

Friends of the Flich Way and Associated Woodlands
Notes from Committee meeting of Wednesday 29 September 2021, Great Notley

Taking part: Stan Davies (Chair), Sandra Reynolds (Secretary), Margaret James (Treasurer) and Committee members, Val Blamire, Graham Dalby, Bob Wright. Tom Hamilton (Ranger)
Apologies for absence: Wendy Moss, John Moss, Alan Trigg (Vice-chair)

Approval of Minutes of 11 June 2021 - Agreed by all and signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising and review of Action Points from last meeting.

Closed actions:-

- AP12.2 The Rayne gate replacements have been done.
- AP13.5 The Barbara Holdsworth bench has been installed.
- AP15.3 The tent at Rayne Station was removed.

Carried forward from previous meetings and ongoing:-

AP11.1 No progress to report on opening up the bridge at Langford Halt other than Countryside have needed access via the Blackwater Rail Trail. Carry forward.

New Actions:

- AP16.1 Sandra to investigate a cost-effective solution for contactless donations as so few people carry cash now. Options could include Sumup and Zetel.
- AP16.2 Sandra to ask Dick Hughes about how drainage could be improved between Braintree and Rayne.
- AP16.3 Bob will approach SRC quarry to see if they can provide 20mm gravel for some of the paths in Garnetts Wood and High Cross Lane car park.
- AP16.4 Stan to brief Josh at the Booking Hall Cafe on Santa dates
- AP16.5 Sandra to investigate online ticketing.
- AP16.6 Sandra to let Rayne Platinum Jubilee celebration team know that we will be happy to support the fete.
- AP16.7 Sandra to respond to Braintree Community Ad magazine and ask them to send us a list of questions which we could respond to for their article.
- AP16.8 Sandra to add a website link to the Rayne Heritage Site.
- AP16.9 Sandra to apply to BDC for free bulbs to plant at Rayne.

Chairman's report: Welcome to everyone and thanks to Sandra for hosting today's meeting. Good to see work parties re-starting after the summer break which will be reported on in Wendy's report. Not a lot to add other than to say how good it has been to get together with friends again and catch up with news. Many thanks to volunteers who have taken part, either in and around the carriage and Station or on Flich Way and P3 work parties.

Communication received from two members of the Railway Ramblers, based near Edinburgh, who propose walking the Flich Way with Herts based friends on Tuesday and Wednesday, 19 & 20 October. Stan will be meeting them around noon on the Wednesday at Rayne Station and Wendy and John have expressed an interest on meeting them for a short walk on the Tuesday. Anyone else who would like to join in on either day would be welcome to do so.

Treasurer's report

Our current bank balance is £6,665.68. Last month we transferred £800.00 to our savings account and the balance now stands at £4,011.22. We have received online donations from Virgin money of 70.56 and £144.91 this month from donations in the Carriage.

Social Activities Report

20 of us had a good visit to Bardfield Vineyard on Monday 13th Sept 2021. The sun shone for us, we enjoyed the tour of the vineyard and learnt about the history of the estate, some of us fed the alpacas which live there. We enjoyed some wine tasting and then a ploughman's lunch. It was lovely to meet up with old friends again.

Margaret is waiting for the Christmas menu from the Bell in Panfield and then will be sending out details of our Christmas lunch. Unfortunately Weavers in Bocking are not able to do the meal this year.

Secretary's report

Online statistics - 1,034 web page visits and 1,937 page views in last month. Facebook shows 2,011 'likes', up 114 since the June meeting.

Planning Applications

UTT/21/0332/FUL Land at Tile Kiln Green Start Hill (Wren Kitchen depot). An appeal was made and then withdrawn and we expect further representations

UTT/21/1577/FUL Land to the south of Dunmow Road, The Street, Takeley on former paddock for 2 houses.

UTT/20/2784/FUL Land at Takeley Street next to Coppice Close Dunmow Road Takeley for 23 houses has been refused, although UTT/17/1852/FUL was approved previously for 20 houses.

The Squires, Little Canfield - Welbeck Land have out a scoping document for 90 houses on land to the north of the gravel pit.

UTT/19/2354/OP Land West of Buttleys Lane (60 houses). An appeal has been lodged against the planning permission refusal and written responses are required by 28 October 2021.

UTT/18/2574/OP Land south of Stortford Road (332 houses at Staggs & Folly farms). No decision has been made yet but a draft S106 has been produced which included £54,000 for drainage and surface improvements in the cutting and boardwalk section plus the creation of a bridleway and semi-hard, semi-permanent surfacing between Buttleys Lane and Ongar Road which is part of the Flitch Way connection.

UTT/20/2613/OP Land north of the B1256 Braintree Road, Dunmow for 38 houses. Investigate whether S106 funding could be available for upgraded bridge over the River Chelmer.

BDC/18/01605 Land south of Gilda Terrace. The Planning Inspector decided to allow the appeal on 27 Jul 2021 which was extremely disappointing. S106 includes £40k for FW.

Donations - Virgin Money have decided to stop their Donation service after the London Marathon, which is being run by Szabina Nemeth for our charity this year. All links to Virgin Money have been removed from our website but we will continue with the PayPal donation link.

AP16.1 Sandra to investigate a cost-effective solution for contactless donations as so few people carry cash now. Options could include Sumup and Zetel.

