

Fairfield Association
FAUNA and Orchard sub-Group [FOG]
Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 1 March, 7.30 pm
at Whitegates, Sunnyside Close

Present: Graham Brandwood, Andrew Brennand (part), Dave Brookes, Glenys Ferguson (mins), Tony Finn, Oliver Fulton, Helen Hicks, Ian Procter, Rebecca Procter, Hilary Short, Mick Short (chair), Philip Turner, Chris Workman, Helen and Fraser Granell-Watson (part)

1. **Apologies:** Sue Nieduszynska
2. **Minutes of last meeting:** After a query about the child safety policy, these were approved.
3. **Edenbreck Cottage tool shed:** Fraser and Helen Granell-Watson of Edenbreck Cottage attended for this item. The initial designs produced by Sam Edge for a tool shed on the footprint of the old pig sty were discussed. Considering matters such as the visual aspect and the need to provide a boundary that acts a deterrent to intruders, the meeting favoured a design that:
 - incorporates a higher wall against the footpath as the back of the shed;
 - is mono-pitch with the slope to the east;
 - has a green roof;
 - lets in natural light through the roof;
 - is timber-faced, but not with blackened timbers (considered dark and oppressive);
 - has a smaller gate to the footpath;
 - incorporates a door facing south or east.

Stones on site could be used to build the wall backing onto the footpath. Existing breeze blocks and bricks could form the other walls, prior to timber cladding.

Helen & Fraser noted that their planning application proposes an increase in the height of their wall alongside the footpath (Mick asked to see this).

The size and precise location of the tool shed in relation to the existing fence and trees is still to be determined: Helen & Fraser favoured it abutting their boundary.

There was discussion of utilities. Any cabling or water supply taken from Edenbreck Cottage would need to be installed before Helen and Fraser's patio is laid. It was felt that – even with separate metering – this would be inadvisable and a connection to the mains via the footpath would be preferable, if more expensive. However, use of battery lights or natural light could render an electricity supply unnecessary. Windows were felt to be insecure, so Sam is to be asked to consider whether light can be admitted through the roof. (Action Mick).

When the plans are sufficiently detailed, and costings have been made, Hilary will pursue grants for funding. (Rough estimate is about £10 000.) It is hoped that Sam Edge will be present at the April meeting to discuss further, when the possibility of installing a toilet and washing facilities will be considered.

4. **Matters arising not on current agenda:**

- **Insurance contact:** Andrew has made two further phone calls. Zurich has requested an asset register. This will be separate from the asset register required by Community Spaces (for instance, the 'standing stones' will be included). The insurance company did not identify any other information to be provided. Item moved to FA.
- **Cromwell Road back alley:** The 'private' sign has been installed.

5. **Current/recent developments:**

- **Commemorative tree:** A request has been made to hold a naming ceremony in the Orchard, and plant a tree for the baby. Since it is a public space, there are no objections to a naming ceremony being held. However, it was decided to turn down the gift of a commemorative tree:
 - there is little room for more trees without losing the desired open space;
 - the particular tree could be vandalised, damaged or might have to be taken out as part of the management programme;
 - there is a risk of setting a precedent.

Andrew was asked to respond to the request and suggest a financial donation, which could be considered as making the whole Orchard a significant place for the baby.

- **Fallen tree:** A rotten elder tree has fallen in the Orchard by the Martins' boundary. It has been inspected and judged not to present a safety risk. It will be tackled at the next volunteer session.
- **Dog in fields:** A dog being trained in the Orchard ran away from its owners and got into the Big Meadow by going under the boardwalk. The meeting considered this was likely to be an isolated incident, and to monitor.

6. **Aldcliffe Fields:** The City Council's decision on land use has been deferred until August. Extra funding continues to be pursued.

7. **FAUNA**

- **External contracts:** Snagging is almost finished. The disputed payment to the wetland contractor has been settled.
- **Information & notice boards:** The deadline set by Community Spaces for installing the information board is fast approaching. Dave is to order the frame as a matter of urgency. Georgina Peacock's map is ready apart from some minor alterations. It was suggested that the heading 'FAUNA 2012' was changed to 'FAUNA Nature Reserve'. If this does not fit, then this wording could be incorporated elsewhere, alongside the funders' logos. The design for the other side of the board is still in preparation, and its production needs to be arranged. Hilary to pursue.

