

Minutes of the Fairfield Association AGM held on 17 September 2024

The meeting took place at the Storey.

Present

Clare Whittaker, Clare Austin, Clio Graham, David Austin, Dave Brookes, Helen Hicks, Hilary Short (Chair), Ian Procter, Jane Parker, Janet Paske, John Whittaker, Mark Tanner, Michael Sheppard, Mick Short, Rebekah Mulligan, Sam Rushworth, Steve Bullen, Sue Pope (Secretary), Suzanne Procter.

Janet Paske from the Friends Meeting House (FMH) offered sincere apologies for the mix up over the booking for the AGM. The chair graciously accepted the apology on behalf of the Fairfield Association.

1. Apologies

Andrew Brennand, Geoff Oliver, Ian Diffenthal, Mike Stevens, Mollie Foxall, Oliver Fulton, Pamela White, Pavlos Pavli, Penny Summerfield, Sharon Diffenthal, Sue Nieduszynska, Tony Finn.

2. Minutes from the last meeting

Accepted

3. Matters Arising

Changing the objects of the Fairfield Association – having agreed these at the AGM in 2023, the charity commission did not accept the proposal because ‘the proposed change of the objects is fundamentally unnecessary as the current objects allow the trustees to undertake all the proposed activity’.

Making a summary of accounts available with the AGM papers – apologies, this was not done – an oversight from the secretary.

4. Chair’s report (Hilary)

Thanks to everybody for coming and to all those who have supported the FA, in whatever way, throughout the year.

The completion and opening of the revamped play area is the major achievement of the year. It has been a massive endeavour led by Andrew Brennand and Mike Stevens and supported by parents of young children. The FA has now been going for almost 30 years and some of the children who formerly played in the play area are now supporters and volunteers. Next year, we intend to repeat the very popular Fairfield Festival that celebrated the opening of the new play area.

Our regular calendar of events: Wassailing, the Easter Egg Hunt, Apple Day, the calendar (which goes on sale at the Green Fair on 23 November) and Carol Singing was completed,

thanks to everyone who contributed to these events. If the play area is where it starts, the regular activities that mark the passage of the year, are what keeps us together as a community.

In addition to our own events, we also cooperated with the North Lancashire Wildlife Group (NLWG) to host an event that was more focussed on the wildlife to be found in the local area. It was extremely popular, and we are hoping that the NLWG will return next year.

We also have a regular outreach programme into local schools, organised by Tony Finn. He reports:

I am sorry to report that it has not been a good year. We have had only two visits this summer. The atrocious weather has in part been largely responsible for this drop in visit numbers. We had to postpone two visits because of wet weather. Unfortunately, after several attempts by the school and ourselves to rearrange dates, the visits had to be cancelled completely. Apart from the problems with the weather, Dallas Road School in particular has had difficulty in recruiting sufficient adults to accompany the children to the Orchard. This has not been the case in previous years. They may now be applying the guidelines for the ratio of children to adults on their outdoor visits in a much more prescriptive way.

Communications are significant for any organisation, and these have greatly improved.

We have seen the return of the newsletter, which keep us in touch with a much wider audience. In addition, we now have a website that is visually much more attractive and much more fit for purpose for an organisation like ours which currently has over 400 members, thanks to the work of Andrew Brennand and Geoff Oliver.

You may remember from last year that some of you were unclear whether or not you were members – this year you can easily check.

You have probably also noticed that we are a much wealthier organisation than we were last year. This is thanks to a very generous bequest from Margaret Burtonwood. We are currently in the process of trying to buy the field on the corner of Aldcliffe Road and the long pads footpath (opposite the Lodge).

On the whole it has been a very successful year for the Fairfield Association and I would like to thank all those people who have made it a success.

5. Treasurer's Report (Jane)

Jane presented the accounts up to 30 April 2024. There was a substantial legacy of £54 760. We opened a new account with the Skipton Building Society and transferred £85 000 so that all funds are protected.

