

Summary – Fences survey, January-February 2026

1. Purpose

There was an action at the FFOG meeting held in January 2026 for me to initiate a regular inspection regime of all fences on the Fairfield Nature Reserve (FNR) and then report back to FFOG at the next meeting on March 12th 2026. In order to create an effective system for inspecting the fences, the following tasks shown in Table 1 are required.

		Progress
1	Survey the fences on the FNR to determine the baseline of which fences exist	Completed
2	Create a map of the fences (in digital form)	In progress
3	Determine the criteria for inspecting the condition of the fences	Completed – described in this report
4	To survey the fences and assess their condition	Completed
5	To create a report highlighting actions that are needed for maintenance and repair	Completed – this report
6	To develop a documented procedure for fence construction, maintenance and repair	In progress
7	To make any further recommendations related to fencing	Completed – this report

Mark Tanner is producing a digital map of the fences, using the same tools that he has used to create other digital maps, such as those for locations of wildlife photographs and hedges.

2. Scope of this report

This report describes the fence survey carried out in January and February 2026. It describes the types of fences on the nature reserve, explains the assessment criteria for the survey, identifies the gates and fences in need of repair, and makes further recommendations.

These recommended repairs are categorised as either **Red**, with repairs required as soon as possible, or; **Amber**, meaning that repairs are strongly recommended within six months.

3. References and assessment criteria

3.1 References

British Standard BS 1722-7: *Fences Part 7: Specification for wooden post and rail fences*

British Standard BS 1722-2: *Specification for strained wire and wire mesh netting fences*

Agate, E. (1986). *Fencing: A practical handbook*. British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, 141p, ISBN-10 0946752044

3.2 Types of fences on the FNR and assessment criteria for the survey

The fences on the FNR consist of two types:

- Post-and-rail (P-R), which comprise large wooden posts with narrower horizontal wooden rails (Figure 1). P-R gates often have diagonal strengthening rails.
- Poste-and-wire (P-W), which consist of thick, wooden strainer-posts, narrower wooden intermediate posts, and supporting struts and pegs for the strainer posts, with a buttressing peg (Figure 2).

There are also several P-R gates.

These designs shown in Figures 1 and 2 represent best practice, which are embodied in British Standard 1722-7 for P-R fences and gates, British Standard 1722-2 for P-W fences, and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) handbook on fencing.

The most appropriate, specific fencing types on the reserve would be high-load P-R fencing, and high-tensile stock fencing.

It is worth noting that specifications for fencing contracts, and criteria for grant applications, either prescribe designs based on best practice, or cite BS 1722-7 and BS 1722-2, i.e. fences and gates must be constructed according to the specified designs. For example, the Government's requirements for fencing grants (FG1) under the [Countryside Stewardship scheme](#) specified that fences must comply with applicable British Standards.

