

The Fairfield Association

Registered charity number: 1058030



FAIRFIELD ASSOCIATION WINS HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND SUPPORT AND FLORA DREAM BECOMES REAL

Today, the Fairfield Association, a community-based Lancaster environmental charity, which created the popular, award-winning 16-acre FAUNA nature reserve in 2012, has heard it has been awarded a grant of £96,700 from the Heritage Lottery fund (HLF) for its FLORA nature reserve project, near Lancaster City Centre (between Aldcliffe Road and Lucy Brook/FAUNA).

Part of the grant will be added to the considerable funds already raised locally through individual donations in order to purchase 26 acres of FLORA land and add it to FAUNA and the 2 acres of FLORA the charity already owns. The rest will help to fund an ambitious multi-generational learning volunteering programme, helping both young and old to learn about the history and biodiversity of the FLORA reserve and to train local volunteers in the skills needed to create habitats to support local flora and attract wildlife.

Andrew Brennand, the Fairfield Association Chairman, said:

“Lancastrians have walked the footpath through what we now call FAUNA and FLORA for hundreds of years and it is wonderful that the Heritage Lottery Fund is supporting so generously the effort on the part of local people to help conserve the fields they love. We all want to improve our local environment for plant life and wild life, as well as for people.”

Learning about FLORA

Mick Short, The FLORA project coordinator, said:

“Our Heritage Lottery Fund grant includes substantial funding for a wide range of learning activities about FLORA, its heritage, its history and biodiversity, and the ways in which we plan to conserve and manage the land.”

The learning programme, which will begin in autumn 2013 and run until winter 2014, will involve:

1. Learning activities for children in local primary and secondary schools and in FLORA;
2. A series of public lectures and visits to FLORA which will be open to all;
3. Training for volunteers to help them to maintain the reserve;
4. An end-of-project two-day public exhibition in Lancaster City Centre about FLORA, its heritage and the Fairfield Association's longer-term plans for conserving and managing the FLORA reserve.

Onwards to the past

In addition to opening up a footpath to a viewing position allowing people to look across FLORA and FAUNA to Lancaster Castle and beyond, the Fairfield Association wants to increase FLORA's biodiversity by changing the way the land is farmed to a style more like the way it was farmed a hundred years ago:

- Introduce hedges and wide wildflower margins (which will support insect life) around the fields within FLORA;
- Plough some fields and sow them with Spring crops (this will support the brown hares on site and encourage lapwing and other birds to return to nesting within FLORA);
- Extend and improve the copse known locally as Pony Wood to encourage owls and other wildlife;
- Introduce ponds and scrapes in the wetter areas, to encourage wetland and wading birds.

Donations still needed

We still need Lancastrians to continue to donate money to the charity as (a) it hopes to buy more land to further expand the nature reserve and (b) it needs to raise funds to make the land it has just bought more attractive to both people and the natural world.

Oliver Fulton, who coordinated the FAUNA project said:

“An important next step will be to raise funds to produce detailed plans which can form the basis for a public consultation, to take place in later in 2013. Then, after that, we will need to raise the money to make the changes that are agreed. We had to raise £140,000 to create the FAUNA part of the nature reserve and FLORA is much larger, of course.”

Anyone who wants to donate to the cause, raise money through sponsorship or other activities or has ideas for raising money or gaining publicity to support the campaign should contact Mick Short by telephone on 01524 63890, by email to m.short@lancaster.ac.uk or in writing to Whitegates, Sunnyside Close, Lancaster LA1 5NH.

Tiffany Hunt, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund's North West Committee, said:

“This is an engaging project which will actively involve local people with looking after their natural heritage. Volunteers will have great fun while learning about the area and its role in our biodiversity and help to make sure it thrives for future generations. HLF is delighted to be able to help people connect with the natural world.”