

FFOG meeting- Decisions & Actions

Location: on-site meeting relocated to the Tite & Locke due to bad weather.

Date: 06.07.23

Time: 7.00pm to 9.00pm

Attendees: Sue Nieduszynska (chair), David Brookes, Steve Bullen, David Elliot, Clio Graham, Anne Greenwood, Rebekah Key, Ian Procter, Hilary Short, Mick Short

Apologies: Graham Brandwood, Glenys Ferguson, Rick Gould, Chris Workman.

ITEM	ISSUE	DECISION	ACTION	OWNER
previous Minutes	Accepted.			
Matters Arising	<p>IP asked for an update on Calum Booth's management plan for the Reserve. SN responded that she, MS, HS & DB have met with Calum and learned that we are not eligible for CS Higher Tier Agreement. Very few applications have been approved. Only protected (triple SI) sites in Lancashire have moved to higher tier. It is probable that nothing will change for at least 2 years & we will remain in the existing scheme until it runs out. The timing of coming out of the Higher-Level Stewardship agreement will depend upon when we know enough about which other options are available to us. There is no assistance from NE in submitting an application and there is no funding for writing a management plan. Calum will produce a service agreement and vision statement for us. This will be matched against the mid-tier agreement which will result in less money and fewer options. Once the vision statement is completed Calum will be asked to do a presentation where questions can be asked. The vision will include plans for half of flora field to be sown with bird food mix & half with pollinator mix and switched over after 2 years. This would need costing. The advice is to move away from attracting waders as this has not been successful. We should aim at what is doing well: warblers, trees & hedges. He supports the proposed wide hedge in West Field and with a ditch inside to take the substances with high levels of fertiliser flowing down the hill. Consultancy fees for this work (payment to the RSPB for Calum's time) will be written into an application for separate grant funding from a different body. Calum may be able to help with other sources of funding.</p> <p>SN will send out a blog post from the RSPB which explains the background.</p>			

Actions carried over from previous minutes

4.2.3	<p>Naming of the Woodland area: IP has canvassed views from the woodland subgroup on naming of the woodland area. A record of the discussion has been circulated to FFOG</p>		<p>To add this item to the agenda for the August FFOG meeting.</p>	<p>AG</p>
	<p>ISSUE</p>	<p>DECISION</p>	<p>ACTION</p>	<p>OWNER</p>
2.1	<p>Shed :(IP) Decision on the Toro mower which has broken down several times over the past 2 years costing £595 in repairs. It has now broken again & will cost approx. £100 to repair (includes £20 transport cost). IP proposed that we sell the Toro “as seen”. The orchard could be mowed with the 2 smaller mowers with DE doing a proportion and the remainder done by volunteers from the WWG. The toro is less able to cope with uneven ground and MS suggested that if repaired, it could be used on the more even ground between the orchard trees and the other 2 mowers used on uneven sites. DE supported repairing the toro for a final time. SN proposed that the mowing could done in strips leaving alternate strips unmowed and this would be advantageous for pollinators, whilst keeping the sward short for picnickers .</p>	<p>It was agreed to give the Toro “one last chance”. McGaffigans will be asked to ascertain if there is a reason for the recurrent breakdowns. To proceed with the repair if the cost is <£150. To discuss with McGaffigans that if it broke down again what would the second-hand value be and would they be willing to sell it on for us. DE agreed to mow in a mosaic fashion in the Orchard.</p>	<p>DE will contact Paul at McGaffigans to arrange the repair.</p>	<p>DE</p>
2.2	<p>Big Meadow: (IP) Removal of posts formerly used to support the electric fence along the Fauna path & around Alder Pond. The electric fence has been moved from both these areas. The bund around Alder Pond is firm with a thick grass layer and unlikely to be destroyed by cattle. The hedge alongside fauna path in Big Meadow is looking very healthy. Therefore, there are 20 to 30 good quality posts that could be relocated. There are also the 2 metal boxes that house the batteries which should be moved to a less exposed environment.</p>	<p>Removal of the posts in Big Meadow alongside Fauna path was agreed. At Alder pond to leave 2 end posts & 2 mid posts (or at IP’s discretion) and remove the rest in case the fence would be required again in this area.</p>		
2.3	<p>Orchard: (GF) Annual Orchard Review 2023. SN thanked GF for the report. The fruit tree team working within the WWG has been very active. AG raised 4 points:</p>	<p>It was agreed that both the crab apple tree & the medlar would be replaced.</p>		

