

## FFOG Report for AGM 2022

The most significant item to report is that our funding from the RPA is to be extended for a further 5 years, to 2028. If an alternative becomes available, we are not committed but it means that a major source of income (over £8,000 pa) is secure. The replacement, the Environment Land Management Scheme or ELMS, which would subsidise farmers for caring for the environment has been delayed, indeed is now under review. Environmental organisations are concerned that it will be at best watered down with disastrous consequences for nature. If you are members of, for example, the National Trust or the RSPB, please consider any campaigns they are launching.

We are, as a consequence, tied into a management plan which restricts our ability to move forward with some of the new developments in conservation. However, there are currently no alternatives available to us and we have been advised that we have to weigh our financial security against the changes we might like to make. The trustees are clear that their first responsibility is to the financial security of the association.

Moving on to what we can do:

The collaboration with the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, LWT, on improving the ponds continues. Thanks to Graham's persistence the mystery of why the pond in West Field never held water has been solved – there is a very large drain about 1 and a half metres down, running the length of the field. The LWT uncovered and destroyed the pipe leading into it and miraculously we now have a pond. We have fenced off ponds in fields where cattle graze, enabling the vegetation to develop there, to the benefit of dragon flies and other pond life.

The bird feeding station by the gate to the Pony Wood path is about to be reinstated by the LDBWS with feed supplied by RSPB Leighton Moss. Because we have long grass in the field rather than bare stubble which the ground feeding birds such as linnets need, we have been strimming an area around the tables but also have applied for permission for the field to be flail topped.

We continue to be one of the most important sites in the area for over-wintering snipe a species vulnerable to the loss of wetlands, and our bird surveyor was very upbeat in the summer, reporting breeding lesser whitethroat, reed buntings and a singing male reed warbler (found a home, looking for a mate), and lots of insects.

The White Park herd size is dramatically reduced to 7 animals - sadly there will be no calves next year

Once again, I must thank Ian and his volunteers for managing the reserve so well. A lot of effort goes into their development, in practical skills such as scything and coppicing, also first aid and more recently wildlife monitoring.

Finally, after a four year gap we are again hosting a public lecture at The Storey, to be given by Glen Swainson, who manages the delightful Gaitbarrows reserve at Silverdale.

