

Friends of the Flitch Way

Notes from Committee meeting of Tuesday 11th October 2016

Venue Stan's house, Braintree

Present Chairman, Alan Trigg. Secretary, Sandra Reynolds
Committee members, Val Blamire, Stan Davies, John Moss,
Wendy Moss.
Rangers, Tom Hamilton, Stephanie Stewart

Apologies Margaret James, Bob Lucas

Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular Stephanie Robertosn who had recently taken up post at Great Notley as Senior Ranger.

Minutes of last meeting

Accepted as a true record of the meeting of 1st August and signed accordingly.

Matters arising and review of action points.

- AP1. Letter of thanks sent to Booking Hall café.
- AP2 Presentation of cheque from Braintree Athletic Club took place on Sunday 18th September at the carriage. Photo appeared in B & W Times and can also be seen on FW Facebook page.
- AP3 Changeover of Bank Account in the process of taking place. Report to be carried forward to next meeting.
- AP4 Details of printing services on offer e-mailed to committee members.
- AP5 Owners of the Station House at Langford Halt spoken to re. project to refurbish the platform etc. They are supportive of proposals.
- AP6 Stan has an appointment at the Halt with a builder on 13th October. Report to be carried forward to next meeting.
- AP7 Volunteer work parties have cleared the footpath around the travellers' site. With regard to dogs from the site running loose, Tom felt there to little which could be done to prevent that happening. Any problems arising should continue to be reported to the police and dog wardens. Good feedback on the improvements received from the public at Dunmow Carnival and Stebbing Fete.
- AP8 Printed Trip Advisor cards placed in carriage for visitors' use.
- AP9 To be covered later under Secretary's report.
- AP10 To be covered later as a separate agenda item.
- AP11 To be covered as a separate agenda item.
- AP12 Details of Saling development proposals sent to Committee members.
- AP13 BDC plans are ongoing re district cycling strategy.

Chairman's report.

Alan attended Dunmow Carnival to represent the Friends. He felt there to have been a missed opportunity to distribute material to publicize the Friends such as the volunteer leaflet recently produced by Sandra.

Chairman and Secretary recently attended an event entitled 'Doing the Honours for Essex', held at the racecourse. Hosted by the High Sherriff, it was also attended by volunteer groups from across the County and gave the opportunity to promote the work

of charitable groups and meet with other like minded organizations.

Alan thanked Braintree Athletics Club for their generous donation of £1,400 to FW funds.

BBC Essex Radio had visited the carriage the previous Sunday as part of their 'Essex Quest' show which had given Alan the chance to speak about the work of the Friends. Work parties have taken place at Little Dunmow and Dunmow Cutting since the last meeting and Alan thanked volunteers who had taken part. He also thanked Andy Horder and John West for the work done on the carriage.

In response to Alan's question regarding the Mill Lane diversion, Tom said that he had no information on Highway's long term solution for the bridge. They have made temporary fixes on improving the slope and steps on either side to enable pedestrians to more easily get around the closed-off bridge.

Treasurer's report.

Wendy gave the report in the absence of Margaret who is on holiday.

Current bank balance is £17,679 which includes a balance of £8,681.70 grant money leaving a net amount of £8,998.19 available for spending.

All required paperwork has been sent to Nat West and we await notification from them to advise of funds having been transferred etc.

Donations continue to be received from visitors to the carriage which are covering the day to day costs.

A total of £92 was received from Dunmow Carnival and Stebbing Fete.

With regard to social events, an enjoyable visit to Ingatestone Hall had taken place with lovely weather on the day.

The Christmas lunch at Bocking was booked up very quickly and no further places are available. An e-mail will be sent out in November asking for menu choices and any balances due.

Secretary's report.

There have been 5 contact form enquiries received via the FW website including 2 about volunteering.

