

Fairfield Association
Fauna and Orchard sub-Group [FOG]
Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 9th January 2014, 7.30 pm
at Whitegates, Sunnyside Close

Present: Dave Brookes, Glenys Ferguson (mins), Tony Finn, Ian Fraser, Helen Hicks, Sue Nieduszynska, Ian Procter, Rebecca Procter, Hilary Short, Mick Short (chair), Chris Workman

1. **Apologies:** Andrew Brennand, Graham Brandwood, Oliver Fulton
2. **Minutes of last meeting:** Agreed.
3. **Current/recent developments:** None.
4. **Matters arising from Minutes:**
 - **Tool shed coping stone and key:** Hilary reported that Mr Edwards will repair the stone when he comes to carry out work on the play area.
 - **Payment for haymaking & wildflower seed:** A reply from Lancashire Wildlife Trust was received today. **Ian** will complete the Section 3 form and pass it to **Dave** for signature.
5. **Report from the FA meeting:** The proposals for the path through Flora were agreed in principle (see item 8). The FA requested that the public be consulted over the widening of the Long Pads path (to be added to the next FOG agenda, **Glenys**). Approval was given for archaeological investigations of the arable field, pre and post ploughing (see item 8). Tenders for the Flora capital works have been received. The Harries family have approved the idea of naming the view from Pony Wood after their father (see item 8). Correspondence has been received from Simon Gershon publicising a series of monthly evening meetings at the Storey Institute. **Ian** (and possibly Mick) will attend the first one on 20 January and arrange for others to attend subsequent meetings should the programme prove relevant.
6. **Report from Flora Steering Group:** No meeting since the last FOG, but see item 5.
7. **Fauna:**
 - **Monthly maintenance and HLS monitoring inspection:** Full reports available. Graham is now including Flora in his inspections and has flagged up two problems. Firstly, there has been wind damage to some of the trees in Little Wood. After discussion, **Ian** offered to tackle the job, with Ken and/or Graham. As the trees pose a danger, it is permissible to deal with them without informing the Tree Protection Officer. **Ian** will take photographs of the current state of the trees as evidence. Secondly, a wall to the south of Upper Sowerholme is damaged. **Hilary** will ask Mr Edwards to inspect this when he comes to work on the play area (see item 4).

The flush count showed an increase in snipe numbers to 100 (one possibly a jack snipe), equally split between School Pond and the Big Meadow marsh. The Hay Meadow and Upper Sowerholme continue to disappoint. Judging from the results of the invertebrate survey, Chris noted that the pool in Upper Sowerholme is healthy and

clean, so that should not be a problem. It could well be attracting birds such as teal (as reported last year) but it is difficult to observe this hidden area. If the lack of reports continues, then Richard Storton (RSPB) will be consulted.

- **Water trough:** Because of a misunderstanding, the temporary installation of the water trough in the Gun Range has not taken place, and for the last few days the cattle have been using School Pond as a water supply. **Mick** has now arranged with the graziers to rig up the trough at the earliest opportunity (Saturday's volunteer session), using hosing left over from the planting of the Orchard. The trough will be moved to its permanent position when the hardstanding is constructed (when the contractors are on site for the Flora works).
- **Track extension and other works:** Awaiting the contractors on site for Flora.
- **Paddock hedging:** Still no notification of when this work will start as it is also tied up with the Flora contract. As regards the western hedge, there are two significant gaps of about 10m that, once cleared, could be infilled with saplings. Assuming supplies are available, this will be scheduled for the February volunteer session (**Ian**).
- **Anna's Pool repairs:** This will take place under Richard Storton's supervision when the contractors are on site for Flora. Richard has arranged funding from S2S for the installation of a new sluice that is eel friendly (adding a smaller diameter, flexible pipe with a floating collar to an ordinary pipe sluice and bund system). This job has a slightly later funding deadline than the other capital works – end March.
- **Willow screening of School Pond:** This task – to be led by Graham – will be scheduled for the February Volunteer session, when a student group is expected.
- **Breeding-birds survey:** Dan Haywood's report and results spreadsheet have now been received (copy sent to the webmasters for publication on the FA website). **Sue** will hold the accompanying field notes. Dan's findings were perhaps limited by conducting just two instead of three visits. He concludes that the situation in Fauna in spring 2013 was little different from the previous year (apart from the disappointing absence of a record for reed bunting). This is perhaps unsurprising as the Fauna hedges will take some time to develop. Plans for a 2014 survey, and how to bring together all the various sources of wildlife sightings will be discussion items for a future agenda (**Glenys**).

