

Fairfield Association: Flora, Fauna and Orchard Group [FFOG]

April '21 7:30pm by "Zoom"

Minutes

Present: Hilary Short (Chair), Mick Short, Sue Nieduszynska, Ian Procter, Graham Brandwood, Peter Tilley, David Elliot, Chris Workman, Steve Bullen, Clio Graham

1. Apologies: Dave Brookes
2. Minutes of last meeting: Approved
3. Matters arising from Minutes:

3.1 Letter to the neighbours has been printed and is ready for distribution

3.2 The field margins and beetle banks have been staked for ploughing

3.3 Communication with David Dawson Andrew has passed on the message to David who is currently shielding.

3.4 Hilary and Oliver have met about a suitable name for the hedgerow near the beehives and are considering one based on Abigail Rigby, owner of that strip when it was worked by prisoners.

3.5 The sightings board is well used, no modifications planned until the autumn

3.6 Approved route for plant map has been given to Fraser

3.7 There were no John Muir certificates because of Covid, the invoice for the membership has been sent to Jane

3.8 Notices for gates are currently with the printers (Signs Express)

4. Management:

4.1 Arable update:

Aubrey Hoyles has taken on the contract which has been signed and returned. He is planning to plant barley, underplanted with pea. He is waiting for the results of the soil test. Ploughing is to take place on April 2nd, sowing April 3rd. Stakes will be moved on Friday (to provide guidance for sowing (**Mick**). The bird food mix will be scattered in the margin at 4pm on Saturday (**Mick, Sue, Ian (N), Ian (P), Steve and Clio**)¹

4.2 Grazing matters:

Following the delivery of hay which caused damage to the FAUNA stone and the fencing, the fence needs to be re-strained and it is better done a volunteer (**Peter**). Hilary will check the stone which is still leaning and then speak to Fraser (**Hilary**.) Sue reported that once again a number of the bales of our hay rotted. **Sue** to seek advice.

4.3 Woodland and hedges:

Following the submission of the data on the Fairfield Hedge Survey by Keith Taylor, a report was produced to which Ian has added a commentary, resulting in a document far too long to consider in a FFOG business meeting. Ian will circulate the paper and ask for volunteers to complete the survey (a few hedges were missed);,inspect the hedges in light of the feedback and Ian's comments, and report back to FFOG in September (**Ian**).

4.4 Ponds: Update on LWT project

It was agreed that the project has gone well so far, including the building of hibernacula. Chris Workman and Linda Renshaw plus possibly others (up to a maximum of 6) from the North Lancashire Wildlife Group (a branch of LWT) will survey the ponds on April 18th which will give us baseline data. It was pointed out that the trustees have signed a contract with LWT which includes West Field and that this will be completed in the autumn. Our experience of working with LWT is that they are very accommodating. A site visit will therefore be arranged to look at our needs. (**Peter and Sue**). We will also invite John Lamb to a (zoom) meeting to give FFOG members the opportunity to ask questions (**Hilary**)

4.5 Rush Cutting

Sue has approached Reuben Neville for advice. He is facing the same challenges as we are – access to a tracked vehicle and grazing the new growth in a very wet summer. He has offered to visit (**Sue** to follow up). Meanwhile this summer the rushes will be on the scything schedule (**Ian**)

4.6 Bee hotels:

Although the feedback from Phil Hendry was to renovate the structure it was agreed that it is valuable for bugs and should be left to rot gracefully (**Sue** to inform Phil)

4.7 Litter bins

Paul Pavli is happy not to proceed with approaching the council about an additional, or relocation of an existing, litter bin. No action

4.8 Alder Pond

Graham reported that Fraser had removed the top pipe of the sluice. It will be left off till after the flush-count but Fraser will be reminded that reserve management is the responsibility of the FA. (**Hilary**). Graham has been managing water levels according to cattle movements, but it was agreed that we should take further advice from Reuben. Steve and Clio have a useful document on managing habitat for snipe which will be circulated. (**Sue**)

4.9 Bamboo in Upper Sowerholme

Graham's report was received. Sue pointed out the amount of work that this has entailed and expressed the group's thanks.

