

**Fairfield Association**  
**FAUNA and Orchard sub-Group [FOG]**  
**Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 9th January 2013, 7.30 pm**  
**at The Robert Gillow**

**Present:** Graham Brandwood, Ken Capewell, Glenys Ferguson (mins), Tony Finn, Matt Homewood, Ian Procter, Rebecca Procter, Hilary Short, Mick Short (chair), Chris Workman.

1. **Apologies:** Dave Brookes, Andrew Brennand, Oliver Fulton, Sue Nieduszynska
2. **Minutes of last meeting:** Accepted.
3. **Matters arising from Minutes:**
  - **Payment for haylage:** Still outstanding, as is the payment for asbestos removal.
  - **Oak tree in copse by oak circle:** Mick will check with Michael Sheppard that there is no objection to its removal.
4. **Current/recent developments:**
  - **Carr House Farm:**
    - a) The Loxams phoned Oliver to report (attempted?) break-ins to their outhouses and request CCTV coverage around Carr House Meadow. The FA seeks to act as a 'good neighbour' and the meeting was concerned by this news. However, it was agreed that the FA has no responsibility in respect of criminal activity in the vicinity of FAUNA and the Orchard. Mick will ask Oliver to reply to the Loxams.
    - b) Mick will talk to the graziers about their procedures for moving cattle between fields.
    - c) Natural England has raised concerns about over-stocking and the presence of the cows in Big Meadow during the winter months. Mick has already reported these problems to Fraser Granell-Watson.
  - **Campers in the Orchard:** Several people were camping at the north end of the Orchard for two/three weeks over the Christmas period. Police advice was that the FA had the right to clear and dispose of the tents if they were unoccupied. This task was completed by a small group of volunteers, with salvageable property handed to the Police for safekeeping.
5. **Report from the FA meeting:** Mick reported that the FA website is being revamped, with blogs being introduced (see also 6). Julia McDowell is approaching BT about providing 'hotspots' in the Orchard. FOTT is now formally part of the FA. The playground has been resurfaced and repaired. Andrew has the preparations in hand for Wassailing on 19 January. Graham offered to transport the stored wood and set up the bonfire. A FLORA Walk & Talk will precede Wassailing with probably Mick and Oliver leading the two groups. Anyone else willing to be involved was asked to contact Mick.
6. **Website updating:**
  - **Inconsistencies and outdated links relating to FAUNA and Orchard:** Mick asked anyone who spotted mistakes on the website to report them to him, for forwarding to Julia. Oliver will soon be submitting some extra pages relating to FAUNA. A 'learning zone' has been added to the website, and Tony is updating and extending the pages

relating to educational activities in conjunction with Julia. This section will also incorporate resources. This is a requirement of the Community Spaces Sustainability Grant as well as a response to teachers' comments.

- **Wildlife sightings blog:** **Tony** has volunteered to monitor this blog. He will also add background information to people's posts and provide suggestions as to what species may be sighted at particular times of the year.

## 7. **FAUNA:**

- **Monthly maintenance inspection:** Full report available. Graham drew attention to damage in places to the top wire of the FAUNA footpath fence. **Ian** will inspect. The leak at Anna's Pool appears quite serious (see below), and the water level in Lucy's Pool also seems unduly low (Richard Storton to be asked to inspect on next visit).
- **Winter flush counts:** The session arranged by Graham with Dan Haywood for January 3rd had to be cancelled. **Graham** will make another arrangement with either Dan or Richard Storton to coincide with his February maintenance inspection.
- **Leaflet:** Finished and being distributed. It is proving a useful handout to support the FLORA fundraising campaign. (Mick is drafting a similar leaflet for FLORA itself.) It was suggested that the FAUNA leaflet could be added as a downloadable file to the website. **Helen/Hilary** to liaise with the webmasters.
- **Final snagging:** Mick and Dave had a site meeting with David Hanafin and Richard Storton (RSPB) on 19th December. It was agreed that Hanafins will add down-boards where missing to remedy the gaps developing at the ends of the boardwalks. Hanafins was asked to quote for addressing the flooding of the FAUNA footpath by the Paddock gate and the Stones. This will involve laying stones in the gateway to act as a soak and installing a pipe under the path to drain into Big Meadow. Hanafins has since been asked to quote for incorporating finer material into the footpath at the Cromwell Road end in response to complaints about the rough surface.

At the site meeting, Hanafins was also asked to replace those whips that have failed to take in the Pads path hedge. Ian argued that this was now unnecessary (see item 17). (**Dave** to inform Hanafins.)

Hanafins has requested a reference from the FA. **Mick** will write a positive reference in consultation with **Dave**.

Rubber strips have been stapled to the top of the Cromwell Road gate to deaden the sound of the closure being dropped.

