

Fairfield Association

Minutes of the Meeting held

on 16th October 2013 at: the Robert Gillow pub, Lancaster

1) Present

Mandy Bannon, (minutes), Graham Brandwood, Andrew Brennand (chair), Dave Brookes, Peter Callingham, Ken Capewell, Ian Fraser, Ruth Haigh, Ian Procter, Hilary Short, Mick Short

2) Apologies

Tony Finn, Oliver Fulton, Julia McDowell, Jane Parker (treasurer),

3) Minutes

From last meeting were accepted, with two changes:

- 1) Item 4 – Cranwell Avenue Green Park group – have £2k put aside *from Lancashire County Council* (not Lancaster City Council)
- 2) Item 9 – The first line should read: Its raison d’etre had been to deal with the NE’s *Heritage Lottery Fund* proposals (not Higher Level Stewardship)

4) Cranwell Avenue Green Park group

This agenda item was postponed as Oscar Thynne was not available.

5) Dogs

Andrew reported that Sarah Greaves, whose house backs onto the play park, has emailed to say dogs have come into her back yard and killed her chickens, on more than one occasion. She has asked if we can do something about dogs running free. Andrew replied by saying we have specific rules for Fauna that relate to the safety of livestock, but as regards the orchard and play park, the Council Dog Control Orders are that dogs CAN be off their leads (although not in the toddler fenced off area, which would be an offence). Whilst we are not happy with the state of affairs either, and we share Sarah’s concerns, dog wardens can be called by members of the public.

Andrew said we could enforce our own rules, but we’re also being lobbied by responsible dog owners.

Mandy read out an email received by Pamela White on a similar issue. Pamela is concerned about dogs in the orchard – being a) allowed to wander off and poo, and b) jump up at people they meet.

Andrew asked ‘are we happy with rules? Are we upholding them, or should we be doing more?’

Dave said we can’t enforce the rules, though some members do try.

Ian said, as a responsible dog owner, he thought it was a serious problem. He suggested a radical solution – to put up a sign saying something like “ Fouling is an offence, the FA is fed up with irresponsible dog owners so we’ve decided to install CCTV cameras and we’ll work with community police to identify offenders and send them to court.”

Dave thought that actually doing this would be impossible and bluffing not advisable. He has had dogs knock over his children. Hilary said she’d only ever seen one dog out of control. She wondered if we could put something in the newsletter about it. Mick said that the dog warden had produced an article 3-4 years ago. He felt that we do not have either responsibility for the actions of the minority of irresponsible dog owners or any powers to change their behaviour. People should complain not to the FA but to the police and the City Council.

Andrew said we can’t ban dogs altogether. We could ban them from Fauna. He liked Ian’s idea, but would take the camera out of the message. We could say we’re going to actively take witness statements from the public.

We could encourage people to actively challenge offenders and take photographs - but does that miss the target – getting the message across to offenders themselves? Dave said it’s a problem everywhere – there are only two dog wardens covering the district. Peter reminded us that dog mess is harmful. Andrew said perhaps all we can do is explain that as a charity we are not responsible for enforcing the law, but here is how you can complain, give dog warden telephone numbers etc.

Graham said he hadn’t realised that the playground wasn’t covered by legislation. We have a duty of care to at least appeal to people’s better natures and ask dog owners to keep dogs on leads around the play area. Ken said there some notices by the allotments that relate to dog control orders. When the play area was being planned, people hadn’t wanted a fence all the way round. Andrew thought that the simmering resentment we’re getting from dog owners would explode if we enforced dogs on

leads in the play area, though we could add a coda and ask people 'to consider the behaviour of dogs around young children'. Ian reminded us that legally, 'a dog has to be under control'.

Andrew proposes:

A poster – saying something like: Please remember this is a children's play area – we would encourage people to keep dogs under control/on leads? And please pick up your dog's poo. It is not our responsibility to enforce the law, here is the number to ring for the dog warden. (And include a notice about statutory fine).

Ian thought we should have bigger signs to create an immediate impact, as part of a campaign.

Andrew offered to make a poster, if Mick could put some words together.

