

FFOG Minutes: 5 September 2024

- Location: On-site meeting.
- Date: 05.09.24
- Time: 6.00pm to 8.00pm

ATTENDEES

Sue Nieduszynska (chair), Steve Bullen, Clio Graham, Anne Greenwood, Rebekah Mulligan, Ian Procter, Chris Workman.

APOLOGIES

Graham Brandwood, David Brookes. David Elliot, Hilary Short, Mick Short.

PREVIOUS MINUTES

Accepted.

MATTERS ARISING

Countryside Stewardship agreement.

SN- Nicola Evans has informed us that the new Countryside Stewardship agreement will be available from October.

Rod Everett had come to look at the possibility of re-wetting the Lucy Brook corridor, however this work will not go ahead as he does not have the time

Cromwell Road Gate.

AG- A silent locking mechanism for the Cromwell Rd gate is an ongoing issue. Fraser has mentioned the hard plastic one used at the abattoir. AG will make enquiries at Wynnstay agricultural shop.

AGENDA ITEMS

2.1.2. Tools Budget.

Many tools in the shed need replacement. This includes shears & waders. An increase in the budget was requested. RM said it had been £500 for many years and this would not cover the costs of items to be purchased. An uplift to £750 was asked for. SN thought it had already been increased from £500 to £600 but this was not the case. Consideration to be given to raising the tools & materials budget. IP said we could apply for grants for large items e.g. from a charity shop based in Carnforth 3R (3rc.org.uk). SN also said that Mike Stevens who attends FA meetings had knowledge of funding sources. In the interim IP suggested sharpening the existing shears but that a grindstone should not be used. Also, when cutting grass, a scythe with a short blade could be used.

2.1.3. Neet Volunteers.

We have been contacted by Evi Oliver of L&M college about volunteering opportunities for young people not in employment, education or training (NEET). Evi will be in touch when there is more information. The DBS renewal will be dealt with by Michael Sheppard.

2.1.4 Repairs to the Footpaths including slope to Towneley Close.

IP said a temporary repair had been done. Other areas in the Reserve that would benefit from modification to improve wheelchair accessibility had been identified, however IP felt that this should be led by wheelchair users rather than volunteers. AG queried whether it would be appropriate to informally ask wheelchair users using the Reserve to ascertain where repairs/modifications are needed. Asking informally for input is acceptable. To continue to do temporary repairs until Huddleston carry out a permanent repair. To reinforce the repair by adding cement to the mix.

2.1.5. Feedback on the tree council application.

IP said this had been submitted. There is a 5–6-week turnaround period, possibly longer because > £500.

2.1.6. Andy Lee's Tree survey

RM said the survey was very extensive & although some tasks such as cutting ivy were obvious there were other tasks where it was difficult to ascertain if there could be volunteer involvement. RM suggested a subgroup to walk round to identify where work is needed, the urgency, and whether it can be done by volunteers. See also item 2.4.1 Tree Safety, as the ash trees are the ones most likely needing attention. A subgroup of RM, IP & CW to look at the trees mentioned in the report. IP said the 2016 map of trees was a partial map that needed extending (doesn't include Pony Wood, the Triangle or the Playground) & updating. To update the map in conjunction with Andy.

Management of ivy to be done on a 3-year cycle as previously agreed.

2.2.1. Orchard. Refer to Annual Orchard Report (AG)

Protection of Young Trees: There has been recent damage to an apple tree (M) planted in 2022. It has lost its central leader & 3 main branches. It may recover. A few days ago, the bark of an adjacent damson tree (L), also planted in 2022, had been stripped, most likely by deer. It is unlikely to survive and will be replaced with another damson. AG proposed to use tree guards & stakes to protect the young trees. This was agreed.

Widening the path at the NW border of the Orchard- The 4 trees adjacent to the narrow path have significant damage to the base of the trunks from mowing equipment. The path had virtually disappeared in summer & it is difficult to mow the path without inflicting further damage. It was proposed to push back the path by approx. 1m.

