

Fairfield Association – Chairman's Report 2011

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 second year as Chairman, and I am happy to say that the same strong support and wise guidance that was offered in my first year 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. With the finalising of FAUNA the Nature Reserve and the fund raising campaign for the field the committee and trustees have been busier than ever, but have always remained calm under fire.

I think very often people conflate the FAUNA project with the field fund raising, and I expect that even now there are some who think that FAUNA is not yet a reality and is still contingent upon some further development. It is not – thanks to the tireless effort of the FAUNA group, lead by Oliver Fulton but ably supported by Dave Brookes, FAUNA will be built in the Autumn and should be ready to stroll around by Christmas. We should remind ourselves how we got to this happy position. We have turned by grant raising alchemy alone £5,000 from the Fairfield Association into £100,000 to meet the costs of building the nature reserve. Our five was followed by fifteen from the County Council, thirty from the Lancashire Environment Fund and fifty from the National Lottery's Community Spaces fund. This demonstrates two things: firstly that Oliver and the people he has gathered to assist in bid drafting are amazingly effective, and secondly that the money we raise as an Association can be leveraged ingeniously. Every 50p piece that is dropped into the collecting bucket at an event is important.

This is worth bearing in mind when we consider our second large project, the appeal to raise enough money to buy the fields adjacent to FAUNA. This has been masterminded by Mick Short, who will tell us more about the amount of pledges we have received so far in his short verbal report later this evening. A lot of time and effort has been contributed by others too to make our fighting fund as healthy as possible. Everyone here can still get involved and feel part of the process. Donations of time, energy and organisational expertise are just as welcome, indeed without them we will not succeed.

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 nine well attended events. In chronological order these were Fun Day, Summer Daze, Apple Day, Carol Singing in town and on Christmas Eve, the Easter Egg Hunt, the Blossom Picnic, Go Wild Month, the Open Garden and the Kwik Cricket match. The latter is about to be repeated on July 3rd. 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 the next year's calendar of events then please let me 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 series of thanks to the fathers who assisted me with the removal of graffiti and the team who installed the commemorative plaques. 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 our Breathing Places grant was wisely spent. To those who spent countless hours planning and proof-reading the information boards my heartfelt thanks. They look splendid. I am happy to say that no-one has spotted an errant comma so my children's pocket money, pledged last year as a reward, remains secure. The Bug Hotels have been installed and repaired after an unfortunate arson incident, and local schools have been making good use of the Orchard for educational visits. Volunteers continue in Stakhanovite fashion with their diligent maintenance of the trees, paths and flora. For their energy and engagement we are grateful.

There have been other successes this year, which demonstrate that we are an Association that continues to thrive. This has been a particularly effective year for fund raising, and our new Treasurer Jane has kept a steady hand and a beady eye on the accounts. For that we are grateful. We continue to build upon the sterling work of the previous Chairman and developed our links with the local media, appearing on BBC Radio Lancashire a handful of times and making the front page of the Lancaster Guardian with our fields appeal and FAUNA success. Communications with members has also been ably managed by Ruth Haigh, who has kept a diligent 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 has been particularly effective this year, and we have managed to involve a number of new members in various projects. We are never short of jobs that need doing – so if you feel like you can get involved in any way then please let Ruth know. Whether your talent is baking cakes, removing ragwort or taking minutes, the Fairfield Association needs you. Did I mention the ragwort? We'd really appreciate people who are good at removing ragwort!

Finally, I would like to thank the only Committee member I have not thanked so far, Hilary Short, our Secretary. She's hanging up her notepad this year, but we're truly grateful for her many years of service on the Committee. She will remain a Trustee and an active member. To show this gratitude we've bought her a bunch of flowers. We'd be grateful if she could minute for one last time how lovely they are.

Thank you very much Hilary.

That concludes the Chairman's Report for 2011.