

FFOG meeting- Decisions & Actions

Location: FMH room 1

Date: 04.05.23

Time: 7.00pm to 9.00pm

Attendees: Sue Nieduszynska (chair), Graham Brandwood, Steve Bullen, Rick Gould, Clio Graham, Anne Greenwood, Rebekah Key, Ian Procter, Hilary Short.

Apologies: David Brookes, David Elliot, Oliver Fulton, Mick Short, Chris Workman.

ITEM	ISSUE	DECISION	ACTION	OWNER
previous Minutes	Accepted			
Matters Arising	Items 2.1.4,2.1.6, 2.1.9, IP has contacted Andy Lee and is awaiting a response.			
<i>Actions carried over from previous minutes</i>				
4.3.3	Big Meadow- To promote research into what causes this area to be so successful. Rick has contacted Lancaster University to see if there are students interested in research of the area		In Progress	RG
4.8	Treacherous paths in winter	The trustees to investigate the legal situation re the use of warning notices.	HS will take to the trustees and bring back to the next meeting.	HS Ongoing

Announcement prior to agenda items	<p>HS announced that the Trustees had had a meeting with Calum Booth. Calum works at the RSPB & is experienced in producing management plans. It has been agreed to apply to NE for funding to enable Calum to produce a plan for the Reserve. A service agreement will be completed with the RSPB who will produce the management plan. Calum has the tools to survey the Reserve including the water resources, underground, & produce a contour map. This will involve the use of a drone. The aim is to complete the fieldwork and the surveys by June/July with an interim brief written report by the end of May. The intention is to apply for a new agreement with NE in 2024 that is to start in 2025.</p> <p>SN said there will be a process of consultation which will include FFOG, the FA & other groups.</p> <p>IP would like to widen the consultation to include knowledgeable volunteers including Hilary Smith & Susan Condor.</p>			
4.4.1	<p>Flora Field: (see report SN). Current management of this field will change over future years.</p> <p>Unfortunately, it appeared that leverets had been killed by the tractor when the manure was spread.</p> <p>It was clarified that solid manure had been spread and not liquid slurry.</p> <p>IP asked if yellow rattle should be sown in the northern border if we are moving away from having an arable field.</p>	<p>The manure needs to be put down earlier.</p> <p>To field walk prior to Aubrey operating the tractor on the field.</p> <p>To collect yellow rattle seeds in summer & then decide in September whether to sow in the field.</p>	<p>SN will speak to Aubrey re the timing of manure application and to ascertain if this year's crop is barley</p>	<p>SN</p>
4.2.1	<p>The West Field hedge/spinney: (see report IP) The report includes the proposed species mixes for the hedge & the spinney. IP suggested that the electric fence currently protecting the saplings along the fauna path would not be required after another summers growth and could be redeployed to protect the new West Field Hedge. The battery would need to be secured in concrete as has been done previously.</p> <p>Silverdale AONB may have a surplus of saplings (species unknown) that we could obtain.</p>	<p>Purchasing of saplings to be explored.</p>	<p>SN to explore funding through Countryside stewardship scheme.</p>	<p>SN</p>
4.2.2.	<p>A plan for hedges: (see report IP) This plan should commence May '23 and be reviewed in May '25.</p> <p>SN clarified that holly will be planted in the hedge between Sunnyside Lane & the wild area.</p> <p>Vista gaps opposite the Orchard benches were discussed with a maximum hedge height of 2m. In the future we may go for a more varied hedge line.</p>			