2.2.2 Oak Circle.

There is lots of rooting black thorn underneath the oak. A circle of vegetation around the tree is currently never mowed. CW suggested a once a year cut back would be beneficial. It was agreed to cut the circle of vegetation around the oak tree every autumn down to 10cm in height leaving 0.5m uncut around the trunk using strimmers & loppers

2.3.2 Bird Food Margins and reinstatement of tables.

Arrangements for bird feeding: Wednesday volunteers will fill up the bucket with bird feed stored in the shed. Ian N. & SN will also be on the feeding rota and top-up with supplies kept at their home. The feed will be stored in a metal dustbin-like container with a lid that is supposed to be rat proof. Dan Haywood is currently very busy so Jen Woodward will take on

responsibility for the rota. Another table is required. Mark Reynolds who is involved with the men's hub may be able to assist, also the man who supplied the stock dove boxes. One table to have a mesh cover to deter pigeons & squirrels. SN To contact mark Reynolds & Jen Woodward to get the name of the maker of stock dove boxes. SN to contact Robin Horner at RSPB re bird feed supplies. SN reported that the bird food margins are better this year.

The field is going to be topped again. Aubrey will be asked to do the flower margins & cut one beetle bank at the same time. SN to find out when Aubrey topped last year and to request it to be done at a similar time this year Gorse will not be planted in the beetle bank as the aim is to reduce woody plants in this area.

2.4.1. Tree Safety

Refer to Andy Lee's report for trees by the feeding station and in Little Wood and Pony Wood.

The issue of ash dieback and trees becoming unsafe was raised by CW and discussed throughout the on-site meeting, in particular:

- Path between Alder Pond & Lucy Brook (by the culvert).
- Approaching the double gates on Long Pads near bird feeding station
- Little Wood
- Pony Wood.

IP & RM will include these trees in their survey indicating which trees need to be dealt with urgently. IP pointed out that if too many trees in Pony Wood are taken out at one time, this could make the wood unstable, (the fallen sycamore was vulnerable because of the wind tunnel which can be clearly seen from the path going up from the gates). Much of this work needs to be done at height, and it is not clear whether this would involve the group from Myerscough or some-one recommended by Andy Lee. SN said that the sycamore that came down recently was a "snap fall" and this indicates fungal damage in the trunk. The questions were: is the fungus visible externally and if so, should it have been noticed? Is it a fungus that could spread? IP suggested that Duncan Slater at Myerscough could be asked for an opinion. (He is though, an arboriculturist and not a mycologist.)

2.4.1 cont. Deer Safety

A young deer had recently been put down following a broken leg. The vet had informed SN that the double wire at the top of the wire fence was an issue. The deer's foot can get caught in-between the two wire strands causing it to tip over & get a ligature around its leg. A single top wire, which provides tension, could be attached to the top of the fence with clips. Alternatively remove the lower of the two wires. This needs to be done in places where the deer has a run through. SN had sent a link round to show the type of fencing the vet had recommended and volunteers will be tasked to adapt the fences.

2.4.2 Fauna ponds

The water was lower than expected in last week's pond dipping despite sufficient rain. It might be related to a change in the drainage or less likely to more plant growth. SN asked if we should consult the Wildlife Trust. It was agreed that no action was required at present.

2.4.3 View from Aldcliffe Rd onto Flora Field.

IP said a large sycamore has been cut down & asked if the bramble should be cut down to wall level in winter. It was agreed that the bramble could be left uncut.

2.5.1 Hay Meadow.

Graeme Skelcher's survey-see report SN. The meadow hadn't developed further since we started "grazing off" rather than cutting the hay.

2.5.2 Fencing off a cattle exclusion zone in Hay Meadow.

No further action

2.5.3. Double Gate Repair.

The post of the double gate leading into Hay Meadow needs replacing by contractors. Also, the gate between lower Sowerholme & Flora field. When the contractor comes in to repair the paths, to ask them to repair the gates also

2.6. Fauna Path.

The wildflower patch has been a great success. It was agreed that we would aim to find a new site for the next few years. The site for 2025 is to be the Fauna Stones area.

2.7.1 Arrangements.

October arrangements -the beehive report will not be requested from Keith Taylor. IP said that Keith had been in hospital following an injury. The volunteers had sent a card wishing him well.

2.7.2. Financial Control.

Nothing to report.

2.7.3. Organised Events

Saturday 5th October- Apple Day

2.7.4. Feedback from the FA

The 2025 Fairfield Festival will take place on May 24th

2.7.5. Feedback from trustees

SN said there has been a complaint about the state of the farm track. This path belongs to Lancashire County Council, and they are going to put chippings down.

AOB

FFOG meetings could take place on other days of the week than Thursday e.g. The first Tuesday of the month, if this was easier for some members to attend. Members views will be asked for when the minutes are circulated.

NEXT MEETING

Tues 5th November, Thurs 7th November or Tues 12th November 7.00pm to 9.00pm FMH.
TBC when members have confirmed their availability.