

## FFOG Minutes: 11th July 2024

- Location: FMH.
- Date: 11.07.24
- Time: 7.00pm to 9.00pm

### **ATTENDEES**

Sue Nieduszynska (chair), Graham Brandwood, Steve Bullen, David Elliot, Clio Graham, Anne Greenwood, Rebekah Mulligan, Ian Procter, Hilary Short, Mick Short, Chris Workman

### **APOLOGIES**

David Brookes.

### **PREVIOUS MINUTES**

Accepted.

### **MATTERS ARISING**

#### Toro Mower

SN has asked DB to sell the Toro mower. RM will take photos to send to DB

#### Stepping Stones

HS suggested that the positioning should be reconsidered & that rather than being placed in front of the sculpture they should be to the left of the stump circle. This would not cause a problem if a marquee was erected in the area. The lack of grass in the area is probably due to shade from the ash tree. Once this has been sorted, the effect on the grass from increased light can be ascertained & a decision taken as to whether other measures to improve the grass are required e.g. sowing grass seed and/or rubber matting with holes. We are waiting to hear from James Willoughby (Myerscough) about work commencing on the tree. HS will contact James Willoughby.

#### Arable Field

SN-There has been concern over ploughing the field causing injury/death of hares & leverets. However, SN reported that three hares have been seen simultaneously in the field.

### **AGENDA ITEMS**

#### 4.1. Arable Field

Hils had expressed concern about the planting of gorse on the bank. A smaller number of gorse to be planted between the rose & the hawthorn. Gorse is bought as a package of 10 & the remainder to be planted elsewhere e.g. the other corner of the field near the path. IP to purchase 10 gorse plants. SN will feed back to Hils.

#### 4.1 cont. Sightings Board.

RM has tasked Winston to carry out repairs. To replace the pens behind the sighting board now rather than waiting until the tables go out. SN is looking into having cages over the tables to prevent pheasants from feeding.

#### 4.2.1. Woodland:

DB has raised concern over the state of some of the ash trees in pony wood. Councils are now proactively felling ash trees following the death of a tree surgeon working on a diseased tree. IP said that the current policy in the Reserve is to pollard the trees as high as can be done safely & and that there is only one seriously affected ash tree in Pony wood. It is not an immediate danger to the footpaths and that we need to get a professional opinion from Andy Lee. Andy Lee does a regular inspection of trees in the reserve. To request Andy Lee to liaise with IP over the potentially unsafe ash tree in Pony wood & to do his annual survey (if not done).

#### 4.2.2. Access to pony wood during the bird nesting season.

SB said that Stock doves may be nesting this year & that Dan Haywood thinks there may be chiffchaffs (ground nesting) breeding also. Dan suggested that there should be no access between 1<sup>st</sup> April & 1<sup>st</sup> July. This impacts on the timing of surveys. Hils normally does this in spring. Future Pony Wood surveys to take place outside of the bird nesting season e.g. late March or early July or both. SB to contact Hils about the timings of future pony wood surveys.

A tent had been put up in Pony wood. The concern was that with more seclusion there is more opportunity for unauthorised entry. The tent was near a stock dove nest box. RM suggested it could belong to youngsters as squash bottles were found. However, DB contacted the homeless team and was informed that the identity of the rough sleeper was known. The tent & contents have been stored in the shed & a note left at the site. GB said that the vegetation prevents sight of what is in the wood & suggested cutting sight lines to enable visibility to various areas. IP said the hedge in the area was due to be laid in winter & this may help. Consider gaining access permission from Martin Ayrton who farms the small field adjacent to Pony wood

#### 4.2.3. Further planning for winter planting.

IP provided a revised version of the winter planting paper. The proposal is for cell grown plants from Cheviot Trees rather than bare root plants from Thorpe Trees & that in the first instance the application for funding should be to the Tree Council. Blackthorn & Elder are not included as there are plenty of blackthorn suckers available at other sites in the Reserve. Wych Elm has been chosen in place of Elder. There should be sufficient reusable plastic protectors. The cost is approximately £500. It was agreed to proceed.

#### 4.4. Orchard.

The slope from Towneley Close & accessibility: HS said there has been email correspondence from a wheelchair user pointing out that the lip on the slope causes difficulties when coming down from Townley close into the Orchard. MS said there was a lip on the Orchard path near Alder Pond that was difficult for wheelchair users. There are other areas in the Reserve that need repair such as parts of the Pony Wood path that have worn down to the membrane. The FA has agreed to pay for improvements to the Towneley Close path & get a contractor in to carry out this & other works. DB to take this forward. RM with input from volunteers to make a list of paths requiring repair works & email to HS. SN to liaise with DB.

