

Fairfield Association
Fauna and Orchard sub-Group [FOG]
Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 4th April 2013, 7.30 pm
at Whitegates, Sunnyside Lane

Present: Graham Brandwood, Dave Brookes, Ken Capewell, Glenys Ferguson (mins), Tony Finn, Helen Hicks, Ian Procter, Rebecca Procter, Mick Short (chair), Chris Workman.

1. **Apologies:** Andrew Brennand, Oliver Fulton, Hilary Short, Sue Nieduszynska,
2. **Minutes of last meeting:** Accepted.
3. **Current/recent developments: Oak saplings offer:** Five English oak saplings aged about 6 years have been offered for planting in Flora. It was considered highly likely that they would be suitable, but that it would be best to wait for expert guidance on tree-planting in Flora before accepting. **Andrew** will be asked to reply.
4. **Matters arising from Minutes:**
 - **Campers in the Orchard:** Have left.
 - **Wildflower sowing around the Fauna stones:** It was agreed to reconsider this in the autumn. **Oliver** was asked to clarify his written comment about the need to do some form of maintenance on the area around the stones.
 - **Dog Fouling:** Philip's new notices are in place and the Dog Warden was contacted. It was pleasing that there was relatively little mess to clear in preparation for the Easter Egg Hunt.
 - **Orchard noticeboard repairs:** **Helen** has still to arrange.
5. **Report from the FA meeting:** Little of direct relevance to FOG. Attended by representatives of the Friends of Storey Gardens, a group which involves several FA volunteers.
6. **Fauna:**
 - **Monthly maintenance and monitoring inspection:** Full reports available. The continuing and growing leak from Anna's Pool is disappointing. Graham has informed Richard Storton. Dave suggested welding a puddle flange to the pipe. **Dave** was asked to instruct Hanafins to store any usable clay excavated when working on the Paddock gate area. **Graham** and **Ian** to initiate a further repair.

Chris recommended clearing the algal growth from Upper Sowerholme (**Graham**). He also advised that the salt lick would not damage the meadows and does not constitute 'supplementary feeding'.
 - **Cattle access timetable:** Still awaiting final clarifications with Natural England (**Oliver**). Meanwhile, poaching and sward height remain the main basis for monitoring. The cattle have been in the Hay Meadow for longer than Natural England would prefer in this exceptional year, but this has had a good effect on the rushes and Graham's report (above) notes that the grass there is still in fairly good condition. From 1 April the cattle have been excluded from the Hay Meadow.

- **Final snagging, water trough and other works:** Snagging work on the boardwalk has been completed. The contractors will not return until the extra works have been priced and agreed. The graziers have agreed in principle to the installation of a water trough, but need to arrange a water source (**Oliver**).
 - **Breeding birds and hare survey arrangements:** Dan Haywood has now produced an excellent spreadsheet and accompanying commentary covering last year's breeding birds results. This will be posted on the FA website (**Oliver**). Dan would be happy to repeat the survey this year, but still does not know whether he will be in position to do so. Philip Turner is continuing to report hare sightings to Clare Brown, who is recording them on the Hare Project website. As hares are a key indicator for Natural England, **Andrew** will be asked to encourage Clare to post highlights on the FA blog.
 - **Paddock hedging:** Permission to proceed as requested has been received from Lancaster City Council for the eastern (allotments) boundary. It is too late for this season so it – and the allotment holders' fencing – will be scheduled for this autumn (possibly later in the season when the leaves have fallen?). John Lambert for the Allotments Association has said that the work will disrupt nearby plot holders and has asked for 6-8 weeks warning of it starting. The work is being jointly commissioned from Hanafins, and a decision will be needed as to which party does the liaison with the contractors.
 - **Rural payments agency remapping:** On the 'to do' list (**Oliver**).
7. **Volunteer activities:** Ian's full reports of March's work and the tasks for April are attached at the end. With the grass not yet starting to grow, spraying of the edges of the Fauna footpath is on hold. Watering of the saplings planted in March seems unlikely to be necessary as they appear to be establishing well despite the lack of rain. How to treat the stumps of sycamore, elder etc. in the Orchard is to be discussed at the next meeting (**Ian**). Poison cannot be used in the Orchard unless the long-standing policy is overturned. Continuous cutting is not likely to work. Another suggestion is to drill the stumps and cover with plastic.
- **Unauthorised individual volunteering:** It appears that some people have been undertaking maintenance work (trimming hedges in Fauna, pruning pear trees in the Orchard) without the knowledge or permission of FOG. **FOG members** were asked to report any such instances to Ian.
 - **Substitute Organiser for 24 April and 11 May:** **Ken** has offered to deputise for Ian during these sessions. **Ian** will prepare the tasks, and brief Ken. **Graham** will act as first aider.
 - **Duke of Edinburgh volunteer:** From the next session, the regular volunteers will be supplemented by a young person working towards a DofE award. Ian feels uncomfortable that he is not able to confirm that he has been DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service, formerly CRB) checked. It was agreed that Ian should be DBS-checked on behalf of the FA. **Ian** will contact Michael Sheppard and request that he initiate the DBS processing.
8. **Tree survey:** Report still awaited.

