

Fairfield Association
Flora, Fauna and Orchard Management Group [FFOG]
Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 11th January 2018 at 7.30 pm
at Whitegates, Sunnyside Close

Present: Graham Brandwood, Dave Brookes, David Elliott, Glenys Ferguson (Mins), Oliver Fulton, Sue Nieduszynska (Chair), Ian Procter, Hilary Short, Mick Short

1. **Apologies:** Tony Finn, Ian Fraser, Chris Workman
2. **Minutes of last meetings:** Approved.
3. **Matters arising from Minutes:**
 - 3.1. **Missing NE payment (3.2):** The underlying problem has been resolved with Natural England accepting that its hedges measurements were inaccurate. Second payment for 2016 has now been received, but the payments for 2017 are being held up by reorganisations within NE (**Dave** to continue to chase).
 - 3.2. **Purchase of hedging tools and materials (6):** Purchase of an 'easy lift' harness is on hold because it is currently unavailable in the UK. Fencing poles etc have just been delivered. 450 free hedge saplings from the Woodland Trust are due to arrive on 19th January. WT is also prepared to supply 1225 saplings, spirals and canes for the Flora Path with 60% of the cost covered through its MOREhedges funding, subject to them remaining in the ground for at least 12 years. It was agreed to accept the mix offered, with holly substituted for dogwood if possible (**Ian**).
 - 3.3. **Lune Rivers Trust (13.3):** Ian and Graham have had a field meeting with Louisa Blundell. LRT has a pool of volunteers who will be helping with sapling planting on Wednesday 24th January. LRT also has good contacts, which have already enabled a) Ian to arrange the financial support for sapling purchases from the Woodland Trust (see 3.2) and b) Tony to become involved in a proposed project with Dallas Road School to grow elvers for Lucy Brook.
4. **Infra red camera:** The meeting agreed that Tony's idea merits working up into a detailed and costed proposal for consideration at March FFOG (**Sue** to notify Tony).
5. **Arrangements for renovation of the wildflower margin:** The Arable Farmer has signed the contract for 2018 but **Sue** is delaying contacting him about work on the margins until the implications of the Flora path are known. Plans for renovating the floristically enhanced grass margin were agreed at September FFOG (item 6) and now need to be implemented. The second cut of the northern border by scything started in mid November and will be finished by the 31st March deadline. The rest of the margin will be ploughed and re-seeded when the arable is sown with:
 - the usual HE10 mix for the top part of the southern border (**Mick** to determine quantity)
 - seed suitable for the remaining, damper parts of the margin (**Mick** to identify an appropriate 'damp' mix and determine quantity)
 - a low nutrient/yellow rattle mix to encourage butterflies supplied by the Green Hay Group (November item 13.1). (**Hilary** to contact.)

- meadowsweet plants and seeds collected from the reserve (for the damper areas)
- yellow rattle seed collected from the reserve (for the top part of the southern border), subject to approval from the Arable Farmer (**Sue**)

These proposals and species list need to be sent to NE for approval asap (**Sue**). **Mick** will arrange purchase of the approved seeds, and will also place the usual annual order for the bird friendly margin.

- 6. Flooding of Cromwell Road cellars:** Not a matter for FFOG. To be discussed by Trustees.
- 7. Replacement fruit trees:** It was agreed to replace the two felled apple trees (November item 11.1) with two plums, variety Blue Tit. No need to notify NE. (**Glenys** to instruct Keith Taylor.)
- 8. Improvement of the triangle of Orchard north of Towneley Close:** Also known as the old damson copse, this is a rather neglected area with lots of bramble and a few fruit trees that have been too badly shaded to perform well. It was agreed to clear the area and replant with holly in the centre (female for colour) and broom plus a bit of gorse on the outside (different varieties to stagger flowering time). The fruit trees are covered by the NE Agreement and must remain. **Ian** to arrange and plan for regular future maintenance of the area.
- 9. Management:**
 - 9.1. Arable update:** See 5.
 - 9.2. Grazing matters:** Once more the report is of no action by NE on formally incorporating the **new stocking arrangements** into the FA's Agreement. If this is still outstanding when **Dave** submits the annual return to NE, he will record on the form that the new prescriptions are being followed. In mid-November the Graziers were supplied with the Cattle Access **timetable** they requested interpreting the new stocking arrangements. **Winter access** to the reserve is allowed on a restricted basis under these new arrangements. So far, the Graziers have only used 4 days of the total of 55 permitted given the current herd size of 16.

