#) helps sketch that out and clarify scope and accountability. We recommend you do this together with the trustees.

**Why this matters:** Subgroups decentralise power. They let members lead, act, and decide - within clear boundaries - without waiting for trustee sign-off. It’s how we move from meetings to momentum.



## 2.3 Support Behind the Scenes

**Support our governance:** The garden is what people see, but what roots us to this place needs maintenance too. You can help with record keeping, minutes, social media, grant applications, finances, or writing policies. These quiet tasks are no less part of the orchard's health. Just speak to a trustee about where help is needed - you might be surprised at how your skills can support things you've never seen.

**Request access:** If you need login details or system access to support your work, you can request them through the [[Password Request Form](#)] - or simply ask someone for support if you're not sure what you need yet.

Why this matters: We may be held together by care - but the "unseen" labour is what keeps us here, the books balanced, and the policies accountable. Even if it's not visible, it's vital.

## 2.4 Give feedback or raise concerns

**Submit feedback:** You don't need a big plan to start shaping the orchard - sometimes the first act of care is just naming something that feels off, unclear, or ready to grow. You don't always have to be the one to fix it - sometimes saying something is plenty helpful. A simple conversation with a trustee or fellow member can be enough to begin.

You can use the [[Feedback & Concerns Form](#)] if you want your suggestion to be logged and followed up formally.

**Why this matters:** Small feedback can lead to big improvements. Clear, caring feedback makes sure our ways of working reflect who we really are - and where we want to go.

## 2.5 Flag the need for a minor purchase

**Tell us when we need something:** See something the orchard needs - like new tools, plants, or a repair? You can request that we purchase it, or ask for funding if you wish to lead on it. If you're unsure you can always raise it with a trustee or subgroup lead first, as they'll be able to advise you on costs and available budgets.

Use the [[Expense & Purchase Form](#)] to show what you need, why it matters, and how it fits our aims.

Why this matters: When members get involved with how we're spending our limited funds, we keep our resources focused on what really supports the mission.



## 2.6 Always remember...

You don't need a title to take initiative. You don't need permission to care. Every small action - weeding a path, offering feedback, sharing an idea - strengthens the roots of this place. Stewardship begins with noticing what needs care - and offering your time.

## 3. Influencing Decisions and Changes

*This is how you help guide what the orchard becomes from everyday ideas to big changes*

### 3.1 Start a conversation with other members

Almost every decision, proposal, or policy change starts with a simple conversation. Talk through your idea with another member, a subgroup, or a trustee. Test it, shape it, sense whether others feel the same way. You don't need perfect words or forms to begin - you just need to care enough to ask: *"Could this be better?"*

### 3.2 Bring Forward Ideas & Proposals

**Submit a resolution:** If you have an idea that would benefit MOP - a new project, a shift in how something works - you can propose it formally through a **"resolution"**. This is legal language for how a proposed change or action becomes a formal decision that we can act on. It's a big part of how you can have your voice heard, and you can submit "resolutions" for upcoming meetings or for circulation to the membership in writing.

The [\[Resolution Form\]](#) helps you clearly capture the decision you wish to make, so it can be shared, discussed, and voted on. You can start by sounding it out with someone, as it's often much easier to craft together.

If you wish members to make a decision on a more complex initiative or project, the [\[Project Planning Form\]](#) can help you and your collaborators answer some basic questions before bringing it to the wider membership.

Why this matters: This is how good ideas don't get lost in the weeds.

### 3.3 Shape Policies & Internal Rules

**Request a policy review:** If you notice an internal rule that feels unclear, outdated, or at odds with how we work, you can suggest a review. This could be about safety, access, finances, or a subgroup's ways of working.

Use the [\[Policy Review Request Form\]](#) to log your suggestion - or talk through the issue first at a subgroup meeting or with a trustee.

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Why this matters: Policies guide how we treat each other, make decisions, and share the land. When they stay responsive they stay relevant.

## 3.4 Propose Long-Term Structural Change

**Plan a constitutional amendment:** Sometimes a change runs deeper, like reshaping voting rights, membership structures, or trustee roles. If so, you can start a careful, collaborative process to propose an amendment to the constitution.

Use the **[Constitutional Amendment Proposal Form]** to map out your idea, gather input, and plan the steps for full member discussion and consent.

Why this matters: The constitution holds our core agreements. Members have the power to reshape it when it no longer reflects who we are or where we're going.

## 3.5 Stand for Trustee Roles

**Stand for election:** Trustees are elected by members to guide and protect our collective aims. If you care about governance, fairness, and our big picture, you can stand for election - or nominate someone you trust to do the role well.

Talk to a current trustee if you'd like to know what it involves before you put yourself forward, and maybe have a peek at some official guidance: [Charity trustee: what's involved \(CC3a\)](#). If it looks a little daunting, remember that the trustees are also a team and you won't be doing it alone!

Why this matters: This is where power and responsibility come together. Who holds these roles shapes how we all grow.

