

**Fairfield Association**  
**FAUNA and Orchard sub-Group [FOG]**  
**Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 4th October 2012, 7.30 pm**  
**at Whitegates, Sunnyside Close**

**Present:** Sheila Beven, Graham Brandwood, Andrew Brennand, Dave Brookes, Ken Capewell, Glenys Ferguson (mins), Tony Finn, Oliver Fulton, Helen Hicks, Sue Nieduszynska, Ian Procter, Hilary Short, Mick Short (chair), Philip Turner,

1. **Apologies:** Rebecca Procter, Chris Workman.
2. **Minutes of last meeting:** Accepted.
3. **Matters arising from Minutes:**
  - **Rats:** No longer any piles of rubbish at the tool shed site to encourage nesting rats.
  - **Bollard keys and padlocks:** Mick has bought extra keys for the Sunnyside bollards, although one of the locks now needs replacing. Oliver has purchased extra padlocks that use the existing key and installed one on the gate between the Big and Hay Meadows. It was agreed that **Oliver** will see if the same padlock could be used on the Cromwell Road gate and the Sunnyside bollards,
  - **FAUNA notice:** Ian has installed a replacement for the vandalised frame.
4. **Current/recent developments: Cromwell Road:** A resident has reported that her car, parked in front of house, was “keyed” in early September. Glenys attended the PACT meeting on 2nd October to ensure that Cromwell Road is on the local policing team’s radar. The meeting agreed that the next FA Newsletter should urge people to report any incidents of vandalism or anti-social behaviour to the Police (**Glenys**).
5. **FLORA:** Nothing to report.
6. **FAUNA:**
  - **Leaking ponds:** A leak from an elbow joint is still suspected. In the long term, the dams will be broken down by the cattle. **Oliver** will discuss with Richard Storton the feasibility of erecting fencing to keep the cattle away. Monitoring of leaks and dams to continue – see item 14 (**Graham**).
  - **Leaflet:** Delayed awaiting an appropriate map. Jane Jellicoe is drawing one that can hopefully be used for other purposes as well. The size of the map means it is likely that the text will need adjustment (**Hilary** and **Helen**).
  - **Concessionary path agreement and Local Nature Reserve designation:** Ann Wood at Lancaster City Council is having difficulty finding time to deal with this. **Oliver** will continue to pursue.
  - **Lancashire Environmental Fund award:** The FA has been given a best practice award of £500. This money will pay for the removal of asbestos from the tool shed site. It was suggested that the glass pane depicting a kingfisher could be auctioned to raise funds (**Andrew**). **Oliver** will request another copy of the certificate to display in the Cromwell Road noticeboard.

- **Insurance:** Andrew reported on the premium for insuring the FAUNA assets, which remains disproportionately high despite negotiating it downwards by 50 per cent. Community Spaces have confirmed that such insurance is a requirement of Lottery funding. **Hilary** will investigate other providers for when the insurance comes due for renewal.
7. **Orchard:**
- **Mugs:** Not worth pursuing.
  - **Future handling of events:** Mick has re-read the FA Minute from 2008 that established the terms of reference for FOG. It states that the organisation of events such as Wassailing, Apple Day and the Easter Egg Hunt are the remit of the FA meeting rather than FOG.
8. **Breeding birds survey:** Dan Haywood has still not submitted his results. **Oliver** will continue to chase.
9. **Volunteer activities:** Ian's reports on haymaking and the September volunteer sessions are attached at the end, along with the tasks for October. It was noted that the graziers have not yet paid for the haylage as Oliver is still awaiting a bill from Lancashire Wildlife Trust. The session on 13th October will need particularly careful management and delegation because of the potential number of volunteers involved (some 20 students plus path users attracted by Ian's publicity and regular volunteers). **Ian** will concentrate on supervising the work on the FAUNA path. **Mick** will take a group of volunteers to Fairfield Green to tackle the hedge and dogwood. **Oliver** and **Sheila** will take charge of seed sowing (see item 13). **Ian, Ken** and **Graham** plan to remove ragwort from the FAUNA path verge in the days before the session and **Ian** will trial the proposed method of cutting back the grass. Dave stressed that damage to the path must be avoided, and that anything growing in the gravel must be left for spraying.
10. **Tool shed:** Planning permission was granted on 10 September. The asbestos has been removed. Andy Lee has quoted to remove trees, and has advised that a fair-sized stump is left to facilitate the subsequent removal of the tree roots by volunteers or a machine. Hilary has submitted an application to Lancaster City Council for a 'Take Pride' grant. The maximum award is £10,000. However, current costings suggest up to £16,000 may be needed (inflated by the fact that the tool shed is in a conservation area, and the project is subject to VAT). **Hilary** has asked Sam Edge to review the costings and will investigate other sources of funds. The Rotary Club is holding a race night in November, with the FA benefiting from the monies raised. Rotary has specified that this should be used to pay for the green roof of the tool shed (to be acknowledged with a plaque). The possibility of using students from Lancaster and Morecambe College to undertake the building was raised.
11. **Educational activities:**
- **Schools' visits update:** **Tony** will follow up the contact with the University of Cumbria once the new term is underway. He and his sighted assistant have spent two mornings in the classroom with Year 5 at Dallas Road school focusing on wildlife on the canal. Their teacher has invited them to an open afternoon which will present an opportunity to publicise the FA to parents.

