Minutes of the Fairfield Association AGM held on 23 September 2026 at The Storey

Present (members, *not yet members*)

Andrew Brennand (Chair), Clio Graham, David Austin, Clare Austin, Geoff Oliver, Helen French, Helena Murphy, Ian Diffenthal, Ian Nieduszynski, Ian Procter, Jane Parker, John Whittaker, Keith Bracewell, Michael Sheppard, Mick Short, Mike Ashton, Oliver Fulton, Patricia Clarke, Rebekah Mulligan, Sharon Diffenthal, Steve Bullen, Steve Longdale, Sue Pope (Secretary), Suzanne Procter, Zee Longdale

1. Apologies

Dave Brookes, Helen Sutton, Hilary Short, Robin Jackson

2. Minutes from the last meeting

Accepted

3. Matters Arising

Burtonwood legacy – the FA aims to purchase the fields currently leased from the Lancaster City Council (LCC). LCC has agreed to commute the 999-year lease on the orchard.

4. Chair's report (Andrew)

First off, thanks to everyone for coming to the meeting. It's been another busy and successful year for the Fairfield Association and I know everyone here tonight has contributed to that success in one way or another. Without our volunteers we can achieve nothing and we have all been working tirelessly to improve our estate and organise entertaining things to do there. We have maintained most of our regular calendar of events and each has been a real thrill to see executed so professionally. From Apple Day in the autumn, through to Carol Singing on Christmas Eve, the Easter Egg Hunt, the return of the Triangle Summer Fair it has been great to see the community coming together to enjoy this very special place we have created together. Special thanks must be extended to Bethany Haughey and Katherine Woodfine for taking on the Easter Egg Hunt and Veronica Dunne for running Apple Day. Sue Holden will take on the mantle of Apple Day for our next event on 3 October.

Our membership numbers are growing and we now have 521 membership accounts, up by 30% from last year. This continued growth in membership is testament to the new systems that our technology lead, Mark Tanner, has put in place. It is now easier than ever to manage the communications you receive from the Association and find out about what we are doing. I know the website Mark has put together means it is much easier to find out what is happening and read about our successes. The website has had over 12 500 visitors in the last calendar year. Grace Naylor has also been continuing her sterling work on our social media feeds.

A number of new projects that were trailed at last year's AGM have come to fruition. The Cycle Hub was expanded and the available spaces were rapidly filled. All the benches at the playground were replaced. Sue Holden put in a successful bid to raise £30 000 from the Lancashire Environment Fund to improve our path network. The oral history project has concluded and we are in the process of presenting our findings in collaboration with University College London who have an innovative technology platform that we can use to present our collection of audio files, written accounts and imagery. We've installed a Free Little Library at the playground, which was funded by the proceeds of the 2025 carol singing and a crowd-funding exercise. Many thanks to Lynne Davies-Craine for driving this.

The rewilding Lucy Brook project was funded and work begins this month. It would be remiss of me to deliver this report without acknowledging the recent passing of trustee Sue Nieduszynski who chaired the FFOG subgroup that manages the day to day running of the nature reserve and who was instrumental in putting the Lucy Brook project together. She was unbelievably good at what she did and will be sorely missed.

School visits have resumed and we welcomed children from the Cathedral Primary School in June. There is a programme of visits planned for the autumn and our second visit, this time from Morecambe Bay Primary School happened this Monday. Morecambe Bay is a school that will really benefit from time spent in the lovely green spaces we can provide and we have subsidised their transport costs to make the trip affordable.

A group of local volunteers continues to look after the green space at Aldcliffe Road Triangle. This summer we refurbished and re-erected the noticeboard on new powder-coated steel posts, which should last longer than the timber ones did. Many thanks to Alasdair Poore who led on this and did most of the work. We have replaced the curling and fading paper window posters in the workshop with posters printed on board by Promotional Gods. We held a successful late Summer Fair on 5 September, a remarkably dry day, raising £660. This was a great team effort, so many thanks to all involved.

At last year's AGM I reported that there was work going on behind the scenes to adjust how the Fairfield Association is governed. We are currently a standard Charity but intend to amend our constitution to that of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). CIOs are registered and regulated by the Charity Commission, not by Companies House, and they continue to operate under charity law. This will not affect the day to day running of the charity but will change the liabilities of the trustees. At the moment much of our land is either leased or owned by named individuals and trustees are personally liable for any debts the Association might incur. By changing our legal status to a CIO, which can own land and assets in its own right we are future proofing what we have built together. The amended constitution is now ready and will be presented to the Association later this evening.

On the back of last year's success in winning the BBC Radio Lancaster Make a Difference Award, trustee Michael Sheppard has been interviewed on both local and national radio, bringing the work of the Association to the attention of the whole country. I would like to extend a personal thanks to Michael for taking this on and giving an excellent account of the work of the Association to a national audience. As I said last year, I genuinely believe this is not just an acknowledgement of what we have achieved in the recent past but in the last

thirty years and our continued success is a testament to anyone who has baked a cake, pruned an apple tree, suffered through a meeting, attended an event or made a donation in that time. We couldn't have done it without you.