- **Entrance markers:** The artist has agreed to carve roman numerals. Work is expected to start in April.
- **Pond & field names:** The new names resulting from Helen and Sue's researches have been incorporated into Georgina Peacock's map for the information board. Dik Bakker has offered to finance wooden signs to identify the ponds from the footpaths. Helen will ask John Wilkinson to provide designs and costings.
- **Main launch event:** To be held on a date in May to suit the convenience of the 'celebrity'. Simon Barnes has been approached via the RSPB, but has not yet replied. The RSPB will have a tent and give a talk. If Dik Bakker is able to attend, he might provide some music. Photographs, paintings, poems on the theme 'Images of FAUNA' will be invited for a display (not a competition) on the day and on the website..
- **Community Spaces 'sustainability grant':** The system to monitor its spending is in place, and some money has already been used. None of the award can be claimed until the information board and asset register are completed.
- **Robin Loxam's field usage:** A meeting is scheduled for 5 March involving Oliver, Richard Storton (RSPB), Robin and Fraser.
- **Concessionary path agreement:** Oliver is now pursuing a meeting with the County Council. After this, he will go back to Ann Wood (City Council), who will combine dealing with this agreement with the task of designating the area as a nature reserve.
- **Wildlife surveys, data collection, photographs and recording:** Tony is now logging reports of sightings of birds and other wildlife in FAUNA, the Orchard and neighbouring fields. Oliver noted that Richard Storton hopes to cut the rushes in Big Meadow to about half-size before the nesting season to encourage birds and stimulate new growth for the cattle. He is also hoping to plant phragmites reeds in Upper Sowerholme.
- **User surveys:** If a concessionary path is designated then the County Council is likely to undertake a user count with its own machine.
- **Fields Access Policy:** For April meeting (Oliver).

8. Orchard

- **Waste bins:** Now being emptied.
- **Easter Egg Hunt:** Tony plans were approved. This year a route for younger children will be provided. Tony's main concern was having enough volunteers to deal with equipment and refreshments on the day. He will contact those who helped last year and ask Ruth Haigh and Jonathan Tansley to put out appeals. Elaine Weedy will be approached to run the egg decorating. Oliver is to ask the Martins for the use of their hosepipe. Mick will investigate whether Dik Bakker and Rob Bulman are available to provide music.

9. **Volunteer activities: Report for February & Tasks for March:** See Ian's full reports at end. There was some discussion about how to deal with grass invading the Orchard paths. Worst is the little-used path around the Millennium circle. Philip shared his knowledge of the use of glyphosate weedkiller, which it is planned to use on the ragwort in FAUNA and could also deal with the grass. It was decided to monitor the paths.

It was suggested that many of the remaining saplings could be planted on the NACRO field boundary (Oliver to contact the tenant farmer). Oliver reminded the meeting that tools bought with sustainability grant money were exclusively for use in FAUNA.

10. **Health and Safety Policy:**

- **CRB Checks:** Graham has investigated the process. *Signposts* in Morecambe can act as an umbrella organisation to undertake CRB checking for the FA. Cost for volunteers free, but £10 admin charge; paid person £44. The first step is to register and nominate a contact person. After discussion, it was agreed that this should be someone who themselves would not be part of the vetting process since the contact person would receive the full disclosure details from the CRB. Hilary will ask Michael Sheppard to take this role and liaise with Graham. Providing identity evidence may require a trip to Morecambe during office hours or for a *Signposts* representative to visit. Graham, Ian and Tony were asked to suggest candidates for vetting.
- **Working Party Progress:** An overall health and safety policy document has been drafted. Sections will be sent out to relevant people for comment (for instance, Tony has received the material relating to events in preparation for the Easter Egg Hunt). The finalised document will be presented to the April FOG meeting.

11. **Educational activities:**

- **Schools' visits:** Tony and Graham hosted two Year 2 mini-beast sessions in the Orchard for Dallas Road School at the end of February. Habitat studies for Year 4 are scheduled, and the school is now expected to visit on a regular basis.
- **Working Party:** Tony and his group have been busy planning activities that can be offered in FAUNA. Funded by the sustainability grant, Tony will introduce schools to FAUNA, provide information and back-up with the aim of encouraging them to continue to visit independently. To extend beyond those schools already familiar with the Orchard, Tony proposes to give presentations at staff meetings.

