

Fairfield Association
Minutes of the meeting held
on 18th September 2013 at: the Robert Gillow pub, Lancaster

1) Present

Mandy Bannon, (minutes), Andrew Brennand (chair), Dave Brookes, Peter Callingham, Ken Capewell, Ruth Feinberg, Glenys Ferguson, Paul Ferguson, Tony Finn, Ian Fraser, Oliver Fulton, Ruth Haigh, Leslie Jones, Bill Littlejohn, Jane Littlejohn, Julia McDowell, Georgina Peacock, Ian Procter, Ann Row, Michael Shepherd, Hilary Short, Mick Short,

2)Apologies

Sue Nieduszynska, Jane Parker (treasurer), Sue Pope, Oscar Thynne, Brian Wood

3)Minutes

Accepted as correct.

4)Cranwell Avenue Green Park

Ann Row introduced herself as a neighbour of Oscar Thynne, a 17year old Ripley pupil who is trying to get a green group together to improve an area of land in Bowerham in Cranwell Avenue. Ann, who is the group's treasurer, has come in Oscar's place to get any advice from us. They have a bank account, have received a start-up grant from the Chestnut Fund, and have £2k put aside from Lancaster City Council. They are insured with Zurich (our insurer too). Andrew has sent Oscar a detailed email. Ann asked where we obtained our notice boards (Woodscape - £800 for just the frame). Dave confirmed that as they are not a charity yet, and have less than £10k, keeping a set of accounts isn't subject to the same legal rigours.

5) Flora Public Consultation results

There is an imminent deadline (Oct 1st) to submit a proposal to Natural England (NE) to qualify for higher level stewardship (HLS). It doesn't have to have all the detail, but does relate to 50 acres of land so needs to have the general agreements in place.

Mick reported that the public consultation was held over a week ago. We received approximately 150 completed questionnaires. The Flora steering group went through the results and the following results will help determine the final proposal.

Field 1 & 2 NE propose they stay roughly the same, but we add ponds and scrapes, and improve hedging.

153 in favour, 10 to stay the same

Fields 3 & 4 NE propose arable farming, either spring barley and rye so birds would get fed over spring and winter stubble would provide cover for small mammals.

119 in favour, 16 against, 4 other suggestions

Pony Wood – to extend? (not funded by NE)

97 in favour, 35 against

Little Wood – to open up access? (not funded by NE)

69.5 in favour, 40.5 just having a footpath through it, 24 no access

So overall, people in favour of opening it up.

Footpaths

Path 1 – around the woodland area (most conservative) but would give excellent views to castle and Flora - *63 voted in favour*

Path 2 – from Lucy Brook to the wood – *22 voted in favour*

Path 3 horizontal spur from the wood. Divides Field 4 in two & would come out on Aldcliffe Rd near the bridge – would probably require a holding area before the road. *17 voted in favour.*

32 also voted for combinations of paths.

The final question asked: Do you in general approve of the NE proposals?

101 approved, 6 disapproved, 23 approved but not entirely

When the Flora steering group met last week, there were also questions about:

1. existing footpaths – whether we could improve them. The County Council is in favour of widening the long pads footpath (where the path is narrow with high hedgerows) to make them wheelchair friendly but we don't wish to excavate or harm the banks in any way.
2. the nature of arable farming and whether it would be dependent on herbicides and fungicides.
3. Lynchets – evidence of ancient agricultural use – especially in Field 2 & 4. A local historian has suggested we should want to maintain them, but Andrew said it would be ironic if these remnants of traditional farming should prevent us from using traditional farming methods. There was some discussion about which fields had the clearest evidence of lynchets and Mick said we need more detailed aerial photographs. Glenys pointed out that it's fields 3 & 4 where the lynchet issue is greater since it is the arable farming (ploughing), not grazing that may affect them.
4. Rights of way not marked on maps. There was some discussion over whether there could be some rights of way e.g the path running from Lucy brook across fields 3 & 4. (based on anecdotal information). Ian said there wasn't one on the map, or on the ground. Mick said there was a footpath marked on an earlier map but not necessarily a right of way.

Andrew reminded us that Natural England will give us money if we go with their recommendations, and each of their options was numerically most popular with the public. We don't have to decide on the detail at this point – we can leave some decisions for years if necessary.

Regarding Little Wood, NE don't have an opinion. There was a feeling that if it was more open, than it may attract fewer campers/rough sleepers. Volunteers are happy to do litter picking there.

Footpaths determine how the community access Flora. Footpath 1 would provide some access into Flora with good views. Footpath 3, the horizontal spur wouldn't add much and would be less desirable for wildlife.

Questions arising:

Peter raised the issue of herbicides and fungicides. Mick explained that this issue had arisen late. The Fairfield Association has a history of not using them (except for the ragwort). Richard Storton had put us in touch with an arable farmer who would want to spray when preparing ground and when crop is growing. Meanwhile Mick has been in touch with Bill Grayson, an organic farmer in Silverdale who is visiting tomorrow, to discuss. He's not an arable farmer but knows a contractor who may be interested. If we don't get a viable crop we can sell it as silage. The original farmer would want to plough but that could damage lynchets, so Mick will ask the organic farmer about not ploughing.

Ian F asked whether we have to grow crops for maximum income? Mick said no, but it would be desirable to at least cover the costs of farming.

