

## FFOG Minutes: 11 January 2024

- Location: Friends Meeting House Rm 1
- Date: 11.01.24
- Time: 7.00pm to 9.00pm

### **ATTENDEES**

Sue Nieduszynska (chair), Graham Brandwood, Steve Bullen, David Elliot, Clio Graham, Anne Greenwood, Rebekah Mulligan, Ian Procter, Hilary Short, Mick Short, Chris Workman.

### **APOLOGIES**

David Brookes, David Elliott, Hilary Smith

### **PREVIOUS MINUTES**

Accepted.

### **MATTERS ARISING**

#### Liaison with Myerscough College

HS & SN met with James Willoughby & Andy Lee on 8th Jan to look at the trees on the Reserve. Myerscough have previous experience of helping Wildlife Trusts & are interested in working with us. This will not happen until spring at the earliest and we will receive a month's notice. We would hire the cherry picker and the college would provide the labour. All had agreed that the Ash tree adjacent to the Stump Circle was not climbable.

#### Timing of Woodland Survey

The survey had been done in April & SB had expressed concern about disturbing breeding birds. Hils had sent an email to say that she appreciated the concern but had not been aware of any ground nesting birds in the area at the time of the survey. SB was particularly concerned about stock doves as they do not tolerate any disturbance. SB said they would monitor the stock dove box and if there was any sign of breeding, he will inform Hils.

#### LGGS & planting of tree saplings supplied by The Woodland Trust

After the meeting with Cara from LGGS, SN & IP, there was an email from Cara to cancel the planting event due to illness and lack of maintenance staff able to support the event. However, in future, LGGS are setting up an ecology group and the FA have offered to provide input.

### **AGENDA ITEMS**

#### 5.1. Volunteer Activities for November & December

See report RM.

#### 5.2. Proposed tasks for January & February

##### *5.2.1. RM.*

SN said that 3 of the cattle had escaped from the Hay Meadow into Upper Sowerholme yesterday. She requested that the method of entry into US should be

investigated, and the barrier/border reinstated. GB will investigate the escape route and repair.

#### *5.2.2. Marking out the margins of the Arable Field*

SN requested that this should take place on the Saturday session in March and should involve SN, MS & a couple of volunteers. Include in the tasks for the volunteer session on March 9<sup>th</sup>.

#### *5.2.3. Scrub planting at the back of 120 Aldcliffe Road.*

This had not taken place to avoid disturbing the expanding bramble thicket. SN said the area continues to look bare and suggested that berries such as hawthorn and acorn could be scattered into the brambles. Scattering of berries in the bramble thickets was agreed & would begin next year and could also be done in other areas throughout the Reserve. RM to add this to the volunteer task list for next winter.

#### *5.2.4. Planting of saplings in West Field*

SN asked for clarification as to whether the hedge and the spinneys would give a variation in height. IP replied that 16 different species of shrubs had been planted so there would be some variation in height. It would be a management decision if some were allowed to grow. As the hedge grows there would also be a variation in width.

#### *5.2.5. Coppiced Hazel*

SN had observed coppiced Hazel at the southern end of the Orchard and that this action had not been documented in any plan or in proposed tasks. GB pointed out that the November arrangements include Hazel coppicing. Hazel coppicing to be reviewed annually as per November arrangements.

#### *5.2.6. Purchase of Saplings for planting in 2025 was raised by RM.*

To be discussed at March FFOG meeting. Add sapling planting/purchase to arrangements for March.

#### *5.2.7. Transition of volunteer Lead from Ian to Rebekah has gone smoothly.*

IP leads his final Saturday volunteer session on 13th January when >1000 sapling will be planted in West Field by around 27 volunteers plus some scouts. The trees will be marked with canes and plastic sleeves will not be used. They will be protected by the electric fence.

### 6.1. Monitoring Report:

#### *6.1.1.*

GB queried if the dead wood at the top of the old sycamore in the Orchard had been cut off. IP said that no work had been done on this tree in the past 5 years.