	<p>The height of long pads/west field hedge was discussed and that there were not many viewing points. GB said the height of the bank was the problem. SN & HS agreed.</p> <p>GB congratulated IP on the production of his detailed reports.</p>			
4.2.3.	<p>A plan for Woodlands: (see report IP.) This report was drafted by Hils and agreed by the group. The plan proposes the expansion of Pony Wood connecting to a network of woodlands & hedgerows to the wider west of Lancaster & to the canal, river & railway corridors. IP acknowledged that this would have to fit with the wider plans for the Nature Reserve. SN indicated that there were some amendments required to the report.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The NE agreement has not yet expired and that this sentence should be removed. 2. The current funding through “Countryside Stewardship” should be amended to “Higher Level Stewardship”. This funding is ending. 3. ELMS has been abandoned and therefore will not provide a new funding scheme. New funding will come from Countryside Stewardship <p>HS pointed out that in the Woodland plan appendix 1 the detailed census conducted by Georgina Peacock in 2017 was not a requirement for the funding of the path.</p>	<p>It was agreed the name of the report should be amended to “A <u>proposed</u> woodland management Plan for Pony Wood”.</p> <p>It was agreed that the gates and Fences in the corner between Pony Wood & Little Wood would be altered to increase connectivity providing a natural corridor. This work could be done by volunteers.</p>	IP to make the suggested amendments to this report.	IP
4.2.3 cont.	SN suggested naming the Woodland area with the generic name of Fairfield wood, retaining the pony wood and little wood named areas but renaming the western & eastern extensions.	The Woodland group to produce a proposal for naming the woodland area as a whole and secondly naming of the separate compartments.	Woodland group to action renaming of the woodland.	IP
4.2.3 cont.	The fence at the point where the tree came down is lower & less taut. It was mentioned that a man had been seen in pony wood and had presumably accessed via this fence.	The Pony Wood fence to be repaired. This can be done by volunteers. The Tilley’s have already provided one training session and it is hoped that they can provide further training in fencing. If not, HS will	IP will ask Peter Tilley to give another lesson in fence repairing & construction to volunteers.	IP

		ask Frank Huddleston do carry out the work.		
4.3.1	Updated Willow Report: (see report GB). As previously agreed, some willow has been left for pruning in August. Some willow shoots are available for the cattle to eat. GB will remove them from the rods if Frazer wants them.		HS to ask Fraser if he would like the willow tops for the cattle	HS
4.3.2	Pond Management Plan -1st draft: (see report CW) The principle is to leave all the ponds alone for as long as possible & allow them to develop naturally. HS stated Lancashire Wildlife Trust had noted that the grass had really spread in the Flora Field ponds. Pam will report back after a further assessment with her boss. Rush cutting in Big Meadow was discussed.GB said that all the ponds in Big Meadow currently have clear water and that no action was required at present. Lucy pond is overgrown with Mare's Tail. There is some clear water for the dragonflies & GB will monitor this. Anna's pond-in the past 2 years phragmites have taken hold, however there is still clear water, so no action required. Cromwell pond- allowing scrub to develop. SN expressed thanks to CW for producing the plan & to GB for looking after the ponds.	Rush in Big Meadow will not be cut.		
4.4.1	Orchard: (see report RG). This document highlighted the issue of expected future climate on the common species of apple trees grown in the UK. Warmer winters reduce the period of winter-chill that is required for some common older apple varieties to thrive. Future selection of trees should take this into account choosing trees requiring fewer winter-chill hours. AG suggested that this document be sent to the Fruit Tree Management group for consultation.		AG will send the document to the Fruit Tree Management Group.	AG

4.5.1	Meadow review: (see report SN/Hils). Should the cattle be given some access to break up the scrub around Cromwell Pond which is currently fenced off? GB said it was developing into a carr habitat and that the flush count had become difficult because of the density of the scrub.	To scythe some rides through after the bird nesting season in July/August.		
5.1	Volunteer Reports: (see reports IP.) Rebekah has successfully led her first volunteer session. IP said that the transition process was going smoothly. IP referred to the April report which included a report from Glenys detailing the work carried out by Fruit Tree group in the first year of the Work Programme incorporated into 27 WWGs.		SN will thank Glenys for the report and the work she has done	SN
5.2	Work plans for May & June: (see report IP.) The toddler fence in the playground is being replaced so it is no longer necessary to weed under it. Undesirables. We are now more tolerant of ragwort but remain within the NE agreement. It is too early in the year to decide on nettles & thistles.	Monitor nettles & thistles and call an on-site meeting in early June to discuss management (scything/pulling)	IP will arrange a meeting in June	IP
5.3	Associate Volunteers: (see report IP.) We no longer need to recruit volunteers to work in their own time. There are well established work groups on Wednesdays (weekly) & Saturdays (monthly). However, longstanding volunteers make significant contributions in their own time & when needed the volunteer organiser can call upon existing volunteers for jobs outside organised groups.			
5.4	Birdbox Inspections: (see report IP.)	This task to be moved to the Saturday groups. SB/CG will continue with the Pony Wood bird boxes. To lower the height of the bird boxes across the Reserve.		

