

## FFOG Minutes: 30th January 2025

- Location: FMH.
- Date: 30.01.25
- Time: 7.00pm to 9.00pm

### **ATTENDEES**

Sue Nieduszynska (chair), Graham Brandwood, Anne Greenwood, Rebekah Mulligan, Ian Procter, Hilary Short, Chris Workman.

### **APOLOGIES**

David Brookes, Steve Bullen, David Elliott, Clio Graham, Mick Short.

### **PREVIOUS MINUTES**

Accepted.

### **MATTERS ARISING**

Feedback from meeting with Andy Lee.

The report from IP was in 3 sections-

- Trees that need action from AL
- Tree works that can be managed by volunteers
- Trees that require monitoring

Trees that require monitoring to be added to the list that CW currently monitors.

Report on tree survey.

CW had produced a map combining our list with the list held by AL. This was discussed with Mark Tanner & it is planned to create a new map using geosetter.de & with linked albums of the relevant photos. CW to provide an update on this item at the next FFOG meeting

Monitoring of bleeding canker.

AL had informed IP that this was becoming an increasing common problem in sycamores. CW agreed to monitor bleeding cancer with appropriate training in how to detect & assess. IP will contact Duncan Slater at Myerscough for advice about training.

Alder Pond Bund.

DB had produced a report. The repair works would require an excavator and DB suggested that we should ask Frank Huddleston to look at it. Georgina has been commissioning FH to carry out the works on the Reserve & this needs adding to the list. HS has recently tried to contact Georgina on several occasions unsuccessfully. HS to ask DB if he can arrange to meet with FH and look at the best solution. Additionally, DB or another person to indicate to FH which gates need repair, discuss the Towneley close repair & request an estimate for the works. GB reinforced the final paragraph in the report recommending, that once repaired, the most vulnerable section of the bund (at the least) should be permanently fenced off. HS to take FFOG recommendation of fencing Alder Pond to the FA

## **AGENDA ITEMS**

### 4.1. Arable Field.

The margins need to be staked.

#### 4.2.1 Feedback from hedges site meeting.

See report from SN.

- AL has agreed to take a couple of branches off the oak tree in the Orchard obscuring the neighbour's view.
- The long pads hedge has been trimmed to allow more light & a view of West Field pond.
- The fence in West Field is being moved out by 2/3 metres. IP queried the length of the waves & suggested the areas should be planted up next winter to increase diversity. SN thought rather than a specified length the waves should be more random.
- SN said there is a bird cherry in the middle of a viewpoint of the castle on Pony Wood path. It was agreed that the tree would be laid into the hedge.

#### 4.2.2. Fence at Fauna Stone

SN reported that during the recent storm the cattle huddled up against the hedge behind the Fauna Stones & they broke through. The fence line at the site is in very poor condition. A meeting took place on 29<sup>th</sup> Jan to assess the damage. GB reported that the inner fence line needs urgent repair & this could be done by volunteers. The inner fence at School field which includes barbed wire to be taken out. (a hazard for young calves)

### 4.6. Photographic Survey of the Reserve.

See report from CW. Mark Tanner had rebuilt the interactive map on the website. The viewpoints have been accurately fixed. All the images have titles & linked information. The photographs will be copyright of the FA. The photographic survey now covers 10 years. MT has suggested that this anniversary of the survey could be used to promote the work of FA/FFOG e.g. an exhibition or a talk at The Storey. HS said that exhibitions require a lot of work, a long time to set up, are expensive and there are storage issues.

CW said that each viewpoint will require a narrative. QR codes have also been suggested but this could overlap with the QR project that Mike Stevens is involved with. CW will send out a draft narrative for the viewpoints for FFOG to comment on.

### 4.7. Updated Fields access policy.

This version includes educational visits. It was agreed.

### 4.8. Servicing the mowers.

IP reported that both mowers are with McGaffigans and that he had given verbal instructions on what repairs were required but subsequent communication has been poor. IP had rung on 3 occasions and received no response back. He will now email McGaffigans. IP had used Dennis Barnfield Ltd for his own lawn mower repair and received a good service. He suggested we might consider switching in future.

### 5.1. Volunteer Reports for November and December.

See report from RM.

### 5.2 Proposed tasks for January and February.

- See reports from RM. RM explained that goose grass is removed when it is dense & therefore likely to inhibit new growth by excluding light.
- IP requested to add the task of laying the sycamores behind the notice board at the northern end of the Orchard. This was agreed.
- Willow management is led by GB. The willow by Ash Tree Corner has been trimmed. The management of the willow stretch by the boardwalk is due to be reviewed and GB will produce a willow report for the onsite March meeting.
- CW said there is an Ash tree at the culvert (turning right after the Orchard) that is suffering from Ash dieback. AL had suggested removing the ivy so that the tree could be properly assessed. IP said this is on the list.
- SN said that Anna, who is associated with the university had asked if there could be a student tour. RM & SN will do this on the 8<sup>th</sup> March Saturday session. GB to ensure that the upper Sowerholme path is clear for the student tour.

