

Fairfield Association
FAUNA and Orchard sub-Group [FOG]
Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 5 January, 7.30 pm
at Whitegates, Sunnyside Close

Present: Graham Brandwood, Andrew Brennand, Dave Brookes, Glenys Ferguson (mins), Tony Finn, Oliver Fulton, Helen Hicks, Sue Nieduszynska, Ian Procter, Hilary Short, Mick Short (chair), Chris Workman

1. **Apologies:** Dik Bakker
2. **Minutes of last meeting:** Approved.
3. **Matters arising not on current agenda: Cromwell Road mud:** The contractors are being paid for clearing the mud off the road. Two parallel tracks are being made and a wider gate installed to enable Robin Loxam to access his paddock by a more direct route.
4. **Current/recent developments:**
 - **Calf escape:** Through a small gap near the Orchard gate. Swiftly rounded up, and gap wired.
 - **FAUNA opening:** The footpath was opened to the public on 22 December. Over 50 people attended the short, informal tape cutting ceremony accompanied by mince pies and mulled drinks. No article in the Lancaster Guardian (yet?).
 - **Logs in pond:** Retrieved.
 - **Cromwell Road back alley:** It has been reported by residents that some people (often with dogs) are turning left immediately after leaving FAUNA, and walking up the back alley behind the even-numbered houses and Nos 80 and 82 Aldcliffe Road. It was agreed to tackle this (in the first instance at least) by buying and installing a sign at the entrance to that alley. The resident at No. 36 has kindly given permission for this to be attached to the side wall of her house. As this alley is their private property, Glenys and Mick will send a letter to consult the residents. If they agree, Dave will order an appropriate sign.
 - **Mobility aids in FAUNA:** A request has been made to allow cycling along the permissive path through FAUNA by those with walking difficulties (mobility scooters and wheelchairs are permitted by law). The rationale for having 'no cycling' was revisited. Reasons include a) the footpath has not been designed for cycling and is narrow and with sharp corners, and b) experience with the Orchard is that poor behaviour by cyclists generates many complaints. It was decided to retain the ban on cycling in FAUNA, subject to monitoring and review in a year's time. It was agreed to make an exception for cycling by anyone with walking difficulties, subject to the issue of a permit.

Oliver raised the possibility of entering into a concessionary footpath agreement with Lancashire County Council and noted that informal information suggests that we could still impose our own access rules. Oliver is to arrange a meeting with Lancashire County Council to discuss, without prejudice, the pros and cons of such an agreement.

5. **Aldcliffe Fields:** No developments. This is not surprising given that Lancaster City Council's decision on land use is not expected until March at the earliest. It was questioned whether the cheques being held would still be valid once six months had passed. Mick will investigate.

6. **FAUNA**

- **Hay disposal:** Hanafins have used this to mulch Robin Loxam's hedge.

- **External contracts**
 - **Ponds and sluices:** No developments with the disputed payment.

 - **Footpaths and fencing:** Hanafins are still finishing off. Dave is to remind them to add a step to help access to the back of the noticeboard. This board has not been supplied with the expected plywood backing. Richard Storton will be helping Oliver process the HLS claims. It was noted that small gaps remain where children or dogs could go off the footpath into wet areas: at the top of the ramp by Lucy Brook and where the handrail finishes at each end of the boardwalk.

 - **Hedges:** Dave will check that Hanafins are using the right size of plants in Robin Loxam's hedge.

- **Signage etc:**
 - **Information & notice boards:** Nutshell is working on the design of the information board. Hilary is to ask Georgina Peacock to show on the map that she is drawing that the entrance/exit route is from Cromwell Road to Aldcliffe Road, and that back alleys are private (see item 4). To be eligible for the Community Spaces grant the information board must be in situ by 31 March. Dave is to order the mounting board and arrange for it to be installed. A decision on ordering an information board relating to the hay meadow was deferred until it is clear that money is available.

Keys to the new noticeboard at Cromwell Road are to be held by Andrew and Glenys. Andrew will add this board to his round, and ensure that all notices with any relevance to residents in the Cromwell Road area are displayed. It was agreed that notices were required to alert people to the rules for using FAUNA and to generate interest in the Fairfield Association. The laminator is to be passed to Andrew (Tony advised that he has one too.)

- **Dogs & Cyclists signs:** In place.