5.5	<p>Chainsaw training: GB & IP are certificated operators of chainsaws. The certificates expire on 23.10.23. Both are willing to take a 1-day refresher course (£380 per person) if the FA is willing to train people of their age! 1 or 2 further younger people could be recruited. It would be useful for these to be members of the WWG so they would be available when hedge-laying takes place. This would entail 5 days training costing £1100.10 at Myerscough. The certification lasts for 5 years.</p>	<p>It was agreed that IP and GB should do a refresher day. To invest in the training of 1 or 2 younger people.</p>	<p>IP will make enquiries regarding this training.</p>	IP
5.6	<p>Toro Mower: Any decisions to be deferred until DE returns from holiday. IP stated that volunteers had mowed the orchard area using the 2 smaller mowers in a single morning. In future, if DE mowed with one of the smaller mowers, the volunteers could complete the job i.e. it would then be not necessary to replace the Toro</p>			
6.1.	<p>Maintenance Inspections: A neighbour in the southern end of the orchard is mowing a wide access path. HS said there was a letter that should go out annually to the neighbours and this includes that they should respect the area outside the fence that is property of the FA. A single tract path would be acceptable.</p> <p>Cattle have been inside the electric fence area in Alder pond-GB would like further consideration given to fencing off Alder Pond completely as it is not needed as a water source for the cattle</p>	<p>A decision re fencing Alder Pond should be deferred until the overall management plan is decided.</p> <p>A meeting re the electric fences needs to take place outside of the FFOG meeting. To involve SN HS IP GB RG RK</p> <p>Sapling planting to take place in the back of Upper Sowerholme in bare areas adjacent to an Aldcliffe Road gardens. Therefore, additional saplings will need to be ordered.</p>	<p>HS to send a letter to the Orchard neighbours. AG will add this to the arrangements calendar for February.</p> <p>Organise a sub-group-meeting to discuss the electric fence.</p> <p>IP to arrange a sub-group to make a site visit to Upper Sowerholme to plan the detail of sapling planting.</p>	<p>HS</p> <p>AG</p> <p>SN</p> <p>IP</p>

6.2.1	Fairfield Wildlife Surveys planner 2023-draft. (SN/Hills) This has been distributed. SN would like the surveys to be opened up to more volunteers.		SN to communicate with Hils about widening the surveys to people outside of the WWG	SN
6.3.	Grazing: HS reported that there were 3 calves & 2 more expected.	RG will show Frazer how to operate the electric fence	RG to instruct Fraser if a meeting can be arranged.	RG
6.4	Update on bat boxes: SB demonstrated the eco-styrocrete bat box. Seven have been purchased from Greenwoods Eco habitats in Blackpool. They are very durable & insulating & can be used by bats throughout the year. Will Walton has agreed to help put them up.			
7.1	Arrangements: No further scything training is required as there are already sufficient numbers of those trained.	.	IP to ask Emma if she is willing to arrange the volunteer picnic. To add this to the May arrangements	IP AG
7.2	Financial Control: Bat boxes -£226.80 No cycling signs- £21.76 Work on the shed £8622			
5.1	Organised Events: NLWG Wildlife Fair (CW). Sunday 23 rd July. Further details to be sent out with the minutes. IP will provide his generator. There is a guided Tree walk at Greaves Park on Sunday 21 st May 2pm at the playground.			

	Fairfield Playground ‘Pizza in the Park’ fund raiser 27 th May 12pm to 8pm in Fairfield playground area.			
5.2	Items to report from FA:	Nil to report		
5.3	Items to report from trustees:	Nil to report		
AOB	SN is unable to make the Sept FFOG meeting if it takes place on the first Thursday in September. Alternative dates will be sent out with the minutes.			

Next meeting: On-site 6th July 2023 7.00pm to 9.00pm.