With regard to the wind-up device containing pre-recorded memories of the railway which had been discussed at the previous meeting, and earlier, Stan felt that he did not have the IT expertise to take the matter forward. Sandra has approached Felsted School to see if they would be interested in helping as part of the Duke of Edinburgh community work.

(AP1) Sandra will report back in due course. As reported previously, Stan said that he knew that Jim Gepp and Sam Marriage would be keen to have their memories recorded. Sam, in particular, had a wealth of knowledge on the railway. Stan was also aware that Rayne local history group had a lot of taped recordings with local residents' recollections of their lives and of the village. Although the group no longer existed, he believed the tapes to be held by either Roger Jiggins or Martin Phillips from the Parish Council. Tom commented that other parts of the FW should not be forgotten, Bishops Stortford local history group having a lot of material associated with the railway.

Regarding online media, there have been 316 web page visits ad 1264 page views in the last week. Most viewed pages were 100 Flitch Way, 63 join and 48 downloads. Facebook continues to grow with 412 followers.

Regarding the Flitch Way Action Group and their campaign for a new bridleway at Dunmow, Sandra said that Taylor Wimpey were about to start on the first phase of the development near Ongar Road South which would create the first section of the Flitch

Way link. They have asked UDC to delay provision of the bridleway until after the last house has been completed. FWAG are opposed to that proposal and will issue guidance on how the public can object to the proposed delay.

(AP2) Alan agreed to write to UDC on behalf of the Friends.

Volunteer A5 leaflets are now available for the carriage and the café. Business cards prompting visitors to leave a review on TripAdvisor have been left beside the visitor book in the carriage.

Sandra continues to work on the creation of the FW Management Plan in support of Local Nature Reserve designation. Both UDC and BDC have agreed to include it in their Local Plan once it has been designated.

(AP3) Sandra will add FW Work Party report as an item on future agendas.

P3 report.

9 work parties have taken place since the last meeting, visiting sites at Earls Colne, Halstead, Takeley, Berden and Manuden. Jobs done include installing bridge, steps and way marker posts as well as a lot of footpath and byway clearance. An average of 5 volunteers have attended work parties during the period.

Ranger's report.

Tom said that a good start has been made at Dunmow Cutting and he estimated another 5 or 6 work parties would be needed to finish the clearance of the banks. Asked about the prospect of improving the drainage at the cutting, Tom felt it to be unlikely due to work demands elsewhere on himself and Richard. He acknowledged the Friends having previously offered to pay the costs of hiring a digger to do the work, but either himself or Richard would have to be present on site to operate the machine and he couldn't see that happening in the foreseeable future.

After finishing at the Cutting, the next work parties will be at Takeley, working eastwards from the station in the congested area where contractors have recently cleared overhanging trees.

(AP4) Tom agreed to give some consideration to a suitable site for the volunteers' Christmas social.

Wendy reported that there had been 32 work parties since the start of the year with an average of 7.25 volunteers on each occasion. That equated to 232 volunteer days. Tom reported that he had recently met with the County ecologist re. Garnetts Wood where it was planned to extract timber, in particular invasive species, over the coming winter and replace with seedlings grown from seeds previously taken from Garnetts and grown on at one of the Country Parks. It was planned to use horses for the work in the wood.

(AP5) Regarding the Garnetts and Langford Halt project, Tom will liaise with the contractor who had done work at Notley to do the required footpath refurbishments at both sites. He was waiting for the weather to deteriorate, however, as heavy rainfall would highlight the areas of footpath which would require attention. As reported previously, Tom has identified a business in Colchester who make benches suitable for both sites. They can supply 10 at a cost of £1,775 but that does not include routing.

(AP6) Tom will follow up and report back.

Railway carriage update.

Wendy reported that we have a total of 39 volunteers although only 13 or 14 do so on a regular basis. Only opening at weekends in October but as half term falls the last week

of the month, it would be good to also open on a couple of days during that week. The meeting suggested an evening meeting with all the carriage volunteers.

