

Fairfield Association
Minutes of the Meeting held
on 22nd January 2014 at: the Robert Gillow pub, Lancaster

1) Present

Mandy Bannon, (minutes), Andrew Brennand (chair), Dave Brookes, Peter Callingham, Ken Capewell, Ruth Feinberg, Tony Finn, Ruth Haigh, Jane Parker, Ian Procter, Hilary Short, Mick Short, Pamela White, Maggie Wild.

Plus De Vitre Gardens representatives: County Councillor Chris Coates, Paul Finlay, Sharon Finlay and Caryn Willmott

2) Apologies

Oliver Fulton, Julia McDowell, Sue Nieduszynska

3) Minutes from last meeting were accepted, with the one amendment to item 7, para 1. The first line should read: *Sue Nieduszynska is getting some text together for the website following the Wildlife Evenings and Richard Storton's site visit.*

4) De Vitre Gardens

Andrew reported that eight weeks ago, Councillor Gina Dowding emailed him to say there was a group of people who want to do something about De Vitre Gardens, along Ashton Road, near to the old school of Nursing. Caryn Willmott explained that the half acre of land is currently owned by the NHS who is keen for local residents to improve and maintain it on a 25 year lease (for a peppercorn rent) for the use of local community, residents and staff. Chris Coates said they formed a community group and carried out a house-to-house consultation before Xmas. A lot of people said they'd like something like "Fairfield Orchard" or the allotments. The land is half the size of the orchard. Ian suggested they get a copy of Councillor Jon Barry's model constitution for Friends' groups as a starting framework. Friends of the Storey used this template, and Ian suggested the group contact their chair, Annie Watson, who would be able to give helpful tips as they will be more familiar with initial stepping stones. Andrew agreed that we are at a different stage, now managing a 50 acre nature reserve, but we're happy to give advice. The group will need public liability insurance. The land is currently wild, undulating with grass. The NHS mow just once a year. Chris asked what ongoing work is required for the orchard, to keep it ticking over. Ian suggested that if half a dozen people met one morning a week, then that would be okay, but our trees are getting to the age when they need a lot of attention, and our tree specialist prunes trees every Saturday morning. So you need more than six volunteers for even half an acre. Ruth suggested keeping things simple. Paul Finlay said the majority of people would like allotments, a few trees, sitting areas, therapy areas. Ruth offered to give the group contact details for Friends of Storey Gardens, Fruity Corners and LESS. Chris said Lancaster Community Land Trust will take the lease on. They've had a public meeting and NHS lets them use their buildings. Dave recommended Georgina Peacock as a landscape artist, but they have their own. Piccadilly Garden Centre is also happy to help them. Andrew suggested Awards for All grant of £10k as useful seed-funding. Chris has talked to the planning department. The land is still considered grounds of the Royal Albert hospital, so Dave said they may need to look at a change of use application. He also suggested a cake sale as an easy and enjoyable way of raising £300.

5) Membership Report

Ruth reported that there have been two new members this month and 5 renewals, plus £40 in additional donations. Andrew thanked Ruth for that and for producing the email before Christmas.

6) Treasurer's Report

As Jane hadn't been at last month's meeting, there were two months to report on.

Balance	20/11/13	£38,143.41
	19/01/14	£38,504.12

Significant Items – Incoming

Wassailing	£ 105.00	
Carol singing	£ 252.00	
Sponsored swims		
Drew Wilkinson	£ 106.53	
Jill Johnson	£ 121.00	(additional £177.50 in Just Giving)
Calendar sales	£ 776.00	(profit £351)
Final FOTT grant (Take Pride)	£2,282.47	
Co-op Bank grant	£1,380.00	(for playground)

Significant items – Outgoing

Peacock Design – re Flora	£ 662.70	
Lancs Wildlife Trust		
Green hay and seed	£ 822.00	(grant to claim)
Wassailing band & morrismen	£ 400.00	(grant coming)
John Jones Chainsaw training for 4 people	£1,440.00	

Accruals Accounts to 30.4.13 – See attached

Instead of just a Receipts and Payments account, there is a Statement Of Financial Activities, balance sheet and notes (required because we went over £ ¼ m).