Work Party report

Since our last meeting we have carried out eight work parties with small numbers of volunteers increasing to 10 of late, installing interpretation boards at the Dunmow end of the Flitch, work on the Blackwater Rail Trail but more recently at Great Notley raking the wildflower banks there. In the current and coming weeks we will be working on the Dunmow Cutting raking the banks. A new member Rosie Schonenberger has joined and has started working with us. Chris Butcher who has been volunteering in the Carriage has also joined the Flitch work parties during this last period. Everyone who has attended is so glad to be back out and about and meeting up with our friends such good mental therapy for all!!

Railway Carriage update - The Carriage has been open to a total of 539 visitors on 89 occasions since the last meeting. Numbers of volunteers taking part has varied between one and four on each occasion.

Derek is worthy of a special mention. As well as showing visitors around the Carriage following re-opening, Derek previously spent time stationed outside the Carriage on 18 occasions during May, talking to people on the platform, gathering donations and selling a wide variety of items to raise funds, all the while following government guidelines.

Stan is grateful to all the Carriage volunteers who have spent time in the carriage since we re-opened, including Brian who continues to come in on Wednesdays to maintain the model layout. Thanks to Pam for keeping in contact with volunteers and maintaining the rota.

You may recall that Community Rail Partnership organized a walk (approximately 2 years ago) from Braintree Station to Rayne. They are hoping to do so again on the morning of Tuesday 23 November and have asked if a short talk on the history of the branch line could be given in the carriage to those taking part at the end of the walk. Stan is happy to do so and am waiting for confirmation of details.

Footpath group (P3) report – The following work parties have taken place since the last meeting:

- June. Boyton Cross, footpath clearance
Great Bardfield, start of major bridleway clearance.
- July. Braintree, footpath clearance
Great Bardfield, continuing on bridleway.
Barnston, installing steps and waymarker.
Braintree, footpath clearance around Springwood Industrial Estate
Boreham, waymarker installation.
Braintree, continuing footpath clearance at Springwood
Rayne, footpath clearance at Rayne Gardens
- August. 3 visits to continue clearing bridleway at Great Bardfield
Takeley, footpath clearance.
- September. 2 visits to Blackmore End, footpath clearance.
2 visits to Braintree, footpath clearance alongside A120 near Notley school.
Coggeshall, bridleway clearance.

Many positive comments in response to P3 work posted on Facebook. A major job to open up the bridleway at Great Bardfield, much appreciated by Parish Council who have donated £100 in recognition of the team's efforts. Awaiting response from Pete on how the money can be spent to benefit P3 work.

Two longstanding volunteers have recently stepped down and thanks to Bob Wright and Kevin French for stepping in. Pete would welcome further volunteers. Hard but varied work at different locations around the county as will be seen on Facebook.

Ranger's report

It's good to be back on the Flitch Way work parties again. Work parties have taken place in Dunmow Cutting and Tom is investigating the use of a robot mower for the top of the higher banks. Future work activities include a 3-4 week block of work at Notley Country Park, where we could advertise the work to the local community to see if they wanted to be involved.

Graham Butland, is the ECC Councillor responsible for Devolution, Art, Heritage and Culture which includes the country parks. He has asked to join a work party and understand the work of the group better.

We agreed to have the Flitch Way Xmas work party will take place in Garnetts Wood.

Either side of Rayne in particular really needs some TLC and cutting back and it was agreed to include that in our programme, on a date when Tom is not available. Bannister Green Halt also requires a facelift when Tom is available.

AP16.2 Sandra to ask Dick Hughes about how drainage could be improved between Braintree and Rayne.

AP16.3 Bob will approach SRC quarry to see if they can provide 20mm gravel for some of the paths in Garnetts Wood and High Cross Lane car park.

Any Other Business

Christmas We agreed to hold the Santa in the Carriage event on Friday 17 December between 10.30 and 3.30. We will offer up 170 tickets at £5 each. We already have most of the presents. This year we plan a changeover of Santa and his elves after 2.5 hours, with John and Stan acting as Santa.

John has also agreed to be Santa in the Toby restaurant on 11th, 12th, 18th and 19th December breakfast time 9am till 11.30am. Margaret and Wendy will be there collecting for the Friends of the Flitch Way. They have also asked if we can do other days in the following week but it depends on when we have our Father Christmas event in the carriage so we haven't committed to that yet.

A friend of Stan's has offered to organise a Xmas raffle on behalf of the Friends.

AP16.4 Stan to brief Josh at the Booking Hall Cafe on Santa dates

AP16.5 Sandra to investigate online ticketing.

Emergency contact list From day 1, Wendy as volunteer coordinator, has kept the list of confidential information of all volunteers for the purposes of contact in an emergency or if a volunteer should have an accident or become ill while on a Fritch work party, P3 activity or in the carriage. We discussed if this should continue and recommended that Pete hold the P3 data and Wendy is happy to continue holding the remainder.

Carriage TV John has requested that we buy a new 24 inch TV for the Railway Carriage as the current one is not working properly at an estimated cost £130. Sandra has a spare inherited TV which she is happy to donate if it is the right size, otherwise we agreed John could purchase a new one.

General Enquiries After discussion we agreed:

AP16.6 Sandra to let Rayne Platinum Jubilee celebration team know that we will be happy to support the fete.

AP16.7 Sandra to respond to Braintree Community Ad magazine and ask them to send us a list of questions which we could respond to for their article.

AP16.8 Sandra to add a website link to the Rayne Heritage Site.

AP16.9 Sandra to apply to BDC for free bulbs to plant at Rayne.

If a suitable opportunity arises, then we will respond to the request for the Chair of Braintree Council, Sue Wilson to attend.

Next meeting

Wednesday 10 November at 2pm.

There being no further matters to discuss, the Chairman thanked everybody for their contributions and brought the meeting to a close.