## 3.6 Remember...

Your first step is rarely a form, but a conversation. Talk it through, test your idea, share it in a circle - then use the tools when you want to root your proposal or concern firmly in our governance. Every question, idea, or challenge is a seed - plant it well and help it grow.

## 4. Voting and Representation

*How your courage and your vote helps steer Meadow Orchard's direction.*



## 4.1 Take Part in the Decision-Making Process

**Show up for Meetings:** You don't have to be an expert to take part - you just need to care about what happens next. General Meetings are where big decisions get made, ideas are tested, and resolutions are decided. We aim to use **sociocratic consent**: proposals are shaped together, concerns are heard, and objections are welcomed.

**Contribute with courage:** Ask questions. Share doubts. Check you understand what's being proposed and why. If you spot a gap, say so. It's your right and your role to speak up. Your questions might be the ones that help others see things more clearly too.

**Voice an objection:** When you believe a proposal could cause harm or conflict with our aims, you can raise a **reasoned objection**. Objections aren't about blocking ideas just because you disagree. They're about protecting the community from risks or misalignment.

If you're unfamiliar with Sociocracy and reasoned objections, you can look at the **[Reasoned Objection Form]** to help structure yours. You can simply voice your objection in the relevant meeting, or submit it using the form if it's a written resolution.

Why this matters: True consent means people feel safe to say *no*, *not yet*, or *this could harm us*. It keeps our decisions thoughtful, not rushed.

## 4.2 Use Your Vote

**Vote on big decisions:** Voting is your clearest way to steer what happens next. Leadership, policies, funding, constitutional changes - these are shaped by the hands that show up to vote. No one voice should ever carry all the weight. A healthy vote keeps the orchard genuinely member-led.

**Nominate a proxy:** If you can't be there in person, you can still have your say. Use the **[Proxy Notice Form]** to enable another member to vote on your behalf and to say how you'd like your vote to be used.

Why this matters: Life happens. The proxy process means your voice doesn't go missing just because you can't be in the room.

## 4.3 Remember...

Before every tick in a box or raised hand, there's a conversation. Ask. Clarify. Check your gut. Your vote is a thread that ties you to every decision we make together.



## 5. Holding Power to Account

*How you help keep trustees, subgroups, and decisions aligned with our mission and values*

### 5.1 Raise Concerns, Complaints, or Grievances

**Speak up if something feels wrong:** Often the first act of courage is simply naming what you see. If you see something that risks harm to people, our space, or the integrity of how we run things, we need you to speak up. Start by sharing what you've noticed with a trustee or someone you trust.

If you want your concern formally recorded, use the [\[Incidents, Complaints & Grievances Form\]](#) to make sure it's tracked and acted on. You can also use the [\[Feedback & Concerns Form\]](#) if you want your concerns to be made anonymously.

Why this matters: We can't fix what we don't see. Honest feedback, even when uncomfortable, helps us protect this space for everyone.

### 5.2 Ask for Clarity & Transparency

**Request information:** Accountability starts with questions: "Was this properly agreed?"; "What did we spend that money on?"; or "Whose responsibility is this?" You're always free to ask in a meeting or one-to-one too - a simple question can bring needed light.

If you want to see minutes, or check how money is being spent, you can request documents using the [\[Document Request Form\]](#).

Why this matters: Transparency keeps trust alive. When members check the books and records, it reminds everyone that power is held on behalf of all.

### 5.3 Trigger Trustee Accountability Processes

**Request a performance review:** If you feel a trustee isn't fulfilling their role, you can raise this with the board in conversation, or you and other members can use the [\[Trustee Performance Review Request Form\]](#), to formally request that their performance is reviewed.

**Propose removal if needed:** In rare cases, if a trustee's actions risk serious harm or violate our mission, you and other members can propose removal through the [\[Motion of No Confidence / Trustee Removal Request Form\]](#).



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Why this matters: Trustees are granted power by members electing them. Your willingness to question or challenge that power is part of what keeps Meadow Orchard healthy and accountable.

## 5.4 Start with conversations, and use Forms for clarity

Accountability is about protection. It's how we keep the orchard rooted in trust, even when mistakes happen. Forms exist to record serious concerns - not to make them harder to raise. If a form feels overwhelming, begin by talking with someone. Your spoken word has weight - the form just keeps it on record so things don't get lost or ignored.

## 5.5 Remember...

Silence lets problems grow unseen. When you ask questions, speak up, or hold power to account, you're tending the vital foundations of our governance. Courageous conversation is how trust grows.

## 6. A Toolbox for Participation

*How you can turn your ideas, questions, and concerns into real action*

Forms help hold our governance together, but it's your voice, your ideas, and your conversations that keep it alive. Before you ever pick up a form, always remember that you can start by talking to someone. You don't have to do it alone - a fellow member, a trustee, or a subgroup lead can help you figure out what you want to say and where it fits best.

Here's a snapshot of what each form does, and when you might use it. If you're unsure which one fits, ask another member or a trustee to talk it through. Remember that the form is just a container - your presence and your questions are the real action.