(AP7) Wendy will ask Pam to e-mail volunteers when she returned from holiday.

Weather permitting, it is planned to re-paint the carriage during half term week and

(AP8) Wendy will seek volunteers to help.

Online donations link.

Margaret had advised Wendy that she had concerns about the ethics of on-line donations and was uncomfortable with asking for donations without an identifiable purpose such as re-printing our leaflets or the upkeep of the carriage. The FW bank balance was very healthy at present and Treasurer felt that we should not be asking for donations without a definite purpose. It was agreed that Sandra would go ahead and set up the facility but not publicize the link on the website. That way, the facility will be there if and when it is needed.

Future of wood processing and use of chipper.

Tom said that the Chipper would probably be used in the period after Christmas but the position with the Processor remained unchanged in that it was unlikely to be used in the foreseeable future. Stan said that the contract drawn up with Greenfields, who had provided funding to purchase the machinery, had been looked at. It referred only to the requirement for the matter to be discussed with them if disposal was under consideration and for written permission to be obtained before that took place. Tom said that it was possible that Belhus Country Park might be interested in taking the Processor, perhaps renting the machine from the Friends. Tom will make further enquiries. Although its purposes would remain the same, it was felt that Greenfields would probably need to be contacted if the machine was being sited elsewhere.

Any other business.

Santa in the carriage: It had recently come to light that the Booking Hall café had paid for reindeer to be at the station on Friday 23rd. Although there had been an understanding on our part that we would be repeating our Santa event on the Sunday before Christmas there was a potential conflict of interest in having the 2 separate events so close together. The matter was discussed at some length, therefore, the feeling being that in the interests of working in partnership with the café, which regularly supported the Friends, we would move our event to the Friday. In view of the probability of less volunteers than usual being available on that day it was decided to have more of a low key event. The fact of John being unavailable to erect a canopy over the platform due to his forthcoming foot operation was another factor in making that decision. It was agreed that the priority was the enjoyment of young visitors rather than raising funds for the Friends. (AP8) A meeting with Josh to discuss his Christmas arrangements is planned to take place as soon as he returns from holiday. Tickets to visit Santa will be sold in the carriage and in the café before the event and be limited to the estimated number of children able to be seen by Santa within a fixed period of time. Cost of a ticket will be £1. It was decided not to hold a raffle this year but concentrate on getting prizes for a Tombola stall, to be run on the day by Alan and his wife using a gazebo on the platform.

An on-site meeting will take place on Monday 17th at Takeley/Little Canfield to view and discuss encroachment onto the Flitch Way at that point. Attendees will be Tom, Tim Dixon, head of Country Parks, and somebody from the County Land Agents. Friends will be represented by Sandra, Andrew Adair and Stan, standing in for Alan who is

unavailable on that date.

Tom thanked Sandra for all the work she was doing on several aspects of protecting the Flitch Way.

The meeting agreed John's suggestion that a new DVD player be bought for use in the carriage.

Stephanie thanked the committee for giving her the opportunity to attend the meeting which she had found very interesting. She looked forward to working with the Friends in the future.

Next meeting

January 17th at Sandra's home, Great Notley.

There being nothing further to discuss, Alan thanked Stan and Margery for their hospitality and brought the meeting to a close.

Summary of Action Points

- (AP1) Sandra to report on discussions with Felsted School
- (AP2) Alan to write to UDC with objection to Developer's proposal
- (AP3) Sandra to include FW work party report on future agenda
- (AP4) Tom to suggest suitable site for volunteers Christmas Social
- (AP5) Tom to liaise with footpath contractor
- (AP6) Tom to report on benches for Garnetts and Langford Halt
- (AP7) Wendy to contact Pam re carriage volunteers' get together
- (AP8) Wendy to e-mail volunteers for carriage re-painting.

Treasurer to report on changeover of Bank Account

Stan to report on meetings with builders at Langford Halt