Sue noted that the birding group (established as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund project at the wildlife evening at the Storey Institute) will have a guided tour led by Jon Carter starting in the Orchard at 7.30am on Saturday. The possibility of claiming for this from Natural England as educational access will be explored at the Flora Steering Group meeting on Monday (**Glenys**).

- **Rural Payments Agency remapping:** **Dave** has submitted revisions showing the internal boundaries of Fauna. When these changes have been accepted, he will make the revisions relating to the path and ponds.
8. **Flora:** Some matters previously dealt with by the FSG (longer-term issues and those not directly related to the pressing concerns of the delivery of either the Natural England

Agreement or Heritage Lottery Fund grant) have been transferred to FOG in an effort to balance the length of the meetings.

- **Names for fields etc:** The viewpoint at the north tip of Pony Wood will be given the name 'Geoffrey Curzon Harries View'. **Sue** and **Helen** – with the involvement of Mike Derbyshire and the local history group set up as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund project – will identify potential names for the fields and ponds of Flora. Their suggestions to be discussed at April's FOG meeting (**Glenys**).
- **Formal declaration of 'no right of way' across the Flora fields:** **Mick** will email Tarja Wilson to establish the procedure.
- **Aldcliffe Road wall repairs:** Mr Edwards has estimated a cost of around £300 depending on the number of coping stones that can be found on site. This repair is not part of the NE capital works, so may not happen until the summer (**Hilary**).
- **Paths:** The FA meeting gave approval, subject to finance and permissions, for the construction of a circular path around Pony Wood from the Long Pads access by Little Wood, with a spur leading out to Aldcliffe Road. **Dave** will check the cost estimate provided by Tarja Wilson. This will be used by **Hilary** as the basis for grant applications. **Dave** will also consult the Highways Department about the roadside access and identify who to contact at the Canal and Rivers Trust about an opening onto the canal towpath opposite. Assuming the answers are satisfactory, and following the go-ahead from the FA, **Hilary** will commission designs from Georgina Peacock. A planning application will also need to be submitted.
- **Historical artefacts:** The boundary stone in Field 3 has been knocked over again by the cattle. Mick has identified and made contact with the person who has been keeping the top of the stone.

Peter Iles, the County Archaeologist, is keen to take advantage of the ploughing of the arable fields. On his advice, Mick and Ian met Ian Sharp, a leading member of both the Kendal and the Lune Valley metal detectorists on 3 January. It was agreed that they would start sweeping the arable fields immediately. It is hoped to repeat the exercise after ploughing. It is the legal position (acknowledged by Ian Sharp) that anything found on the Flora fields belongs to the Fairfield Association. Peter's other suggestion of inviting local historians to 'follow the plough' (albeit after the ground has settled) will also be implemented. **Mick** will talk to George Howson (Chair of the local Historical Association). Mike Derbyshire has volunteered to approach Oxford Archaeology North too. Should they require payment, Sue suggested that this could be funded from the projected underspend in the Open Learning Programme.

- **Interpretation boards, HLF sign, carved stones, finger posts:** To be incorporated into the planning application and funding proposal for the path (**Hilary**).
- **Change of use to nature reserve, local nature reserve designation:** The change of use will be part of the planning application. Chris offered to investigate through his contacts whether local nature reserve designation is possible in the absence of local authority involvement in Flora.

