

## **Friends of the Flitch Way**

### **Notes from Committee meeting of Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2017**

Venue: Alan's house, Braintree  
Present: Chairman, Alan Trigg; Secretary, Sandra Reynolds  
Treasurer, Margaret James;  
Committee members, Val Blamire, Stan Davies, Bob Lucas, John Moss, Wendy Moss.  
Ranger, Tom Hamilton

#### **Minutes of last meeting**

Accepted as a true record and signed by Chairman accordingly

#### **Matters arising and review of action points**

From 11 October meeting:-

**AP1.** Felsted school remain keen on audio project. Details of person who had been evacuated and lived at station passed on. School also keen for pupils to be involved in Flitch Way projects such as litter picks, tidying and weeding Bannister Green Halt etc.

**AP6.** Delivery of benches likely in week commencing 13<sup>th</sup> March. Installation to probably take place at the end of March. From 17 January meeting:

**AP1.** Done

**AP2.** Completed and installed

**AP3.** Quotes received. Work scheduled for 6 March cancelled by contractor due to unsuitable weather and potential adverse effect on surface of path. New date awaited.

**AP4.** Tom liaising with Fitzpatrick Woolmer.

**AP5.** Done.

**AP6.** Done.

**AP7.** Done. Arranged for 27 April.

**AP8.** Done

**AP9.** Done. Alternative route put on website and available in carriage.

**AP10.** Contractor to provide quote after meeting with John at the carriage on 9<sup>th</sup> March. (AP1)

**AP11.** Tom's recommendation is for Processor to be sold as the prospect of Rangers being available to oversee use is very unlikely in the foreseeable future. Machine was bought using a Greenfields grant and Sandra will write to them explaining the position and seeking their permission to sell. (**AP2**) Likely sale value not known.

**AP12.** Confirmed.

#### **Chairman's report**

Chairman noted footpath work done at Fentons Farm bridge and asked the position on the report of dumping onto the Flitch Way from an adjacent site on the west side of the bridge. Tom said that it was a long standing issue which had not yet been looked into. He was advised that the situation was worsening. Secretary will write to BDC Enforcement (AP3) to ask for action to be taken against the landowner.

Alan said that he was very pleased with the way the Langford Halt project had gone. There remained the benches to be installed and the footpath to be repaired as previously discussed. Stan said that following the top of the platform having been cleared and re-surfaced, agreement had been reached with the occupier of the station house for us to install some form of screening at the far end of the platform to prevent people looking into

his garden. Cost will be approximately £50 and the work will be done as soon as is convenient.

Chairman noted work remaining to be done at Garnetts Wood. Delay in resurfacing the car park had been caused partly by somebody living in his car in the car park but it was believed that he had had since moved on.

Chairman thanked Brian, Andy and John for the work they had done to make the ends of the carriage more weatherproof.

Alan reported on the very intensive 3-day first aid course he had recently attended at Writtle

### **Treasurer's report**

Current account balance £2,246 with £1,600 in the savings account. Expenditure on Langford Halt had gone over budget by £648 which the committee had agreed would be covered from Friends funds. A further £3,000 would be paid by Tesco Bags of Help on completion of the Langford Halt project which would return the current account to a more healthy balance.

Donations from visitors to the carriage continued to cover carriage expenses. Electricity readings continues to be taken every week and a gradual decrease in usage was being noted as temperatures improved.

On social matters, Margaret said that 13 members had so far booked for the Fingringhoe trip. Future social events would be a local garden visit in July (Spains Hall?) and a visit to Paycockes and Grange Barn in September.

### **Secretary's report**

Sandra reported feedback and a good response to have been received from Braintree District Council and Natural England to Version 1 of the FW Management Plan in support of the Local Nature Reserve designation. Tom and Steffanie need to agree Version 1. Chairman thanked Sandra for the work she has done on the LNR.

Contact has been made with Dee Whittock at Felsted School about getting pupils' help on recording audio memories. They are positive and are due to respond with further details. School very interested in the person who had recently visited the carriage. A WW2 evacuee, he had lived at Rayne station for 3 years and is happy to recount his memories.

From the website, there have been 11 contact form enquiries since the last meeting. There have been 337 web page visits and 959 views in the last week, the top pages being Flitch Way 56 and Blackwater Rail Trail 40. Downloads totalled 32. Updated wildlife trail has been added to the website, together with the Blackwater Rail Trail leaflet.

A link to making donations online has also been put on the website.

Facebook has 549 likes, up 27 since January meeting. Most popular post was the renovation of Langford Halt with 928 people.

8 visitor reviews have been put on the Trip Advisor website.

Sandra said that a number of Friends members had attended the recent FW Action Group ACM when the chairman's report and Stan's presentation had been well received.

Sandra has e-mailed the committee with information on wildlife and hedgerow recording. Forthcoming courses on bird watching and hedgerow recording provided by Essex Wildlife Trust were thought to be particularly relevant.

Sandra confirmed with Val that Essex Field Club would be surveying Dunmow Cutting in June.

