

Fairfield Association
FAUNA and Orchard sub-Group [FOG]
Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 6th June 2012, 7.30 pm
at Whitegates, Sunnyside Close

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

1. **Apologies:** Andrew Brennand, Helen Hicks, Sue Nieduszynska, Chris Workman
2. **Minutes of last meeting:** Accepted
3. **Matters arising from Minutes**
 - **Cromwell Road:** Since the last meeting, Glenys has not been alerted to any further incidents. The Community Policing notice will be added to the Cromwell Road board (**Hilary** to email a copy to **Glenys**). Following responses to the letter sent to local residents, two out of the three 'Private' signs initially proposed will be installed on the back alleys. The signs have been purchased and are being prepared for mounting.
 - **First Aid course:** **Ian** will check with Helen before booking places for her and Mick on the course to be held by Lancaster District CVS on 20 September.
4. **Current/recent developments: Edenbreck Cottage boundary:** It has been noticed that the Granell-Watsons have built a chicken run. This has prompted consideration of exactly where the boundary lies between the FA land and Edenbreck Cottage. The boundary needs to be identified and marked in anticipation of the construction of the tool shed. **Mick** (accompanied probably by Oliver) will arrange a meeting with the Granell-Watsons.
5. **Aldcliffe Fields:** Fundraising continues with a sponsored Cross-Bay Walk on 30 June. Anyone wanting to take part must register for the walk in advance.
6. **Edenbreck Cottage tool shed:** Sam Edge has submitted the application for Conservation Area Consent. The indicated deadline for the Council's decision is 27 July. Hilary advised that she needs costings in order to apply for grants. Since this requires input from an engineer, it was decided to wait for the decision.
7. **Health and Safety Policy**
 - **Contractors' public liability insurance:** Enquiries of the Charity Commission and CVS were not very helpful: the former only mention Indemnity Insurance for professionals such as architects, the latter suggested contacting the FA's insurance company. Dave argued that contractors should be covered by the FA's public liability insurance (although he had not checked this himself) but that is in our interests for them to be working under their own. He advised that all contractors, large or small, should be asked whether they have their own public liability insurance. Large contractors such as Hanafins can be expected to have this, but it should still be checked as part of any tender process. If small contractors, such as a stone carver, do not have their own cover, then FOG should decide whether it is desirable to let the contractor work under the FA's policy and what risk mitigation procedures are needed (e.g. path closure).

- **H&S policy documents:** Ian reported that the working party had made the changes requested by FOG in April. However, comments received on the revised documents prior to the meeting had revealed that differences in viewpoint and emphasis remained. Consequently no documentation was brought to the meeting which was instead requested to identify an appropriate way forward. In discussion, it was felt that the problems documenting an H&S policy partly reflected wider issues relating to a) the scope of FOG as a sub-group of the FA and b) to what extent, and how, the FA should be adapting to reflect the growing complexity of its activities. Oliver thought that the approach of the local Wildlife Trusts (a short, core document complemented by several good practice appendices) offered a useful model. He proposed that the Trustees be asked to draw up the core H&S policy. **Mick** will take this item to the FA.

8. Educational activities:

- **Education leaflet & presentation for schools:** Tony showed the meeting the powerpoint presentation he has designed to deliver to those schools that show an interest in making educational visits to FAUNA. He has also drafted a leaflet to follow up the presentation. The leaflet was circulated prior to the meeting, and has since been amended to incorporate comments received. Oliver added that it should be made clearer that H&S is the responsibility of the school. The leaflet will be modified for sending to Cub and Brownie groups. Production of the leaflet will be funded from the Community Spaces Sustainability Grant. This money has also been used to buy extra pieces of equipment, such as booklets on bees and grasses.

Tony reported that his approaches are generally received with enthusiasm and interest, but it is proving challenging to penetrate beyond the school office. He recognises that it will be a longer term project to widen educational use of FAUNA beyond the current key schools of Willow Lane and Dallas Road. Initially school activities will be restricted to the FAUNA footpath. Dave suggested that the Paddock is also a suitable venue as it not usually grazed by the cattle.

- **Schools art competition for Apple Day:** Deferred. To be combined with Apple Day on next Agenda.

9. Volunteer activities (See full reports at end.)

- **Ragwort:** The two parish lengthsman provided excellent advice and training. Ian is liaising with Fraser Granell-Watson to ensure that the cattle are kept away from areas being treated. For instance, Carr House Meadow has yet to be tackled because the cows currently have access. Spraying of Big Meadow is in progress. There is extra work to be done in the Hay Meadow, including hand weeding of the wet areas. Good progress is being made and spraying by age-eligible people will continue on an ad-hoc basis whenever the forecast is for a window of dry weather.
- **Report for May:** The suggestion of adjourning to the pub after a Wednesday evening session was well received, even if it meant curtailing the length of the session.
- **Tasks for June:** The main task will be to prepare the area to be used for the forthcoming school visit.

10. Orchard: Nothing specific to report.

11. FAUNA

- **FAUNA celebration event:** Very enjoyable and successful, and raised about £200. Specially designed mugs were presented to funders and key supporters. The design was much admired, so spare mugs will be displayed at Fun Day and orders taken (**Sue**).
- **FAUNA fields access list:** The list of names circulated was approved, with the addition of Andrew. **Oliver** will email the safety requirements to those on the list, requesting acknowledgement.
- **Snagging:** Hanafins have installed the extra bench and tackled problems such as the expanding toe-boards on the boardwalks. The locks on the field gates still need attention (**Dave** to pursue). It was decided that tidying any still-visible pieces of geotex could be tackled by volunteers.

