

FFOG Minutes: 15th May 2025

- Location: FMH
- Date: 15.05.25
- Time: 7.00pm to 9.00pm

ATTENDEES

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

APOLOGIES

David Brookes, Mick Short.

PREVIOUS MINUTES

Accepted.

MATTERS ARISING

3.1. Viewpoints for Flora & Fauna.

CW reported that this was ongoing although there had been no further progress with QR codes.

3.2. Playground trees.

SN had informed Simon Gershon of FFOG's decision on managing the playground trees, and Simon was pleased.

3.3. saplings near the substation.

SN had fed back to the neighbour about the saplings & the neighbour was happy with this.

3.4. Update on contactors progress.

SN reported that the woodwork had been completed. The next item on his list is the repair of the balustrade close to Cromwell Road gate. The posts have plastic sleeves and have been set in concrete. CG said the concrete bags in West Field had split open. HS contacted Sue Holden, who advised obtaining a price per metre for resurfacing the path. SN to inform the contractor about the split bags and to enquire what the price would be per metre for path resurfacing

AGENDA ITEMS

4.2. Woodland and Hedges.

- SN said the path from the canal to Pony wood felt "tunnel-like" with nettles encroaching on the path & these should be cut back. RM will task volunteers to do this and the nettles to be put down by the noticeboard near the wall.
- HS commented that the pile of brash by the wall near the canal path looked uncared for and that cement bags had been tipped on the pile.

- SN reported that Peter Kay, photographer, has commented that the bird cherry along the Fauna path was obscuring the view. This will be laid into the hedge this winter.
- Additionally, if standing at Harries View looking across at the hedge on the other side of Flora Field there is a holly growing to the left of the oak tree which may eventually block out the view of the castle. Peter Kay has provided a photo of this (sent out with the minutes).
- SN asked about the commemorative sapling near Little Wood & if it could be checked. RM will action.
- Pony Wood is now closed for the bird breeding season until 1st July.
- SB said a tawny owl has been spotted in Pony Wood, between the double gates & the wildflower patch and provided a photograph.

4.2.1. Review of the Woodland Management Plan.

This was agreed in May 2023. This was a 10-year plan with the vision of extending the woodland towards the canal & towards West Field and eventually to Freeman's wood. IP thought it was premature to review at this time. There were 3 minor points

- p.4 To add that 3 Ash trees were taken down in Little Wood because of Ash die-back.
- P.4 3rd line in the action plan was to put a fence in place between Pony Wood & Little wood to increase connectivity. This objective has been achieved.
- P.5 In the western extension of pony wood, it was stated that the hedgerow was not in need of management. However, it has grown very well, and FFOG subsequently agreed that this will be laid next winter. Dan Haywood had indicated that this area was a good bird habitat. IP said that by laying the hedge we would be creating a lower denser habitat and would have a short-term effect only. SN said the trimmings from the hedge could be put into brush piles on the margin side and this would create a habitat until the hedge has grown.

The next review of the Woodland Management Plan will be 2028.

4.2.2. Review of the Hedges Plan.

This was agreed by FFOG in May 2023.

- The work in West Field has been completed.
- West Field east-The hedge is being widened by allowing blackthorn to grow and by creating bays for the planting of saplings. The saplings will be planted one metre apart requiring 413 trees.
- Holly has been added to the hedge near the shed bordering the Wild Area.

SN suggested that a map showing the location of hedges would be helpful.

IP said the hedge between Long Pads and West Field was too high restricting visibility for the public. There is a Natural England 2m rule for wet pasture. It was agreed to reduce the height of the West Field/ Long Pads hedge next winter. Mechanical hedge trimmers & chain saws to be used followed by sculpting by hand.

IP has updated the Hedges Management Plan, and this will be sent out with the minutes.

5.1. Volunteer Activities for March and April.

RM provided a report. The Wednesday morning session in April with 10 volunteers from Network Rail went well. RM to ask Mark Tanner to add a photograph of the Network Rail volunteer session to the FA Facebook page.

A member of the public developed a rash and contacted the FA website with concern that this was caused by Giant Hog weed along the Long Pads path. Following inspection, it was reported that there was no Hog weed present. SN to inform the member of the public that there is no giant hog weed. RM has since tasked volunteers to trim the vegetation at the side of this path

5.2. Proposed tasks for May and June.

RM provided a report. Scything training for new volunteers to be organised. RM to contact Paul Ferguson (via Glenys) re provision of a training session on a Wednesday morning.

5.3. Monitoring Report.

See report GB. Howson's gate does not fit properly after the contractor's repair. The bar slips under the padlock, and GB has installed a kryptonite bike lock as a temporary measure. Winston previously supplied a heavy-duty chain, stored in the shed, but the lock code is uncertain. SB will check the code for the heavy-duty chain with Winston. SN will get back to the contractor about the gate.

The water levels in most ponds are very low with some having dried up completely and there is no rain predicted in the next week. CW said the NLWG pond dipping session due to take place on 25th May is to be cancelled. However, if agreed by the NLWG committee, this could be changed to a "minibeast hunt" for invertebrates

6.2. Progress with Surveys.

Hils has carried out a survey of Pony Wood (see report) She suggested that the primroses could be split to distribute them around the woodland.

6.3. Volunteer observers for grazing.

HS reported that Sharon & Ian Diffenthal have been observing and reporting back. HS thought there could be duplication as Rick Gould is now recording grazing data using the spreadsheets previously used by Glenys and uploading to google drive. HS will contact Rick Gould to give contact details of Sharon & Ian to avoid duplication

7.1. Arrangements

IP flagged up that the Long Pads path needs cutting prior to LGGS school run on 30th June.

GB said the John Muir award has been relaunched. A new proposal will have to be submitted

The volunteers' picnic to take place during a Wednesday session. To consider whether there is interest in a winter social event at the storeys for all volunteers.

7.2. Financial Control.

Kryptonite bike locks (GB) £33
Hose pipe & connectors (IP) £53

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7.3. Organised Events.

Wild Roots Nature Fest: Wildlife Walks Saturday 14th June- includes a Dawn Chorus Walk (6 am) and a guided bird walk (9 am) with Andrew McCafferty. Bugs hunt in the Orchard at 1.45 pm with Belinda Nixie.

Sunday 15th at 10.00am SN will lead a walk on the history, management & wildlife.

Open Yards 21st & 22nd June

7.4. Items to report from FA

Education for primary school children. GB has sent some suggestions to Dan and there is a meeting at the beginning of June to progress this.

There is a funding from Avanti for a second cycle hub near the substation.

7.5. Items to report from trustees.

Nothing to report.

AOB

Nothing raised.

NEXT MEETING 10th July on-site 5.00pm to 7.00pm.