

Fairfield Association
FAUNA and Orchard sub-Group [FOG]
Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 4th April, 7.30 pm
at Whitegates, Sunnyside Close

Present: Graham Brandwood, Andrew Brennand, Dave Brookes, Sam Edge (part), Glenys Ferguson (mins), Tony Finn, Oliver Fulton, Helen Hicks, Sue Nieduszynska, Ian Procter, Hilary Short, Mick Short (chair), Philip Turner

1. **Apologies:** Rebecca Procter, Chris Workman

2. **Minutes of last meeting:** Approved.

3. **Priority Items:**

- **Edenbreck Cottage tool shed:** Sam Edge explained his revised design which incorporates the changes requested at the last meeting. There will be a steel door for security. The form of construction – prefabricated, cladding etc – is still to be decided. Sam was asked to obtain quotes and discuss with the Conservation Officer.

The focus of the discussion turned to the provision of a composting toilet and hand washing facilities (which have become more of a priority now that there is potential exposure to cow dung as well as dog faeces). It was envisaged that a toilet would be used on request during events, volunteer sessions and school visits (i.e. low use). The costs and practicalities of maintenance would need to be explored to help decide whether provision of a toilet was justified. To be eligible for grant-funding it would probably have to be suitable for the disabled. Sam noted that, when adequately composted, the contents can be used as mulch (but not around fruiting trees).

A toilet separate from the tool shed was considered preferable. It would be more secure, give more room for tools, and allow construction to be deferred until a later date. The consensus was that the need for a good-sized tool shed is the more urgent and, since the cost of the tool shed alone is likely to be considerable, constructing this in advance of any toilet will place less pressure on funds. However, given that planning permission lasts for a few years, it was suggested that the planning application should cover both tool shed and toilet. It was recognised that liaison with the allotment holders would be needed if a decision was eventually taken to proceed with a toilet.

It was decided to defer provision of a water supply too: antiseptic hand-gel provides a convenient alternative; local residents are happy to provide water for events.

Oliver reminded the meeting that Lancaster City Council's Property Services must give for permission for a building to be constructed.

- **FAUNA fields access policy:** It was accepted that there is a need to restrict and regulate access to the FAUNA fields in the interests of the wildlife, the cows and safety. The meeting decided that a permit system would be unnecessarily complex. Instead, emails will stand as proof of approval for the applicant and as a record for FOG. Oliver

has agreed that applications to access the fields be addressed to him in the first instance. He will then consult with other FOG members before making a decision. The list of 'Safety Requirements' to be sent out to applicants was welcomed, although it was suggested that item 9 be elevated to the top. Applicants (e.g. naturalists) will also be asked to report any findings. Oliver volunteered to redraft the documentation.

- **H&S policy documents:** Draft documentation prepared by Ian, Graham and Glenys, and incorporating contributions from several others was circulated prior to the meeting. This item generated considerable and wide-ranging discussion. It was agreed that the documents incorporated much valuable content, but further work was needed:
 - comments on particular aspects received prior to and during the meeting are to be incorporated. For instance, Andrew noted that the ultimate H&S responsibility lies with the main FA committee and ultimately with the Trustees. Anyone with further comments on the detail is asked to submit them ASAP;
 - the tone is to be changed to make the documentation less daunting;
 - Oliver offered to approach contacts in the Wildlife Trusts for examples and advice;
 - the section relating to Schools requires some rethinking to simplify and express the balance of responsibilities more effectively;
 - the section on Contractors requires more investigation of client's responsibilities and the requirement to check public liability insurance. Dave agreed to write a checklist and identify the ramifications for the FA when employing contractors. Andrew will contact the Charities Commission, and Hilary the CVS, for advice.
 - it was suggested that a 'practicalities' element (e.g. who might provide a supply of water, access to home toilets where necessary) added to the H&S Checklist would generate a very useful document for an event organiser.

As this policy has potential implications for the operation of the FA as a whole, the final version will be passed to the FA meeting for approval.

