

Fairfield Association
FAUNA and Orchard sub-Group (FOG)

Minutes of the meeting held on
Thursday 2 June 2011, 7.30 pm
at Whitegates, Sunnyside Close

Present: Andrew Brennand, Dave Brookes, Glenys Ferguson, Oliver Fulton (mins), Helen Hicks, Mary Ridley, Mick Short (chair), Chris Workman

Apologies: Sue Nieduszynska, Hilary Short

Minutes of last meeting: Approved

Matters arising:

- We have just received the draft revised management plan from Graeme Skelcher, too late to circulate and discuss with Graeme tonight: next agenda (if Graeme is available: Oliver to check).
- Tony is in discussion with Mrs Sandbach (LGGS) about the proposed jigsaws, and Chris was thanked for his help in facilitating this. It was noted that the cost might turn out to be prohibitive. Tony is also involved, with Emma Garston, in discussions about jigsaws for the Wildlife Trust.

Current developments

- The fire near the picnic table site was noted and Mick was thanked for his prompt action in removing the remains. Agreed to reseed the burned area next volunteer session (Saturday June 4).
- Mick spoke to the dog warden and PCSO about the latest presumed dog attack on apple tree branches. The PCSO agreed to have a further word with the suspected (human) culprit, and there appears to have been no further damage since then.

Grants and fund raising

- The final bridge design has still not been received: Dave is chasing it.
- Hanafins' bill for the fencing and gates has been paid.
- The special 'rag forks' have been bought using part of the Duchy of Lancaster grant.

FAUNA

- The ragwort is looking more menacing by the day. Digging it up will be the main task for the Saturday volunteer morning, with the promised 20 student volunteers. Jon Barry and Dave Brookes (as Councillors) have said we can safely use green bins: Mick will liaise with people in Sunnyside Lane/Close, and Glenys kindly offered to ask as many neighbours as possible on Cromwell Road (which is much closer than Sunnyside Lane to the hay meadow) if we can fill their bins as well.
- New name for FAUNA. After considerable discussion it was agreed that the AGM would be offered the choice of six new names, each in the format X X (or X) Nature Reserve: Fairfield, Fairfield Fens, Fairfield Pads, Lucy Brook, Lucy Leas and Lucy Meadows. Those present would be asked to indicate a preference, but their views would be taken as indicative and not binding, with the final recommendation to the FA to be determined at the next FOG meeting. It was decided not to proceed with several other attractive and imaginative suggestions, mainly because they might not be so widely recognised as applying to the area. It was agreed to defer the choice of field names until a later FOG meeting, perhaps after the future of the additional fields has been decided.
- Dave, Mick and Oliver met Fraser Watson (the new owner of Edenbreck Cottage) immediately before the meeting. He offered to remove the rubbish on our land, including the remains of the pigsties, free of charge to us, apart from the asbestos: however, he may be able to help us with good quotes for this. He also offered to build us a tool store, faced in stone and/or stucco with a strong door, at the end of our land near the pig sty site, at his own expense, in return for a long lease on the land opposite, which he would like to turn into an extension to his garden. After

some discussion, it was agreed that Oliver would check our lease to see whether such a sub-lease was possible, and then ask Ann Wood what the Council might think of this idea.

- Other items in the report (green hay plans, training for recorders, etc) were noted.

Orchard

- Main Saturday tasks in the Orchard were agreed: grass seeding (including the burned circle in the grass) and tidying.

Events

- No public events pending other than the Loxams' Open Garden: Mick and Oliver will lead short walks into FAUNA from the garden, with the aim of explaining the plans and raising awareness about the Fields beyond Lucy Brook.

A O B

- Oliver has indicated that he wishes to step down from acting as secretary of FOG later this year. He will continue to play a major part in FAUNA until the current grant-funded work is finished, and is willing to carry on as FOG secretary until then if need be.

Next meetings :

7.30 pm, Wednesday 6 July 2011 at **Whitegates, Sunnyside Close**

7.30 pm, Thursday 4 August 2011 at **Whitegates, Sunnyside Close**

Addendum: FAUNA progress report, as circulated prior to the meeting.