### 5.3. Volunteer group from Network Rail on 23<sup>rd</sup> April.

Christina Houghton from Network Rail contacted SN. Their management scheme includes a volunteering session with a local organisation. The Network Rail volunteers will work alongside the Wednesday volunteers.

### 6.1. Monitoring Report

See report from GB.

**Gates:** The grammar school gate can be repaired by volunteers.

The lock on the gate into west Field is damaged. The gate was temporarily secured with a bike lock but unfortunately the key has been lost. The lock will need to be cut off and the replacement bolt can be fitted by volunteers. The cattle cannot use the field until the lock is repaired.

Howson's gate is significantly damaged and needs a replacement.

The gate between the grammar school field & the gun range needs replacing but is not our responsibility. HS has advised Robin to speak to the grammar school who own the field.

**Ponds:** HS had contacted LWT about the bullrushes in West Field and the lower-than-expected level of water in Willow East. Pam Derbyshire will take a look at the bullrushes next time she visits to do DNA testing. She said that this was disappointing as normally they would expect at least 8 years before an intervention was required. Regarding Willow East, she is going to consult someone else in the Management team.

**Fields:** The cattle are in Hay Meadow & the access gate is open. HS will ask Robin to close the gate into Hay Meadow.

The beehives have blown over in the wind. SN will contact Keith to discuss the beehives.

A Kingfisher has been seen in Upper Sowerholme.

## 6.2. Bird Sightings from the feeding station WhatsApp group..

The station is managed by the LDBWS who post on the WhatsApp group in addition to the notice board. A barn owl has been seen regularly. Will Walton had helped SB & CG put up an owl box near Lucy Brook.

The bird tables are to be moved incrementally nearer to the gate.

## 6.3 Progress with surveys.

- Dan Haywood's breeding bird survey is awaited.
- Snipe count in January: 62 common snipe and 5 jack snipe which is normal for the time of year. SB had seen snipe flying out of Big Meadow towards the river- they could be roosting in Big Meadow in the day & feeding by the river at night.
- Butterfly counts have been received from Christine Bennet & emailed out. SN wanted to register her thanks to Christine who has been doing this for years. The counts were low as expected reflecting the wider picture.
- Will Walton said there were pipistrelle bats using 2 of the boxes in Pony Wood

## 6.4. Grazing.

Figures to be sent out with the minutes.

Robin now has responsibility for the herd and intends to reduce it in size. To remove the signs off the gates that inform the public to contact Fraser if there are issues with the cattle, when the new signs are ready.

Glenys is going to cease monitoring the cattle after the end of March. Volunteer observers need to be recruited to help with monitoring

## 7.1. Arrangements

GB said there is no need for the cattle crossing to go on Frank Huddleston's list.

Woodland management plan needs to be reviewed at the next site meeting in March.

## 7.2. Financial Control.

Hoyles £510.00

Barn owl box £168.59

Bird food £76.50

Two orchard trees £77.40

Updating first aid kit £67.02

Shed door lock repair/replacement by Lune Locksmith. £279.00

Andy Lee Tree works £2170.00

## 7.3. Organised Events.

Easter egg hunt 21/04

Fairfield Festival 24/05

NLWG pond dipping 25/05

Nature Fest 14/06 (guided nature walks)

Open Yards 21&22/06

#### 7.4. Items to report from FA

Change in ownership of the cattle as previously reported.

Dan Moore who is linked with a charity (Morecambe Bay Curriculum) that provides outdoor activities for children, has expressed an interest in developing educational provision. The FA can contribute to the travel of school children to the Reserve

#### 7.5 Items to report from trustees.

Nothing to report.

#### **AOB**

- Jonathan Tansley has moved away. It was agreed to send a thank you letter and a Fairfield calendar. SN to email to find out his new address.
- The student tour event on 29<sup>th</sup> January organised by Rick Gould was very successful
- Mick normally orders birdfeed mix for the margins. SN queried whether we should order a different mix to attract birds like linnets. SN to ask SB for advice on the best birdfeed mix.
- Notices about new calves to be put up on the gates & noticeboards. HS reported that Fraser had been alerted that woman with her dog had been seen in one of the fields with a young calf. HS to check with Fraser which field had been trespassed so that volunteers can check if there was an entry site for the dog.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

TBA on-site in March.