Supplementary feeding has now started. A couple of bales (now used) were delivered to the top of the Gun Range, the rest stored in the shed. The ring feeder is being moved around the Gun Range and the water trough is closed off, with the cattle drinking from School Pond. But with the weather so wet, ground conditions in both the Gun Range and School Pond are now poor. The meeting made the following suggestions to relieve the pressure on these areas:

- move the cattle into West Field and/or Lower Sowerholme. In West Field there is water available in the scrape, but the herd could only come in from Sunday 14th to Tuesday 23rd January because of scheduled volunteer activities. In Lower Sowerholme, the Lucy Brook crossing should be closed to avoid further poaching (cattle can drink from Willow Pond instead). (Note: the Graziers would need to be reminded that supplementary feeding is not permitted in these fields and these days would count against the winter access allowance.)
- when there is another feed delivery, the tractor should take a different route and offload the bales into the LGGs field, thus avoiding creating further ruts in the Gun Range

Sue will convey these suggestions to the Graziers and offer help from volunteers as appropriate.

Dave is still chasing progress on the nose pump.

The contractor is scheduled to install a **second gate into School Pond** in mid-January. **Dave** will confirm and make arrangements for supervision. **Dave** will also ask the contractor to assess the **broken gate** into the LGGS field where the post has cracked on the hinge side.

9.3. Wetland management: Graham circulated a paper assessing the state of the ponds and Lucy Brook, and proposing actions. This was deferred for discussion at March FFOG (**Glenys** for Agenda). Whilst working in the vicinity of Lucy's Pool Graham has uncovered stone slabs, cobbles and a wall associated with the old coach house. This has been drawn to the attention of the History Group. There is probably more to be exposed, but for now Graham is returning his focus to clearing the brook. He noted that the bund in Lucy's Pool and one of the slabs which is lower than the others are restricting the water movement here although there is still seepage through into the old channel of Lucy Brook. Dave confirmed that the sluice in Lucy's Pool was designed to act only as an emergency overflow, and the effective diversion of the brook through Upper Sowerholme is as intended. In Anna's Pool the sluice appears to be working well and with field drains this is creating a strong flow in Lucy Brook to the cattle crossing. **Dave** will look at the area with **Graham**. **Mick** will investigate whether there is a post graduate student who would be interested in studying the area and in providing advice. **Graham's** suggestion of covering part of Lucy's Pool with a tarpaulin to try to curb mare's tail was approved.

9.4. Flora path progress: As part of the discharge of planning conditions, the Landscape Architect has produced a numbered plan and detailed list of the trees in Pony Wood. These useful documents were circulated. The tender document has now been written. **Hilary** will instruct the Landscape Architect to send it out immediately and then convene a meeting. There has been no progress with the Canal and River Trust.

9.5. Addition to Fields Access List: John Weedy.

10. Monitoring:

10.1. Maintenance and HLS habitat inspections: Graham's reports circulated as usual. The concerns flagged were covered at other points in the meeting.

10.2. Progress with surveys: Christine Bennett has submitted her 2017 results, along with comparison with earlier years (**Sue** to thank). Meadow brown continues to be prominent on the reserve, although there is a larger number of 'unidentified white' recorded. Red admiral sightings were notably higher in 2017. **Dave** noted that the Triangle group has been doing its own informal recording. He was urged to share this with Christine and/or report it via the FA blog.

The results of Oliver's first season surveying bumblebees in Hay and Carr House Meadows were circulated. An expert he consulted considered the results encouraging, particularly given the proximity of honey bees. **Oliver** will repeat in 2018, starting earlier than mid-June.

Nest box monitoring has been completed, reports to be circulated for the next meeting.

The winter bird survey is in progress, with Dan Haywood having made the first of his three planned visits.

Sue will collate and summarise the results of the year's bird surveys for the next meeting.

11. Volunteer activities:

11.1. Volunteer activities: Full reports for November and December are attached. The roof of the bug-hotel in the Orchard has been eaten by over-enthusiastic insects! It has temporarily been replaced but **Ian** would welcome offers of help to improve it. The short stretch of hedge alongside School Pond (from the ash tree in the direction of Cromwell Road) has now been laid by volunteers. It is a clear contrast with the rest of the hedge bounding the LGGs field which the FA cannot lay without permission. The wooden ramp leading into the shed remains unsafe, although the addition of chicken wire has reduce the slip risk. **Ian** will meet **Dave** on site to discuss how best to improve this. A specific risk assessment has been written to take account of the special requirements of one of the volunteers. This approach will be adapted for others should the need arise (**Ian**). Tasks proposed for the upcoming Saturday volunteer session were approved.

