

**Fairfield Association
Fairfield Orchard Sub-Group**

**Minutes of the 1st meeting
Thursday 11 September 2008, 7.30 pm
at Whitegates, Sunnyside Close**

Present: Jon Barry, Andrew Brennand, Margaret Burtonwood, Tony Finn, Oliver Fulton (sec), Simon Gershon, Steve Langhorn, Rebecca Procter, Mick Short (chair)

Apologies: none

The sub-group: terms of reference, method of working and membership

At the beginning of the meeting Mick announced that Hilary had just received letters from the Charities Commission approving (a) the winding up / merger of the Fairfield Millennium Green and Community Orchard Trust and (b) the revised constitution of the Fairfield Association (FA). It was agreed that **Oliver** would contact Marion McClintock and Andrew Jotischky, and ask them to pass on the Trust's accumulated files, which we need both as a general record and also to help us with issues such as applying for Green Pennant awards (none had been applied for this year owing to the transitional status of the Orchard), discussions with neighbours etc.

All those present had been at the FA meeting on Tuesday 9 September, and had taken part in the discussion of the new sub-group (minutes were not available for the meeting but have now been circulated). Mick summarised the key points for noting or for further discussion as:

? **Terms of reference :**

These included overseeing and managing the Orchard, reporting back to the FA and also, Mick suggested, raising money – both project/grant funding for special projects and also money for day-to-day management of the Orchard. Although the FA meeting had said that Orchard events would continue to be the formal responsibility of the Fairfield Association and organised through the main FA meetings, he would like the sub-group to take a view on the ownership of events and what should be done with the income.

In response, the following points were made:

The Orchard should not be seen as a money-raising opportunity – it is a community asset which can quite reasonably expect to be supported by general FA funds, and should not be required to pay for itself.

The response to the Friends of the Orchard appeal shows that there is a willingness in the community to contribute more to the Orchard's upkeep. It was agreed to discuss how to build on the Friends initiative at a later meeting.

We need to be clear about the financial position of the sub-group. It will not have delegated authority to raise or spend money – there is only one Fairfield Association and one Treasurer, and the aim of the sub-group is to ensure that we act as part of, not separate from, the main FA. On the other hand, there is no point in setting up a group which can take no decisions on its own without checking back with the main FA meeting. After discussion, it was agreed to propose to the FA that the sub-group should produce an annual forecast of expected income (based on planned events, contributions from the Friends etc) and regular expenditure (for maintenance, volunteer expenses, etc) and submit this to the FA. The expectation would be that the group would have authority to commit expenditure of the kinds and up to the amount

agreed, although precise mechanisms and procedures would have to be agreed with the Treasurer. This would not preclude us making separate bids to the FA for major purchases or unanticipated needs (e.g. emergency tree surgery). **Mick** agreed to discuss this with Michael and Jude, and unless they raised objections, to make a formal proposal on these lines to the next FA meeting. It was also agreed to discuss the forecasts for our first year at the **next meeting**, and **Simon** agreed to prepare a draft expenditure forecast.

? **Method of working :**

Mick proposed that the sub-group, like all FA meetings, should be open. The core membership had been identified by the FA main meeting, but the date and place of meetings would be advertised (on the website and on our notice boards) and everyone interested would be welcome to attend. It was also planned to compile the agenda in advance and put it on the website, which would enable some advance exploration of the issues by email, provided that decisions were reserved for the meetings: people who weren't on email should not be pre-empted. It was suggested that the agenda could be emailed to the Orchard volunteers circulation list and in due course to the Friends of the Orchard. This was agreed provisionally: the group is already large and there could be difficulties about finding a suitable meeting place if it grew much bigger.

Minutes of meetings would be compiled quickly and placed on the website as well as circulated to the members of the sub-group and the officers and trustees of the FA. Meetings would need to be frequent – monthly, for the time being – at least until the group's working pattern had bedded down. Planning the volunteers' activities would be a standing item on the agenda.

