

Meeting held 8/12/14 at CVS Lancaster

Present: Stuart Hunt, Andrew Halladay & Mo Kelly (Whalley Playing Field), Simon Gershon (Lancaster Green Spaces), Roger Frankland (Civic society), Ian Procter (Fairfield Association), Brian Jones (Carnforth Coke Ovens), Hilary Smith (Williamson Park), Frank Ledwith (Community Land Trust), David Redmore, Jane Attfield (CVS)

The theme was: 'Volunteer Training'. Also ideas for future sessions

Items of interest

Whalley Playing Field (between Ridge & Freehold, Lancaster): A small number of local residents met last week and are going to leaflet surrounding houses and hold a public meeting end Jan, which is likely to result in a Friends group forming. Area sees reasonably well protected from development but minimal input from city council so a Friends group may be able to enhance it for community benefit, perhaps with control handed to the Gregson Centre.

Examples of Training

Beyond The Castle team has run scything workshops. Tarja Wilson (County Ranger) organises free hedge laying courses through winter, contact her if you would like to be put on the mailing list. Fairfield Association report that people initially trained are now quite experienced and are passing their skills onto new volunteers.

Friends Groups can qualify for funding not available to local authorities, so might be used as a conduit or partner with the local authority to access funds.

Young People

There is demand from children working on their Duke of Edinburgh Award, young people compiling a 'personal statement' to apply to university, and from college students who want to fill up their CV. Maybe consider giving our certificates or letters to confirm volunteer attendance for such people? However, organisations may put effort into training youngsters who do not stay around.

Many young people have zero practical skills, they don't have suitable clothes and need to be shown very basic stuff we take for granted e.g. using a shovel.

Training demand & Opportunities

Popular demand for training with CVS includes: First aid, Safeguarding (of children & vulnerable adults) and food hygiene.

Can be good to get lots (30+) volunteers when there is a suitable task and a big area to cover. Bioblitz events around the castle have done this. Fairfield Association had 50 people tree planting (600 saplings) last year, including 13 from Green Lancaster (University). Coming to a big event can appeal to people who might not come to a regular volunteering session e.g. locally advertised Litter picks.

Alternatively, you can cultivate a small group of regulars that come out every week - Fairfield Association now have a hedge laying team that meets every Wednesday throughout the winter.

Conversely, having one person who is very skilled may not work in the long run if s/he

doesn't pass the skills on or is unable to keep up with the need.

Mentoring can work better than training, paring people up. Training on regular work sites is more popular with volunteers than going somewhere else. So open programmes across groups may struggle to get attendances.

Opportunities to work with City Council park staff e.g. the Greenfingers group in Williamson Park, less formal opportunities as well. Operatives all found to be very helpful. 'Masterplans' are being developed for all parks but these are quite flexible as they are intended to accommodate funding and other opportunities.

Opportunities to work with businesses e.g. in Penrith and Carlisle there is a partnership between traders, council and volunteers to enhance urban greening.

The John Muir Award can be done by anyone at your own pace, and will result in enhanced appreciation of natural spaces. You have to Discover – Explore – Conserve – Share. See full details at www.jmt.org/jmaward-home.asp

Green Infrastructure

It would be a worthwhile exercise to map out urban green (and blue) spaces and corridors, in order to identify opportunities to link spaces up and identify opportunities generally.

Actions

Jane at CVS will talk to her IT volunteer and see if they can set up/buy in a database for registering skills and/or equipment people are willing to share.

Ideas for future meetings

1. Invasive species – recognition & recommended actions. Ask Lune Rivers Trust? Bamboo as an invasive? Ken Thomson of Sheffield University?
2. Tree Diseases – recognition & recommended actions. Ask Paul Bullimore to organise a visit/training session
3. We enjoy tours of other Friends' Groups sites
4. Organise a practical session at a new site where we can make a difference. Maybe Newton Woods?
5. Look strategically at the green infrastructure in Morecambe and Lancaster

Next Meeting

Monday 26th January – Morecambe Town Hall, 7-9pm. The meeting theme will be: '**Green Infrastructure Planning**'. Rebecca Richards and Maurice Brophy are kindly returning to assist the Forum with a strategic look at the green infrastructure in Morecambe and Lancaster. We will have paper maps to help us identify green and blue corridors for wildlife and people, to see where the bits we care for, fit in with the whole.