

Fairfield Association
FAUNA and Orchard sub-Group [FOG]
Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 3rd May, 7.30 pm
at Whitegates, Sunnyside Close

Present: Graham Brandwood, Dave Brookes, Glenys Ferguson (mins), Tony Finn, Oliver Fulton, Helen Hicks, Ian Procter, Rebecca Procter, Hilary Short (part), Mick Short (chair), Philip Turner

1. **Apologies:** Andrew Brennand, Sam Edge, Sue Nieduszynska, Chris Workman
2. **Minutes of last meeting:** Dave made a clarification to item 3. Once construction of the tool shed is started, no time limit applies to the rest of the planning permission so the toilet could be built at any point. Otherwise approved.
3. **Matters arising from Minutes: Stone throwing: Mick** has not had a reply from Ripley School. To be followed up.
4. **Current/recent developments: Cromwell Road:** There have been more incidents of petty thieving and strangers on private property, some of which are known to have been reported to the Police. **Hilary** will be asked to contact PCSO Cath Elliott again, and **Glenys** will attend the next PACT meeting. It was also agreed to buy and install a further three 'Private' signs for the back alleys, subject to residents' agreement. **Glenys** and **Dave** to implement.
5. **Priority Items:**
 - **Edenbreck Cottage tool shed:** Dave explained the modified design, which now gives space to install a toilet at a later date. The extra door and an internal partition would not be put in until a decision was made to add a toilet. For security reasons it was felt that the main double-door access needed to be the most visible, and that any toilet door would be less vulnerable if it was clearly signed. Thought will be given as to whether to install a length of drain when the foundations are laid so as to give the option of installing a conventional toilet. Fraser Granell-Watson's concerns about adding a toilet were noted. He will be consulted before anything is finalised.

Dave and Sam have had a meeting with the Conservation Officer, who does not anticipate any problems with permission. Unfortunately the Tree Officer was unable to attend and offer a view on the proposed removal of the self-seeded sycamores. Oliver has met with Ann Wood (Lancaster City Council). She does not foresee any problems obtaining permission for a permanent structure, although it is possible we might be asked to remove it when the lease expires. It was agreed that the best strategy is to apply first for Conservation Area Consent, to draw out any comments, and then follow this with an application for planning permission. **Dave** and **Sam** to pursue.

It is anticipated that the planning application for Edenbreck Cottage will be approved shortly. This will give the opportunity for the asbestos to be removed from the site. It is understood that Fraser's offer to share removal costs still stands. **Dave** will consult with Environmental Health about the removal process.

- **FAUNA fields access policy:** The revised policy was accepted. **Oliver** was asked to draw up a list of FA members and other advisers who will be allowed access to the fields on a regular basis for approval at the next meeting.

- **FAUNA celebration event including Easter Egg Hunt:** The event will start at 12.30pm, with the Egg Hunt (postponed from Easter Monday because of bad weather) as one of the first activities. A ceremony is scheduled for 1.30pm, to include the presentation of commemorative mugs to key people and hopefully to incorporate unveiling of the information board. Three talks/guided walks will start around 2pm, and be repeated if there is sufficient demand: Fraser-Granell Watson (White Park cattle); Dan Heywood (birds); Richard Storton (FAUNA wetlands design and management). Oliver and Tony are still keen to recruit extra helpers for the event itself and for setting up and dismantling. **Mick** will compose a press release, and include a plug for Fun Day. Community Spaces has sent a 'launch pack' containing balloons, banners etc.

6. **Aldcliffe Fields:** Nothing to report.

7. **Educational activities:**

- **Schools' visits:** Tony reported that he is making good progress encouraging school visits. Willow Lane and Dallas Road Schools remain enthusiastic. Letters containing information on the educational opportunities offered by FAUNA have just been delivered to several new schools and Tony is ready to give a presentation if these schools accept the invitation. After their initial meeting, working party members are exchanging ideas and information by email.
- **Forest School at Storey Gardens:** Graham provided two sessions in March for pupils at Dallas Road School on the theme of 'sustainability'. Graham was disappointed with the report in the Lancaster Guardian. It failed to highlight the three-way partnership between the Storey, the School and the FA that has brought activity back into a garden closed for several years. Teachers from Dallas Road have attended an Inset session in the gardens. The Storey and Dallas Road are now working to establish an on-going arrangement which will provide the school with regular access to green space.