### **Work Party report**

Wendy reported that 3 new members had signed up since the last meeting. 604 volunteer days have taken place in the current year with very good attendances on work parties.

Hedge laying has taken place at Takeley and at Danbury. Alan advised the latter to have been finished. The hedge laying previously done at Great Notley has been badly vandalised. Tom said that problems with vandalism were occurring on a regular basis at different places within the country park.

### **Railway carriage update**

Wendy said that Pam had advised 27 open sessions had taken place in January and 29 in February.

Wendy commented that the same small group of people were currently volunteering and she is liaising with Pam to consider contacting those volunteers who had not attended recently to see whether they were likely to do so in the future. **(AP4)**

Stan echoed Chairman's thanks to Brian, Andy and John who had done such good work on the outside of the carriage.

Pre-booked visits have been made to the carriage by Essex Dementia Care and Braintree Easy Riders cycle group committee, the latter making a donation on each occasion. North Essex Friends walking group have also visited.

Displays are currently being updated with newer photographs. Photos of the work done at Langford Halt will also be put on display.

Tom mentioned that 2 GER chairs were at Takeley and asked whether there was space to have them in the carriage, that being a more appropriate place for them. Wendy said that consideration will be given to finding space to do so. **(AP5)**.

Stan will look at potential funding sources to cover the cost of work on the roof to be explored once quote received. **(AP6)**

### **Footpath group (P3) report**

Chairman said that Pete had advised him that the group continued to be very much in demand. 7 work parties have taken place since the last meeting with an average of 7 volunteers on each occasion. Sites visited included Bartholomew Green, the Colnes, the Hallingburys, Takeley and Gainsford End. Good feedback had been received from the places where work had been done.

Alan said that Pete was looking for 1 or 2 new volunteers to replace 2 experienced people who would be moving away from the area in the near future. The matter will be raised at forthcoming FW work parties.

### **Ranger's report**

Tom reported that a new Ranger has been appointed to replace Richard although the date of starting was not known. The meeting expressed the hope that the new person would be sufficiently experienced to relieve some of the pressure on Tom. So far as the future work programme was concerned, Tom said that there was lots to do but he was conscious of the shortage of time before bird nesting began. It was anticipated that two more work parties would complete the current work at Takeley. Once that was done, a summer type cut back was planned between Mill Lane and Gore Road bridges followed by single work parties at

smaller areas. Work was also planned for Colne Valley Railway, Garnetts Wood and the Blackwater Rail Trail.

Tom acknowledged the comments that work needed to be done to repair and improve the Dunmow boardwalk, That included removing the tree root which had forced the track out of shape and possibly extending the boardwalk towards Staggs bridge, A major problem in doing so was a lack of funds. It was felt that funds were available from a number of sources and Stan will contact Essex Community Foundation for advice. **(AP7)**

With regard to traveller site issues, a visit had been made by Tim Dixon and Sustrans which had highlighted the problems for people using the Flitch Way alongside the site. Although he did not know the details. Tom was aware that discussions between interested parties were taking place at County level which would hopefully produce a positive outcome. Drainage at Dunmow Cutting would be dealt with in September as part of the annual work parties taking place there. Friends have already agreed to cover the cost of hiring a mini digger.

#### **Future of wood processor and chipper**

Already discussed.

#### **Any other business**

Sandra will liaise with Wendy over issuing of membership cards and over issue of relevant ACM forms to members.

Tom thanked Sandra for the considerable amount of work which she has done on the Local Nature Reserve paper.

Alan reported that he had negotiated a 15% discount for members using the Booking Hall Café. To get the discount, members need to show either a membership card or a carriage steward badge.

Alan expressed the Committee's thanks to Ranger Rhiannon who had accompanied volunteers on a number of work parties and would be leaving at the end of March.

Chairman also expressed best wishes to Grace Meehan whose baby was due to be born very shortly.

Stan said that the agents for the Brook Green Development have recently submitted changes to the Outline Planning Application which covered a vast number of pages. Stan's view was that no substantial changes have been made and that, as previously, the amount of paperwork submitted seemed to be aimed at discouraging a full review of what was contained. He noted that BDC Planning had responded with a 17 page letter to the agent seeking further information and clarification of many of the supposed changes. Objections to the 'revised plans have already been made by members of the public and FW members needed to be encouraged to do the same. Andrew Adair has agreed to submit a formal objection on behalf of the Friends and he will submit a draft for the committee's approval. Closing date for objections is 30 March 2017.

#### **Next meeting**

Annual General Meeting, Discovery Centre, 6.30pm 12 May 2017.

First Committee meeting Wednesday 7 June at Sandra's.

There being nothing more to discuss, Chairman brought the meeting to a close.

**Summary of Action Points for next meeting.**

AP1 John to give update on quote for carriage roof.

AP2 Sandra to report back on contact with Greenfields re Wood Processor

AP3 Sandra to report back on contact with BDC re dumping on Flich

AP4 Wendy/Pam to report back on contact with carriage volunteers

AP5 Wendy to advise on available space in carriage for GER chairs.

AP6 & AP7 Stan to report on potential funding sources