6)Treasurer's Report

Jane provided the following report by email, prior to the meeting:

Bank Balances

15 September 2013 £72,319.33

14 October 2013 £70,411.45

Significant transactions

a)Incoming

£500 received from Lancaster Green Spaces

b)Outgoing

£868 paid to Wood Solutions re Aldcliffe Road

£600 paid to R Turner & son re Sourholme land negotiations

£431 paid to Playdale Playgrounds for play equipment repairs

£385 paid to LCC re Aldcliffe Road planning application

Jane instructed the bank today to transfer £38,000 to Goad & Butcher in payment for the Gleasons land; (this transaction is not reflected in the balance above). This means that the current balance is actually **£32,411.45**.

Peter has made a final claim to the City Council's Take Pride fund, and £2,282 will be reimbursed for FOTT work.

Ian asked how much of the 32k is allocated? There is 4k in the Fauna budget.

Dave said the general fund has £7-£8k.

Andrew to ask Jane for an unallocated general funds figure in her reports.

Bequests

Ian reported that the Friends of the Lake District's newsletter features recent bequests and they receive enormous sums. He wondered if it would be possible to publicise this form of fundraising to our members. Ruth said we've received several bequests over the years. Mick suggested a standing newsletter item – 'donations and bequests'. It was agreed to include something in the next newsletter e.g. thank you for donations and bequests. Dave added we could say something along the lines of while we're good at getting grants, we now have even more responsibilities and give examples of expenses.

Maintenance Funds

Mick reported that Charles Wilson attending the Flora consultation suggested we approach Flora donors for £25/year on a regular basis which would help provide regular cashflow. We could use Flora to kickstart the campaign, but perhaps in time, use funds for Fauna, orchard and playground generally? This would be best done after they've donated and then rolled out to the newsletter list, and then perhaps to the wider public. It needs some money to do it. The Flora and Fauna leaflets cost £200. Also needs a page on the website – need to ask Julia to organise? Dave said so not to exclude the impoverished, they could be invited to donate their time as a volunteer etc. Would require a form to go with it? Mick is keen to involve Geoff Oliver from Aldcliffe Village, and will talk to Pagefast who did the design of the Fauna and Flora leaflets, and maybe ask for help from Mike Swann who designed FOTT website etc.

Ian wondered if it was too early to make requests when we don't know the projected figures for the reserve yet. Mick said it will take 1-3 months to produce promotional materials, so we can just plan it

now. We want the wording to last a long time, so we could just indicate approximate figures, but to explain that we need a regular revenue stream.

Ruth thought that members will be interested to know how much things cost. They have a vested interest. If we add up capital costs, over £600,000 has been donated. It was agreed to go ahead.

7) Membership Report

Ruth reported that it has been an amazing month.

Since the last meeting we have received 31 renewals, 15 new members (joining at the Flora talks and Party in the Paddock), totalling £230, and with added donations, making it £295

Ruth has given in a cheque for £50, from selling Jean Stuart's cards.

8) Website – Mandy read out Julia's email reporting that:

a) we now have audio recordings and slides of the two Flora talks that have taken place, and she'll put up others, if they are willing.

b) She has received the first entry to the Calendar competition.

9) Flora Steering Group (FSG)

Future

Mick explained that when the group was first set up, it was to do with the Heritage Lottery Fund planning. As we go on, we need a properly constituted committee ensuring everything gets done properly. This needs to be resolved soon. FOG and FA meetings are both long, so how best to cover all aspects – e.g. volunteering relates to all three groups. Soon our biggest volunteering will relate to Flora (especially hedgework). There is a lot to decide on and the mechanisms are getting complicated.

The question was raised should we get advice from an expert?

Dave agreed that four Fairfield meetings a month (for him) was a lot. Flora is temporary and the HL Fund only has so far to run. Once we've done the initial capital works this winter, Flora issues should return to FOG, which deals with maintenance and day to day activities (and/ whilst F.A meeting is policy-making decisions).

While Ian agreed that FSG is transitory, he was concerned that FOG is overstretched at the moment (the meetings often overrun by an hour) – but he couldn't see an alternative solution to splitting FSG business between FA and FOG.

Dave wondered if task groups would work – like the finance one, that he'd been in with Jane and Oliver, to discuss finance.