9. **Volunteer activities:** Ian's reports of the volunteer work undertaken during December and proposed for January are attached at the end. Ian noted that, with permission from Aldcliffe Hall Estates, the Hedge Working Party has now started work on the western boundary of the Flora field 1 (part of the NE capital works). There was discussion about how long this task would take because the current capital works plan provides for a stock proof fence to be constructed. **Dave, Mick** and **Ian** will discuss whether this fence is necessary on site during Saturday's volunteer session. Attendances at both HWP and regular volunteer sessions have been encouraging. 500 copies of the volunteering flyer have been printed.

It was agreed that the task of repairing the hazel fencing in Upper Sowerholme should be deferred, given that it will need to be taken down for the imminent repairs to Anna's Pool. Instead – depending on numbers attending – litter picking of the Flora hedgerows will take place. The HWP is continuing with tasks that have already been approved by FOG.

Ian has been asking volunteers if they would like to be involved in fruit-tree pruning at the start of the volunteer session. This has proved rather awkward, as Keith is not always present to provide guidance at this point. **Ian** will instead try offering the opportunity of joining in with fruit tree management at the refreshment break.

10. **Local Nature Reserve designation, Edenbreck boundary & garden, Concessionary Path Agreement:** No report. Despite enquiries over several months, the FA's application for Local Nature Reserve Designation for Fauna remains stuck with Lancaster City Council. **Glenys** will approach our Natural England adviser, Claire Harris, to ask if she can intervene on the FA's behalf.
11. **Educational activities: Tony** was given approval to spend around £200 on items such as 5 extra pairs of binoculars, compasses (for map work exercises on Flora), bug pots, magnifiers, drawing on the money in the Community Spaces sustainability grant. Kate Jackson, co-ordinator for Green Lancaster, has asked whether a couple of university students who are considering becoming teachers could be involved in school visits. **Tony** will explore this further with Kate, to assess the feasibility of them participating in the spring/summer Flora schools programme. Chris suggested that it would be good to involve schools in the 'following the plough' archaeological exercise on Flora (item 8) – not least because children have better eyesight. **Tony** will sound out schools and liaise with Mick over his arrangements with the Historical Association and others.
12. **Health and Safety Policy: Guidance for external contractors:** Dave has now finalised this appendix to the FA's Health and Safety Policy and forwarded it to the FA Chair. It has been circulated to FOG members who were reminded that – whilst it is mainly Dave who deals with contractors – it must be implemented by anyone else representing FOG in dealing with contractors (e.g. tree surgeon).
13. **DBS checks:** There has been no news on the progress of these applications. **Mick** will ask Michael Sheppard to investigate.
14. **Application for Single Payment Scheme Entitlements:** Purchase of these has already been approved by the FA. Mick and Hilary had a further meeting with Sarah Clegg at the Auction Mart on 6 January, which confirmed that this is financially worthwhile for the FA even though it may create cash flow problems in the short term. Dave has supplied the map

required, so **Mick** and **Hilary** will now finalise the purchase. The annual claim forms can be submitted by the agents at the Auction Mart. A decision whether to pay the £70 p.a. fee or do this in-house will be made in the future.

15. **Financial control: Glenys** will alert the FA Treasurer to the fact that this section of the Minutes will be used in future to collate any financial commitments mentioned elsewhere in the Minutes, as well as any other spending claims that are about to be submitted:
 - About £300 committed for wall repair (item 8), probably summer.
 - Claims imminent from Ian Proctor for flyer printing and servicing mower (total approx. £260) from Community Spaces sustainability grant. Also invoice for chain saw training course of £1400 (HLF grant).
 - Tony Finn will be spending some £200 on resources for schools (Community Spaces sustainability grant) (item 11).
 - Around £4500 will be required to buy Single Payment Scheme Entitlements (item 14) (imminent, Mick/Hilary).

