

AGM 2022 Chair's Report

My first job is to welcome everybody to a meeting that is very different from the one we held last year when Covid was still quite a large threat, there were few of us and we all wore masks.

Looking back through the year

Looking back, it has been a very busy year, although Covid concerns led to the cancellation of some of the FA's planned events. We held a very successful Easter Egg Hunt in April thanks to Carole Martin and Emma Foster, a Picnic in the Play Area in June, a Volunteers Picnic in early August (thanks to Emma Foster) and Apple Day on the first day of October (thanks to Veronica and Paul Pavlos and Patricia Clarke). Our Apple Day celebrations included a collaboration with Ukrainian volunteers thanks to Michael Sheppard, a collaboration which we expect to continue at future events, both theirs and ours. We also added a new communal event to our calendar: the Open Yards (thanks to John Barry) and we were part of the City Nature Challenge, a wet and soggy event. We ran a Meadow Exhibition over two weeks in the Storey Institute thanks to very talented Laura Whittam. I know that a number of people were disappointed not to see the Meadow Exhibition and we are currently negotiating for other places to display the panels.

This year, there has also been a great demand for tours around the Nature Reserve. These included students from the Linguistics department at the University, Malaysian students from the University, people from the University with an interest in the arts and participants at the national AONB Conference which this year was held in Lancaster.

Volunteering continues to be organised on a regular basis, on the first Saturday of each month and every Wednesday morning and I would like to thank Ian Procter for all the effort he puts in to make this a success and also to the preparations needed to make sure marquees, tables and chairs are in place for all our events. On October 1st, Ian and his generator saved the day when the day before, we unexpectedly lost our source of water and electricity and Fraser who takes care of the White Park cattle, stepped in and provided water. Our outreach into schools has now returned on a regular basis, thanks to the efforts of Tony Finn and during the year, there have been 7 visits from Dallas Road and Willow Lane with children from year 4 down to reception. Activities have included a hedgerow habit study, tree and leaf activity and of course the ever popular minibeast hunts! We are about to restart our occasional lectures in the Storey Institute, open to all ages.

Future Events for your diary.

We have, as usual produced a calendar, which will be on sale at the Green Fair on November 19th. When Carole Martin left, we felt very nervous about producing the calendar without her but thanks to Sue Nieduszynska and the calendar girls which now include many new faces, we have missed Carole but we have managed and the calendar is once again a triumph of what the FA can do when we pull together. If you are unable to get to the Green Fair, you can order one by contacting Sue or filling out the form at the back of the room.

Other significant events include a visit next month from Glenn Swainson, manager of Gait Barrow who will be giving a talk entitled Bigger, Better, More Connected: emerging themes in nature conservation in the Storey Institute on November 17th 7.30 – 8.30 pm. Looking further ahead we hope that this year we will once more be Carol Singing around the streets of Lancaster and Wassailing on January 14th 2023.

Finally, sometime in February can I encourage you all to buy the North Lancashire Wildlife Group Newsletter which has an article about the Fairfield Association, our history and the things we do. The North Lancashire Wildlife Group are expert in many areas of wildlife and have consistently

enabled us to host events such as the City Nature Challenge, and provided us with data for our records. Please support them by buying their newsletter which is always an interesting read.

Finance

This was the first year in which we have had prolonged discussions about our funds – on the grounds that there was too much money in our bank account! After exploring the matter at some length, the Fairfield Association Committee decided that in the context of our responsibilities and commitments, we should maintain our current holdings. In retrospect, we have been shown to be wise, in that one of the large grants which we hoped would provide funding for the play area, failed to materialise, meaning that we are currently around £40,000 short of our target. We are also very aware, that in the current climate, our NE agreement which we believe will continue for the next five years, may not be replaced by revenue of the same order. The money which we receive from NE is our largest source of revenue (around £8,000 pa). Our only other predictable source of revenue comes from Fairfield Friends and I would like to thank Geoff Oliver for the work he has put into creating this. If you have been to any of our recent events, you will also have noticed that we are now able to take cards, thanks to Dave Brookes for his work on this. Our restructured website should be available very shortly thanks to the work of Jonathan and Julia McDowell. It has been re-designed and is currently in the process of being evaluated and should be live in the next couple of months. It will include new possibilities for donations including such as a Just Giving type site which is free of charge and called Wonderful many thanks to Bethany Haughey.

Pending

There are always things pending. We have still not achieved Local Nature Reserve status. However, experience has shown me that sometimes the FA moves ahead in leaps and bounds and sometimes progress is frustratingly slow. At the end of the day, the trustees know that they are always working within a great community that responds to the challenge when needed. Other people will have more to say about the different areas of activity we undertake: our play area, our Orchard and our Nature Reserve.

Finish with thanking everybody and giving particular thanks to Shirley, our Secretary and Jane our Treasurer without whom this organisation would struggle. Also, my fellow trustees who unfailingly offer help and support. A lot of necessary decisions keep this organisation going and without them I would be lost.