- **FAUNA launch event:** Date agreed: Sunday 13th May. Sue and Oliver will continue making preparations.
- **Easter Egg Hunt:** Some last minutes organisational details were dealt with.

4. **Current/recent developments:**

- **Chimney pot:** One appeared on the FAUNA footpath, and was later thrown over the fence into the Hay Meadow. It transpired that it had been taken from the front of one of the houses in Cromwell Road. It was retrieved and returned to its owner by Cameron Watson. Later it was reported that another chimney pot had gone missing from a back garden on Cromwell Road at the same time. Hilary is to make PCSO Cath Elliot aware of this.

- **Stone throwing:** Three boys were seen throwing stones into the School Pond. It is believed that they are pupils at Ripley School, and the school will be advised of this incident (Mick).
- **Moorhen in pipe:** The bird was reported trapped in the sluice in the Alder Pond, but had disappeared by the time Mick went to rescue it. He has fixed netting over the pipe.
- **Calves:** The first two of the season have been born and are attracting a lot of interest. Notices have been erected advising the public to treat them with caution and respect.
- **Edenbreck Cottage:** A revised planning application has been submitted.

5. **Aldcliffe Fields:** Fundraising ongoing.

6. FAUNA

- **Information board:** The design is virtually finished. Production of the frame is being arranged.
- **Entrance markers:** Carving has commenced on the stones at the Orchard end, and may take a further week. The stone at the Cromwell Road end may need to have its face cut back, and might be left until a second visit.
- **Community Spaces ‘sustainability grant’:** Because the meeting was running very late, discussion of this item was deferred.
- **Robin Loxam’s field usage:** Oliver and Richard Storton (RSPB) met Robin and Fraser Granell-Watson on 5 March. With a number of new calves expected, there is a risk of the land becoming over-grazed. Richard’s advice is that the number of animals is less important as an indicator than grass length, and that grazing of the hay meadow should not extend beyond 1 May.
- **Concessionary path agreement:** Deferred.
- **Wildlife surveys, data collection, photographs and recording:** Deferred.
- **User surveys:** Deferred
- **Leaflet:** In the process of being drafted. Oliver was asked whether he could offer some suitable photographs. The urgency with which this has to be produced depends on how much of the Community Spaces grant has already been spent on other things.
- **Pond markers:** John Wilkinson has been approached to design wooden markers to identify the ponds from the footpaths, and should provide a sample soon. It was suggested that it would be best to pin these to the posts holding the breast wires.

Because of the barbed wires, the cows should ignore them. They should also be less prone to vandalism here. The more distant ponds will be indicated with an arrow. It was decided to not to create signs at the moment for the two ponds that are invisible from the existing footpaths.

- **Marked trail:** Deferred.
- **RSPB rush cutting:** Deferred.

7. Orchard

- **Go Wild Sessions:** Deferred.
- **Wildflowers in Oak Circle:** Some wildflower seeds have been donated to Sue. Assuming they are native species, Mick will scatter them in the Oak circle. After mowing in preparation for the Easter Egg Hunt, the circle will be left untouched for the wildflowers to grow. Steve Bullen from the Greaves Community Garden has helped create a wildflower meadow in a similar situation. He is keen to share his knowledge and ideas. Oliver will invite him to a FOG meeting in the Autumn, when the results of last year's seed sowing will be known.

8. Volunteer activities:

- **Report for March & Tasks for April:** See Ian's full reports at end. It was decided that it would be best to leave the grass around the fruit trees uncut or – if too rampant – cut one section, and then other sections in turn (as advised in Graham Skelcher's Management Plan). Approval was given to hire a wood chipper to deal with the brash piles, but the task will be postponed until after the bird nesting season.

Oliver reported that he had planted anemone donated by David Austin in the hedge behind the stones at the Orchard entrance to FAUNA. It was noted that the soil in front of these stones is currently bare and compacted. Hilary will consult the stonecarver for advice on an appropriate surface here.

Richard Storton has advised that the best time for starting ragwort spraying is when the plants are readily identifiable (i.e. about 6 inches tall). This will be in about 3 or 4 weeks time, and so could be scheduled into the tasks for the first Wednesday evening volunteer session of the year.