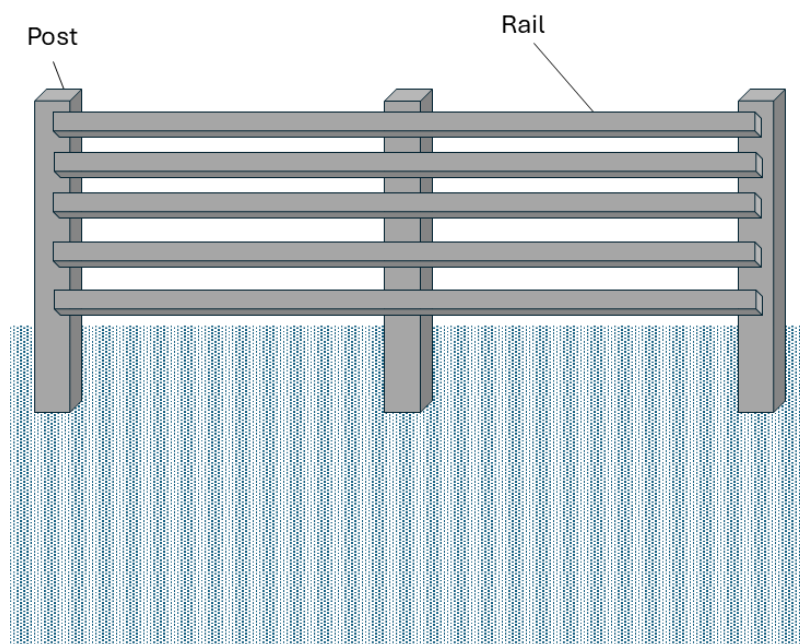


Figure 1 – A diagram representing best practice for P-R stock fencing

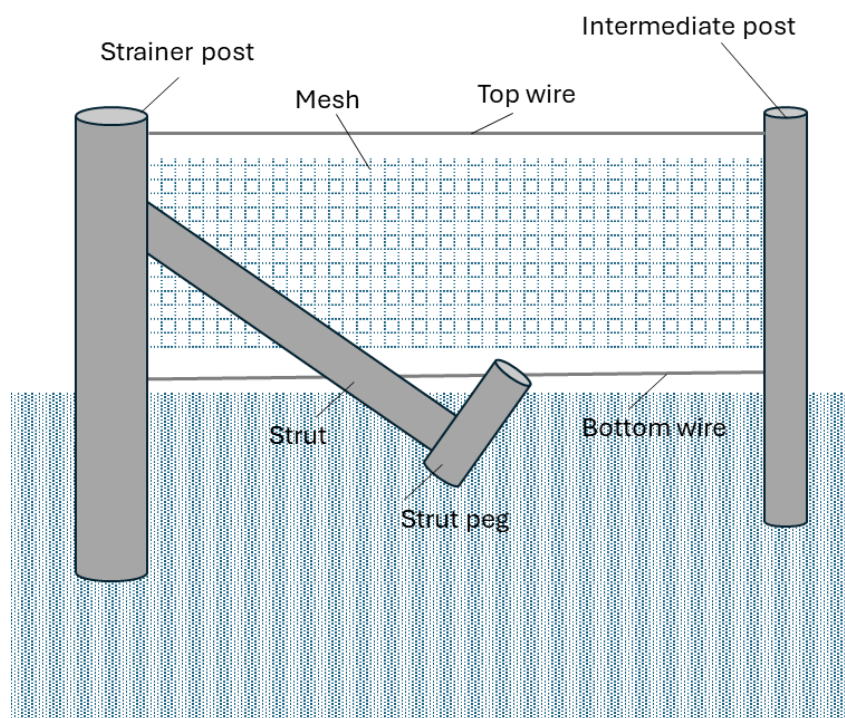


Figure 2 – A diagram representing best practice for P-W stock fencing

Table 1 shows an example of requirements from BS 1722-2 for P-W fences, stating the dimensions required for strainer posts, intermediates and struts, for three different heights of high-tensile, stock-proof fencing.

Height of fence	90	105	120
Straining post height	180	180	210
Straining post diameter	125	125	125
Strut length	150	150	210
Strut diameter	65	65	75
Intermediate length	150	150	180
Intermediate diameter	65	65	75

Table 1 – Example of dimensions for P-W fencing appropriate for the nature reserves

Note 1: The lengths for straining posts apply when these are set in concrete; when not set in concrete, the straining posts and struts need to be 30 cm longer, and the straining posts set 90 cm in the ground.

Note 2: The dimensions are for high-tensile wire fencing.

Note 3: All dimensions in cm.

Strainer posts must be thicker than intermediates, deeper into the ground, and supported by struts and pegs to withstand the forces of high-tension wires. This high tension is critical to

create a stock-proof barrier and one that is especially resistant to heavier farm animals, i.e. cattle.

4. Risk assessment and legal position – why do we need fences?

There are two main UK Acts of legislation that apply to cattle kept on the FNR, which are the Animals Act, 1971, and the Occupiers' Liability Act 1984.

The Animals Act 1971 states that the keeper of an animal is strictly liable for injuries caused by their stock, whilst the Occupiers' Liability Act 1984 states that landowners and tenants must take reasonable care to ensure that visitors to the land are safe.

In simple terms and when applied to the FNR, this means that there must be effective livestock control, i.e. functional fencing and gates.

More importantly, the responsibility for fencing and any associated liabilities, are at least shared between the Fairfield Association and the owner of the cattle, although this depends on the details within the grazing-rights agreement with Robin Loxam.

Therefore it is strongly recommended that we clarify the legal liabilities related to the fences on the reserve, and document this officially.