9. **Monitoring of Natural England Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Success Indicators:**

- **Reedbed and wetland indicators:** A form covering the indicators relating to the reedbed and wet areas of Fauna has been drafted and sent to Richard Storton (RSPB) for comment. **Glenys** will continue to liaise with Richard.
- **Orchard:** Keith Taylor, who does much of the pruning work in the Orchard, has agreed to be involved in monitoring the health of the trees. Each fruit tree is to be identified by number: on a list, a sketch plan and on the tree itself. Once a year (Keith suggests at blossom time) each tree will be assessed for its health. **Glenys** was given permission to spend around £30 on numbered tree tags. Keith is also happy to keep a watching brief as he tends the fruit trees, and report anything of concern.

10. **Local Nature Reserve designation & Fauna Management Plan:** LNR designation is now progressing steadily. Ann Wood (Lancaster City Council) has received the application document from Richard Storton. **Oliver** is investigating with Natural England the situation as regards Flora, which may not qualify for designation as an LNR as there is no local council 'interest' in the land. He has put work on the full management plan on hold until this is clarified.

11. **Educational activities:** A local Beaver Cubs leader has made a site visit, and was impressed by the opportunities offered. She is planning a weekend session in the Orchard on 8th and 9th June. (The Beavers would sleep overnight in a Scout hut.) To avoid conflict with the Saturday morning Volunteer session, their arrival would be delayed until after 1.30pm or arrangements made for them to eat their lunch in a part of the area away from the volunteer work. (**Tony** to liaise with **Ian**.) Tony would welcome offers of help with this group.

Tony intends to undertake further promotion of the area's potential with such organisations. He will also be sending a newsletter round to local schools at the start of the summer term.

Following a short-notice request from a teacher to hold a session using a fire pit, Tony asked for clarification as to how to treat such a request as the FA has a no-fire policy in the Orchard (apart from the annual Wassailing event). School visits should go through the formal process of first contacting Tony by phone or email after which a booking form and risk assessment would be completed. This will allow the FA Facilitator to appraise the suitability of the request. **Andrew** (FA chairperson) is to be asked to clarify this procedure to members at the next FA meeting.

The Learning Zone on the website (funded by the Community Spaces Sustainability Grant) continues to develop.

12. **Edenbreck boundary and garden, Concessionary Path Agreement:** These are being dealt with by Ann Wood alongside the LNR designation. No further progress to report.

13. **Health and Safety Policy:** Progress on contributions to the appendices to be submitted to the FA:

- a) Policy for Fauna fields. Still not finished, to be deferred until the annual review in June (**Oliver**).
- b) Guidance for external contractors. Still not finished (**Dave**).

14. **Canal & Rivers Trust Walk:** Item to re-added to the Agenda if and when there is any progress to report (**Sue**).
15. **Tool shed: progress and green roof grant:** Building work is progressing well, although extending into April. Enough of the work has been completed for Hilary to submit claims for the full Take Pride grant. Sam Edge is taking over the task of liaising with the Builder from Hilary. Hilary has secured a grant of £500 from Lancaster Green Spaces for the green roof. It comes with several conditions:
 - a) *Local volunteers are involved in the plant selection:* It was felt that FOG was the appropriate forum to make this decision as FOG members are also regular active volunteers. After discussion of various options, it was decided that sedum was the best – attractive, practical, hardy, rainfall tolerant and cost-effective. (**Ian** to inform Sam and the Builder.)
 - b) *Local volunteers are involved in planting the green roof.* **Ian** to remind the Builder. He already has a list of volunteers ready and eager to contribute to the building work. Dave noted that protection around the edge of the roof would be needed for safety.
 - c) *Photos and a short report of activities must be submitted within two months of the final claim:* **Ian** to arrange photos, press releases etc., all with appropriate logos and acknowledgements.

It was suggested that the substantial number of surplus bricks from the former pigsty could be used to create a hardstanding area around the entrance, where the existing concrete is too low. This was ruled out as it could be slippery, weeds would grow in the spaces and the bricks deteriorate quickly. It was decided to revisit this issue when the toolshed is complete.

16. **Flora update including HLF conditions & Jacob's Join celebration:** Pledges are being banked and it is hoped that the purchase will be completed in a few weeks. A Steering Group has been set up which will report principally to the FA meeting, with FOG becoming involved as necessary. The grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) imposes several conditions (circulated prior to the meeting). **Anyone** involved in anything Flora-related needs to be aware of these. There was support for the idea of a Jacob's Join picnic to celebrate the acquisition of Flora, date to be set once the purchase of the 26 acres so far contracted for has been completed. **Tony** and **Graham** offered to arrange some games and activities, Ruth Haigh will undertake publicity. Following Graham's advice, it was agreed to commission a tree survey before any activities are allowed in the wooded areas (**Oliver**). Litter picking will be another priority task (for May volunteer session? **Ian**).
17. **Go Wild arrangements:** In compliance with the HLF grant, the Steering Group has identified three potential Flora-related sessions to contribute to a programme of events over the May-June period. **Graham** offered to add a campfire experience in Pony Wood in Flora (possible because the undergrowth has been grazed out). In addition, there is also Chris's North Lancs Naturalist Group workshop already agreed for the Orchard/Fauna on 7th June (March Mins item 13). However, these events are dependent on finding someone to take the burden of the organisation from Oliver (posters, practical arrangements). In the absence of any volunteers from the FOG meeting, **Andrew** will be asked to raise this at the FA.

