

Fairfield Association
FAUNA and Orchard sub-Group [FOG]
Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 8th November 2012, 7.30 pm
at The Robert Gillow

Present: Dave Brookes, Glenys Ferguson (mins), Tony Finn, Oliver Fulton, Helen Hicks, Sue Nieduszynska, Ian Procter, Hilary Short, Mick Short (chair), Chris Workman.

1. **Apologies:** Sheila Beven, Graham Brandwood, Andrew Brennand, Ken Capewell, Rebecca Procter, Philip Turner.
2. **Minutes of last meeting:** Accepted.
3. **Matters arising from Minutes:**
 - **Padlocks on bollards and Cromwell Road gate:** Oliver will switch these to padlocks that use the existing keys during the volunteer session on November 10th.
 - **Cromwell Road:** Glenys has not been alerted to any more incidents. A message giving police contact details has been forwarded to Ruth for insertion into the next FA newsletter.
 - **LEF award certificate copy:** Oliver is still pursuing this.
 - **Payment for haylage:** Oliver will present an invoice to the graziers in the next few days.
4. **Current/recent developments:**
 - **Sheep in meadows:** Sheep have found their way into FAUNA on two separate occasions. Richard Ayrton has retrieved them, and his sheep are now out of the adjacent fields. Graham's latest inspection (see item 6) shows that his fencing on the far side of Lucy Brook has not been repaired and that sheep could still readily enter FAUNA, with White Park cattle conceivably going in the other direction. Oliver will discuss the state of the fencing with the graziers. The possibility of using hazel to strengthen the boundary on the FAUNA side was also raised (see item 7).
 - **Cattle movement:** The graziers have sold three adults and two followers, and brought in a new adult. This has reduced the size of the herd to seven adults and four followers.
 - **Paul Mitchell:** Paul was responsible for planting the majority of the trees and bushes in the Orchard in 1999/2000. The meeting was saddened to hear the news of his death. Mick and Hilary will attend his funeral.
5. **FLORA:** No progress.
6. **FAUNA:**
 - **Monthly maintenance inspection:** Graham's regular inspection was welcomed as a valuable addition to the agenda. This month's report notes that water levels in both Lucy's and Anna's pools are still well below the pipe. Oliver commented that the level in Lucy's is designed to overflow only in exceptional circumstances. Anna's pool, on the other hand, should overflow all the time. So it appears it is still leaking, probably through both the pipe elbow and the dam itself. Richard Storton is aware of the

situation and expected to take some action. **Oliver** will remind him. He will also ask whether the overgrown ponds are a problem and, if so, whether any action can be taken.

- **Fencing of bunds:** Oliver has met with Richard Storton. They agreed that it would be a good idea to protect the bunds around Lucy's and Anna's pools from excessive trampling by the White Park cattle by installing some discouraging fencing across the ends. It was suggested that coppiced hazel could be used for this (see item 7). This task will be added to the December volunteer session (**Ian**).
- **Leaflet:** Helen has obtained three quotes for printing, and has accepted the cheapest. Photographs and logos still need to be added, and the placing/orientation of the map finalised (**Helen**).
- **Website updating:** Oliver has sent the updated text on FAUNA to the webmasters, and a meeting has been arranged with them to discuss formatting and design. **Mick** is aware that other parts of the website are inconsistent and/or out of date in their references to FAUNA and has offered to address this. It was noted that the whole FA website is to be overhauled, and that the FAUNA changes need to be compatible and integrated with this revision.

7. **Volunteer activities:** Ian's full reports are attached at the end. Ian is anticipating a high turnout of students on November 10th. Dave queried the height to which the Grammar School hedge should be trimmed (task 5). It was agreed to raise the trim point to about a foot above the wire. The aim (see also item 8) is to produce a hedge that offers privacy to the wildlife: viewing along the whole length is not required. This means aiming for a hedge that is eventually about 6 foot tall. However, relatively hard pruning (particularly of the rowans) is needed in the early stages to ensure that it bushes out first.

There was also discussion about tasks 7c and d. Simon Gershon is unable to attend the volunteer session, but has had a site meeting with Ian. Simon recommends coppicing the hazel down to ground level. This suggestion was agreed. (The cut hazel will be put to several uses – see items 4, 6 and 8.) It was also agreed that the willows are becoming too large, and that Simon is asked to reduce the one by Towneley Close with his chainsaw. Simon also queried whether the oak by the holly at the edge of the circle in the Orchard should be removed. It is not growing straight and is taking light from other trees and people's gardens. **Ian** and **Mick** will look at this more closely on Saturday. Whether the tree was a donation should also be investigated before any decision to cut it down is made. (**Ian** to liaise with Simon about these tasks.)

Ian suggested that the Martins' hedge bordering the Orchard requires attention. **Mick** will consult with the Martins on desired height and size.