5. Findings

Whilst the fences and gates on the FNR are largely in serviceable condition, the assessment revealed three main findings that require attention:

- The original P-R fencing along the Fauna footpath is showing signs of age, with several decayed posts and rails on both the fences and gates. The lifespan of a pressure-treated P-R fence typically ranges from 10 to 15 years, with wet conditions reducing the life of the fence, unless it is made from oak. P-W fencing can last much longer.
- There is a mixture of P-W fencing, with the original fences constructed by contractors compliant with best practice, and several P-W fences constructed by volunteers, that do not comply with best practice. For example, there is a lack of strainer posts and sufficient tensioning - in simple terms, these are questionably stock-proof (Figure 3 and Item 26 in Annex A of this report show examples). A small number of volunteers have attempted to remedy this by encouraging the use of fence posts as makeshift struts for corner posts, but this is a poor substitute for strainer posts and struts that represent best practice (Figure 3, left side).
- Many of the non-compliant P-W fences have suffered from damage by cattle, whilst some of the compliant P-W fences have lost some tension, which typically happens over several years after cattle lean on the fence posts.

Annex A describes the detailed findings, listing the Red and Amber actions required, together with the locations of the fences needing attention, and photographic evidence.



Figure 3 – Example of a strut, and insufficient tensioning in a fence without strainer posts

6. Recommendations

- Carry out the recommended actions in Annex A of this report.
- Formalise the construction, inspection, maintenance and repair processes for fences, documenting the inspections, i.e. a documented procedure and associated records.
- Ensure that any future P-W and P-R fences comply with best practice.
- Either send a few volunteers on training courses in fencing, or commission an instructor to provide training on the nature reserve.
- Designate a responsible person or persons for fencing, ensuring that these individuals have appropriate training and experience in fence construction, maintenance, inspection and repair. These designated roles should be time-limited.
- Obtain guidance publications on fences. The BTCV fences handbook is highly recommended.
- Considering the age of the P-R fences, decide whether to repair the existing fence or replace it.
- Set aside provisions for maintenance, repair and replacements of the fences.

Rick Gould, 05 March 2026

Annex 1 – Findings with photographic evidence

A. Post-and-rail (P-R) fences and gates

Item	0
Location	Cromwell Road, entrance
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Amber
Observations	Missing hasp, unable to lock. A lock is needed to control vehicular access.
Recommendations	Fit a strong latch and padlock.



Item	1
Location	Hay Meadow
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Red
Observations	Bottom rail rotten and displaced.
Recommendations	Replace and repair.



Item	2
Location	Carr House Meadow ¹ ; and opposite P-W fence corner in Hay Meadow
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Amber
Observations	Rotting strainer post, and ajar strut on P-W fence on RHS of footpath from Cromwell Road; missing strut on strainer post in P-W fence in Hay Meadow.
Recommendations	Schedule repair or replacements.



¹ Also known as Hay Paddock, although the Agreement with Natural England refers to this area as Carr House Meadow

Item	3
Location	Hay Meadow
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Amber
Observations	Top rail of gate overlooking the pond is rotting, with loss of structural integrity.
Recommendations	Schedule repair or replacement of rotten rail.



Item	4
Location	Hay Meadow
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Red
Observations	Top rails, and some intermediate rails, are rotting and splitting, with significant loss of structural integrity.
Recommendations	Replace rotten rails.



Item	5
Location	Carr House Meadow
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Red
Observations	Posts rotting and split, leading to a loss of structural integrity
Recommendations	Replace



Item	6
Location	Carr House Meadow, second upper gate
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Red
Observations	Top rail is rotting and at risk of losing integrity.
Recommendations	Replace the top rail.



Item	7
Location	Hay Meadow
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Red
Observations	The top of this post, and at least 10x others like it, are rotting and place the fence at risk of losing the top rail and losing integrity.
Recommendations	Trim and repair.



Item	8
Location	Hay Meadow
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Red
Observations	Intermediate rail is rotting and placing fence at risk of losing integrity.
Recommendations	Replace



Item	9
Location	Hay Meadow
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Red
Observations	Top rail is rotting and placing fence at risk of losing integrity.
Recommendations	Replace and repair.



Item	10
Location	Hay Meadow
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Red
Observations	Intermediate rail is rotting at end and fallen from post, and placing fence at risk of losing integrity.
Recommendations	Replace and repair.



Item	11
Location	Boardwalk, Big Meadow side
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Red
Observations	Top rail is rotting and placing fence at risk of losing integrity.
Recommendations	Replace and repair.



