

Minutes of the Fairfield Association Annual General Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2014 at the Friends Meeting House.

Present: Andrew Brennand (Chair), Wendy Anderson, Claire Austin, David Austin, Mandy Bannon, Jon Barry, Dave Brookes, David Burns, Margaret Burtonwood, Peter Callingham, David Elliot, Glenys Ferguson, Paul Ferguson, Tony Finn, Ruth Haigh (membership secretary), Helen Hicks, Henry Hicks, Joyce Leonard, Jane Littlejohn, Margaret Masters, Ian McGregor, Geoff Oliver, Jane Parker (treasurer), Ian Procter, Hilary Short, Mick Short, Philip Turner, Shirley Rawsthorne (secretary)

## **1. Welcome**

Andrew welcomed members to the meeting.

## **2. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Sue Nieduszynska, Pamela White and Sue Pope.

## **3. Minutes of 2013 AGM**

The minutes were amended as follows:

- three lines from the bottom of page 2 , the sentence "This needs ratifying at the next AGM" was struck out.

## **4. Chair's Report**

See report at Appendix A

## **5. Treasurer's Report**

Jane reported that, as income had exceeded £250k, an additional report had been produced in order to comply with Charity Commission rules. The accounts had been approved by an independent examiner. Jane explained the distinction between general and restricted funds. She thanked Hilary for her tireless efforts to secure grants, which has meant that the general fund has remained healthy.

See report at Appendix B

## **6. Membership Report**

- Membership has increased again to 210 up 21 from last year's total of 189.
- 51 new people have become members. This was attributed to the publicity from buying the Flora fields and to people wanting to show their support and approval of the aims of the charity.
- 39 people now pay by standing order.
- Membership donations totalled £2015; about two thirds of members help in one or more practical ways; in the orchard and nature reserves, organising and helping at events, providing baking and delivering newsletters.
- As a result of the Constitution being updated at last year's AGM, membership is no longer annual; it is considered to be in perpetuity and there is no suggested donation. However the

Membership Secretary advised that she intended to contact Members every year to keep the membership records up to date and to offer the opportunity make a further donation.

## **7. Amended Appendix 2 from Constitution**

Andrew considered that the current Appendix 2 had required some attention, given that the amended constitution passed at the previous AGM contained a lot of detail on how to run General Meetings (of which there is only one a year) but nothing on the running of the monthly business meetings. He advised that bye-laws had now been drawn up which covered the monthly 'business' meetings, including those of the sub-groups.

In response to a question on the matter, Andrew confirmed that he wanted to use the term 'business meeting' in the Appendix to distinguish between general meetings and the AGM, but that the term would not be used in any publicity so as not to discourage people from attending.

## **8. Election of Trustees and Officers**

Andrew advised that trustees were elected for a three-year rolling term, but were not obliged to serve for the full period. The minimum and maximum number of trustees was four, and nine, respectively. Sue Nieduszynska was elected as a trustee in absentia.

Andrew was re-elected as Chair, Jane was re-elected as Treasurer, and Shirley Rawsthorne was elected as Secretary. Members thanked Mandy for her work over the last three years.

## **9. Standing Item for Notification of third parties of change to trustees.**

Andrew confirmed that the Charity Commission would be notified of the change to trustees.

## **10. Short Flora Update**

- Mick reported that Fairfield Association took ownership of the Flora land last autumn, and had purchased the 'Gleeson's' field for £300k. It had received £80k towards the cost from donations, gift aid, and HLF. An education programme had been well-attended by members of the community, for which thanks were due to Dave Brookes, Ian Procter, Tony Finn and Sue Nieduszynska.
- In December, supported by Natural England and HLS, a programme of hedge laying, fencing and landscaping was undertaken. Funds were still required for footpaths around Pony Wood, and repairs to the Lucy Brook path.
- The Fairfield Friends had been created to raise funds for future repairs and maintenance.
- The arable field had been planted with wheat, including a perimeter strip of wildflowers.
- A question was raised about the collision damage to the perimeter wall – Andrew explained that a driver had been apprehended and the Association was pursuing compensation from her insurers.

## **11. Short Fauna and Orchard Update**

- Mick reported that there were an encouraging number of volunteers for Saturday maintenance sessions. Natural England had insisted on nettle clearance to improve accessibility, and a few blighted apple trees were to be replaced. However, the wildflower meadow had been a real success, following the sowing of 4.5 kilos of wildflower seed.
- He noted that some of the footpaths were unsuitable for wheelchair users and said that we would be investigating upgrading them.
- Mick encouraged visitors to the reserve to make entries on the blog, which would be used to inform dealings with Natural England.
- There was an update on the welfare of the White Park Cattle.
- It was confirmed that the boundary marker was in the process of being repaired, prior to being reinstated in the Pony Wood field.

## **12. Short Triangle Update**

Dave reported that last year's summer fair had been a success. Planning permission had been secured for the change of use of the site and demolition of the sheds at the rear. The interior of the workshop had been cleared, with the help of monthly volunteer sessions.

They had received a grant from Lancashire Green Spaces, which was used for the creation of a noticeboard by a local joiner. Other grants for the development of the site were in the pipeline. Dave advised that FOTT hoped that someone would come forward with a proposal for use of the workshop.

In response to a question about unauthorised parking near the entrance to the site, Dave advised that FOTT intended to purchase bollards.

A question was raised about ownership of the perimeter wall, which appeared to be in a poor state of repair. Dave advised that the wall had been surveyed and found to be sound. It was confirmed that the wall was owned by the Canals and Rivers trust, and was covered by FOTTs public liability insurance.

