

FFOG Minutes: 10th July 2025

- Location: on-site
- Date: 10.07.25
- Time: 5.00pm to 7.00pm

ATTENDEES

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

APOLOGIES

Steve Bullen, Clio Graham, Mick Short.

PREVIOUS MINUTES

Accepted.

MATTERS ARISING

2.1. Footpath monitoring.

- Footpath monitoring: Winston has been inspecting gate posts. Volunteers will be responsible for checking padlocks & the wire at the bottom of the gates
- Lock for Howson's gate: Winston has put the heavy-duty lock back on the gate. RM to check with Winston how he fixed it in case there are problems in the future.
- Hay meadow surveys have been done by Graham Skelcher. He will do the margins later in the year.
- John Muir awards: GB will need to do a new proposal

2.2. Hedges management plan with maps.

There is now an interactive map on the Fairfield website. The master hedges plan is a word document on the FFOG drive. RM will be responsible for updating it.

2.3. Blackthorn suckers along Fauna Path

This is resulting in the path becoming narrower. DB inquired about the plan for addressing this issue. The suckers should be cut back as close to the ground as possible during winter. RM to add to volunteer tasks

2.4. Update on contactors work.

Concrete repairs at Towneley Close path. HS noted the path should have been redirected to manage rainwater runoff. IP stated it was a public right of way and recommended advance notice of any closures. SN mentioned she had posted an apology online and on social media.

Alder Pond Bund Repairs: The bund was last repaired three years ago. DB consulted with Lancashire Wildlife Trust about using bentonite for repairs and possibly installing a permanent semicircular fence. GB said that over the past six months, the bund has shown minimal deterioration, and the soft rush area appears unaffected. However, DB noted that ongoing spill level erosion poses a risk. IP suggested a stone wall with an above-ground spillway, which DB considered feasible. SN to give contact details for Steve Cowell

to DB who will discuss bund repair works.

Gates Repairs: These are not satisfactory. The West Field gate will not lock & the post moves with the gate. The Howson's gate lock is not functional. SN will discuss the path & the gates with the contractors.

2.5. Update on Lucy Brook project.

See report SN. This project follows Calum Booth's plans to develop a wetland corridor upstream of the cattle crossing. SN is submitting a proposal for funding. SN and DB have discussed the project with Steve Cowell (LWT), who could serve as project manager.

2.6. Winter sapling planting 2025-26

- The drought experienced in March and April presented significant challenges for the saplings planted last year. In the playground area, only four out of twelve saplings have survived. The presence of numerous blackthorn suckers has been observed in this section. Nevertheless, the overall survival rate for the other saplings planted in the Reserve is estimated at 85–90%.
- Winter planting plans include the planting of saplings within the 12 bays established along the hedge line in West Field, with the aim of broadening and diversifying the existing hedge. A total of 413 saplings, spaced at one metre intervals, will be required for this section. Additional smaller areas have been identified for infill, bringing the overall requirement to 450 saplings of various species.
- IP proposed using wood chip mulch for the saplings. This could be delivered to the gate in the Flora field opposite the West Field gate. IP to contact Andy Lee.
- RM will apply for funding from the Tree Council and use Thorpe Trees as the supplier.
- A community event for planting to take place in January with some protection placed over the barbed wire
- SN to take the issue of further development of the playground area near the substation to the FA.

2.7. Harries View

There was concern that the holly tree might eventually block the Castle view, but as holly trees grow slowly, it would take years to become an issue. No immediate action is needed; the situation will be monitored.

2.8. Surveys.

SB & CG had sent in a report on the **Bird breeding season in Pony Wood**. Tawny owl chicks have been noted. CW will liaise with Dan Haywood if he needs to enter the area.

2.9 Mosquito Surveillance:

Jen & GB are working on this and will look at a possible site tomorrow. Installation is scheduled for a later date.

2.10. Monitoring Report.

SN suggested it would be a good idea to transfer proposed actions from GB's monitoring report into RM's proposed tasks report. For this to happen in time for the FFOG meetings GB would need to submit his report a week earlier.

The scything of rides may prove beneficial in Big Meadow due to the increasing spread of soft rush. This matter requires additional discussion with SB and CG.

2.11. Volunteer Activities for May and June

RM provided a report. Plastic tree protectors stored at the back of the Wild Area had been removed from the storage area and placed at the entrance near the stump circle. RM thought that teenagers were probably responsible. This is the first incident in 3 years. They are bulky and would take up a lot of space if moved to the shed/yard area. Additionally, there had been damage to the hazel fence.

2.12 Proposed tasks for July and August

RM provided a report and the activities were agreed.

3.1. Arrangements

SN waiting to hear from Aubrey about cutting the field.

3.2. Financial Control

Nothing to report.

3.3 Feedback from FA

See link below for minutes of FA meeting 17th June.

<https://fairfieldassociation.org/meeting-information/fairfield-association-minutes-17-june-2025/>

7.5. Items to report from trustees

Nothing to report.

AOB

Footpath repairs: HS reported that Simon Gherston has recommended a contractor. An estimate is awaited. The work will not start until October.

SN reported that Fraser has contacts at Witherslack school & a small group of pupils with two teachers are visiting the Reserve next Monday. Fraser will talk to them & SN will give a scything demonstration.

NEXT MEETING. Thurs 4th September 7.00pm to 9.00pm at the bowling club.