Item	12
Location	Boardwalk, Big Meadow side
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Red
Observations	Top rail is rotting at end, displaced from post and placing fence at risk of losing integrity.
Recommendations	Repair.



Item	13
Location	Boardwalk, Big Meadow side
Compliant with best practice?	Yes for original structure, no for repairs.
Category	Amber
Observations	Post used for repair is rotting and placing fence at risk of losing integrity.
Recommendations	Replace and repair.



Item	14
Location	Boardwalk, Big Meadow side
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Red
Observations	Top rail is rotting, losing integrity and placing fence at risk of losing integrity.
Recommendations	Replace and repair.



Item	15
Location	Boardwalk, Big Meadow side
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Red
Observations	Loose posts and intermediate rails rotting, and placing fence at risk of losing integrity.
Recommendations	Replace and repair.



Item	16
Location	Big Meadow
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Red
Observations	Rail displaced, rotting at end. Post is loose.
Recommendations	Investigate cause of loose post, repair.



Item	17
Location	Big Meadow
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Red
Observations	Top rail is rotting, losing integrity, and placing fence at risk of losing integrity.
Recommendations	Replace and repair.



Item	18
Location	Gate to LGGS field from Fauna Path
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Amber
Observations	Top of gate post is rotting and losing integrity.
Recommendations	Trim top of post, replace top, repair.



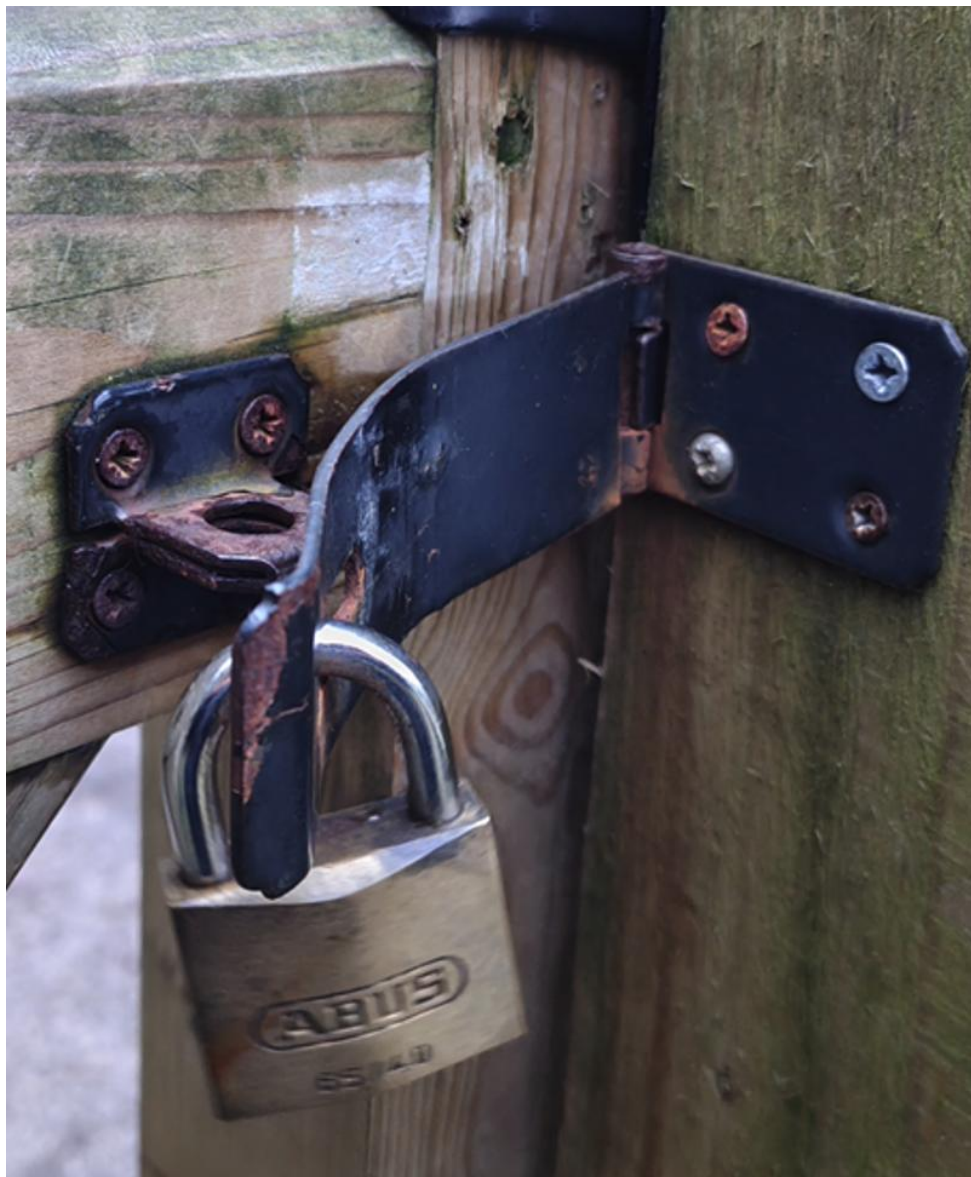
Item	19
Location	Big Meadow, Gate near orchard
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Red
Observations	Top of gate post is rotting and losing integrity.
Recommendations	Replace and repair.