Andrew has been contacted by a group of Zen Bhuddists. They expressed an interest in taking part in environmental activities in July, and may turn up to that month's volunteer session(s).

- **Loyne School Volunteers:** Deferred.

9. Health and Safety Policy: CRB Checks: Deferred.

10. Educational activities:

- **Schools' visits:** Deferred.
- **Working Party:** Deferred.
- **Forest School at Storey Gardens:** Deferred.

11. External events: Teddy Bears Picnic Concert: Deferred.

12. AOB: None

13. Date / place of next meetings : Thursday 3 May and Wednesday 6 June at Whitegates, Sunnyside Close

Report on Volunteer Session 10 March 2012

17 volunteers reported for duty

Mud was cleared from the path between Sunnyside Lane and the Orchard and the path running between the Orchard and Fauna. There may be one or two areas which need further work.

The pruning of the fruit hedge was completed and wood chippings from Fauna were used as a mulch.

The dogwood cut back in January was tidied and worked into the hedge.

Two trees were cut down in the overcrowded area between the Towneley Close path and the oak circle. Some of the bramble was cleared, when this is completed we should be better able to assess whether more trees need to come out.

The hedge between the Orchard and Fauna was pruned in the vertical plane to prevent growth over the path. Next year the hedge should be laid.

The pruning of the apple trees was completed.

Two hazelnut saplings (donated by Simon) and an apple tree were planted.

NOTE: an extra volunteer morning was held on March 3rd to complete the planting of the saplings donated by the Woodland Trust. 7 volunteers got the job done, there were 840 saplings in all plus two commemorative oak from the royal estates and one ash sapling. The latter three trees have been planted in the hedge alongside the Grammar School field with posts to mark them out from the hedge bushes.

Proposed volunteer tasks for April 14th 2012

Two preliminaries:

- a) Two volunteers planted circa 30 alder buckthorn in the Fauna hedges. This had been recommended to us to encourage Brimstone butterflies. *(N.B. I believe this was funded by a bequest. I don't know the details. Should it be recorded?)*
- b) Mick and I will be mowing the grass in reparation for the Easter Egg Hunt. Otherwise it would have been included in the list below.

Note: Ian is unable to attend on the 14th. Mick has kindly agreed to act as Organiser.

1. One small area of mud remains on the Sunnyside Lane – Orchard path. Remove this if the dry weather has persisted.
2. Continue to clear the brambles between the Towneley path and the Oak circle. Once the area is cleared, assess whether any further trees should be removed. Mark them for future action.
3. Remove piles of wood chippings from the Fauna fields and use as mulch
 - a. Around the new saplings in the hedge running NE of the ash tree
 - b. To supplement that already placed around the fruit hedge
 - c. In other areas of new saplings adjacent to the chippings
4. Tidy other piles of chippings spilling through the Fauna fences
5. Remove self seeded saplings in the Orchard. Those, (looking south), just to the left of the Towneley junction are hazel: do we want to replant elsewhere?
6. Clear the remnants of last year's foliage in the Orchard, particularly at the southern end. Strim around the bushes to prevent being swamped by upward growth.
7. A board near the ash tree needs a screw replacing.
8. Various pieces of wood in the Fauna fields should be moved to the hedge/fence

Two further points to consider:

- i. Managing the grass around the fruit trees. Last year (I don't know about previous) this grew quite long and the strimming at the end of the summer was arduous. Do we want to keep it more under control i.e. mow it from early in the season? If yes then we ought to make a start soon.
- ii. A possible task for May (with the student volunteers). The brash pile by the Towneley Close path is getting bigger and more unsightly. There are also other piles of prunings / cuttings which could be cleared. I understand that in the past a wood chipper has been borrowed from our tree surgeon. Should we try to do this again? If not available should we hire a large chipper (1st glance c. £60 + VAT) ? The students will be useful to drag the wood to the machine and barrow away the chippings.

Ian Procter