8. **Breeding birds survey:** Dan Haywood has provided highly detailed maps and a verbal report to Oliver – well worth waiting for. Dan intends to supplement this with a written report and a spreadsheet that can be used for comparisons in future years (**Oliver** will follow this up with Dan when he returns the maps after taking copies.)

Dan surveyed FAUNA and the Orchard on three occasions: in late April, late May and June. Some 40 species were spotted, including shelduck, tree pipits and wheatear. Two species on the red list were nesting (song thrush and house sparrow). Three amber list species were

recorded: swallow, house martin and swift. An isolated lapwing was spotted - Dan considers this promising for the future. However, he also noted that it was either a bad year for reed bunting or that they had been deterred by the rush cutting. Whilst the focus of the survey was on breeding birds, Dan emphasised that the area was an invaluable resource for birds on passage.

Dan also gave the following advice:

- winter flush counts should be made (**Oliver** to arrange this with Dan, Richard Storton and/or Graham – as part of his maintenance inspection, after training in bird identification!)
- a nest box for stock doves should be put up, sited as high as possible in the Ash tree which they frequent (see item 13)
- birds are being deterred from using School Pond because of the visibility of people on the FAUNA path (notably, purple sandpipers were absent). This should be addressed by raising the height of the hedge (see item 7) and introducing some screening. (This is another potential use for the coppiced hazel, which has the added advantage of being less flammable than some other materials. **Ian** and **Tony** will investigate the design and construction of the screening, taking advice from Richard Storton and exploring the involvement of the Ripley School sustainability group. A possible task for the December volunteer session?)
- if FLORA is acquired, avoid a thick understory in the copse which would deter birds such as owls.

9. **Tool shed:** Official notification has yet to be received, but Hilary is optimistic that the FA will be awarded a substantial “Take Pride” grant by the City Council. But even supplementing this with money from the Rotary’s Racing night and a number of other pots, the total sum available is still likely to fall short of the current estimated build cost of the tool shed. **Oliver** and **Hilary** will explore whether VAT has to be paid, and also consult with Fraser Granell-Watson and Sam Edge about installing an electricity supply (to give option of installing lighting, burglar alarm etc.). **Hilary** will apply for a HEFCE grant, as suggested by Ian.

The “Take Pride” grant has a tight deadline imposed on its spending of March 2013. So, once a favourable decision is received, a prompt start on the build is imperative, even if not all the funding is in place. **Mick** will ask the next FA meeting for approval to go ahead as soon as this grant is awarded and about arrangements for overseeing the build. Tidying of the pigsty area and other preparations for the build are to be added to the tasks for the December volunteer session (**Ian**).

10. **Educational activities:** Tony noted that there was a lot of interest in the FA’s activities from parents at the open afternoon at Dallas Road School (see October minutes).
11. **Volunteering with North Lancashire Wildlife Trust:** **Oliver** will explore the various options further with Reuben Neville. **Chris** will circulate a copy of LWT’s winter programme, which lists volunteering sessions that individuals can attend. Ian was in favour of organising a group of FA volunteers to carry out a specific task for LWT (like the leaf clearing session for the Storey Gardens last year).
12. **First Aid group:** Has yet to meet.

13. **Bird and bat boxes:** Richard Storton's recommended supplier appears good value. The Natural England HLS grant would stretch to buying nesting boxes for a tawny owl, a kestrel, eight small birds and ten bats. **Tony** questioned whether bat boxes were the best option, noting that those in the Orchard appear unused. He will contact Steve Bradley for advice. Based on Dan Haywood's report (item 8) **Oliver** suggested a box suitable for stock doves should be added. He will contact Richard Storton for further advice on what to buy and how to install.
14. **Health and Safety Policy:** Progress on contributions to the appendices to be submitted to the FA:
 - a) Policy for FAUNA fields. **Oliver** is reviewing the format for consistency, and in the light of the discussion on item 15.
 - b) Volunteer working parties. **Ian** has converted his existing documentation into an appropriate format. A little more work is needed to cover informal volunteering (item 15).
 - c) Guidance for external contractors. **Dave** has revamped the section drafted for the original H&S policy document. He has included an example drawn from the implementation of the FAUNA contract. There are a few final adjustments to be made before this appendix is forwarded to the FA.
 - d) School visits. Documentation forwarded to the FA. Approved at October FA meeting.
 - e) Information for external volunteering groups, including agreement form. **Ian** has prepared this based on the sponsored event form (f), and shown it to Green Lancaster.
 - f) Sponsored event form. This has been written by Andrew.
15. **Health and Safety Policy: Informal volunteering:** **Ian** reported that valuable work is undertaken by volunteers as individuals and small groups outside the formal volunteer sessions. This may be done without the prompting and sometimes knowledge of FOG or the Volunteer Organiser, and typically involves tasks such as ragworting and hedge trimming. **Ian** was unsure how such informal volunteering should be integrated into the health and safety policy (item 14b). On first attending a formal session, all volunteers have their details recorded and are issued with a leaflet covering health and safety matters. After discussion, it was agreed anyone on this list of volunteers (held by the Volunteer Organiser) should be permitted to undertake informal volunteer work under the auspices of the FA provided the tasks they undertake are agreed by FOG. Permission will only be given to undertake work that is **not** rated medium or high in terms of severity of risk **and** medium or high in likelihood of risk (any tasks so rated must be part of a formal volunteer session). **Oliver** will incorporate this limitation on activities into the FAUNA fields policy too (item 14a).
16. **Fundraising: MA Language teaching session:** Scheduled for Saturday 1st December for a group of MA students from the University who are teachers of English as a second or other language. A powerpoint presentation and guided walk through FAUNA and the Orchard will provide a context for their language learning. **Mick** (and **Ruth Haigh**) have identified enough tutors to lead the walks and enough people to bake cakes for the refreshments at the Friends Meeting House (although extra offers of help are still welcome). If successful, this activity could be repeated on an annual basis.
17. **AOB:** **Mick** requested that a Chair's Report from the FA Meeting be added as a standing item on future agendas (**Glenys**). From the October FA meeting, he drew attention to: 1) FA website updating (see item 6); 2) the approval of the schools' visits documentation (item 14); 3) the setting of the date for Wassailing as Saturday 19th January.

