

Friends of the Flitch Way

Notes from Committee meeting of Tuesday 17th January 2017

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

Minutes of last meeting.

Accepted as a true record and signed by Chairman accordingly.

Matters arising and review of action points.

AP1. Felsted school have been approached re. recording audio memories. They are positive and have promised to provide more details on how they will proceed. Sandra will remind them.

AP2. Done.

AP3. Done, as per agenda for current meeting.

AP4. Done. Christmas social took place at Garnetts Wood.

AP5. Done. Contractor has visited both Langford and Garnetts.

AP6. Tom is liaising with bench supplier.

AP7. Done and get-together held in carriage. Less people attended than at previous meetings but most current volunteers attended and had an enjoyable evening.

AP8. Done. Bodywork repaired where required and upper section of carriage painted.

Chairman's report.

Fentons Farm bridge:

New ramp has been completed on west side of bridge but work required on east side ramp as it is steep and difficult to use for wheelchairs, prams etc. ECC have agreed to improve the ramp at some stage. A lot of litter/rubbish was churned up during the course of the work which has been cleared by Wendy and John. Landowner on west side of Flitch adjacent to bridge continues to encroach onto FW and has been reported to Rangers for action.

Santa in the carriage:

A successful day both inside and outside the carriage. Treasurer to give details of money raised on the day in her report. Reindeer at the café were very popular and attracted a lot of youngsters. Positive feedback received from visitors and Alan thanked everyone involved in the day.

Bonnington Green development response:

An outline proposal has been submitted to UDC for a further development at Takeley on the South side of the FW. An application for a different development on the same site was previously approved but did not go ahead and, in view of that, the feeling was that the current one would also be approved by UDC. Part of the current application was for a new pedestrian access onto the FW and for quite a narrow buffer between the development and the track with tree planting along the boundary. Sandra will draft a response for committee approval to UDC Planning re. concerns over the proposed new access point and will also request a buffer of between 20 and 100 metres between the development and the FW. **(AP1)** As the proposed development is on the South side of the track, care will also need to be taken with regard to the shading effect on the FW of any tree planting.

Projects at Langford Halt and Garnetts Wood:

Preparatory work in clearing the platform at the Halt has been completed by volunteers in readiness for the contractor's start, scheduled for 23rd January. Drafts for the information panels at the Halt have been agreed and delivery is awaited. An order for the new station sign is shortly to be placed by Stan **(AP2)** and Tom is progressing the order for benches for both Langford and Garnetts. It is believed that the footpath contractor has visited both sites and quotes for that work are awaited. **(AP3)** Plans for the signage required at Garnetts have yet to be drawn up and submitted and Tom is in the process of gathering information to enable that to be done. **(AP4)** Separate grants were awarded by Tesco for the two sites and need to be spent by mid-April. Although expenditure on Langford will be completed by then, the meeting agreed that care needed to be taken to ensure that the work at Garnetts was completed and paid for within the time allowed.

Social:

Alan said that the volunteers' Christmas meal at Wildens restaurant had gone very well and he thanked Margaret for organizing the event. Wednesday 20th December has been booked for the 2017 meal.

Carriage:

Alan thanked Brian, Andy, John Easter and John West for the excellent work done on weatherproofing the ends of the carriage and for all the volunteers who helped with the painting.

BDVSA nominations for Volunteer of the Year award:

Categories included long service for individual volunteers and for groups as a whole. The latter was felt appropriate for the Friends and Wendy agreed to prepare a submission for approval by the committee. **(AP5)**

Treasurer's report.

Friends' current account stands at £8,533.01 with £1,600.02 in a savings account, the latter being a contingency fund, primarily for any expenditure on removing the carriage from its site should that ever become necessary. A sum of £800 will be added to that account each year. £2,601.11 of the current account is part of the Langford Halt grant from Tesco and the balance of the grant, £3,000, will be given on completion of the project and submission of relevant invoices, photos etc.

Re. the Christmas event at the carriage, £95 was spent on children's presents and £97 received from sale of tickets. £133.36 was collected from the tombola stall and nail game and £22.72 received in carriage donations.

The monthly standing order for electricity in the carriage has been increased from £15 to £75 but sufficient donations are being received from visitors to cover that amount.

Alan thanked Margaret for her input and for the work done on changing the bank account which had turned out to be a lengthy process.

Alan asked that a formal receipt be sent to Graham B for the generous donation of £200 which he had made. Wendy agreed to do so. **(AP6)**

Social report.