Dave explained in discussions with Richard Storton, it was said the farmer would get the field for free. Richard is keen on arable with gaps for birds and hares. Oliver asked, if it was sprayed wouldn't that negate that? Dave said Richard is aware of the issue, and the farmer is already practising this in Winmarleigh. Fungicides are only required in wet summers (but that may be most!).

Tony said the use of herbicides and fungicides is an emotional issue and that we need more information – e.g. will the use of herbicides affect the natural flowers?

John Littlejohn asked how long Natural England's funding lasts. It will be until 2021.

Ian P added that NE's capital input was vital for things like new gates which are expensive.

Ken was concerned that it would be difficult to create passing places for wheelchairs on the long pads footpath, but Mick said this could be resolved at a later date in discussions with the county council.

Andrew summed up by saying there were some unresolved issues, but that we were overwhelmingly in favour of arable, but without using herbicides or fungicides if possible.

Andrew asked for a show of hands in favour for the NE proposals. The agreement was unanimous.

Thank yous - Michael congratulated the Flora group for sifting and weaving all the comments together in the analysis and report. Mick expressed particular thanks to Sue Nieduszynska for processing them. Michael also thanked Glenys for her input and Mick proposed a vote of thanks to Georgina for producing the artwork for the public consultation.

6) Treasurer's Report

Jane provided the following report after the meeting:

Balance 12/07/13 Co-op	£67,803.64
Balance 12/09/13	£72,319.33

Income includes

June Take Pride grant claim re FOTT	£7,285.33
FOTT fundraiser	£460.00
Fields donation	£1,110.00

Payments include

Purchase of tools etc from HLF grant	£1,450.25	
JWK solicitors re Aldcliffe Rd lease	£1,305.00	
Peacock Design re Flora consultation	£1,258.56	(grant applied for)

7) Membership Report

Since the last meeting on 18th July, we have received 36 renewals, 14 new members (5 having joined at the public consultation).

Our membership, as of September 2013, is now up to 220.

People are making bigger donations, and Ian suggested in a future meeting we should look at how to encourage people to leave bequests.

8) Website – Julia says everything seems okay. She has put events on the first page.

9) Flora Steering Group (FSG) report

Its raison d'être had been to deal with the NE's Higher level stewardship proposals, which we have just approved. Other business:

Ian reported that Tony has succeeded in getting more schools to take part in the education programme. Tony explained that we've offered 8 local schools half-day sessions. He's received 6 replies and will start the sessions in November.

Andrew provided an update on Gleeson's field: everything is agreed, the price and an amendment that allows us to build structures on it if we want.

10) FOG Report

There has been lots of volunteering in Fauna and the orchard recently (11 met last week) but there wasn't so much over the summer. We need to keep recruiting volunteers.

Mick reported that we have Himalayan Balsam in the paddock, so need to monitor it as it may spread fast.

11) FOTT Report

Dave reported that

- 1) they have signed a lease for 30 years so FOTT is now responsible for the land.
- 2) they have submitted planning permission application.

There has been some discussion over whether the "squatting monkey" is heritage graffiti or not.

12) Playground Report

Andrew reported that he and Ken spent 7 hours today repairing some vandalised equipment. Over the summer, the gate has been fixed and they have received a quote for resurfacing the soft play area.

Soil is also required to fix the edge of the newly resurfaced sections.

Hilary said we need to finish replacing the safety surface. She has submitted a bid to the Lancashire Environment Fund, but they have said we need to spend some money on more equipment as well as the safety surface and they are particularly keen on 'natural play'. Hilary wondered if it would be possible to have equipment to swing on, balance or sit on between the toddler area and hedge. She has spoken to Sam Edge who may create some designs if we get the funding for safety surface and

extra equipment. Andrew said it would be good to examine the options. Ken said that mums with young children often have picnics in that area. Michael warned that we would have to be conscious of our neighbours in the houses behind the hedge – regarding privacy and additional noise, so we would have to consult with them first.

13) Events

Party in the Paddock Saturday 5th Oct – Community Spaces gave us £2k to spend on a party to thank those who have donated money to enable Flora fields to be bought. It has not been advertised beyond the Fairfield community. Andrew, Dave and Sue have organised it, as an ‘Apple Day with knobs on’.

Itinerary:

3-5pm Apple day activities

(Flora plans in marquee all day)

5pm caterers arrive – will deliver food

6pm Balkanics to perform music for social dancing

8pm finishes

The £2k has been spent on hiring the marquee, wooden flooring, band and caterer. There is £89 left to buy paper plates, juice etc. (There will be no alcohol.)

There was a lively discussion over whether we should have a portaloos (which will cost approx £130). The idea had initially been rejected, as it was hoped that people would go home at some point in the day and return later. Mandy, Ruth and Tony, however, felt it was important for people, especially young children and elderly to have access to a nearby toilet. Ruth wondered, as we would be over-budget, whether we could ask people to bring juices as well as puddings.

Mick suggested putting a donations bucket next to the portaloos.

Andrew agreed that we should have a portaloos from FA funds, and Mandy offered to organise it.

14) Correspondence

Andrew has received a letter from The People’s Trust for Endangered Species asking about wildlife in the orchard. He passed the letter to Ian and Tony.

Oliver’s signature was required on the lease transfer.

15) Items for Website/Facebook

Party in the paddock to go on website calendar.

16) AOB

Mick reminded us that Hanafins will be finishing the Fauna footpath near the paddock gate on Tuesday.

17) Next Meetings

Wednesday October 16th – Robert Gillow pub

Wednesday November 20th – Robert Gillow pub

Both meetings starting at 7.30pm.