

Fairfield Association
FAUNA and Orchard sub-Group (FOG):
Minutes of the meeting held on
Wednesday 7th December 2011, 7.30 pm
at Whitegates, Sunnyside Close

Present: Dik Bakker, Graham Brandwood, Dave Brookes, Glenys Ferguson (mins), Tony Finn, Oliver Fulton, Ian Procter, Rebecca Procter, Mick Short (chair), Chris Workman

1. **Apologies:** Andrew Brennand, Helen Hicks, Sue Nieduszynska, Hilary Short
2. **Minutes of last meeting:** Approved
3. **Matters arising:** None
4. **Current developments**
 - **Mud on Cromwell Road:** Farm vehicles accessing via FAUNA have twice deposited mud on the street. This is not anticipated to be a long term issue. The problem was exacerbated by the wet weather, the already churned surface due to the presence of the contractors and the long route taken through the reserve because works are not yet complete. In future, Robin Loxam is expected to use a new gate which will be much closer to both his paddock and the FAUNA entry point. Oliver is to confirm this with Robin.
 - **Damaged fences:** The wire of the fencing along the Sunnyside Lane footpath has been deliberately cut in different places on two separate occasions, either by vandals or to gain access. Mick has repaired temporarily, and the situation will be monitored.
5. **Aldcliffe fields:** Our bid has finally been rejected. Next strategy is being determined.
6. **FAUNA**
 - **Hay disposal:** To be used to mulch hedges, either by Hanafins or Volunteers.
 - **External contracts**
 - **Ponds and sluices:** Still haggling with the contractor over the price, and may be referred to the small claims court. Dave is to ask Richard Storton to check the water levels before Hanafins go off site.
 - **Footpaths and fencing:** Should have been finished by 2 December, but tasks generally, and the boardwalk in particular, are taking longer than anticipated. Unlikely to finish until mid December, but this should not affect costings. Oliver raised a safety concern over the depth of water by the boardwalk. Dave will explore with Hanafins the options for adding hand-rails, preferably on both sides (the finance is available). Oliver was also concerned about a step/terrace that has been created next to the path where the ground slopes down from the LGS field towards Cromwell Road. It was decided to see how it develops as it grasses over. The flooding in the hay meadow should be resolved when the pipe is installed (a job that cannot be done until the end). When they leave, Hanafins will also level the ruts they have created.
 - **Hedges:** Most of the cutting and laying has taken place. Meeting with Hanafins on 10 December will discuss completion date and discover if the work has been inspected yet by the hedge expert. Logs will be used to create insect piles in the Orchard and Fauna (in invisible and inaccessible locations), with any surplus offered to the local community. Oliver's formal recording of the changes to the grazing agreement with Robin Loxam has been delayed because computer problems have prevented Georgina Peacock from updating the map to show the new lines of the hedge and fence.

- **Information and notice boards:** Also delayed by Georgina Peacock's computer problems. Hilary has contacted Nutshell, who are happy to undertake the work and have agreed to the time scale. Tony's suggestions for content have been forwarded to them. Nutshell are trying to establish whether any existing graphics can be used before supplying an estimated price. Hilary will convene the working party when Nutshell's proposals arrive. The funders' logos and instructions on their placing will be provided by Oliver. Dave considered it would take 4 to 6 weeks to acquire posts for the noticeboards, which would then need to be erected.
- **Dogs & Cyclists Signs:** The type and location of these signs is another item to be discussed with Hanafins on 10 December. It was agreed that 'No cycling' was the preferred wording (to be consistent with the Towneley Close footpath sign).
- **Woodland Trust Community Tree Pack:** Simon Gershun has applied on our behalf for a 420 tree-pack, which is due to arrive the week beginning 30 January. Mick will deal with them and they will be planted in the February volunteer session. Mick also applied but has had no reply to date.
- **Launch events:** Sue and Oliver will focus on the organisation of the main event in the Spring. The celebration as soon as the contractors have finished will be an informal affair arranged at the last minute. Oliver pointed out that any press releases must incorporate all the funders' details and logos. He is prepared to provide these, and Mick will write the words for the press release.
- **Community Spaces 'sustainability grant':** Members of the working group have been busy collecting cost estimates, and the grant application is now almost ready for submission. The element within the grant for supporting educational activities should be adequate to fund at least 15 half-day sessions. Oliver advised that tools bought with this grant should only be used in FAUNA, and suggested attaching stickers to them as a reminder.

7. Orchard

- **Towneley Close footpath:** Andrew reported that the County Council can offer a sign reading 'No cycling' but not one saying 'Cyclists dismount'. It was agreed that 'No cycling' was fine. It was not known whether the City Council was honouring its pledge to empty all the bins in the Orchard. Helen is asked to monitor and report at the next meeting.
- **Hedges:** It has been decided not to lay the whole hedge along the footpath this year. Laying will however take place where it runs close to a bench, in order to create views across to FAUNA.
- **Wassailing:** Andrew has this in hand.

8. Volunteer Activities

- **Report for November:** Ian's report (attached as Appendix) on a highly productive morning's work was circulated. It was noted that there were problems with some of the tree labels. Hilary and Oliver will resolve these as the seasons progress.
- **Tasks for December:** An extra item was added to the list circulated by Ian (see Appendix). Worn and slippery patches have developed on a steep grass path. Installing some grass protection matting is a potential solution. Mick has offered his doormats (which appear identical in structure to matting for sale on one website) to undertake a trial to establish practicality and safety. Chris advised spreading sand on the area in the interim.
- **Volunteering website pages:** A draft webpage written by Ian, Mick and Oliver about volunteering anywhere in the FA was circulated prior to the meeting for comments. After discussion, which commended the welcoming tone, it was agreed that two areas required slight

amendment. Oliver will make alterations to the wording about volunteers participating in educational activities, and to the safety paragraph of the Work Party section. Contact phone numbers for problems were agreed: Ian for the Orchard, Glenys for FAUNA and Sarah Dawson for the Play Area (to be displayed on the notice boards too). As regards other web pages, Oliver reported that he is about half way through his revision. He will also review links between pages.