Mick said the split between policy and maintenance is not straightforward. FOG doesn't have a budget, and as the management of the nature reserve is going to be larger, we will have to pay contractors on a regular basis.

Dave reminded us that when he'd asked if Jane could create a budget allocated to nature reserves, she'd said it would be an accounting nightmare. Mick suggested we explore the issue with Jane again and raise this whole issue at the next FSG and FA meetings.

FSG report

Ian reported that they are having an onsite meeting on Sunday afternoon to inspect each field and to prioritise work, and to decide which work can be done by either contractors or volunteers. FSG members and trustees are invited.

Mick said we're nearly at the end of the Gleeson's purchase process.

The Flora lecture series has been well-received and well-attended – between 25-30 people for the lectures so far and 8 for the on-site tour on a very inclement day.

10) FOG Report

At last Saturday's volunteering session, there were 17 volunteers.

Mick said there are two FOG cost issues:

- a) There is a path erosion problem, cured a few years ago by plastic mats. Ian said these plastic mats only cost £100 so we could get some more. This was agreed.
- b) In the orchard, there is fire blight and canker in some of the trees, which therefore need to be removed. We can't replace with apple trees so we need to buy other soft fruit stock. This raises the issue of longterm plans for the orchard. Keith has suggested a tree nursery area. Any ideas welcome.

11) FOTT Report

Dave reported that the planning application was in. All comments on the website have been positive. It may not go to the committee.

The notice board funding has been successful.

The business rates issue has been sorted out (we don't need to pay them).

They need to be looking at funding applications.

12) Playground Report

Andrew reported that there are rotten logs in the retaining wall.

Hilary has talked to Sam Edge about it. There are two options:

- 1) Replace with more logs (which will also rot eventually)
- 2) Replace with a stone retaining wall. Hilary said she'd ask David Edwards, who did the work near the tool shed. Dave said that stone may be an expensive option. But we may be able to get rocks from Fraser.

Andrew said we should aim to carry out the wall and resurfacing work over the winter. The Abacus quote won't be kept beyond October. Hilary explained that the LED grant can't cover resurfacing but they are interested in natural play equipment. When the grant application went in, we really wanted Wetpour membrane, but we'll say we won't go down that road. Georgina had suggested Giffords Cushion Fall which is a cheaper, longterm option. Hilary hasn't seen it in use. You have to rake it over from time to time, and we'd have to take out existing surfacing to put it in. It's made of crushed pallets, but isn't coarse. When you walk on it, it presses down. Hilary to contact Georgina about it, to find out where it is (in Caton?).

Climbing frame and slide outside toddler area would cost £7,660 + VAT.

Andrew to ask for quotes for toddler area and big slide. It's a huge on-going cost, if we spend all the grant on Wetpour.

A parent asked Andrew how she can remove graffiti (that her daughter has done!) on top of the slide. Ian says we have a battery operated sander.

There has been an inspection report – no fails, just the rotten logs noted.

Hilary has phoned Hampson Green about the lights that are out.

13) Events

Andrew reported that the Party in the Paddock went well, especially the buffet that disappeared very quickly! The marquee was collected on the Monday and the loo on the Wednesday. Andrew thanked Mandy for organising the loo. The party raised £180 [which more than covers the cost of the loo].

This event was a one-off and Apple Day will revert to normal next year.

Ruth would like to buy two 1 litre teapots as the current one is too big to fit under the urn. This was agreed.

Carols – Ruth will email Stephen Hoyland to ask him if he's able to do it this year

Wassailing – Saturday 18th January 2014 - Andrew will book Morris men.

14) Correspondence

We have received a tax bill and rates bill for the Harries land, but by mistake, as the solicitor filled the form in wrongly. This is now resolved.

15) Items for Website/Facebook

Dave asked whether we can have Fairfield email addresses. Can they be set up so they all come to the same place. Andrew to ask Julia.

16) AOB

Ruth asked if we should be doing more to sell Hermione Roff's fund-raising book. We have sold ten, but have 40 more. Andrew suggested trailing it in newsletter nearer to Christmas.

17) Next Meetings - Both meetings starting at 7.30pm.

Wednesday November 20th – Robert Gillow pub

Wednesday December 18th – Robert Gillow pub