18. **Date / place of next meeting:** 7.30pm Thursday 6th December upstairs at The Robert Gillow, 64 Market Street; Wednesday 9th January (venue to be decided).

Ian Procter's Volunteer Items:

Report on volunteer session 13th October 2012

32 volunteers reported for duty including 12 from Green Lancaster, 5 new people, plus 2 relapsed volunteers who had been prompted to resume. This suggests our advertising 'campaign' may be deemed a success.

Most people were deployed trimming back grass at the edges of the Fauna path. About three quarters of the path was cleared.

The hedge around the Fairfield Green substation was cut and the cuttings carted away.

The hedge along the path to Sunnyside Lane was cut, particularly the protruding holly bush and the cuttings carted away.

This path was also cleared of fallen leaves.

Excess vegetation was cleared from a further stretch of the Fauna path hedge to give the new saplings their best chance

Wildflower seeds collected locally by volunteers and supplied by Lancashire Wildlife Trust were sown in the Hay and Carr House meadows after cutting back the grass and scarifying the soil.

'Don't pick' and other signs were removed from the apple trees and the tree 'dressed' on Apple day was undressed.

The notices advertising today's session were removed.

Proposed tasks for volunteer session on 10th November 2012

NOTE: The meeting of FOG corresponding to this volunteer session that normally approves this list of tasks is but two days before the session. The tasks will thus have to be circulated to relevant parties (the regular volunteers by the database list and Green Lancaster) before the meeting. The usual backup procedure is for the Chair of FOG to give his provisional approval but on this occasion the Chair is away until November 5th and will no doubt have many pressing commitments on his return. It may be that late changes will have to be made.

A group of students from Green Lancaster will be assisting at this session, for the second time this term for which we are grateful. They will be mainly deployed on the first three tasks below but may provide supervised assistance on remaining tasks.

- 1) Trimming back the overlapping grass on the FAUNA path. (N.B. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of the path was completed last time and this should finish the job).
- 2) Digging out self seeded saplings in the Orchard.

- 3) Slashing back and clearing vegetation, especially at the south end of the Orchard
- 4) Completing the clearing of excess vegetation around the FAUNA hedge saplings.
- 5) Cutting the FAUNA hedge from the ash tree onwards to a height parallel to the fence wire.
(N.B. remember the two commemorative oaks and the ash tree, all marked by stakes)
- 6) Strimming around the fruit trees.
- 7) Start work on the copse between the Oak Circle and Towneley Close
 - a) Severely prune the buddleia
 - b) Cut down the sicklier of the silver birches
 - c) Coppice the hazel
 - d) Coppice, or at least reduce in size, the willows

N.B. It will be helpful to have the assistance of Simon and his chainsaw

- 8) Clear small amount of fly tipping behind the stump circle
- 9) Remove one or two 'Ouch' signs previously hidden by leaves

NOTE for future: the hedge adjacent to the west Orchard edge (is it the Martin's house?) needs attention but we should discuss with the householders what they would like. I think Mick knows them.

Two additional items for report:

- a) Three volunteers (myself, Graham Brandwood and Keith Taylor are booked in for a hedge laying course with Lancashire CC in mid –November
- b) 13 volunteers and some partners are having a meal at the Robert Gillow, 7.30 on 20th November. Others are welcome.