11.2. Working with Volunteers with dementia: The first steps to becoming a Dementia-Friendly charity have been taken with the holding of an induction workshop on 23rd November run by a Dementia Champion from the Dukes Playhouse. 15 people are now signed up as Dementia Friends. Mick himself has become a Dementia Champion after attending a one day course on 12th December. He will share in the running of the next workshop, probably in February. A dementia audit is being set up (**Mick**).

11.3. Preparations for Volunteers' Buffet: The date has been changed from that originally advertised to avoid half-term. It is now on **Thursday 22 February**. Places should be booked via **Sue** or **Ian**. Payment is on the night. **Dave** will circulate the invitation to the Triangle volunteers. **Ian** and **Dave** will liaise with **Graham** over the presentation of John Muir Awards.

12. Standing items:

12.1. Arrangements:

Ian will mark out beetle banks and check manhole/drain covers are clearly marked in anticipation of ploughing.

For March FFOG: **Graham** will prepare an annual review of the John Muir Award scheme, **Ian** a review of the Associate Volunteers Scheme, **Glenys** a review of last year's rush control and plans for the coming year. .

12.2. Financial control:

Item 3.2 – Woodland trust sapling purchases about £300 (**Ian**) (considerable saving on original budget estimate)

Item 7 – cost of 2 plum trees about £50 (to be purchased by Keith Taylor)

Item 11.1 – About £30 for materials to improve shed ramp (Ian)

Mower currently in for servicing - about £150 (Ian)

Approval was given for **Graham** to purchase a pair of waders.

Dave recirculated the current spreadsheet detailing anticipated annual spending relative to income. Ian noted that the failed defibrillator has now been replaced by the manufacturer at no cost to the FA (November 11.2), but that there will be an ongoing cost of replacing the battery and pads about every 3 years at around £200. Ian's proposal to set up a tools and materials fund was accepted. This will allocate £500 annually to the Volunteer Organiser for spending without reference to FFOG. An item over the value of £200 will continue to require FFOG approval. **Hilary** pointed out that grants should continue to be considered as a source of funding for tools. **Meeting members** were asked to inform **Dave** of any other amendments to be made to the spreadsheet.

12.3. Organised events for notification to FA: A talk at The Storey on 25th January on the FA's wetlands will be followed by a guided tour of the wet areas of the reserve on 2nd February. (This coincides with World Wetlands Day.) .

- 13. AOB: Graham's** idea of building willow igloos in the north part of the Orchard for children's play was welcomed.
- 14. Date/place of next meetings:** Thursday 1st March, Thursday 3rd May at 7.30pm. Venue: Whitegates Sunnyside Close.

Ian Procter's Report on Volunteer Activities:

1st November 2017

Nine volunteers formed the Hedge Working Party (HWP). A Site Specific Risk Assessment (SSRA) was prepared but not invoked as we did not use a chain saw.

- The fence at the 'entrance' to Upper Sowerholme from the Hay Meadow was repaired with hazel stakes and withers.
- At the ash tree dogleg on the Fauna path the south west hedge was cleared and trimmed but is not ready for laying.
- Its neighbour, the north east hedge was laid.
- Preparatory work was undertaken to lay the hedge between the Fauna path and School Pond north of the dogleg.

7th November 2017

We made a trolley to house and transport the shed battery and adjusted the wiring to fit.

8th November 2017

Nine volunteers attended the HWP on another lovely Wednesday morning.

- Paul and Glenys assessed the Flora Field wild flower margin for its amenability for scything. Paul will test scythe it another time.
- The path scythed in September part way through Upper Sowerholme was completed
- We began laying the hedge between the Fauna path and the School Pond, east of the ash tree.
- Ecoplugs were inserted into elder and sycamore adjacent to the Fauna ash tree and in the hedge between the Fauna path and the Paddock
- The hedge between Big Meadow and the Hay Meadow between the ash tree and the gate was trimmed back to the fence to prevent incursion by bramble.
- The hedge between Carr House Meadow and the Fauna path was trimmed on its south (path) side.
- Encroaching vegetation was cut back between Carr House Meadow and the Cromwell Road gate.

11th November 2017

Eleven volunteers formed the monthly volunteer working party on a pleasant autumn morning.