Dave has reported to Richard Storton that the dam on Anna's pool is leaking. Richard will inspect and try to rectify the problem. It is not known when the leak started as it was discovered by chance. Dave proposed that FAUNA should be inspected on a regular basis, with a record maintained. **Graham** offered to take on this job. **Dave** will produce a list of particular things to be inspected.

- **Information board:** Now in place.
- **Wildflowers by entrance stones:** A card has been sent to the National Wildflower Centre to thank them for their donation of seeds, which were sown by Helen and Oliver during May's Wednesday volunteer session.
- **Leaflet:** Now with **Helen**.
- **Marked trail:** On hold.
- **Reeds:** Richard Storton has arranged for phragmites reed plants to be provided by Brockholes. The anticipated price is £720 for around 1200. Since it is Natural England's requirement that reeds be planted, Richard will ask them for finance.

12. Go Wild

- **Forest School events:** Graham reported that there has been a mixed response to his campfire sessions. The event for adults was cancelled because only one person had booked. The first family session also suffered from a withdrawal, leaving just one family to attend but they really enjoyed the event and made a generous donation to FA funds. The session scheduled for Thursday afternoon is fully booked, but the evening one has been cancelled because of lack of interest. The Paddock is proving an ideal venue, and the fire pan (purchased with the Sustainability Grant) is working well. Dave suggested that publicity for campfire sessions should advertise that vegetarians etc can be catered for on request.
- **Other sessions:** **Oliver** has a list of people interested in a bird walk. He will remind Dan Heywood that he has offered to organise one. A wildflower session will be arranged once the yellow rattle starts to flower in the Hay Meadow.

13. **Website updating:** Some draft pages should be circulated soon (**Oliver**).
14. **Aldcliffe Road Triangle:** Dave is leading a group of local residents who are seeking to improve this small plot of derelict land and buildings by the canal. Even if they do not decide to affiliate to the FA, the meeting agreed to Dave's request to borrow FOG tools, subject to a check being made that they are returned.
15. **AOB:** None
16. **Date / place of next meeting :** No meeting in July. Thursday 2nd August and Wednesday 5 September at Whitegates, Sunnyside Close.

Ian Proctor's Volunteer Items:

Ragwort Report May 31st 2012

As requested by the May FOG meeting I contacted parish lengthsman for assistance with the herbicide spraying of Fauna ragwort. Mike Ashworth and Geoff Roberts met with four age eligible volunteers (myself, Mick Short, Oliver Fulton and Keith Taylor) on the evening of May 16th for training and supervision in the back pack spraying of glyphosate herbicide. Together with the lengthsman we sprayed the Paddock and most of the Hay Meadow. Weather permitting I plan to complete the Hay Meadow in the next day or two.

Results there seem satisfactory with the ragwort dying quickly and we are assured that the surrounding grass will quickly regrow.

But the Big Meadow awaits us with the complication of the cattle. We have agreed with Fraser Granell-Watson that the cattle will be kept out of the Big Meadow from Saturday 2nd June until the sprayed ragwort is safe. I will keep Fraser informed of all activity.

Five litres of Roundup Pro (as recommended by the lengthsman) have been purchased and I am in the process of organising sessions for eligible volunteers over the next week or so. Dependent on the number of volunteers and the weather we will review progress and consider whether to contact the lengthsman again. I will report verbally to FOG on this.

Report on Volunteer Session 12th May 2012

12 local volunteer were joined by 20 student volunteers from Green Lancaster on a lovely morning.

Our tasks were

1. The big job for the session was to clear piles of wood chippings from the edges of the Fauna fields and transfer it as an extra mulch around our new saplings (which are all doing really well). Still some to do!
2. Mowing the grass around the stumps and all the paths ready for the Fauna Celebration on the following day.
3. Some strimming of rapidly growing undergrowth.

4. The new and very impressive pond signs were fixed to the fence and, in one case, to posts, after a struggle to get the post in. Well done to two young volunteers who stuck at it and finished up with a really good job.
5. A bit of hedge trimming down the Pads path removing entangling brambles, to the appreciation of at least one passing dog walker.
6. Collection and removal of excess membrane from the gate areas, bits of wood and even scrap from the hedges. Very satisfying tidying.
7. Assessment of the copse between the Oak Circle and Towneley Close and
 - a. Identification of a sickly silver birch which can come out
 - b. Noting that the hazel should be coppiced in the autumn

As ever, not everything achieved, the self seeding saplings are now hiding in the long grass and those chippings seem to go on for ever! But everyone enjoyed the morning, especially one seven year old little girl who had some super rides in a wheelbarrow.

Report on Volunteer Session on the Evening of 29th May 2012

Nine volunteers set to work. We:

1. Mowed the stump circle and the paths
2. Strimmed a section of the undergrowth around the fruit trees
3. Cleared away the fallen willow
4. Cut down two small dead trees
5. Cleared more of the piles of chippings, to infill ruts in a gateway and mulch the saplings
6. Fixed the last pond sign on the fence
7. Prepared the ground in front of the Fauna stones and sowed wildflower seeds

So, a productive evening. There was a suggestion that after these evening sessions we repair to the pub for much needed refreshment. I am very happy indeed to organise such forays.

Proposed Volunteer Tasks for June 9th 2012

- Clear the nettles and long grass from the area between the Towneley path and the Circle - Tony has requested this for a school session he is running the week after
- Cut back the undergrowth around the gorse, broom and other shrubs / trees
- Mow the stumps area and paths
- Clear the remaining piles of chippings
- If we can get at them dig out some more self seeded saplings

If the weather seems appropriate and a couple of age eligible volunteers commit to coming we could do some ragwort spraying. I shall contact possible 'candidates' toward the end of the week.

Ian Procter