- **Entrance markers:** An old gate post is to be fixed by the first bend in the footpath at the Cromwell Road end (in line of sight from the entrance). 'FAUNA' and the date will be carved vertically.
- **Waste bins & other signs:** A pair of 'please shut the gate' signs for Cromwell Road are in the post. Andrew has applied to Lancaster City Council for a dog-waste/litter bin to be provided, and has asked whether it is possible for the refuse collectors to empty the temporary bin in the meantime. He will chase this up as a reply has not yet been received. It is hoped that the Council will agree to site the bin about 25 metres within FAUNA, adjacent to Robin Loxam's farm gate where it is away from housing and also unlikely to be damaged by any vehicle movements.
- **Pond & field names:** It was recognised that it would be very useful to have names for parts of FAUNA sooner rather than later, for instance to aid wildlife recording and describing locations of contractors' activities. Helen and Sue are to make suggestions, drawing on sources such as historical names (in consultation with Mike Derbyshire), Robin Loxam's names, and suggestions from the competition (to be provided by Oliver). Oliver will also provide a census of the ponds etc. requiring names.
- **Woodland Trust Community Tree Packs:** Two packs totalling over 800 hedging plants and two trees are due to be delivered at the end of January. In particular, they will be used to diversify the LGGS hedge.
- **Main launch event:** No detailed planning so far as the date will be after 31st March. Mick's celebrity has not replied. Sue and Oliver were asked to make contact quickly with other celebrities, and invite the Mayor and possibly the Sheriff.
- **Community Spaces 'sustainability grant':** The application has been submitted. Assuming it is successful, the money will be received when the main grant expires (i.e. April at the earliest). Ian pleaded that he needs a blow torch now to tackle dormant grass. It was agreed that he could buy one as a trial, claiming from FA funds.

7. Orchard

- **Cyclist sign:** In place.
- **Waste bins:** New bin has been emptied by the Council. Monitoring is required to ensure this continues.
- **Hedges:** The only laying this year is opposite the benches to provide vistas across FAUNA. This task was started in the December volunteer session and will continue in January (item 8).
- **Wassailing:** Andrew stated that it will take place on 14 January whatever the weather. The John o' Gaunt Morris Men are performing this year, probably on the harder ground

by the FAUNA entrance. Tony will be providing the wassail brew and is producing adult and children's versions. Graham will be in charge of the fire.

8. Volunteer activities: Report for December & Tasks for January: See full reports at end. Dogwood cutting under the guidance of Philip Turner is the principal task for 14 January.

9. Health and Safety Policy:

The minutes of the first meeting of the H&S group comprising Glenys, Ian and Graham were circulated. The group's aim is to identify and review existing documentation and practices, and update and expand as necessary. The decision to focus initially on FAUNA and the Orchard was approved (either the FA or the working group would extend the policy to the play area later). The first outcome is that Ian has written a leaflet for those volunteering in the Orchard or FAUNA. This is to draw the attention of new volunteers to various health and safety issues, and will be emailed out when an enquiry is received or handed out when a new volunteer appears at a session. It was recognised that parental consent forms and details of medical conditions must be readily available at volunteer sessions. Ian is to find a suitable file in which to store this confidential information. It was agreed that emergency contact details should also be collected and held. Ian will implement this and add an extra point to the leaflet. (The first aid kit already contains a notebook in which details of any accidents or incidents can be recorded.)

On insurance, Oliver pointed out that a condition of the Community Spaces grant was that our cover included damage to the infrastructure as well as public liability. Andrew is to be the named contact person for the insurance company. Hilary is to send an email (requesting acknowledgement) to notify Zurich that FAUNA is now open.

10. Edenbreck Cottage

- **Boundary meeting:** A meeting took place on 10 December with Fraser Granell-Watson and representatives of the allotment holders. It has been agreed to delay the laying of this boundary hedge until the allotment holders have raised the funds to instal a security fence. Oliver mentioned that there was money available in the HLS grant to lay the hedge along the public footpath by the paddock and old pig sty. This would have to be spent by March 2014.
- **Tool shed:** Fraser has agreed that his workmen will knock down and clear away the pig sty walls. He has agreed to retain the bricks as potential material for surfacing paths. The future of two sycamore trees adjacent to the tool shed site was raised. Oliver noted that the boundary of the conservation area is the allotment fence, so – if they are to be removed – it must go through the proper channels. These trees need be considered as part of the overall scheme. A decision was deferred and Mick and others will inspect on 14 January. Dave made the point that a 'scoping exercise' is needed for the tool shed. There has been no news on progress in sourcing a container, so Andrew was again requested to contact Michael Sheppard. If a container is ruled out, Mick will ask Sam Edge and Jo to proceed with a design. It was noted that storage needs to be found for all the tools to be purchased with the Community Spaces grant. The issue of the tool shed is to be discussed in more detail at the next FOG meeting.