#### *6.1.2. Several of the beehives have fallen over.*

There was uncertainty as to whether Keith was actively involved with them. There was also discussion about discontinuing to hives to prevent competition with wild bees. To contact Keith & ascertain the plans for the hives. SN will inspect the beehives & visit Keith to see how he is.

#### *6.1.3. Cropping of willow screen*

Last year this was done in February and August with some of the willow that had been allowed to thicken up over 2 years being used for hedge stakes. GB & IP agreed this was a good management plan and should continue. SN asked whether this

resulted in willow catkins. Willow cropping should be reviewed annually. To add cropping of the willow screen to the arrangements for February

#### *6.1.4. Notice Boards*

SN requested that GB check the access to the back of notice boards in his inspection. The step at the back of the Cromwell Rd notice board had rotted. As a result, it collapsed when an FA member was standing on it whilst posting material in the notice board.

#### *6.1.5. Rope on Cromwell Road gate needs replacing as it has recently been removed.*

SN suggested this could be done with one similar to that on the Pony Wood gate which is secured with staples and less likely to be stolen. Replacement of rope to be added to volunteer tasks.

#### *6.1.6. Cattle have been moved out of Carr House Meadow, as requested by GB, because in his opinion there was severe poaching.*

SN had inspected the meadow with HS and wanted it recorded that they had not assessed the level of disturbance as severe. In addition, that the level of nutrient is not a deciding factor with the success of the meadow and that cattle perform a useful function by acting as a vector across the reserve for the invertebrates and seeds in their dung. A difference of opinion was recorded.

## 6.2. Surveys

- Meadow & Arable Margin Survey-see report Graeme Skelcher
- Woodland Survey: See report Hils
- Winter & Breeding Birds Survey: Dan Haywood.
  - SN commented that there had been a significant decrease in linnets. SB was unaware of any specific reason.
  - Success of Breeding warblers in the well vegetated wetlands of Upper Sowerholme. DH commented that expansion of these habitats could be a fruitful avenue to explore. Dan will liaise with Callum Booth about this habitat.
- Snipe Flush this week. CG reported that there were 68 in total. 44 in Big Meadow which always has the greatest number and 24 in School Pond, which is more than recent numbers.
- Butterfly survey: -Christine Bennett. The survey is taken from the footpaths. Numbers this past year have been low & this may be due to the poor weather. SN wondered if Christine would be willing to give a talk at The Storey. This could be shared with someone giving a talk on birds in Fairfield. Sue will approach Christine Bennett to see if she is willing to give a talk.

## 7.1. Arrangements - February

- 5. The associate volunteer scheme to be reviewed annually. There is currently no need to advertise for additional AVs.
- 6. SB to contact Will Walton re bat report
- 7. Woodland Management Plan to be reviewed 3 yearly.  
AG to revise the wording of items 5 and 7 in the "Arrangements".

## 7.2. Financial Control:

- McGaffigans for hedge trimmer repair & servicing of Ariens razor mower £150
- Power scythe sold for £175.

## 7.3. Organised Events

Wassailing 13th January

## 7.4. Items to report from FA

Mark Tanner is redesigning the website. It will go out in draft form for comments.

## 7.5. Items to report from trustees

Feedback from the graziers meeting: This took place in June. Ear tags were discussed, and Fraser will put them on the new calves. Robin had stated that ear tags are only a legal requirement when cattle are being moved from one establishment to another. There is no intention to increase the size of the herd which is currently 11. They are aware that there will be a move to a new management plan. They did not see this as an issue and intend to keep the White Park Cattle. GB requested that the annual meeting with the Graziers should go on the June arrangements. Add graziers annual meeting to the June arrangements.

### **AOB**

GB said that wind has rotated the willow with the silver birch growing in it (see item 6.1 in minutes of Nov '23) and that this was a significant feature that could be explored further.

### **NEXT MEETING**

Onsite 14<sup>th</sup> March 2.00pm