

Greenspace Groups Forum no. 10

Meeting held 09/03/15 at Ridge Community Centre, Lancaster

Present: Paul Bullimore (community forester), Ian Procter (Fairfield Association), Louise Belcher (Thwaite Brow Nature Reserve), , Roger Frankland (Civic society), Kathy Barton (Claver Hill), Sarah Blackler (Greaves Park), Simon Gershon (Lancaster Green Spaces), Hilary Smith and Joy Greenwood (Williamson Park), Robin Eyre (Fork2Fork), Francesca Biondi, (researcher)

The evening's topic was **'Writing Management Plans'**.

The meeting was preceded by a walk in Newton Beck Woods led by Paul Bullimore. Paul hopes to facilitate the formation of a Friends group for the wood, and make a start on getting the woods into better management this season. Perhaps repair the bridge later this Summer, and have an approved management plan in place with a work schedule next winter. We looked at management needs, opportunities, and issues with different users.

Firstly, you need to be clear **WHY** you are writing a management plan . Lots of good reasons such as: 1) So everyone knows what's happening; 2) To enhance the space for different users and/or wildlife; 3) to satisfy funders and/or landowners; 4) to create a useful working document.

Secondly, you need to have a shared **VISION**. What do you want to achieve? The management plan is there to enable you to achieve some end, but it is quite likely that different people have different ideas on what they want to achieve. So discussion and agreement is needed well before someone goes off to draft the management plan.

The plan needs to take account of the different **RESOURCES** that are likely to be available – or you may end up with an aspirational but unworkable plan because you don't have enough volunteer-hours/skills/equipment/money/motivation in the group. Not being able to keep up with the plan is dispiriting and destructive.

The management plan is there to tell you **HOW** you will achieve the vision, with the resources you have. The best management plans are usually short and simple, so are more easily read and kept up-to-date. A short and simple plan is much more readily communicated to volunteers and the wider public. Some tasks may need explaining in more detail (maybe through a method statement) but this can be done elsewhere. Also, a clear diagram is much better than a page of words!

Management plans will be very helpful in getting permission from the City Council's tree officer and others – they can see that your planned work has been thought through for it's long term public benefit. They will be aware of TPOs, conservation status and other designations in your area, development plans, and other policy and planning issues that you may be unaware of.

Note – many parks have a 'Masterplan' in place or in preparation – so what's the difference? A Masterplan is more visionary and less detailed. It will require detailed plans to deliver its different parts, and is designed to be revised as budgets and grants allow different parts of the Masterplan to be implemented.

Management plans generally look a year or so ahead, but also need to consider longer-term issues such as tree health, climate change, likely demographic and

planning changes that may affect your greenspace

HELP or comments may be obtained from County lengthsman, Environmental Services managers and operatives. On the voluntary side, Lancashire Wildlife Trust and other specialist groups such as the Lune Rivers Trust and Bat Group are very knowledgeable. Members of the North Lancs Naturalists have specialist expertise. Maybe a role here for LGS, to compile and maintain a database of expert volunteers?

TEMPLATES are very useful – they ensure that all relevant aspects of your management plan are covered. The Forestry Commission one can be found at www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-9BMJWE – the one for small woodlands will be more relevant. Although this is for woodlands, any 'woodland' will include other use areas and the template accommodates this. In addition, if you do have an area with trees, the Forestry Commission will comment on your draft plan for free, even if you have no intention of applying for a grant. [Note, the FC grant scheme is currently closed, pending being re-funded]. Myforest has a more sophisticated free facility at: <http://sylva.org.uk/myforest/woodlandmanagement>. Other Friends groups will have been through a similar process and their own management plans are likely to be useful as an initial template. Some may be found on the LGS website. [[link](#)]

MAPS and **PLANS** are essential; you can download aerial photos from Google Earth (not Google maps) and Mario. Both enable you to draw lines on the downloads to identify boundaries, compartments etc. A National mapping scheme called **MAGIC** is more sophisticated and will have much useful information already – well worth having a play with.

ENCOURAGING WILDLIFE is usually part of a management plan; you will then want to know what you have, and what changes over time. Recording wildlife is a great way to get local people involved in your project, since many will be interested in birds, flowers, spiders etc. You can also pay an expert to do a survey for you. A 'Bioblitz' consists of getting experts on site for a day, helping volunteers to record absolutely everything that grows or moves. Surveys are best done twice a year if you want to be fairly sure of finding seasonal/migratory species. Wildlife findings can be shared via social media.

Your management plan may be used to write a separate **WORK PROGRAMME**. This gives the **WHAT** and **WHEN** of tasks, on a season-by-season, or month-by-month basis. Very easy for volunteers to follow; it may be helpful to classify tasks as a) essential, b) desirable and c) optional so they can be prioritised.

EXAMPLES of Management Plans can be found on the 'Resources' page of the Lancaster Green Spaces website at www.lancastergreenspaces.org.uk/resources