Mick suggested that it would be very helpful if members were up to date with developments on the ground in the Orchard. In the summer it might be useful to organise pre-meetings on site, but for the time being members were asked, if possible, to walk the Orchard during the two or three days before each meeting.

Volunteers

There was some discussion of **volunteer recruitment**, including the desire to include younger volunteers who have so far proved harder to reach. Simon has been in touch with Lancaster University Volunteering Unit and Mick thought it possible that there would be a better response than last year; the University BTCV group had also done volunteer work in previous years and would be worth contacting. The Marsh Community Centre is providing some young men as helpers for Apple Day. Other suggestions included the University of Cumbria and the boys and girls' grammar schools (Duke of Edinburgh volunteers): **Oliver** will enquire at LGGS. Further discussion: **next agenda**.

Forward planning of **volunteer activities**: this is a core task of the sub-group. Mick suggested that this should be done on a rolling, three-month basis, guided by the Orchard Management Plan, and reviewed at each meeting. It was agreed to start this process at the **next meeting**.

Breathing Places Grant

No news yet of the new application to transfer the grant from the Orchard Trust to the FA. It was agreed to invite Hilary to send Rachel at Breathing Places administration copies of the Charity Commission's letters approving the merger etc, and ask her when we might expect to hear. Meantime we were unable to spend any more of the money allocated to the Trust. It was agreed that when (if) we receive approval we should urgently consider whether we can still spend the money by the original deadline, and if not, apply for an extension as soon as possible.

The relevant extracts from the bid were circulated (bid summary and expenditure budget): *NB one line [‘Mower: £999’] was accidentally omitted from the budget, but not the total, in the circulated copies.* **Simon** made a verbal suggestion relating to buying a mower, and was asked to bring a full, costed proposal to the **next meeting** with an explanation of how it relates to the Orchard Management Plan.

Review of Annual Management Plan

The Plan, which was drawn up for the Trust by a small group led by Jon Barry, will be the key document to guide the management and development of the Orchard and for planning volunteer activities. We have just received the wildlife report on the Orchard prepared by Graeme Skelcher, with input from Jennifer Newton, as part of the Breathing Places grant. It was agreed to postpone this item for full discussion at the **next meeting**.

Current developments

Andrew reported that there appears to be a new camper in the Orchard: there is a very well concealed tent in the deepest part of the scrubland at the north-west corner. It has almost certainly only arrived in the last couple of days. **Jon** undertook to ring Cath Griffiths (PCSO) for advice, and invite her to visit the camper as soon as possible (the previous resident, in the spring, was the object of a certain amount of disorderly behaviour); and to contact City Council Property Services, as the ultimate landlord, to discuss the possibility of taking legal proceedings for eviction. Meanwhile, **Andrew and Mick** would try to talk to the camper during the volunteer morning on Saturday 13.

Simon reported briefly on a conversation and site visit with Carol Martin, who is developing a piece of land behind Edenbreck (see also FA minutes, 9/9/08). It was **agreed** that those members present would look at the land during the Saturday volunteer morning, and that we would invite Carol to a **future meeting** of the sub-group – provisionally the November meeting – to discuss her plans and requests.

Recent and forthcoming events

Andrew and all others involved were thanked for their efforts with the Teddy Bears’ Picnic and for their willingness to run another event next year.

Simon announced that he had committed over £200 in preparation for Apple Day (mainly for food and drink), at his own risk – in expectation of a substantial return to the FA. It was agreed that it was not appropriate for individuals to be asked to bear financial risks on the FA’s behalf, and that future events organisers should bring proposals for advance payments or commitments in good time to the FA main meeting, which would consider whether or not to authorise them. For the present, **Mick** was asked to write to the Chair and Treasurer, explaining the situation and asking for financial cover for Simon.

Other business

It was agreed to return to other items on the agenda, including school visits, future funding bids, Green Pennant awards and other awards and marketing opportunities, at **later meetings**.

Next meeting :

7.30 pm, Monday 6 October, at **Whitegates, Sunnyside Close**