- We completed clearing the grass from the path around the Oak Circle.
- We began clearing leaves from the track between Sunnyside Lane and the Orchard,
- The wildflower plot was lightly forked over with some grass and buttercup removal to allow reseedling.
- Sapling suckers were cut back in the Orchard.
- The notice boards in the Orchard and playground were cleaned.
- Hazel / ash fences were built around the Flora Field manholes to make them more visible to farm machine operators
- A start was made to the winter pruning of the fruit trees.

15th November 2017

Ten volunteers formed the HWP on a dry, pleasant morning. During our break we took a walk across to the sandstone blocks revealed by Graham's excavation of a channel from Lucy Pool back to Lucy Brook.

- We continued to lay the hedge between the ash tree corner and the School Pond gate.
- The loose board adjacent to the ash tree was repaired.
- Invasive bramble was cut back and dug out of Carr House Meadow adjacent to the Gun Range hedge.
- Ecoplugs were inserted in four elder in the hedge between the wild area of the Orchard and the track.
- This hedge was given a light trim.
- Leaves were cleared from the Shed yard and gateway into the Paddock
- We began scything and clearing the wild flower margin on the north side of the Flora Field

22nd November 2017

Heavy and persistent rain led to the cancellation of the HWP.

29th November 2017

Nine volunteers formed the HWP on a lovely cold and sunny morning.

- We completed laying the hedge between the Fauna path and School Pond.
- Scything of the Flora northern flower margin continued.
- Work continued trimming the Long Pads / West Field hedge.
- Further work was done on the winter pruning of the fruit trees.
- We continued applying glyphosate to elder and sycamore in our hedges but now using a direct application rather than the expensive Ecoplugs.
- Two overhanging and broken branches were cut up and carted away in the Orchard.
- Two refurbished bird boxes (O11 and O13) were fixed in position.
- Bird box O12 was repaired to prevent its roof blowing off again.
- The 'bug hotel' near the soft fruit circle had lost its roof. We re-fixed with a temporary repair. It really needs a new roof.
- We repaired the heavy rain damage to the Long Pads footpath shifting the gravel back to fill the ruts.
- We began laying the short section of hedge around the soft fruit circle. More to do here.
- The Volunteer Organiser recommended volunteers attend a future Dementia awareness workshop.

Associate volunteers in November:

- Finished off clearing the bulrushes from the channel in Upper Sowerholme (late October).
- Work trying to clear a channel from Lucy Pool back to the open section of the Brook revealed large sandstone blocks. These may be the foundations of the coach house described in the Graziers' talk to the FA some while ago.
- Hedge trimming between the Pads footpath and Big Meadow.
- Hedge trimming between the Pads footpath and West Field
- The Cromwell Road notice board was cleaned.
- Scything of the wildflower margin of Flora Field (both Paul and Sue with clearance from Glenys and Ian)

2nd December 2017

Two volunteers, unable to attend next Saturday, put in their volunteer session early by clearing self seeding saplings and bramble in the area adjacent to the Towneley Close entrance and around the Stump Circle perimeter.

6th December 2017

The Hedge Working Party (HWP) met under Graham's leadership as Ian was otherwise committed. Four other volunteers attended.

The scything of the Flora wild flower margin continued.

A start was made trimming and bramble clearing the hedge along the east side of the Long Pads adjoining Lower Sowerholme and Flora Field.

9th December 2017

Ten volunteers attended the monthly Saturday session on what was forecast to be a cold but sunny morning. It was cold but distinctly damp with several heavy snow showers. Nevertheless we

- Planted 7 gorse bushes near the Aldcliffe Road gate into Flora Field.
- Planted 8 gorse bushes in two groups of four in the Pony Wood extension.
- Checked the Pony Wood and extension saplings for wind damage and repaired the staking / fastening of those that needed it.
- Removed now redundant plastic surrounds from the larger saplings and sorted the rubbish from those that could be re-used.
- Helen staffed a stall by the shed to sell calendars and cards.
- After huddling in the shed for our break we braved the mini blizzard to clear the leaf debris from the track between Sunnyside Lane and the Orchard.

13th December 2017

The HWP was cancelled due to cold, wet and windy weather in a prospectively exposed work site.

20th December 2017.

Four volunteers formed the HWP and continued to trim and de-bramble the hedge between the Pads footpath and Flora Field.

We also finished laying the short bit of hedge around the soft fruit circle.

Mince pies to celebrate our last session before Christmas.

Associate volunteers in December:

- Hedge trimming between the Pads footpath and Big Meadow.
- Hedge trimming between the Pads footpath and West Field
- Clearance of Lucy Brook near Lucy's Pool.