	R& P	SOFA	
Total Income	£255,491	£283,206 –	income has to be matched to years, so gift aid received 24/5/13 £29,199 is included
Total payments	£270,813	£26,162 -	purchase of assets moved to balance sheet from R& P account, note depreciation charge £7,223

Balance sheet shows net assets of £521,469 of which £477,619 relates to restricted income funds.

Andrew asked how much unallocated funds were, and Jane said she would look into it.

Jane reported that Alan, the accountant has seen the accounts and is happy with them. She will send Andrew a copy of the accounts which can be sent to the Charity Commission by end of Feb). Mick thanked Jane for her all her work.

Mick explained that cashflow will be an important issue which we will have to work hard to manage. Jane agreed to do a mini accounts and to tie up grants. Dave said £9k from County for Flora would be coming in. Heritage Lottery Fund – we can put in a claim for half at the end of February, but we need to prove that our boundaries are secure. Natural England Higher Level Stewardship scheme – six-monthly payment will be another source of money coming in, the rest we can claim in arrears.

Mick is interested in setting up Fairfield Friends to get people to allocate funds on an annual basis. He has sent letters and has had some replies already so there will be some source of money from that.

7) Website

As Julia wasn't at the meeting, there was nothing to report this month.

8 & 9) FOG/FSG Report

Mick reported that they had had a change of policy in how they handle things. They have decided to split Flora across FOG and Flora Steering Group so FOG deals with practical matters and FSG deals with HLF-related and steering matters, so FSG and FOG from this meeting onwards, will be discussed together.

Future Agenda items

- We ought to discuss how to manage administrative workload in the future
- Plans for succession from Mick and Hilary

Ongoing Items

- Capital works for Flora & FOG. Dave explained Hanafins can't do all the work, (they may do some tree work) but Huddlestons will do the gates and ponds. Splitting the work actually works out cheaper. Mick reminded us that the work needs completing by the end of February. Funded by Natural England (£15k), County Council (£9k), Heritage Lottery Fund (£2k - for fencing). There may well be cashflow issues e.g. an estimate for tree surgery work on Pony and Little Woods is £700 more than we expected.
- Deep Ploughing - we have, after the NE agreement an assumption that we'll be doing deep ploughing, but costs are expected to be £7.5k. We've agreed to investigate less deep ploughing, but we're running out of time. Dave suggested deferring arable for year. Andrew pointed out that deep ploughing can't be carried out when it's wet, so that may affect timing too. Mick said we would continue to take advice.
- Archaeology - Metal detecting has started, and photographs of finds were distributed e.g. Georgian coins, cartwheel pennies, buckles etc, Ken raised the issue of how the finds were being treated – e.g. coins shouldn't be cleaned. He told us that in good condition, cartwheel pennies can raise £3-£400 each. Mick said Ian Sharp (the chair of the local Metal Detector Association) was experienced and would be taking care of the artefacts in an appropriate manner. In addition to this work, the concrete wall was dug out, and a piece of glass and a piece of pot were found. In the past, Robin Loxam has found stone-age axe-heads near Lucy Brook.
- Educational programme is going well.
- Flora, Fauna and Orchard – Mick said they would have Financial Control as a formal item on the FOG and FSG agendas so that it is easier for Jane and Andrew to track costing issues in the sub-group minutes.
- Flush count – there were more snipe than ever at the last count.
- Volunteer Session – there were 24 at the last session, a record.
- Water trough needs to be moved as it's in the wrong place at the moment and Carr House Meadow is getting churned up.
- Single Farm Payments – Hilary reported. You buy entitlements to SFPs according to your hectareage, then you get the money back from the government – it would be £5k in February and we would get money in December and for next 7 years. This seemed like a good thing when first investigated, but there is a new complication. Although we'd get it this year, the rules are changing, so it's not clear what would happen in future years. Our eligibility rests on whether we get inside the new Rural Payments Agency definition of farmers. Rodney Coward is our advisor at the Auction Mart. He has assessed our land use, and as 75% of income is currently derived from farming, he thinks we will probably qualify. We could always sell our entitlements, but Rodney Coward is cautious about advising us to buy, until he knows about the changes, so we can't make a decision just yet.
- Green Space Forum – Ian and Mick attended. It was chaired by Simon Gershon, attendees included Helen Ryan from City Council and Lucia Marquart from County Council. There were eleven others from seven groups around Lancaster and Morecambe. It was a useful networking opportunity, and Ian agreed to support for up to six months. Mick reported that they found out it's sometimes possible to get the County council to provide chipped wood for paths (especially after storms, when they've had to remove storm-damaged trees).
- Herbicides – we want to use as little as possible (hence the desire for deep ploughing) but we may have to do some targeted spot spraying (not boom spraying)