8. **Health and Safety Policy:**

- **CRB Checks:** Michael Sheppard, as a Trustee of the FA, has agreed to act as the contact person for *Signposts*. **Graham** has provided details of the vetting process and will continue to liaise with Michael.
- **Contractors' public liability insurance:** Held over to June. **Dave** is to produce a checklist and identify the ramifications for the FA when employing contractors. **Andrew** and **Hilary** will seek advice from the Charities Commission and CVS respectively.
- **H&S policy documents:** These are being revised in the light of the discussion at last month's meeting, and will hopefully be ready for the June meeting.

9. **Volunteer activities:**

- **Report for April & Tasks for May:** See full reports at end. **Oliver** was asked to arrange for the cows to be in the GGS field on 12th May. Grass will be mown in preparation for the FAUNA party. Sycamores in the hedges also need to be removed.

Philip noted that the newly planted FAUNA hedge alongside the Orchard needs to be trimmed to help it bush out and prevent the plants becoming leggy. It includes some beech and rowan saplings which will become trees if left. **Philip's** offer to maintain this

hedge at times of his own choosing was gratefully accepted. He was mandated to decide which beech and rowan would be allowed to develop into trees, but asked to make sure Ian too knows which ones should not be cut.

Oliver pointed out that Tarja Wilson (County Council) had advised him that ragwort spraying with glyphosate should only be done by licensed operators (requires a three day training course). Her suggestion of contracting a parish lengthsman whose licence might permit the supervision of volunteers will be followed up by **Ian**. It was recognised that a considerable amount of hand weeding of ragwort will again be required this year as spraying is not suitable for the wet areas, the hay meadow and along the sides of paths. Tackling ragwort needs to commence in the next two or three weeks.

- **Loyne School Volunteers:** Ian reported that the Loyne Specialist School had made a tentative enquiry about bringing 6 students to undertake simple volunteer tasks as part of the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. Ian offered to co-ordinate this, and help the school identify appropriate tasks. Agreement in principle was given to this session and **Ian** authorised to explore further should the school make another approach.

10. **Go Wild Sessions:** The three FAUNA celebration talks are effectively 'Go Wild' sessions. **Oliver** will ask Dan Heywood whether he will give another talk after he has finished his breeding birds survey (probably late June). **Tony** offered to contact Jennifer Newton about a session on moths in the Orchard. **Graham** is planning an adults-only camp fire evening in the Paddock, using the new fire pan. He also intends to arrange two Forest School family campfire sessions during the Whitsun half term (probably a maximum of 12, pre-booked). Participants at each session will be asked to make donations to the FA. **Mick** volunteered to co-ordinate these activities into a programme to be advertised.

11. FAUNA

- **Snagging plus broken gate & barbed wire LGGs fence:** Hanafins were due to start snagging work this week (to be completed before the celebration event). The recycled gate between the Hay and Big Meadows has fallen off its hinges. Hanafins have been asked to provide a stay when it is re-fixed, so that there is something to latch it to when it is left open. They will also replace some of the barbed wire in the GGS fence where it comes close to benches.
- **Information board:** **Dave** will continue to chase Woodscape, in an attempt to have the board installed in time for the FAUNA celebration. Capra Designs have kindly supplied a CD of the designs and illustrations they have used. **Oliver** will arrange for Tony to have a copy and for the contents to be held on the website. The master CD will be passed to **Glenys** for safekeeping. (Oliver also noted that there is space on the website for other vital documents to be stored.)
- **Entrance markers:** Joanna plans to return in the school holidays to tidy the carving on the main stones and carve the stone at the Cromwell Road end. She is working on the design for this. **Helen** suggested that the poor clay soil in front of the main stones might prove suitable for wildflowers. She volunteered to contact the National Wildflower Centre at Knotty Ash.
- **Community Spaces 'sustainability grant':** Being spent. Claims cannot be made until installation of the information board finalises the spending of the capital grant. Oliver has completed the annual Entrust return.