Item	20
Location	Gate at Edenbreck Paddock
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Amber
Observations	Top rail is rotting and starting to lose integrity.
Recommendations	Monitor and schedule repair.



Item	21
Location	All padlocks and hasps
Compliant with best practice?	-
Category	Amber
Observations	Many padlocks are now difficult to open, whilst some hasps are corroded.
Recommendations	Inspect all padlocks and oil them. Any padlocks that do not respond to oiling should be replaced. Replace severely corroded hasps.



Item	22
Location	Aldcliffe Road, gate to Pony Wood
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Amber
Observations	There have been suggestions to improve access via this gate, which can be difficult to open. Currently the gate can only open in one direction, as the gate is wider than the posts; changing this would require a narrower gate.
Recommendations	Investigate solutions.



B. Post-and-wire (P-W) fencing

Item	24
Location	Carr House Meadow
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Amber
Observations	Strainer post is rotting and starting to lose integrity.
Recommendations	Schedule repair; trim top and replace with new wood.



Item	25
Location	Carr House Meadow from footpath
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Amber
Observations	Loose posts, losing tension.
Recommendations	Investigate and schedule remedy.



Item	26
Location	Big Meadow, small area of fencing near to boundary with Hay Meadow.
Compliant with best practice?	No – absence of strainer posts and lack of tension.
Category	Amber
Observations	The fence is not a proper stock-proof enclosure and has been pushed and trampled by cattle.
Recommendations	Replace with a stock-proof fence. NOTE: The fence has since been repaired, with barbed wire added. However, this fence still does not comply with the applicable British Standard and similar requirements.



Item	27
Location	Edenbreck Paddock
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Red
Observations	The fence appears to have been originally stock proof, but the wet ground and make-shift repairs mean that the fence has little tension, insecure posts and is no longer stock proof.
Recommendations	Replace or investigate alternatives, e.g. partial fencing to secure boundary with LGGS field.



Item	28
Location	West Field
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Amber
Observations	The fence has lost tension, and is losing structural integrity.
Recommendations	Schedule repair.



Item	29
Location	West Field
Compliant with best practice?	Partial
Category	Amber
Observations	The fences do not have strainer posts and therefore it has not been possible to tension them sufficiently.
Recommendations	Monitor when cattle are in the field – repair if the fences lose integrity. Replace corner posts with larger, deeper conventional straining posts and tension the wires firmly using a monkey strainer.



Item	30
Location	Gated area, Big Meadow to Lower Sowerholme
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Amber
Observations	Some rails are rotting and are ajar.
Recommendations	Repair and replace rails where needed.



Item	31
Location	East section of Big Meadow
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
Category	Amber
Observations	The fence is aged and degrading.
Recommendations	Monitor cattle movements; schedule replacements.



Item	32
Location	Big Meadow to Lower Sowerholme fence
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
RAYG status	Amber
Observations	The strainer post is starting to rot and the fence has lost some tension.
Recommendations	Monitor and schedule repair.



Item	33
Location	Hay Meadow to Big Meadow
Compliant with best practice?	Yes
RAYG status	Amber
Observations	The strainer post is starting to rot and the fence has lost some tension. One of the rails on the section of post-and-rail fencing is rotting.
Recommendations	Monitor and schedule repair.