FAUNA

The hay meadow is growing – especially the ragwort, which is present in alarming quantities. However, we have purchased (using part of the Duchy of Lancaster grant) 4 special 'Ragforks' (forks specially designed to remove ragwort plants including the whole root ball), and borrowed 3 more for a few days. Up to 20 students are expected for the volunteer morning on Saturday 4 June: removing the ragwort from the hay meadow and, if there's time, from the big field, will be one of the main tasks. There is also a great deal of ragwort in the LGGS fields, but Robin tells us he is hiring someone to do some digging there. We would like to offer to lend this person one of our forks after the weekend. Aside from the ragwort, the grass is growing fairly slowly except in a few lush patches, and this is probably a sign of helpfully low fertility. There does not appear to be much diversity of flora, prior to our first seeding with green hay, but no survey has been done yet.

Reuben Neville (LWT) has visited and is actively looking for a suitable donor site for green hay. This may now turn out to be the Heysham Nature Reserve which Reuben manages, and we are seeking permission to use this from Natural England. Robin has agreed to help us find a farmer who will cut, bale and remove the hay from the hay meadow, and also someone to harrow the cut meadow before spreading green hay. The N Lancs Hay Meadows Group has arranged a training day in Silverdale for wildflower recorders on June 24. Rachel Malloch has agreed to go and we are waiting to see if there is space for other people as well. We then need to organise our own survey on site, with Graeme Skelcher's help. And we need to be prepared to spread a thin layer of hay across the meadow when it is delivered, possibly at short notice (though this can be done when wet, so it may be possible to fix a time in advance). All this may well need to have been done by the end of July or even earlier, but we should know more about the dates shortly.

Alan Stamford of RSPB who led the Go Wild bird walk has offered to train and support our bird recorders, starting with a session in the Orchard and FAUNA at 9.00 am on Saturday or Sunday 18-19 June, to be followed up with an indoor session on (recorded) bird song. Tim Graham, Lancashire Biodiversity Manager, who led the Go Wild mammals walk, is keen for anyone who sees hares to record their observations on the websites www.brownhare.org.uk and www.lancspartners.org/lern.

Robin's cows have produced a number of calves but at present the grass in the big field is comfortably above the prescribed lower limit.

No reply from LEF about asbestos removal: Lucia Marquart has advised us not to try to claim for this, so we will need to finance it ourselves. We were given an informal quote of £500 by a specialist contractor – Dave is investigating to see if we need a specialist or could get it done cheaper.

We have still not received the final designs for the Cromwell Road bridge from Graham Schofield: Dave is chasing this and will go out for estimates as soon as it arrives. Georgina Peacock has made a full site visit to discuss the autumn construction work and we have made some provisional decisions about unresolved minor design issues. She is now drawing up plans for tendering and we will have a chance to review them before we go out to tender, probably in August.

Registering as a Local Nature Reserve and Concessionary Path: we suggest holding off on these decisions until the infrastructure is in place.

Fraser Watson (Robin's stepson), the new owner of Edenbreck Cottage, is meeting us at 7.00 pm on June 2 to discuss his plans for the cottage and outbuildings. A verbal report will be made.

Items for discussion: (1) hay spreading and other volunteer tasks; (2) naming competition (entries will be tabled).

ORCHARD

Volunteers are now into the summer season of mowing and tidying, plus a bit of work on the footpaths.

Jonathan has not received any positive responses to the suggestion of a second week-night session during the summer.

Graeme Skelcher has nearly finished revising the Orchard management plan, but his first draft did not arrive in time to put on tonight's agenda. Hopefully it will provide us with useful guidance on essential and less-essential maintenance to help with planning volunteer sessions.

Last week we were phoned by Deirdre Jacks to say there was a fire in the Orchard (near the picnic table site). Someone had brought what appeared to be fly-tipping rubbish and set fire to it. Mick took the remains to the end of Sunnyside Lane, for removal by the Council, by agreement.

GO WILD

The Go Wild events (five in all: four 1-2 hour activities and an afternoon walk) were well attended – an average of around 12-15 for the first four and around 25 for the afternoon walk to/from Freeman's Pools – and seemed to be much enjoyed. The joint event with the Wildlife Trust (Morecambe Bay Wealth of Wildlife) worked well. Total donations over the five events were £138.38; expenditure was £50.00. (We also purchased three collection boxes for £19.00, but these are a continuing asset.)