18. **Woodland Trust tree pack:** This offer of saplings for autumn delivery might be appropriate for extending Pony Wood, but advice will be needed. Flora will also need extra hedges and some interplanting of existing hedges. It was decided to apply for a pack that comprises hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, silver birch, rowan and common oak (**Ian**)
19. **AOB: Dumping at northern end of Orchard:** Logs and garden waste, and other more general waste has been dumped in the Orchard at the bottom of people's gardens. The logs will be moved to a more suitable location and the general rubbish (possibly left by the campers?) will also be removed. **Ian** will investigate further and arrange for someone (PCSO?) to speak with the neighbours.
20. **Date / place of next meeting:** The Robert Gillow has accepted a long-term booking from another group for the first Thursday of the month. (Thanks to Mick for offering to host tonight's meeting at the last minute.) **Graham** and **Glenys** will investigate commercial alternatives, but it is possible that the meetings will have to revert to being held in members' homes. 7.30pm Thursday 2nd May (venue to be advised, to be chaired by Oliver), Thursday 6th June (venue to be advised,, to be chaired by Dave)

Ian Procter's Volunteer Items:

Report on volunteer morning 9th March 2013

11 local volunteers were joined by 11 students from Green Lancaster on a cold and damp morning.

1. We had received a consignment of hedgerow sapling from The Woodland Trust and around 200 of these were planted:
 - a. Filling gaps in the Pads / Fauna hedge where attempts to lay very old wood had failed
 - b. Thickening up some of the planting in the Fauna / Grammar School Pond hedge.
 - c. Replacing the section of rotten hedge at the north end of the Pads / Orchard hedge
 - d. Infilling gaps in the Pads / Orchard hedge especially a gap toward the southern end which had been blocked by dead wood.
2. The latter was carted away to the top end of the Paddock along with the elder cut out of the hedge by the hedge laying working party. This is now ready for burning on Fraser's bonfire.
3. Pruning of the apple trees progressed.
4. The fruit bushes in the fruit hedge were pruned and the remnants carted away to the Paddock.
5. Encroaching grass was cleared from around some of the Orchard benches.
6. Bramble was cut back to the fence along the Fauna footpath. (NB Earlier volunteer work had cleared enveloping bramble from last year's saplings in the Fauna hedge.)
7. Various stakes were gathered up for storage at the Orchard entrance.
8. Graham's stumps were moved from the Paddock / Allotments hedge so they don't get caught up in any future hedge work.
9. Various notices informing the public of our activities were removed as having served their purpose.

NOTE 1: At the FOG meeting on 7th March I was asked to consult with volunteers about the sycamores in the Pads / Orchard hedge (Minutes item 9). This was not done at this volunteer

session as I considered too many people with an interest in the matter were absent. It is noted for the April session and will be so advertised on the Proposals to FOG for that session.

NOTE 2: It was confirmed that the cluster of trees in the copse to the north of the Towneley Close path is alder. I am not sure what this means for any future action, perhaps included in the consultation of NOTE 1.

26th March 2013

Three volunteers checked out water and electricity supplies ready for the Easter Egg Hunt and then two of us did further work on the bird boxes: a) Two more had been 'discovered' since we last did this work in February, one of which had been used for nesting; b) two boxes were repaired; c) the boxes in the Orchard were numbered for children's activities.

Proposed tasks for volunteer morning of April 13th 2013

1. Mow the grass (surely by then it will have started growing!).
2. Strimming / cutting back tufts of grass in the Orchard
3. 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.
4. Clear the large brambles behind the fruit hedge
5. Clear the prunings left over from the fruit hedge
6. Clear the bramble enveloping the laid hedge by the Fauna stones
7. Cut off and clear the broken willow branch adjacent to the Towneley Close path
8. Inspect the small tree alongside the Fauna / School footpath which has blown over. If it is dead, clear, if alive, stake.
9. Consult with interested parties on the future of the sycamores in the Pads hedge and the alder near the Towneley path. (Bear in mind we have agreed to take down the 'crooked oak' nearby at some point).
10. If the shed is finished begin moving equipment to it.

Note added after consultation with Chair: if it does not rain soon I am worried that the saplings we planted in March will dry out – by my recollection it has rained only once since. If the dry weather continues perhaps we can approach the Martins to run a hose pipe to the Orchard and water the new saplings.