The Fairfield Association was founded in 1996, so that makes this year our thirtieth anniversary. For three decades the Fairfield Association has battled, negotiated, fund-raised, cajoled and encouraged in order to provide wonderful green spaces and community events that we can all enjoy. Here's to another 30 years of the same!

Fairfield Association Calendar timescales – the 2027 calendar is planned to be available in October.

5. Treasurer's Report (Jane)

Jane spoke to the accounts up to 30 April 2026 that had been made available on the website in advance. The balance includes the Burtonwood legacy of £54 760. It's been a good year but we do need to continue building our reserves as we don't know what the future might hold. We received over £2200 in memory of Sue Nieduszynska and intend to use the funds towards the Lucy Brook project. Huge thanks to Jane for taking care with the accounts and her clear explanations.

6. FFOG update (Hilary – read by Andrew)

Nature Reserve Funding

Our income from the Rural Payments Agency has increased during the past year. Our current agreement runs until the end of March 2028 when we expect to be invited to apply for new funding.

Wildlife

In January, new saplings were planted in West Field using a grant from the Tree Council and bird-friendly wildflowers were planted between the lynchets.

The iNaturalist app has greatly increased our awareness of the variety of flowers and insects to be found around the reserve. The bird feeding station continues in Flora Field thanks to Lancaster and District Bird Watching Society and Chris Johnston now provides a regular bird sighting report across the whole area.

Details of all local sightings can be found on our website where you can also find details of how you can contribute to what we know.

The Cattle

The White Park Cattle are an important part of conservation across the area. In a year when there was no bull, there was a bumper crop of seven new calves, which have delighted those walking through the area.

New Projects

Two exciting projects are underway, which will improve the area for both people and wildlife. Both will be completed by next July.

Many of you will be aware of The Lucy Brook Project. This will allow Lucy Brook to flow more naturally and significantly increase the value to wildlife in the centre of the reserve. It will provide cover for small mammals and birds, which in turn will encourage bigger predatory birds such as tawny owls and barn owls. There will be new ponds and we expect to see more of the beautiful damsel flies and dragonflies which are already a feature of the reserve. For this and many, many other contributions to the reserve we need to thank Sue Nieduszynska who died unexpectedly in June. She contributed a huge amount to our experience of the nature reserve and is greatly missed.

We have secured funding to improve our paths. This project will restore them to their original widths and improve the drainage. There will also be more passing places and better gates, which will make easier for those in wheelchairs. Sue Holden succeeded in getting the funding for this project and we owe her a big vote of thanks.

Volunteers
Finally, many thanks to Rebekah, our volunteer organiser and the volunteers who turn out in all weathers to maintain and continually improve the reserve.

Path from the canal to Pony Wood has become a green tunnel – will the hedges be laid soon?

Path maintenance volunteers needed to ensure maximum benefit from the path renovation works.

Fence maintenance and possible replacement with plaswood posts.

7. Fairfield Association becoming a CIO:

Following discussion, three proposals were voted on:

- Proposal 1: The draft constitution of the proposed new Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), to be named The Fairfield Association CIO, is approved in principle by the membership. Proposer: Sue Pope Seconder: Jane Parker
  Supported unanimously.
- Proposal 2: The Trustees of the Association are authorised and instructed to submit this approved draft constitution to the Charity Commission for England and Wales as part of an application to register the new CIO. Proposer: Andrew Brennand
  Seconder: Ian Procter
  Supported unanimously.
- Proposal 3: The Trustees are authorised to accept minor, non-material typographical or administrative amendments to the text if required by the Charity Commission to secure registration, provided that the core charitable objects and governance structure remain unchanged. Proposer: Mick Short Seconder: Jane Parker
  Supported unanimously.

8. Election of trustees and officers

Trustees have a three-year term of office, after which they need to be re-elected. The following were duly elected. Officers are confirmed annually.

office	**trustee**	**proposer**	**seconder**
New trustee	Rebekah Mulligan	Andrew Brennand	Ian Procter
Renew trustee	Sue Pope	Andrew Brennand	Sharon Diffenthal
Chair	Andrew Brennand	Sue Pope	Michael Sheppard
Secretary	Sue Pope	Andrew Brennand	Jane Parker
Treasurer	Jane Parker*	Andrew Brennand	Sue Pope

***** not a trustee

9. Standing item for notification of third parties of change to trustees

Rebekah Mulligan needs to be added to the list of trustees on the Charity Commission website – Sue P to action.

10. Fairfield Association and local community issues – discussion

Sylvester Street building redevelopment – we are not a residents' association and cannot submit formal responses to community proposals that are out with our objects.

11. AOB

None.

Date of next AGM

Wednesday 22 September 2027.