4.10 Bird feeding station

Although the table is due to be removed next Monday and stored for the summer it was proposed that we should keep it in situ for longer. The FA would be prepared to pay for some seed. (**Sue**)²

4.11 Path through wild part of the orchard

It was agreed to close off the path which has appeared in the wild area to the north of the orchard. Hazel fences will be constructed at both ends and brash put down to create an additional barrier. (**Ian**)

5. Monitoring:

5.1. Maintenance and HLS habitat inspections

Graham's reports were received. Sue explained that trustees need to show that they respond to issues raised in the HLS report as they are responsible for the agreement. They will add comments and these final versions will be sent out with the minutes. (**Sue and Hilary**). Graham informed the meeting that he plans to summarise the winter grazing season in a report for the June meeting, to include recommendations for the sluice pipe (**Graham**)

5.2. Progress with surveys

5.2.1 Nest boxes: Ian N's report was received.

5.2.2 Butterflies. Peter will create a permanent transect, i.e. a map of a walk through the reserve. Butterfly observations, including habitat will be recorded at fixed points. A rota will be drawn up (**Peter**). Steve and Clio, David (Elliot) and Hilary (Smith) have volunteered. This will complement Christine's reports and will be reported to Butterfly Conservation. It was agreed that we would hold a special FFOG in the autumn to look at surveys. (**Sue**)

6. Volunteer activities:

6.1. Reports for February and March '21 were received

6.2. Work plans for April and May '21

Window box planting will take place next Wednesday. These will be kept at the shed. Brash will also be transported for the path closure (**Ian**)

6.3 Associate Volunteer report was received

7. Items for Discussion: Winter hedge and tree work

Ian's document was discussed and the following agreements reached:

- Fauna path from the Orchard path crossroads to the ash tree dogleg.
New hedge to be planted, to be kept low and to have long gaps, e.g. along the board walk and at the Orchard end – in both cases to maintain a view
- Ash Tree Dogleg to Cromwell Road.
No hedge to be planted alongside the hay meadow so as not to obstruct the view.
- Between Carr House Meadow and School Field.
This will be left but proposal may be revisited in the future
- Carr House Meadow, by Fauna path
New hedge to be planted between the gate and existing tall hedge to create a more continuous habitat
- Between Carr House Meadow and the Gun Range
Deferred for future consideration
- Between Lower Sowerholme and Flora Field hedge from the Pads footpath to the mature hawthorns
To be laid. No plan to double the width

- Grass margin all around Flora Field
Continue scything nettles, leaving scrub
- The eastern section of Pony Wood between existing woodland and the Flora / Pony Wood path
Scything will continue in the summer, ready for planting in the winter 2021-2, including hazel for coppicing, and canopy trees to include oak (we have in stock), small leaved lime, whitebeam, hornbeam. Horse Chestnut was suggested but that needs to be checked with NE as its status as a native species was questioned.
- West Field South hedge
Agreed to lay winter 2021- 2 or 2022-3
- West Field West side
No plans, leave for the future (although it was accepted that this is a poor habitat)
- Extending a corridor from West Field NW corner (beyond our land)
For future Consultation with Mandy Bannon about the feasibility as this is council land

8. Standing items:

- 8.1. Arrangements (all) Checked prior to the meeting
- 8.2. Financial control: actual and expected income and spending
 - 8.2.1 Invoice for £120 Winter Bird Survey received
 - 8.2.2 Tools and materials fund budget received
- 8.3. Organised events: Open Garden July 3rd and 4th, Apple Day September 25th
- 8.4. Morecambe Bay Facilitation Fund Partnership: Nothing to report
- 8.5. Items to Report from:
 - 8.5.1 The FA: Student Projects (**R Mick**)

Mick was unable to give the talk but has sent the powerpoint presentation geared to volunteers and volunteering plus general information on the association. Ian and Mick to interview student applicants for placements.

8.5.2 Trustees: Confirmation of HLS Extension (Sue)

One year extension been confirmed – i.e. to March “22. We continue to be advised to apply for extensions as long as we are able

Offer of Advice for beyond HLS (Sue)

Callum Booth of the local RSPB office has offered us advice on funding beyond HLS. Dave is arranging a site visit after which we hope to set up an open zoom meeting.

9 AOB.

9.1 Breeding bird notices need to be put up. **Ian** to check the shed

This needs to be added to the arrangements (**Sue**)

9.2 A couple with 2 very large dogs are using the Fauna and Pony Wood paths, the dogs running ahead unchecked. They may be known to Helen Loxam. To investigate (**Hilary**)

9.3 Glenys has enquired about the status of the success indicator for The Orchard – *At least 90% of trees alive at start of agreement still alive on 31/3/2021*. It potentially affects our recommendations as regards very sickly fruit trees. Agreed that we need to keep a record of compliance with this target, and manage the orchard appropriately. **Sue** to convey to Glenys

9.4 Dementia friends – any new people to be referred to Mick

10. Date, place & organization of next meetings: June 10th (zoom) (note June 3rd is in the half term week), Sept. 2nd (FMH)

Developments Following the Meeting

1. The field was sown on April 3rd with barley and pea, the margins with the bird friendly mix, and cornfield mix in the crop area
2. Bird feeding station. – Dan will leave the table in place until the end of April, particularly useful in the sudden cold weather. (Although reed bunting will switch to insects when feeding young, the linnets will continue eating the seed).