A question was asked about the total costs of the playground renewal. The total cost was £77 751 (see p.2 of the accounts), the Fairfield Association only paid £15 110 of this sum, as we

raised £62 641 in grants and donations. The City Council helped by buying a lot of the equipment on our behalf, this saved us paying VAT. Jane will write an article for the newsletter/website.

Cards and calendars raised £1639 during the year.

Huge thanks to Jane for taking care with the accounts and her clear explanations.

6. The Playground update

Covered in the Chair's and Treasurer's report.

7. Fairfield Association Flora and Fauna Nature Reserve update

Nature Reserve Funding: The renewal of our stewardship agreement with Natural England has suffered further delays in that details of the replacement scheme have still not been fully released. We are now told that they will be available this October. Fortunately, we still have the support of the RSPB and our current income from the Rural Payments Agency is not affected.

New Initiatives: The saplings planted in West Field last January have taken well and will in time provide a thick and diverse hedgerow, an ideal habitat for wildlife. Thanks to the organisation by Ian Proctor and the 36 volunteers who took part.

In April, 15 volunteers stripped off the turf adjacent to the Pony Wood Path and scattered wildflower seeds. The colourful display has been very popular. Those cornfield annuals will not be present next year as they need bare earth to self-seed but will be replaced by perennials such as ox-eye daisy. We have identified other small areas to repeat this in subsequent years. Particular thanks to Clio and Steve.

Wildlife: This summer for the first time for many years, lapwing nested in Flora Field. We spotted three chicks by the double gates at the end of the Pony Wood Path, and Dan Heywood our bird surveyor later saw a juvenile, so we know that at least one of the young had a good chance of surviving to adulthood. This is very good news as lapwing are on decline and the Aldcliffe population has collapsed due to the unsympathetic farming in the fields by the river. We have seen three brown hares in the same field so it looks as though a leveret was born. Many of us were delighted by the young roe deer family, but sadly the fawn sustained an injury when trying to jump the fence out of Pony Wood and was humanely put down by a vet. We are reviewing our fences to ensure that they are less hazardous to deer.

Safety: We closely monitor the trees on the reserve for safety and fell trees or remove branches that could be dangerous. We also close the Pony Wood path if there is an amber weather warning. However, as the climate warms the weather is becoming less predictable and urge caution in stormy conditions.

Volunteers; As usual, many thanks to the volunteers who turn out in all weathers to maintain and continually improve the reserve, now ably coordinated by Rebekah.

8. Aldcliffe Road Triangle update

Ten years ago, the work was done on the Triangle. Now, the principal focus is maintenance. The Friends of the Triangle has been stood down as a formal subgroup, the accounts and website have been incorporated into the Fairfield Association. There is a small group of volunteers who maintain the Triangle. During the year, there were two attempted break-ins and the workshop doors were damaged but are still functional.

During the year, there were a couple of homeless campers but the Lancaster homeless team has relocated them.

9. Election of trustees and officers

Trustees have a three-year term of office, after which they need to be re-elected.

The following were duly elected

office	trustee	proposer	seconded
Renew trustee	Sue Nieduszynska	David	Jane
Chair	Andrew Brennand	Hilary	Sue P
Secretary	Sue Pope	Hilary	Rebekah
Treasurer	Jane Parker*	Hilary	Ian Proctor

* not a trustee

Hilary Short has completed eight years of service as chair, she hands over to Andrew Brennand. Michael Sheppard expressed the gratitude of all involved with the Fairfield Association for Hilary's unstinting commitment and resilience, and presented Hilary with a small gift. Hilary reassured everyone that she is continuing to serve as a trustee.

10. Standing item for notification of third parties of change to trustees

None required.

11. AOB

Query about the cycle pod that will provide cycle parking for Fairfield residents. Planning permission has been granted and users will need to be suitably insured and make a modest payment, once it is installed.

12. Date of next AGM

16 September 2025.