The neighbours at the southern end of the Orchard have complained about their view. The FA had previously agreed to keep this section of the hedgerow low. It is hazel & therefore grows rapidly. The section of hedge to be trimmed back so that the access is clear and that there are some gaps. Vistas from the benches should also be maintained by hedge trimming

#### 4.5. Hay Meadow

Feedback on a restricted grazing area in Hay Meadow from HS. Refer to item 2.5 in the minutes of 02.05.24. The proposed area is too large for Carr House Meadow. IP suggested an alternative i.e. an area in Hay Meadow enclosed by drawing a line from the double gates to the pond & doubling back to make a triangular shape. This area could easily be fenced off. The cattle would graze off the whole meadow and then be kept out of the fenced off area. This would have little impact on grazing & would be scythed. IP to provide a sketch of the proposed area. To consider IP's proposal and make a final decision by September.

#### 4.6 Progress with gate fastenings.

RM said that Howson's gate has a combination lock. Cromwell Rd gate- the rope has been removed again & found in the bin. Fraser had said he would find out details of the silent locking mechanism used at the abattoir. It was agreed that it was pointless to pursue rope fastenings on the Cromwell Rd gate. To pursue a silent locking mechanism. Pony Wood gate does not need a fastening. RM to email the code to the group. HS to recontact Fraser about the abattoir gate locks.

#### 4.7. Data Protection & access to the Contacts & Field Access lists on the Fairfield google drive.

See report from AG. Mark Tanner could set up a separate area on the google drive with restricted access. It was agreed that a restricted area would be set up on google drive & access to be limited to the chair (SN) & the secretary (AG). AG to liaise with Mark Tanner. Also, there are problems updating the Field Access list because in most cases there is no responsible person indicated. SN will review the list.

#### 5.1. Volunteer Reports.

See reports from RM. There is no shortage of volunteers.

#### 5.2 Proposed tasks

See reports from RM. RM said as she was compiling the list of tasks for the first time, if anyone was aware of tasks that had been omitted, please would they email her.

#### 6.1. Monitoring Report

See report from GB. Trimming of some branches above the path required in the Orchard (Tony's test). Ragwort in the south-east area of Big Meadow. IP suggest that we monitor and if too much then we need to remove some. Chairs action if the ragwort needs removing late summer. Vegetation around the steps of the Cromwell Rd notice board & the playground notice board needs cutting back. The wildflowers patch in Pony Wood area has been a success & GB asked if we would consider doing this in other areas of the reserve. MS suggested the fauna stones area would be suitable. To discuss sowing wildflower patches at other sites at the next meeting. To add further yellow rattle seed from Hay meadow to the Pony wood patch. SN stressed that the composition of the herd & the management of the cattle should not be included in the monitoring report as it is not a FFOG issue. GF sends

information on the cattle to HS & SN and relevant information from this report will be fed into FFOG under the grazing section of the agenda.

#### 6.2 Progress with surveys.

SN reported that Graeme Skelcher is doing a second survey of Hay & Carr House meadows on Saturday 13th July. SN has put out a notification on Facebook & the website see if anyone is interested in joining him.

#### 6.3 Grazing.

After the meeting SN informed that we have a temporary adjustment to graze Hay meadow. There are currently 15 animals in the herd. This comprises 7 over 2 years including the bull, 4 between 6 months to 2 years, & 4 under 6 months. AG uploads the monthly figures from GF to the google drive. The annual meeting with the graziers has not yet taken place.

#### 7.1. Arrangements

'refresh barley straw algae treatment in ponds' was removed from the August arrangements as it is no longer relevant.

#### 7.2. Financial Control.

Nothing to report

#### 7..3. Organised Events.

Fairfield Festival. Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> July

Apple Day- 5<sup>th</sup> October

#### 7.4. Items to report from FA

Nothing to report.

#### 7.5 Items to report from trustees.

Calum Booth has left for a new job. Nicola Evans who is a conservation officer for the RSPB based in Kendal has taken over the management plan. She is currently waiting for the grants for the new units to be released. Rod Everett, who did the water works at Claver Hill, has come to look at possibility of diverting Lucy Brook & putting in ponds in the area above the cattle crossing. This is a capital project & may not be funded under ELMS. IP requested a consultation meeting so that ideas could be expressed. HS said there would be a consultation with both FFOG and the wider public when there is more information on what is available to us.

#### **AOB**

John Muir awards. see report from GB. The awards may relaunch in 2025. GB questioned whether we should wait & see or have our own award. If it doesn't return, we could provide a portfolio of work carried out by volunteers that could be used in a CV. I was agreed to wait & see.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

5<sup>th</sup> September 6.00pm to 8.00pm on-site.