- **Allotments holders' fence and Paddock hedging:** The allotment holders now have the finance for their fence and will be hiring Hanafins to install it. It is hoped that Hanafins will be able to lay and/or coppice the Paddock hedges (paid for by the FA) at the same time (and before the 31st March bird nesting deadline). This was also discussed at the site meeting on 19th December. These hedges are within the Cannon Hill Conservation area and most of the trees that have developed over the years meet the Tree Protection Officer's criteria for requiring formal, written permission before removal or coppicing. Richard Storton's view is that laying to create a hedge is the best

way to develop a solid boundary attractive to birds, so an application will be made to the Tree Protection Officer for 'proper' hedges on both sides. Hanafins will quote for writing a report to support the application.

- **Repairs to Anna's Pool:** This was also discussed on 19th December. Richard Storton suggested that earth around the pipe is dug out, and replaced with clay. He has offered to tackle the job himself, but requires a supply of good quality clay. **Mick** will ask the graziers if they are aware of any suitable source within FAUNA.
8. **Volunteer activities:** Ian's full reports are attached at the end. Mick, Ken and Rebecca have been leaf clearing along the path south of Sunnyside Lane. Once potential hedging stakes have been removed on 12 January, Fraser Granell-Watson has offered to deal with the remaining brash by the pigsty. He has also pointed out that there are some bulbs appearing between the pigsty and the defunct fence, Moving these to a safer site is a task to be added to January list (**Ian**).
  9. **Educational activities:** Pupils from Dallas Road School are expected to visit in the next couple of weeks for one of their regular sessions studying habitats.
  10. **Volunteering with Lancashire Wildlife Trust:** Mick and Ken joined an LWT working party cutting blackthorn on Warton Crag in December. About 8 FA members have signed up to help LWT with hedge planting at Freeman's Pools on 14th February.
  11. **First Aid group:** Has yet to convene (**Mick**).
  12. **Bird and bat boxes:** No update.
  13. **Health and Safety Policy:** Progress on contributions to the appendices to be submitted to the FA:
    - a) Policy for FAUNA fields. No report.
    - b) Guidance for external contractors. No report.
  14. **Concessionary path agreement, Local Nature Reserve Designation, Edenbreck boundary:** Progress at Lancaster City Council has stalled because of the pressure of other work. Councillor Jon Barry has written to the Council in an attempt to get these matters expedited. **Mick** will discuss tactics with Oliver.
  15. **FLORA:** Fundraising continues, and it is hoped that schools will become involved through interested parents and/or teachers. **Hilary** will explore whether a lottery grant could provide finance to help buy the Gleeson fields.
  16. **Tool shed: funding and construction:** Tenders have been sent out to two local builders. A February start is still a possibility. The first payment from the Take Pride grant can be claimed by the end of January. It was suggested that project management costs and skip hire are items that could be claimed at this stage. The cost of adding an electricity supply has been estimated at £4-5000, which is likely to be impractical. However, there may be other grants that would finance this. **Chris** will forward to Hilary a copy of the Lancaster City Council notice in last week's local paper. **Hilary** will also investigate Lancaster Green Spaces grants (under £1000, but several bids possible). The builder will be encouraged to save costs where possible. The VAT position remains unclear with inconsistent information being provided. There seems a strong case for the build qualifying, so a VAT-free certificate will be issued to

the builder. Should this subsequently be rejected by HMRC then the decision will be challenged or money found to pay the VAT at that point.

17. **Hedging:**

- **Proposals for laying:** See the end of Ian's Volunteer Items below.

There was discussion about the hedging policy to adopt: trimming to make them bushy or laying as advised by Joe Craig; whether to adopt the same approach for all hedges or treat them individually. It was agreed to be pragmatic and monitor the results, the aim being to produce hedges about 5 foot in height (so that birds cannot detect a human shape, but people can still get some view) and that are not 'lollipop' in shape. The hedge along the east side of the Grammar School field does not belong to the FA and cannot easily be laid because it is closely bounded by wire fencing, so trimming will be the approach here. The west side of the Pads path will be laid, which will be a time-consuming exercise. The east side of the Pads path will continue to be trimmed. **Mick** will communicate this information to Philip Turner and ask if he is prepared to continue the valuable work he has been doing on the hedge on the east side of the Pads path.

It was decided to save money by deferring the purchase of axes since the FA already has 6 new bill hooks. Approval was given to purchase 5 pairs of welders gloves (**Ian**). A start on the hedge on the west side of the Pads path will be made in the volunteer session on January 12th. **Ian** plans to supplement this with an extra working party session each week starting after 21st January until the bird nesting deadline (information to be circulated). Graham, Ian, Ken and Josh Gifford are currently signed up for Lancashire CC training days on 16/17th January.