- **School visit booking form and risk assessment:** Oliver and Tony have met and made some final revisions. The latest versions were approved by FOG, and can now be sent to the FA meeting to be signed off (see item 20).
12. **Website updating:** Oliver has received some suggestions from Sue and pictures from Helen. **Oliver** was asked to send some interim content to the website ASAP.
  13. **Wildflower seed collection and sowing:** To take place as part of the 13 October Volunteer session (see 9). **Ian** will ask the graziers to keep the cattle out of Hay and Carr House Meadows on the day. **Oliver** and **Sheila** will determine the method for sowing the seed, and identify the tools needed. Locally collected seeds will be provided by **Sheila** and **Dave**. **Oliver** will arrange to collect the seeds being supplied by the Lancashire Wildlife Trust. **Oliver** will also make further contact with Steve Bullen to report the state of progress with wildflowers around the Millennium Oak.
  14. **Inspection register:** Graham has established a list of items to check in FAUNA and circulated his first monthly report. Currently principal maintenance concerns relate to the ponds (see item 6).
  15. **Emergency toilet arrangements:** With school visits on hold over the winter months, this is less urgent. Over the next few months, **Tony** and **Mick** will compile a register of householders prepared to offer emergency access to their toilet. Graham demonstrated the 'Boginabag' a reasonably inexpensive, foldable and portable toilet that uses absorbent gel, that he has found to be acceptable when running Forest School sessions. This could be used as a back-up if there is a problem arranging access to a householder's toilet.
  16. **FAUNA gate widening:** Haymaking revealed a potential future problem with the gates between the Carr House and Hay Meadows. The equipment used by Lancashire Wildlife Trust can negotiate the gates with care, anything larger would not have a tight-enough turning circle. The options are to change the size of the gates and re-angle them (likely to be quite expensive, and must still be able to close off the path) or cut a new gate into the LGGS field and take a longer route round (would need permission, and depend on future use of that field). Decision deferred. To be discussed after 2013 haymaking.
  17. **Volunteering with North Lancashire Wildlife Trust:** LWT would welcome extra help. It was suggested that FA volunteers might offer a day's work, doing something different and/or extending their skills. Another suggestion was that LWT and the FA exchange email lists to advertise volunteer sessions. **Oliver** will explore possibilities with Reuben Neville.
  18. **First Aid Refresher Course:** Mick has renewed his first aid certificate having attended a refresher course organised by CVS in Morecambe. **Ian**, **Helen** and **Mick** have all attended different courses in the past few months. It was suggested that – along with **Graham** – they meet to compare notes, share experiences and review the contents of the first aid box. Approval was given to acquire an extra first aid box.
  19. **Bird and bat boxes:** HLS funding for bird and bat boxes needs to be spent. **Oliver** will ask Richard Storton for suggestions on types, locations and sources.
  20. **Health and Safety Policy:** The September FA meeting has asked FOG for the following contributions to the appendices:
    - a) Policy for FAUNA fields. **Oliver** will review the format for consistency.

- b) Volunteer working parties. **Ian** will convert his existing documentation into an appropriate format.
- c) Guidance for external contractors. **Dave** will build on the section drafted for the original H&S policy document (**Glenys** to supply).
- d) School visits. Documentation now available (see item 11). (**Glenys** to forward.)
- e) Information for external volunteering groups, including agreement form (**Ian**). The schools form can be used as a model, and Green Lancaster can provide guidance. The agreement form might cover several visits or a whole year. **Andrew** noted that, to clarify arrangements, there should also be an agreement form for other external bodies using the FA's space (eg. any Forest School events that are not organised under the umbrella of the FA).