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One crab apple died as a result of strimmer damage. It is proposed that this should be replaced with another John Downie. 2. A medlar has died due to its roots being in standing water over winter. It is proposed that this should be replaced with another medlar in a different site. 3. We are now below the success indicator of 90% remaining alive from 2011 Natural England Agreement. 4. Widespread strimming damage from several years ago may result in deaths of further trees over the next few years. Volunteers using trimmers & mowers have been instructed to leave a circle of vegetation uncut radius > 0.5 m around the trunk of each tree. <p>IP flagged up that AG had informed him of 2 fruit trees (on the left-hand side coming in from the Sunnyside entrance) being overshadowed by a Wild Service Tree. IP suggested lifting the crown in winter.</p> <p>A large branch from the Ash tree in the stump circle had snapped off recently. Andy Lee had subsequently met with HS & inspected the tree. Andy said the tree was healthy although the fallen branch looked as if it had sustained damage in the previous year. There had been a strong wind the previous night that may have weakened the branch. Andy will return with a younger colleague who will climb the tree & take some of the weight out on the northern aspect. He will also assess if some weight should be taken out of the Ash on the fauna path. The tree on Ashtree corner does not require any work on it.</p> <p>IP commented that there were some further dead branches on top of the ancient sycamore in the Orchard.</p>			
2.4	<p>West Field: grass growth: (R SN). A derogation for hay cutting had been applied for in case it was required. The hay required by dairy farms must be a “clean crop” & therefore there is no market for the grass in West field. CW & SN had discussed bringing in Morecambe</p>	<p>It was agreed that the cattle would be let into West Field although the herd may be too small to graze the grass sufficiently to meet the NE agreement.</p>	<p>HS to contact Fraser to request him to put the cattle in West Field.</p>	<p>HS</p>

	<p>Bay Conservation grazing company in addition to our herd however it transpires that they no longer operate in the Lancaster area. IP had received written viewpoints from Hils & GB that cutting of the grass to a low level would be detrimental to the environment and wildlife. Hils had described the benefits to wildlife of not cutting. SN said that on ecological grounds she accepted Hils argument and that may be where we end up in the future but currently we are within the NE agreement and must do our best to abide by it.</p> <p>SN commented that if an item is put on the agenda with an accompanying paper by one member it is not acceptable for another member to subsequently request to submit another paper that disagrees with the original paper. If there are concerns relating to an original paper then this can be discussed at the meeting or alternatively, if they were unable to be attend the meeting then to contact the author to discuss.</p>	To remove the string supporting one of the brash piles to avoid the cattle getting tangled in it.	Volunteers to remove the string around the brash pile.	IP
2.5	<p>Flora Field: Margins & beetle banks. (SN) IP confirmed that there was a good margin of bird friendly plants and the nettles had not invaded. IP & RK will monitor. Segments of nettle in the grass margin along the pony wood path had been scythed the previous week.</p>			
2.6.1	<p>Pony Wood: Proposed Woodland Management Plan- IP discussed the corner near the notice board & the double gates. If the fence line was to be altered to bring the fence alongside the path it would create a link between Little Wood & the western extension of Pony Wood.</p> <p>IP proposed more wood pasture around the Pony Wood edges to expand the wood outwards. SN & MS commented that Calum Booth has seen the woodland management plan and was aware of this aspiration.</p>			

2.6.2	<p>Failure of wildflower seeding project pony wood & playground: There have been 2 attempts to sow & plant yellow rattle. There was no sign of yellow rattle in the pony wood semi-circle & it was very sparse in the playground and has disappeared since the drought. IP suggested that SB & CG should take this on as they have experience & success in this area. Yellow rattle seed has been collected by volunteers. SB said a spring sowing (April) of seed was more successful at Greaves Park. HS commented that there was very little below the turf in the playground meadow area except rubble. DB said that there has been success in Heysham, at the end of Sunny Slopes, where the turf was removed, gritstone put down and the seed sown into this.</p>	SB & CG to inspect the Pony Wood semi-circle to decide the best way forward.	SB & CG to do an assessment. (See report sent out with minutes)	SB & CG
2.7	<p>Flora Ponds: -grass growth. SN & CW had assessed & no action currently required. Martin Sherlock has been asked to identify the grasses. CW suggested cutting rides perpendicular to the wildflower strip leading to each pond so that small mammals and other creatures would be able to access the pond.</p>	IP & RK to assess if volunteers could scythe the rides	IP/RK to feedback to CW after their assessment	IP/RK
AOB	<p>IP- The Playground proposed wildflower area had been marked out with stakes & hazard tape. The stakes and tape have disappeared!</p>	Signs explaining the reasons for stakes & tape will be used if there is further work on the playground area. Signs to be used in Pony wood area also to inform the public.	Signs to be used.	IP
AOB	<p>IP- There has been a positive response from the Woodlands Trust for the purchase of the saplings for the far side of West Field. They will finance 75% of the saplings and are willing to be flexible on the plastic guards. HS said it had not been agreed to use the electric fence in this area and was concerned about the health & safety aspects of volunteers moving the heavy batteries in wheelbarrows. IP said that if the electric fence is not used, it will be a very hard work for volunteers to put a wire fence in to protect the saplings and it would be expensive.</p>	Further information is required to determine if it is safe for volunteers to transport the batteries in wheelbarrows.	IP will ascertain the weight of the battery. HS to check health & Safety guidelines re transport of heavy weights.	IP HS

3.1	Volunteer Reports for May & June- See reports x2 (IP)			
3.2	Work plans for July & August -See report IP	No objections to these proposals were received and they are thus approved.		
4.	Maintenance: See report (GB)			
5.1	Organised Events:	NLWG Wildlife Fair (CW)- Sunday 23 rd July.10.30 am to 4.00pm Volunteers Picnic- Saturday 29 th July 12 noon to 3 pm.		
5.2	Items to report from FA:	Nothing to report		
5.3	Items to report from trustees:	See “matters arising”		

Next meeting: FMH 31ST August 2023. FMH 7.00pm to 9.00pm