- Contractors' Health and Safety Guidance. Dave has produced this document which gives us advice on how to ensure our contractors' safety. (Contractors also have their own separate H& S guidelines). Andrew thanked Dave for producing this.

10) FOTT Report

There has been no FOTT meeting since the last FA meeting, so there was nothing to report.

11) Playground Report

Andrew reported

- Wall - we've accepted the stone building quote from Mr Edwards. Simon Gershon might have free stone for us, from the Marsh but not until April. It would be good to get the work done before summer. We may need some help moving the stone from someone with a van.
- Graffiti has been removed using the sander
- Climbing nets have been temporarily fixed using silver gaffer tape
- The new resurfacing looks good and gate is opening well now.

12) Events

- Wassailing – Andrew reported that there were more people than ever, plus bands and Morris men. Andrew thanked everyone who attended, plus Graham for providing the fire, Tony and Jacqui for the refreshments and Ruth for organising bucket collections. £105 was raised.
- Easter Monday Egg Hunt– April 20th Tony reported that last year's was even more successful than previous years (138 children plus parents.) It's becoming a must-attend event. But there were long queues for clues and if so many attend again, Tony feels that the current format is unmanageable i.e., the orchard can't cope with that many people, and the spring flowers might suffer. He therefore proposes to extend the hunt along the Fauna footpath/boardwalk. We will need more volunteer stewards, (15 people to commit at least 2 weeks before). We can start asking in March, and say that if we don't get the volunteers, we can't run it. Tony proposes providing 30 clues – children will collect their clues from any of the 4 distributors, they'll be given a number and name so there will be 9 randomly selected names so this policy will reduce queuing, and the children will be looking for clues over a wider area. Goody bags were successful, better than eggs, but it was a lot of work to fill them and we ran out (we'd anticipated 80 children). So Tony is proposing a goody bag packing session at his house. Mick raised the issue of children's health and safety beyond the orchard. Clues won't be hidden, so children won't have to go outside the boundaries and someone will be posted at the Cromwell Road end of the footpath to prevent children wandering out onto the roads. Andrew thanked Tony and Jacqui for putting so much thought into it.
- Fun Day – Saturday 5th July. Yes, this is a Fun day year! There is no need to do anything yet. Elaine has said she'll do cakes again. Allotment Association have agreed to take part again.

13) Correspondence - There was no correspondence this month.

14) Items for Website/Facebook

Ruth has received some questions about why we are spending money on lectures, so we need to explain how the Heritage Lottery Fund stipulates and funds this (so there is no extra financial cost to the Association). We need to get this message across on website, posters, Facebook etc.

15) AOB

Maggie Wild drew our attention to the film: "Project Wild Thing" which can be screened through schools, community organisations and has been shown at the Dukes. It's about a filmmaker/father's mission to get children to spend more time outdoors. A few parents had seen it (Andrew, Dave). Andrew wondered if we could combine a screening with a wine tasting.

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

Wednesday February 19th– Robert Gillow pub

Wednesday March 19th – Robert Gillow pub