

Greenspace Groups Forum Minutes 05

Meeting held 7/7/14 at Ryelands Park

Present: Rita Gerard (Poulton the Sands & Morecambe Cemeteries), Simon Gershon (Lancaster Green Spaces), Mick Short & Ian Proctor (Fairfield Association), Steve Wearden (Ryelands Park), Joy Warren (Claver Hill), Helen Ryan (City Council), Sarah Blackler (Greaves Park), Roger Frankland (Civic society), PCSO David Johnson, David Redmore

Theme for this meeting was 'Dealing with Antisocial Behaviour'

Common and less-common problems

- Litter, especially from plastic bags and takeaway food in some areas. Nappies thankfully less common now
- Owners not picking up after their dogs - or worse, bagging the poo and throwing the bag up a tree...!!!
- De-barking trees and snapping branches
- Destructive vandalism e.g. setting fire to bins and benches, breaking fences
- Motorbikes – less prevalent now but mini-motos still available with parents buying them and allowing illegal use on public areas
- Stealing cut wood, grazing horses on peri-urban land
- Using disposable barbequees in inappropriate places where they scorch grass/crack gravestones
- Bending fruit tree branches down until they snap
- Training attack dogs on trees
- Homeless people camping and associated litter/needles
- General yobbish behaviour – usually alcohol-related – often 'with attitude'

Our experiences

- PCSOs have been found to be very helpful: they often know the people involved (and their parents), and have a good technique for dealing with them. It's definitely worth knowing your PCSO.
- PCSOs also have two unmarked cars operating, so you can ask for these to check on problem areas.
- Much better to call the police/PCSOs as soon as you are aware of an issue developing – don't wait until you are really irritated.
- For roads/footpaths/tree roots and lighting, you need to inform County Council. There is a report facility on their new website:
<http://new.lancashire.gov.uk/roads-parking-and-travel/fault-search.aspx>
- Fly tipping, waste collection and above-ground tree issues are the responsibility of City Council
- Getting young people to help design any new facilities greatly reduces problems

What can we do?

- Sometimes children and teenagers just don't understand – explaining appropriate behaviour to them in a non-judgemental way is worthwhile
- Some problems can be designed or specified out: e.g. site benches in visible areas; use super heavy duty benches from Woodscape
- Some problems can be reduced e.g. protect newly planted trees with hawthorn, plant lots of tiny trees instead of a few large ones.
- Try to create a virtuous circle: get more people using the space, this reduces litter & vandalism, and stimulates more use.
- A community litter pick gets local people involved and usually the place stays clean for a good while. The City Council has lots of adult and child size tongs to lend, yellow bibs etc. They will give you the pink bin bags to fill and make a kerbside collection afterwards. The contact for borrowing the kit is Paul Parker pparker@lancaster.gov.uk. McDonalds also organise litter picks

Help is at hand!

- Lancaster City Council has two park wardens – their job includes opening and closing parks and football pitches etc, checking lifebelts. They can be contacted through Customer Services. customerservices@lancaster.gov.uk Tel 582000
- The City Council also employs a dog warden, Alison McGowan. In addition to collecting stray dogs, she can help with fouling issues. Contact her through Environmental Health: environmentalhealth@lancaster.gov.uk, tel 582757. More info at www.lancaster.gov.uk/environmental-health/dogwardens
- All areas in the district have a neighbourhood policing team. To find yours, visit www.lancashire.police.uk/my-area/ Each team has a police officer in addition to the PCSOs. There are phone numbers but don't call if it's something that needs an immediate response because you may well get an ansaphone. If you do need someone now, call 101 or 999
- Keep Britain Tidy have a very informative website www.keepbritaintidy.org and can supply promotional material. They run several initiatives including The Big Tidy Up, Eco Schools, Love Where You Live and beach cleaning/blue flag awards

AOB

For future meetings we came up with the following theme ideas:

- Involving young people
- Applying for and delivering larger grants – maybe separate workshops for different funders
- Greenspace strategy. Many people at the meeting shared concern about the loss of public open space, with areas seemingly being sold off for housing without public consultation. Can we get a senior planner such as Maurice Brophy or Paul Hatch to a meeting to explain council policy and practice?

Next Meeting

Monday 1st September – Near Greaves Park Lancaster Meeting time 7-9pm

We hope to be able to use the Scout hut a little way up Bowerham Road - venue and format will be confirmed the week before. The theme for the next meeting is:

'Risk Assessment, Health & Safety, and Insurance'