1. Health and Safety Policy

It was recognised that both practices and documentation need to be updated a) to relate to FAUNA as well as the Orchard and b) to take more explicit account of health issues. Ian, Glenys and Graham will work on this, and consult Tony as appropriate in respect of educational activities. In the meantime, it was recognised that there was a need to improve hygiene practices when refreshments are provided to working parties. Graham offered to make antiseptic gel available at the Volunteer session on 10 December. Oliver is fairly confident, but not fully certain, that our insurance covers FAUNA effectively. He is to follow this up at the FA meeting.

2. Edenbreck Cottage

- **Boundary meeting:** Scheduled for 10 December, with allotment representatives and Fraser Granell-Watson, to discuss concerns that the proposed laying of the hedge separating the allotments from the small paddock will make them more vulnerable to vandalism.
- **Tool Shed:** Dave has spoken informally to the Conservation Officer who foresees no problem in principle with constructing a tool shed, but considers rough-cast render preferable to masonry. Sam Edge and Jo have offered to design the tool shed and make any planning application. A permanent structure will require the permission of Property Services. (Oliver will approach them when it becomes appropriate.) Dave has identified a potential source of stone. It is not known whether any progress has been made in sourcing a donated container. Andrew is requested to pursue Michael Sheppard for an update (given the works on Edenbreck Cottage, there are access and timing issues associated with installing a container).

3. Education Working Party

Teachers' visits are scheduled to start in the New Year. On 9 December, A Level students from Carnforth High School are due to visit the Orchard for a session on tree identification.

4. Archiving and Document Storage

This has been discussed by the FA. Legal documents are to be deposited with the Solicitor. It has yet to be decided who will hold copies of them and other important material. Other important and/or useful documents are currently held by a number of people including Hilary, Andrew and Oliver. In the New Year, they will form a working party to rationalise and organise these documents.

5. External Events

- **Health Walks:** The series of four walks is nearing completion. Attendance levels appear to have been quite low. Before they started, Oliver helped in briefing the students leading the walks on behalf of the University of Cumbria and the Wildlife Trust.
- **Leaf Clearing at Storey Institute:** Several FA members helped the Storey gardeners with this task on 26 November. It provided a rare opportunity to enter the garden, and revealed its considerable potential as an educational resource. Graham has already enlisted the help of Jon Barry in an attempt to gain use of the garden for educational activities. It was suggested that a one-off, half day, event involving a single school would be a good starting point and establish the principle of access. Graham will approach Dallas Road School and contact the Director of the Storey with his proposals.

6. AOB: None

Next meetings :

7.30 pm, Thursday 5 January 2012 at Whitegates, Sunnyside Close

7.30 pm, Wednesday 1 February 2012 at Whitegates, Sunnyside Close

Ian Procter's Report on Volunteer Session on 12 November 2011

Eleven local volunteers (including three young people) were joined by 27 (!) student volunteers from Lancaster University's Green Lancaster group. Many thanks to the students who seemed to enjoy an active morning in the warm sunshine. So we were able to get a lot done.

1. We cleared leaves along the footpath from Edenbreck Cottage to the north entrance to the Orchard
2. We dug out excess soil from around the trunk of a willow tree near Towneley Close.
3. The edging to the Townley Close path was back filled to protect the boards and give a smooth finish
4. Two builder's bags of firewood was collected for the wassailing bonfire. They are now stored in Mrs Ridley's garage. Many thanks to Mrs Ridley.
5. Further progress was made strimming the nettles and long grass around the apple trees. Some of the cut grass was raked and transported to the FAUNA field.
6. Very smart signs indicating species were attached to deciduous trees. Some need further checks before the job is completed.
7. Some of the apple trees were pruned.
8. We cleared undergrowth in front of the benches including the removal of quite large self seeded saplings. Saplings and brambles were also removed near the north end but several more remain and need to come out before they get too big.
9. The wooden path boards around the oak circle path were exposed so that blowtorching of the overgrowing grass will be much easier later in the winter.

However

- a) We did not quite have the resources to clear out the bird and bat boxes.
- b) Through mutual misunderstanding Mick and I seem to have ignored the mud clearing on the path toward Lucy Brook. However, if contractors are to work on that hedge, pretty drastically I understand, then perhaps it is not too significant?

Nevertheless, a good morning's work

Ian's Proposed Tasks for Volunteer Session 10 December 2011

1. Clean bird and bat boxes (assuming Tony is coming to the session)
2. Cut broken bough from willow
3. Clear mud from southern section of the path
4. Move stones near Towneley Close to a more secure location
5. Strimming
 - a. By hedge in front of benches (then people doing 1. to 4 can move on to 7. below)
 - b. By the middle entrance
 - c. Sections toward the middle and southern end of the Orchard
6. Remove unwanted saplings (does Chris still want these? If not possibly plant along path but Hanafins should be asked)
7. Cut and lay sections of hedge in front of benches
8. Remove piles of cut wood from FAUNA to create insect habitats in the Orchard.