- **Concessionary path agreement:** Oliver and Dave met Tarja Wilson on 25th April. She is in favour of designating the FAUNA footpath as concessionary, but pointed out that the County Council was unlikely to fund its maintenance. However, significant maintenance problems are not foreseen in the next few years and there are other advantages, for instance it will appear on maps. She will talk to the County Land Agent and produce a draft agreement, which will incorporate the FAUNA rules. This will be sent to the FA and the City Council's legal department.
- **Leaflet:** No progress. For June agenda.
- **Pond markers:** To be installed by **Oliver** on 12 May.
- **Marked trail:** Oliver has produced a draft. Now in **Tony's** hands.
- **RSPB rush cutting:** The rushes have been cut by Richard Storton to make the wet areas more attractive to breeding birds. Enough have been left to provide some cover. It is hoped that the new growth on the rushes will provide fodder for the cows, whose grazing will then keep the rushes short.

12. **Website updating:** On hold.

13. **AOB:**

- **BTCV:** A leaflet advertising their community network was included in the Community Spaces launch pack. **Oliver** will forward this to Mandy Bannon so that the FA meeting can decide whether it is worth joining.
- **First Aid:** Helen and Mick are seeking a suitable refresher course so that they can renew their first aid certificates. **Ian** will send them information on the BTCV course, which is not until September. **Helen** will investigate whether there is an earlier, more local option. Ian (and Keith Taylor) praised the more expensive 2 day course run in Staveley. It was suggested that this course should be used in future if the BTCV or local alternative proves disappointing,

14. **Date / place of next meetings :** Wednesday 6th June and Thursday 5 July (or break) at Whitegates, Sunnyside Close

VOLUNTEERING REPORT SATURDAY 14 APRIL 2012

There were only six volunteers today, including young Stewart, and most were not there for the whole session. So less than was hoped was achieved. We:

- Removed all the brambles from among the trees near the Towneley Close footpath;
- Reduced the length of most of the bamboo canes supporting the hedging plants along the public footpath (there is still a small stretch to do near the FAUNA path entrance) and replaced the canes which had been pulled out and thrown away;

- Installed the stone marking Anna Siewierska's and Dik Bakker's wedding near Anna's pool;
- Removed a couple of large lumps of wood from the meadow field into the hedgerow;
- Redistributed a few barrow loads of chippings from a couple of piles along the footpath near the FAUNA stones and used them to mulch some of the new hedges nearby.

When the students come we could perhaps use them to redistribute the rest of the chippings and to cut down/remove brambles from among the new hedge plants. The first Wednesday volunteering session will need to include mowing the Orchard as we didn't do any mowing today.
Mick Short

Report on Volunteer Session 25th April 2012 (evening)

Five stalwart souls braved a blustery evening. Although the day had been wet, Jonathan's influence with the Clerk of the Weather gave us a dry if bracing evening.

1. The grass paths and stump area were mown
2. We completed the replacement of sapling supporting canes and lopping them down to the plastic level to deter small (either physically or mentally) people pulling them out yet again.
3. Some of the self-seeded hazel saplings were dug out and the better of them heeled in at the north end of the Orchard by the stone store (marked by a stake in the ground).
4. Some of the debris of last year's foliage was cleared from the south end of the Orchard.

Ian Procter

Proposed volunteering tasks for May 12th 2012

NOTE: We shall have a contingent of Green Lancaster students for their Summer Term session with us. I am arranging with their organiser for them to engage in the following tasks.

1. There are several piles of wood chippings left in the fields and alongside the hedges which need moving and dispersing as mulch around the new saplings. **NOTE:** It will be best if the cows were not in the Big Meadow or the Hay Meadow on the 12th.
2. Bramble growth in the new hedges should be cut back to prevent the brambles taking over.
3. Complete the removal of last year's foliage from the southern section of the Orchard.
4. Continue digging out self-seeded saplings in the Orchard.

Regular volunteers will, of course, work with the students but the following tasks are more suited to them:

- a. Regular mowing of the paths
- b. Strimming around shrubs and trees, particularly at the southern end where last year's surrounding growth overtook the broom shrubs.
- c. Assess the copse between the Oak Circle and Towneley Close to judge whether further trees need removal. Mark them.