Name	Categories	Description
<a href="#">Communication and Accommodation Passport</a>	#Equality; #Meetings;	For expressing your communication preferences and other accommodation needs.
Constitutional Amendment Proposal Form	#Legal; #Policy; #Proposal	For planning a change to our core rules and legal foundations.
Document Request Form	#Accountability; #Legal	Request to see official minutes, decisions, financials or other key records.

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<a href="#">Expense &amp; Purchase Form</a>	#Finance; #Legal; #Proposal	Ask for funds or approval to make a purchase that supports our work.
<a href="#">Feedback &amp; Concerns Form</a>	#Reporting	Share any worry, suggestion, or idea for how we can do better together.
General Meeting Request Form	#Accountability; #Meetings; #Legal	Call a General Meeting if something very urgent needs everyone's voice.
<a href="#">Incidents, Complaints &amp; Grievances Form</a>	#Legal; #Reporting	Report serious issues or conflicts that need formal follow-up and action.
Meeting Proxy Register	#Meetings; #Resolution; #Voting	Kept by the meeting facilitator as an official record of who is voting on behalf of whom in a meeting.
Membership Form	#Legal	Fill out to join Meadow Orchard as a voting member, or to renew your membership, with all rights and responsibilities.
<a href="#">Password Request Form</a>	#Accountability; #Proposal	Request access to shared logins or systems needed for your responsibilities.
Policy Review Request Form	#Legal; #Policy; #Proposal	Suggest changes to a rule, process or policy that needs improvement.
<a href="#">Project Planning Form</a>	#Proposal; #Resolution	Develop and describe a new initiative or complex project before bringing it forward.
Proxy Notice Form	#Meetings; #Resolution; #Voting	Submit before a meeting to nominate someone to vote on your behalf, if you can't attend.
Reasoned Objection Form	#Meetings; #Resolution; #Voting	Use to structure any concerns you may have that a proposal could cause harm or conflict with our aims.
<a href="#">Resolution Form</a>	#Meetings; #Resolution;	Propose a decision for members to discuss and vote on together.
<a href="#">Resolution Meeting Voting Record</a>	#Meetings; #Resolution; #Voting	Record a vote and decision on a resolution at a meeting.
Risk Assessment Form	#Events	Identify risks and outline safety steps for your planned event or activity.

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<a href="#">Site Use &amp; Event Form</a>	#Events; #Proposal	Plan or request approval to reserve an area or host an event or activity at our site.
<a href="#">Subgroup Formation &amp; Terms of Reference Form</a>	#Legal; #Proposal	Propose a new subgroup with clear roles, purpose and decision powers.
<a href="#">Trustee Acknowledgement of Duties Form</a>	#Accountability; #Legal	Signed by new trustees to confirm their understanding and acceptance of their legal duties.
Trustee Performance Review Request Form	#Accountability; #Legal	Band together with other members to request a performance review, if you feel a trustee isn't fulfilling their role well.
Trustee Removal Form / Motion of No Confidence	#Accountability; #Legal; #Proposal	Band together with other members to trigger the formal process to remove a trustee if necessary.
Voting Poll Sheet	#Meetings; #Resolution; #Voting	Used by the meeting facilitator to record and count votes accurately if a poll is called during a meeting.

These forms help us to:

- Create a clear paper trail, so nothing gets lost or forgotten.
- Keep decisions transparent and fair.
- Help us show the Charity Commission that we run our charity responsibly.

Forms exist to help your ideas, requests, and concerns stay visible and get acted on, but they're never a gate that stops you from taking part. Sometimes, the simplest way to protect your idea, or hold someone to account, is to write it down, and the record you leave behind to help others care well too.

## 7. Support and Contact

*Who to reach out to, how to get help, and what happens when you do*

### 7.1 Reach Out Anytime

Participation doesn't mean you have to do everything alone. Questions, worries, unfinished ideas - these are all part of caring for the orchard. If you're stuck, unsure, or want to check where to begin, **ask**. A quiet conversation is sometimes the strongest step you can take.

- Don't know which pathway fits best? Start by explaining what you see and we'll find the right tool or next step.

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- Not sure how to fill in a form? A trustee or experienced member can help you shape your words and complete it.

## 7.2 How to Contact Us

You can reach out in whatever way feels most comfortable:

- Speak in person at a General Meeting, event, or volunteer days
- Email: [meadoworchardproject@gmail.com](mailto:meadoworchardproject@gmail.com)
- Website: [meadoworchard.org](http://meadoworchard.org)

## 7.3 How Your Feedback is Handled

Feedback is care. It keeps us honest and helps us grow stronger together. When you share an idea, suggestion, or concern, it's never ignored.

Some things can be resolved quickly, others need deeper discussion. Trustees, subgroups, or the full membership may review your feedback.

If you're using a form you're already helping to create a clear paper trail, so nothing gets lost or forgotten. The process for each form will be outlined in the form guidance, but you can follow up any time if you want to check where your request has got to. It's your right to ask how decisions are progressing

## 7.3 A Final Reminder

You don't need to know every rule or process to be part of this. Your presence - and your willingness to speak up - are what keep Meadow Orchard alive, transparent, and member-led. Together we are the roots, together we grow strong.