- 11. Education Working Party:** The Carnforth High School session in the Orchard went well, after having to be rearranged because of bad weather. The school is now interested in an activity for 'Enrichment Week' some time in February. This would probably involve about 14 Year 10/11 pupils for a half-day session. It would either be a study of habitats (with the schools doing the preparation) or some form of volunteer work. The latter would require the FA to provide tools, identify suitable tasks, and give guidance and supervision. Ian offered to support Tony on this. Planting or covering the geotex edges of the FAUNA path were suggested as possible tasks.

The working group will convene shortly to consider the educational use of FAUNA. Andrew expressed an interest in joining. As well as some teachers, Tony hopes to involve Maggie Lightfoot from Leighton Moss, and Emma Garston from the Wildlife Trust. The group will plan activities that can be offered, identifying resources needed and carrying out a risk assessment. After this schools will be contacted and first visits arranged, the cost subsidised by the Community Spaces grant. Timing depends on the approval of this grant, but Tony hopes to start the programme in the summer term.

- 12. Archiving and document storage:** Item moved to Fairfield Association meeting.
- 13. Website updating:** Oliver reported that the revised webpage on volunteering will be on the website very soon. Other pages are in progress.
- 14. External events:** Clare Brown will be carrying out a survey for the North West Brown Hare Project in the Orchard and FAUNA in February/March.
- 15. AOB**
- Oliver will shortly contact Lancaster City Council about applying to Natural England to record FAUNA in the national inventory of nature reserves.
 - The following matters need to be considered at the next FOG meeting:
 - Results of the hare and other wildlife surveys need to be collated and stored by the FA. Decisions need to be made about the format and timing of a survey of users of the FAUNA path (required to report to funders).
 - Robin Loxam's use of the fields needs to be reviewed, and a timetable worked out, to ensure compliance with the HLS grant conditions. Oliver is to produce a summary of Robin's obligations. There may be a problem when the cows are in the LGGS field if this coincides with a time when the gate to the pond has to be shut. A separate water supply in the LGGS field may need to be provided.
- 16. Date / place of next meetings :** Wednesday 1 February and Thursday 1 March at Whitegates, Sunnyside Close

Report on Volunteer Session 10 December 2011

14 volunteers reported for duty on a fine winter's morning.

1. The bird boxes were inspected, three had been occupied, these were cleaned. Several others were repaired.
2. The broken bough was cut and cleared from the willow next to the Towneley Close footpath.
3. Three protective mats were fixed on the steep section of path around the fruit hedge. Whilst this will make the path safer we will continue to monitor this path as it looks as if more protection is needed.
4. Loose (potential building) stones were moved from the top end of the Towneley Close path to a more secure location toward the north end of the Orchard.
5. A considerable quantity of logs, the remnant of pruned hedges, was removed from FAUNA and used to build log piles for insects and fauna in secluded parts of the Orchard. Three large logs were set in the ground near the log sections for use in children's activities. A number of suitable logs were stored in the Paddock for use as seating.
6. The worst of the mud was cleared from the southern section of the public footpath.
7. Two large unwanted saplings were dug out.
8. The area between two of the benches and the hedge was strimmed to provide access to the hedge. The ground around the middle entrance to the Orchard was also cut back.
9. Two sections of hedge adjacent to the benches were cut and laid to provide vistas across FAUNA.

Many thanks to all our hard working volunteers. Ian Procter

Extra Volunteer Session 17 December 2011

A couple of volunteers shifted more cut logs from Fauna into the Orchard to create insect friendly wood piles.

Proposed Tasks for January 2012 Session

1. Prune those dogwood shrubs that need it. We will have the assistance of Philip Turner who knows a lot about this shrub.
2. Lay one or two more sections of hedge, again adjacent to the benches, to provide vistas over Fauna.
3. Make a start on the fruit hedge. According to the management plan
 - a) Blackcurrents should be cut down to ground for c. one third of the bush
 - b) Blackthorn should be pruned back hard.
4. There are quite a few useful looking stones at the southern end of the path which should be transported to our 'stone store'.
5. Assess what, if any, trees to take out/prune/pollard at the bottom of Marilyn Lindsay's garden

We think it best to avoid FAUNA at this stage. Even if Hanafins have finished they will want to do their own snagging.