## **13. Short Playground Update**

Andrew reported a recent fire in one of the wooden playground bins; this had damaged the safety surface, which he intended to assess for repair. The playground had passed an inspection by Lancaster City Council, with only minor repairs identified. The wooden palisade wall had become a safety hazard; it was intended to replace it with a stone wall, funded by a grant of £4,100.

Andrew suggested that the playground was weeded during the next volunteer session, in preparation for Fun-day.

## **14. Any Other Business**

There was a complaint about the acoustics in the meeting room. Andrew agreed to consider this for next year's meeting.

## Appendix A

### Fairfield Association – Chairman's Report 2014

Since we will be receiving additional reports this evening from the various projects that are underway it is my intention to keep this report brief and to the point.

This has been my fifth year as Chairman, and I am happy to say that the same strong support and wise guidance that was offered in previous years has continued. My thanks are extended to all the committee members for their hard work and to the trustees as well, who have had a lot to deliberate this year, as last.

This has largely been a year of consolidation, but one not without its challenges. The year began with a public consultation on how best to use and enjoy the new purchase held in this very room. It was very well attended and we received valuable feedback from those who had contributed to the purchase and the wider community. Guided by the will of that consultation we have resolved to make modest developments in this first year, mostly boundary and gate work, planting new trees and sowing seeds for an arable crop in the large field opposite the canal. All this work has been expertly managed by our FOG subgroup, but particular thanks need to be extended to Mick Short for charring, Dave Brookes for managing the capital works and Ian Procter for coordinating the army of volunteers and overseeing the work.

In addition to us becoming wheat farmers, another innovation this year has been the lectures we have been delivering as part of our Heritage Lottery Fund obligations. A diverse range of topics have been covered and a great number of people have enjoyed the talks. Sometimes we are asked why we are diverting funds into this area and not saving the money for the work required on the nature reserve. The answer is simply because hosting the lectures was a requirement of the grant we received. But I think there is more to it than even that. The work we as an Association now undertake is much more than the managing of green spaces for the benefit of the public. We now do significant and effective work in the realm of education, with volunteers going into schools and engaging local children in the work that we do, hoping to foster a general enthusiasm and love for the outdoors. So 2014 has very much been about serving the community here in Lancaster, as much as it has been about looking after wildlife and habitat. Particular thanks need to be extended to Sue Nieduszynska for her efforts in coordinating the Lectures and Tony Finn and Julia McDowell for their work with local schools. We have a major task ahead in presenting the work undertaken on Flora to the general public and need to put a small exhibition together at the end of September to show case what we have achieved. If you'd like to help in putting that event together we'd be grateful for assistance.

The energy of Association members has delivered a full and varied calendar of community events this year. Since the last AGM we have organised, run and enjoyed no fewer than seven well attended events. These were... the first summer event in the Aldcliffe Triangle, Party in the Paddock which this year was coupled with Apple Day, Carol Singing on Christmas Eve, Wassailing, Easter Egg Hunt, a BBQ and Treasure Hunt at the Triangle. The next event will be the return of Fairfield Fun Day on July 5<sup>th</sup>, and we are still looking for help running stalls and setting up and taking down tents, so please do make yourself known if you are free on the day and would like to help out. Our thanks as an Association go out to everyone who organised, helped out at and attended these events. If anyone feels like they would like to be involved in any of next year's events then please let us know.

We do not focus solely on events though – the Association provides facilities and services to the people of Lancaster throughout the year. The playground on Fairfield Green continues to be well used, and I would like to extend a special thanks to Ken Capewell who has become increasingly central to the monitoring and maintenance of the playground. The new safety surface was finished off in the winter. The Millennium Orchard is also a focus for daily activity, and a great deal of effort has been put in behind the scenes to ensure it remains a well-managed and well used amenity. Special thanks need to be extended once more to Ian Procter for coordinating the volunteer sessions, and to Glenys Ferguson and Mick Short for ensuring that the Fauna and Orchard Subgroup meetings are so well run.

There have been other successes this year, which demonstrate that we are an Association that continues to thrive. This has been another effective year for fund raising. Hilary Short continues to magic grants seemingly out of thin air, and we have her to thank for our healthy bank balance since we only occasionally have to dip into general funds – the vast majority of what we buy is funded from successful grant applications. This has

been a particularly challenging year for our Treasurer Jane, who because of our success in fund raising last year had to produce accounts in a different and much more detailed format. So we thank you Jane for maintaining the financial side of our operation so carefully and diligently. A new innovation this year is the Friends of Fairfield scheme, and we thank Geoff Oliver for his time on this new fund raising effort. Communications with members has been ably managed by Ruth Haigh, who has kept a beady eye on the membership database and coordinated the delivery of newsletters and fliers to the Fairfield area. Her ability to conjure suitable names from the ether when a particular task needs doing is dependably effective. We are never short of jobs that need doing though – so if you feel like you can get involved in any way then please let Ruth know.

The Friends of the Triangle subgroup, ably commanded by Dave Brookes and Peter Callingham, have continued to make progress with the Aldcliffe Triangle project. The lease has been signed and that most important milestone for any volunteer lead project has been achieved. They have installed their own noticeboard!

Finally, we have to turn to the fact that Mandy Bannon is stepping down as secretary after three years of working tirelessly to make sense of the monthly meetings I chair. This has been a momentous three years for the Fairfield Association, with us experiencing an unparalleled amount of growth and change. She has done the job fantastically well and I am personally grateful for her hard work and commitment and grateful on behalf of the Association. I am happy to report that she is taking over the role of newsletter editor, so will still be involved with the work of the Association. Thank you Mandy. The card has three bullet points on it.

That concludes the Chairman's Report for 2014.