Drafts are to be sent directly to the FA.

21. **AOB:**

- **Tree donations:** Philip has been given a couple of trees that are growing in pots. The meeting stressed that they cannot be planted in the Orchard (no space to plant more trees) or in FAUNA (the aim is to attract wetland birds and large trees are undesirable as they encourage predators). It was decided that **Philip** would tend these in anticipation of planting them in FLORA.
- **Community Spaces Conferences:** **Oliver** will book places for himself and **Hilary** for the 24 November session discussing future grant possibilities. He will circulate details of the 31 October conference on Green Spaces in case anyone else is interested in this networking opportunity.
- **Location of FOG Meeting:** FOG is becoming too large for Mick's front room. **Glenys** will book the (free) upstairs room at The Robert Gillow for the next meeting.

22. **Date / place of next meeting:** 7.30pm Thursday 8 November upstairs at The Robert Gillow, 64 Market Street; Thursday 6 December (venue to be decided).

## **Ian Procter's Volunteer Items:**

### **Haymaking, early September 2012**

We had been waiting for a spell of dry, settled weather since early August. At last, a month later, it arrived and the Hay and Carr House Meadows were mown by Reuben and Steve from Lancashire Wildlife Trust (LWT) on 4<sup>th</sup> September.

An urgent appeal for volunteers went out through all our email systems on the evening of the 4<sup>th</sup> and next morning 12 volunteers turned up for duty. This meant that turning the hay in the two meadows was achieved in three hours. It was particularly satisfying for those who had fought the ragwort that almost none was detected lurking in the cut grass.

The weather held and on 6<sup>th</sup> September 14 volunteers assisted the LWT team in rowing up, baling, transporting the bales to Loxam's storage barn, wrapping in plastic and stacking the bales in the shed. 70 bales were harvested, 55 from the Hay Meadow and 15 from Carr House Meadow.

Exciting and satisfying for all concerned.

## **Report on the volunteer session held on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2012**

9½ volunteers assembled for work:

1. The grass was mown, including the Oak Circle, left quite long but ready for further reduction for Apple Day
2. The brambles cut at the last session were cleared and the patch further tidied
3. Seeding thistle heads were removed in the Big Meadow adjacent to the footpath
4. Sufficient apples were harvested for Apple Day
5. Apple tree varieties were identified and labels attached
6. Long grass and nettles was cut back around all the Orchard benches and the notice boards
7. A start was made to digging out first year ragwort from the Fauna path
8. A start was made to clearing excess vegetation from the Fauna hedge saplings (NB Philip has undertaken to continue the clearing of the Fauna / Orchard path hedge)

As well as the regular Volunteer session in September we can also record:

- The *Fauna Welcome* notice at the Orchard end of the Fauna path has been replaced.
- Many thanks to Philip for finishing off clearing the excess vegetation around the saplings on the Orchard / Fauna path
- Strimming, mowing and tidying the play area
- Mowing the Orchard in readiness for Apple Day

### **Proposed volunteer tasks for 13<sup>th</sup> October**

NOTE: Green Lancaster has offered student assistance on two occasions this term. A group will be joining us on both the October and November volunteering sessions. They will be deployed across the following tasks.

- The priority, as agreed by the last FOG, is the trimming back of the grass edge to the Fauna path. We are advertising this, calling for members of the public to assist. (See NOTE 1 below)
- In conjunction with this, trim the top of the Fauna hedge to keep it at c. 4 feet in height. REMEMBER there are three commemorative oaks in the hedge, marked by supporting stakes.
- Cut the hedge around the electricity sub-station on the Green (NOTE; the Council have promised to do their share in the week proceeding our volunteer session)
- The grass will have been mown for Apple Day so may be OK, however, as we get to this time of year this may be the last regular opportunity to cut it. Judge on the day in terms of length of grass and how many people we have.
- Depending on whether Oliver organises anything sooner, sow wild flower seeds in the meadows
- Continue clearing the Fauna hedge of excess vegetation around the saplings.
- Slash back nettles etc in the Orchard

NOTE 1: Prior to the 13th the ragwort must be removed from the path edges. It may be that volunteers get to work on this but I will review the situation circa 8th October and ensure that the ragwort is out.