

Appendix C: Fairfield AGM 2017 FFOG Report

There has been a slight shift in emphasis this year in FFOG. We now hold extra meetings to discuss monitoring reports and major issues and in some areas are developing medium term plans.

As Ian said, the proposals for Little Wood form part of a broader woodland management plan. For example the trees in Pony Wood are old and may need replacing and there is concern over the ash, loss of which would have noticeable impact on the landscape.

Ian has also produced proposals, which will go to the next FFOG for the on-going maintenance of the hedgerows, so as to encourage low, dense growth at the bottom, and to create diversity across the reserve.

A further aspect of this move towards more forward planning is to establish regular meetings with the graziers to review the herd, the condition of the grazing land and the facilities.

In practical management there is a move towards discrete groups working outside of the general volunteer sessions:

hedgelaying and ragworting working parties are well established and we are now setting up scything and caring for the trees in the orchard in the same way. Scything will be used for control of the rushes for example. And the aging fruit trees need some TLC

This year the arable crop is wheat - using the same farmer who was pleased with his crop last year and is very good to work with. The birdseed margin is very successful but other margins less so - so we are planning to harrow parts to encourage a stronger growth of broadleaved plants.

Another area of some concern is the channel from Lucy Brook to the pond in Upper Sowerholme which is choked with mares tail and rushes. It may need dredging out again.

A quick review of wildlife highlights

In the winter snipe numbers were maintained and there were the usual flocks of linnets and migrant thrushes.

Roe deer are back on the reserve and there have been regular sightings of hare and grey partridge including young, as well as a range of small birds such as reed buntings and warblers.

A Little Owl was spotted by the Pony Wood extension, and a hedgehog in Big Meadow.

We have seen lapwing in the arable field (We put out decoys to attract them - suggesting that Fairfield is a lapwing des res.) but it is difficult to be sure that they successfully rearing young.

Invertebrates are important: recently a member of the Lancashire Naturalists remarked "every year it gets better". I think there has been frog spawn

The hay meadow is showing an increase in species typical of lowland meadows, yellow rattle in particular is abundant.

Informal Monitoring continues to be important:

Oliver has been trained in bumblebee monitoring

One of our members reports on butterfly sightings

As always we need more people to report on the blog, take photos and get involved.