Tony, with help from Oliver, is devising a marked trail along the FAUNA footpath, for use by schools and the general public. It was suggested that numbers could be fixed to existing fence posts. These would link to a downloadable guide on the FA website, giving details of points of interest, wildlife and habitat. If the numbers could be moved, this would allow new locations to be introduced to maintain interest over time. Brass numbers are a possibility, but Helen was also asked to consult John Wilkinson.

12. **Website updating:** The Volunteering page has been submitted. The rest is in progress.

- 13. External events:** Posters will be displayed to publicise the Teddy Bears' Picnic Concert on 17 March. This is organised by Gila Robinson, who has kindly offered the donations to the FA, in recognition of FAUNA.
- 14. AOB:**
- **Wildflowers around the Millennium Oak:** Oliver drew attention to a TV programme giving advice on how to introduce species attractive to wildlife in such an area.
 - **Go Wild:** To start in May. It was proposed that there would be a series of sessions through the early summer, rather than one week of events.
 - **Leaflet:** To be discussed at the April meeting (Hilary, Helen).
- 15. Date / place of next meetings :** Wednesday 4 April and Thursday 3 May at Whitegates, Sunnyside Close

Report on Volunteer Session 11th February 2012

Thankfully the frost held off and we were able to go ahead as planned with 35 volunteers, 21 students from Green Lancaster and 14 'local' volunteers.

The main objective of the day was to plant out hedge saplings donated by the Woodland Trust in commemoration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

In this we were successful in that several hundred saplings were planted in all the areas we had designated for hedge development. This was a considerable achievement as most of these areas were on the sights of old walls, in boggy land, and 'doubling up' existing hedging with adjacent barbed wire.

So planting was not straightforward and hence we still have a considerable number of saplings left to plant.

We have identified a number of areas where further planting can place and intend to hold a further work session before the March working party.

Proposed Volunteer Tasks for March 10 2012

Before coming on to March 10, I should report:

1. Oliver, Chris and Graham have planted more of the Woodland Trust saplings behind the stones in Fauna.
2. As agreed by the January FOG (Minutes item 6) I purchased and trialled a Paracene Weed Wand to try to eliminate grass from the Orchard gravel paths. I tested this on a square metre of path near the middle entrance. It was not successful. This product seems more suitable for clearing weeds between flagstones or blocks and I am happy to keep the item

myself for these purposes, so no charge to the FA.

But what of our grassed over paths?

- a. We (or Simon I believe) already possess a formidable looking blowtorch. Whilst I have not inspected this in detail I am only willing to use this after proper training and if I am confident about its safety.
- b. Digging out the grass will not get to the roots and will probably damage the paths.
- c. Chemical weed killer?
- d. Leave well alone.

I tend toward the latter

3. As agreed by the February FOG

- a. I have purchased and installed a frame to house the 'Fauna rules' at the Orchard entrance to Fauna (Item 7).
- b. I have purchased and installed mats to protect the steep but worn path by the side of the fruit hedge (Item 9). They look ugly at the moment but I will sow grass seed in March
- c. (Item 7-1) I have purchased from The Lile Tool Shop the full set of tools we wanted to get from the Sustainability Grant (not just the reduced list in the application). I gave Mr Woodward the 'offer' and RRP prices currently listed on Amazon and he came up with a very competitive price (including delivery). The tools are promised for this week (beginning 27 Feb)
- d. Two volunteers have registered for The First Aid Cumbria Outdoor First Aid course (Ian Procter 7-8 March, Keith Thomas 28-29 March) (Item 7-2a). Mick and Helen recognise that they need updating and we hope a convenient CVS course is offered soon.

4. As noted in the Report for February 11 we have arranged an extra volunteer session to continue planting saplings (on March 3)

5. And so to March 10!

- a. Clear mud from path between Orchard and Fauna and along the path from Sunnyside Lane
- b. Plant remaining saplings (if necessary after March 3 – decide then where to put them)
- c. Prune fruit hedge
- d. Clear cut dogwood either properly under hedge or to brash pile
- e. Remove two trees (identified and marked in January) and large brambles in area between Towneley Close path and Oak Circle
- f. Prune hedge in vertical plane on path between Orchard and Fauna
- g. Litter pick inside the Fauna fence
- h. Use wood chippings from Fauna as a mulch for the fruit hedge

No problem!!!!

Ian Procter