16. **Annual Review of Fauna cycling and dogs policy:** With one more issued since the last review, there are now five people who hold permits allowing them to cycle along the Fauna footpath because of walking difficulties. However, the number of people observed cycling is notably higher than this, although there is no evidence that it is increasing. This level of cycling is disappointing though, particularly as cyclists cause more disturbance to wildlife than walkers. Dogs off leads continue to be quite a frequent sight, with some people throwing balls which then bounce into the fields. Meeting members were asked to continue challenging anybody seen with a dog that was not in control. On the positive side, much less dog poo is observed along the Fauna path than in the Orchard, where dogs are permitted to be off the lead.

17. **AOB:**
 - a) Sue handed round leaflets advertising the Spring Term's Open Learning Programme (Heritage Lottery Funded).

 - b) Helen informed the meeting that the trees in her garden at the top end of the Pads path have suffered wind damage and she will be asking Andy Lee to deal with them. The meeting was uncertain how far up to Sunnyside Lane the FA's responsibility for the path extended. **Glenys** will ask Oliver for clarification.

18. **Date / place of next meeting:** Thurs 6th February 7.30pm (Whitegates), Thurs 13th March (to avoid clash with lecture series) (Whitegates),

Ian Procter's Volunteer Items:

Volunteer activities December 2013

4th December 2013

Four volunteers agreed the Site Specific Risk Assessment (SSRA) and continued the laying of the Orchard / Pads hedge and carting the debris away to the bonfire site.

7th December 2013

The first of our Saturday Hedge Working Parties (HWP) and good to see 9 volunteers with some only able to come at the weekend. The SSRA was agreed and we

- Continued laying the Orchard / Pads hedge
- Built a hazel fence where the former large sycamore had denuded the underlying hedge. There are some remnants of thorn but we will plant new saplings to eventually replace the fence.
- Pollarded two further willows.
- Carted away debris.

11th December 2013

Seven volunteers agreed the SSRA and

- Continued laying the Orchard / Pads hedge
- Part pollarded a large willow
- Pruned two large but unproductive boughs for two apple tree
- Carted away debris

14th December 2013

15 volunteers for our regular Saturday volunteer session.

- Graffiti was removed from the playground
- Leaf debris removed from the track running down from Sunnyside Lane
- The fence forming Flora boundary 3 is now dismantled. Part of it has been re-erected as the temporary boundary 2. Other sections were moved and rolled up for storage until after the ploughing.
- Saplings planted in a gap in the Pads / Fauna hedge, in a gap in the Pads / Flora hedge after re-instatement of the fence and alongside the new hazel fence in the Orchard
- An exploratory trench dug at right angles to the concrete wall. Inconclusive and more exploration needed
- Pony Wood trees inspected for cattle damage – none.

- The gate re-opened so that the cattle can get back to their favourite Flora grass.

16th December 2013

Two volunteers further extended the protective cattle shelter in the Gun Range, using corrugated sheets reclaimed from Flora.

18th December 2013

A wild and wet morning for the HWP six volunteers but we

- Finished laying the section of the Orchard / Pads hedge that we are due to do this year.
- Completed the pollarding of a large willow
- Carted away most of the debris
- Did more clearing of leaves on the Sunnyside Lane – Orchard track
- Cut overlapping grass on the path into the Orchard

27th December 2013

Collected the Volunteer Flyer from the printers. This is for distribution

- At our community events
- When we are doing volunteer work
- Around the city on suitable notice boards

Proposed volunteer tasks January 2014

- a) To finish moving the now demolished fence in Flora
- b) Further exploration of the foundations of the concrete wall
- c) Complete the recovery of usable stone by the Aldcliffe Road wall and concrete trough
- d) Investigate the boarding in Pony Wood
- e) Repair the hazel fence in Sowerholme
- f) Make a short extension to the new hazel fence in the Orchard
- g) Further sapling planting alongside the Orchard hazel fence
- h) Clear away the last of the hedging debris in the Orchard