The Martins have taken on responsibility for their boundary hedge in the Orchard. They would like to reduce some of the sycamores. The meeting was happy to support this proposal, which would need to be approved by the Tree Protection Officer. (**Mick** to report back to the Martins.)

**Mick** will contact Andy Lee (tree surgeon) to survey the trees in the Orchard and FAUNA. For health and safety reasons, this task (last done in Spring 2011?) should be undertaken regularly at approximately two year intervals.

- **Woodland Trust plant pack:** Mick has requested another pack of hedging plants. It was suggested that these could be used to plant up gaps in the Pads hedge by FA volunteers (instead of Hanafins doing this work – see item 7 Final snagging). These plants might also be useful in the Paddock hedges. They will be heeled in somewhere if not needed immediately.

18. **Stand-in Chair for FOG:** **Mick** will recommend to the FA that Dave and Oliver share this role in his absence.

19. **Review of FAUNA cycling policy:** The current policy is that cycling along the FAUNA footpath is banned, except where a permit has been granted on the grounds of walking difficulties. This policy was established in January 2012, to be reviewed after the first year. Four cycling permits have been issued. 9 people were observed disobeying the 'no cycling' rule during the User Survey in July 2012. This aggregates to about 50 per week, although the impression is that the number is lower than this at the moment. The meeting considered that

cycling through the nature reserve should continue to be prohibited (with the exception of permit holders). The current level of cycling was considered disappointing, but not a major problem.

20. **AOB:** Mick noted that FA equipment currently stored in Mrs Ridley's garage will have to be re-homed soon, possibly at short notice. Simon Gershon has kindly offered space on the Marsh, but **Mick** will try to find a more convenient alternative.
21. **Date / place of next meeting:** 7.30pm Wednesday 6th February (upstairs at The Robert Gillow 64 Market Street) and Thursday 7th March (The Robert Gillow).

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

### **Report (with pictures!) on volunteer morning held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2012**

11 volunteers turned out on a cold but bright morning.

1. Our top priority was to demolish the former pig sties adjacent to Edenbreck Cottage and on the site of the soon to be started tool shed. They have been an eyesore for too long and a number of supporters came along to witness their demise. The resulting rubble, along with general rubbish, was deposited in a skip although good quality bricks were stored for future use.
2. A few days before two volunteers had felled some of the trees on the site and the resulting debris was sorted between firewood for the wassailing celebration and brash. Both were carted away from the site.
3. Leaves were cleared from the path alongside Edenbreck Cottage.
4. Further pruning of the apple trees was undertaken.
5. The work was heavy and the team were even more grateful than usual for the refreshments provided by Tony. Two of his cakes were devoured.

Mick wields the first blows.



NOTE: Sheila Beven is leaving, hopefully temporarily, the district and has donated some garden tools and a wheelbarrow to the FA. Many thanks to her and even more reason to build the tool shed.

### **Monday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2012**

The skip was successfully collected and the yard and adjacent road swept. And afterwards:



### **Proposed tasks for volunteer morning on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2013**

1. Complete clearing and stacking bricks in former pig sties.
2. Sort out any possible hedging stakes in the brash adjacent to the former pig sties.
3. Clear piles of brash in Orchard after sorting out any possible hedging stakes.
4. Clear leaves from the path south of Sunnyside Lane.
5. Retrieve pile of hedging stakes from Hay Meadow.
6. Complete the trimming back of grass on the Fauna path toward Cromwell Road.
7. Make a start on laying the Pads hedge.

### **Proposals for hedge laying following meeting with Joe Craig 15/12/12**

Seven volunteers met with Joe Craig, Chairman of the Lancashire and Westmorland Hedging Association for a walk down the Pads footpath and advice on what to do with a number of our hedges. Detailed notes were kept by Glenys and are available separately. We were all impressed by Joe's knowledge and enthusiasm and as a result I propose:

1. Between January and 31<sup>st</sup> March (Defra recommended end of hedging) we make a start of laying the Pads edge southwards from the Orchard entrance.
2. We will need some equipment:
  - a. Joe strongly recommends welder's gloves not only for their toughness against thorn but also for their ease of removal when using an axe. Pack of 10 at circa £50
  - b. Axes. Joe recommends axes with a 19 inch / 50 cm handle and a 1½ pound / .67 kg head. Four at approx £7.
  - c. He recommends discussing our requirements with Ian at Lyle Tool Shop.
3. Other equipment we have either within the FA (saws) or privately (hammers). For the moment we have sufficient hazel to fashion hedging stakes.
4. Lancashire CC is holding further hedging training days in January. I will circulate details when I get them. I suggest that FOG recommends people attend as and when they are able.
5. It seems impractical to restrict hedge laying to our routine Saturday volunteer mornings. Hence I propose I organise hedge working parties to focus on this task over the winter.