Margaret agreed with Alan that the Christmas meal had been very successful with a full house of volunteers and partners attending. A date for 2017 had been agreed accordingly.

A trip to Fingringhoe Wick nature reserve is proposed for May or June. Margaret and Wendy will enquire into combining a guided tour of the reserve with a meal at a nearby pub. **(AP7)**

Secretary's report.

Local Nature Reserve Declaration:

Work continues on the creation of the FW management plan in support of LNR designation. Both UDC and BDC have agreed to include it in their Local Plans once it has been designated. Alan said that Tim Dixon, Head of Country Parks, has been very complimentary re. Sandra's input on LNR designation.

Online media statistics and enquiries:

Sandra reported that there had been 250 web page visits and 833 page views in the previous week, the top pages being Flitch Way 147, Join 77, and Blackwater Rail Trail 69. Facebook continues to grow with 522 'likes' and 100+ followers since the previous meeting. The most popular post was the completion of the Mill Lane ramp.

There have been 7 contact form enquiries via the website since the last meeting including 2 complaints about the Grange Lane track near Great Dunmow, a history enquiry, a report of a dog attack, a thank you for P3 group and a cycle group enquiry.

Online donations link:

Secretary is in the process of setting up an online donations link on the website which would allow donations to FW funds to be made directly. To allow her to do so, Sandra said that she needs to be set up as a Trustee of Friends charity. Stan will do so via the Charity Commission website. **(AP8)** Secretary will liaise with Treasurer as necessary.

Alternative route around Little Dunmow:

An alternative route for use by FW users has been drafted by Sandra with input from Sustrans. Approval of the route is awaited from ECC Country Parks. **(AP9)**

Flitch Way Action Group:

Will be holding their first AGM on 20th February at Foakes Hall, Dunmow. Interested parties are welcome to attend. Stan is the keynote speaker. With regard to the proposed new bridleway, Sandra reported that matters were moving along albeit slowly.

Work party report.

Various sites visited since the last meeting with current work parties concentrated at Takeley where a lot of cutting back has been done in areas which had not been worked on for quite a few years. Volunteer attendance continues to be good with a current average of 12 persons per work party. 3 new volunteers have been recruited since the previous meeting.

Railway Carriage update.

Although detailed statistics were not available, Wendy reported that weekend openings had been covered, mostly by the same group of volunteers. The carriage had also been opened on some days during school holidays.

Alan's earlier thanks to those involved in working on the outside of the carriage were echoed. Stan said that Braintree Easy Riders cycle group had recently held a committee meeting in the carriage and had made a further booking for March. A donation of £20 was made by the group. It was felt that the background heating in the carriage had been successful, particularly in protecting paperwork, with blower heaters being used if required when the carriage was open to visitors. John will move one of the existing heaters into the staff room which was very cold. Although it was still weatherproof, some concern over the flaking/bubbling of the paint on the carriage roof was expressed, particularly given the work put in by volunteers on repainting the roof in 2016. It was felt that enquiries needed to be made to find a surface which would not deteriorate in such a short period of time. The meeting agreed that for health and safety reasons it was unreasonable to expect volunteers to get up on the roof to do the work and for that reason a professional business/contractor would need to be engaged. Some form of rubberised material on the roof was felt to be required. **(AP10)** John will identify potential businesses and quotes for the work will be obtained in order for applications for grant funding

to be made.

Footpath work group (P3) report.

The group continues to be in demand at various places around the county and 11 work parties have taken place since the last meeting with an average of 7 volunteers attending. A variety of tasks have been undertaken including clearance, way marker, bridge replacement and gate installation at Pleshey, Bambers Green, Clavering, Maylandsea, Rickling, Ashen and Heckfordbridge. Forthcoming work includes repairing and installing a boardwalk at Earls Colne.

Ranger's report.

In Tom's absence, carried forward to the next meeting, together with discussions on the Wood Processor and Chipper. **(AP11)**

Any Other Business

It was agreed that the Friends sign up as a member of Essex Field Club.

A bird survey of FW was planned with assistance from U3A members. Guidance on the required process and format of the survey will be sought from EFC.

A possible speaker for FW AGM was somebody from Easton Lodge and Wendy will make contact with them.

Sandra advised that Cheryl was helping with information to go on the website.

Best wishes were given to Richard Bicheno who had recently left as a CP Ranger to take up employment in the private sector.

Next Meeting.

Tuesday 7th March at Alan's.

Annual General Meeting 12th May. Wendy to check availability of Discovery Centre. **(AP12)**

There being nothing further to discuss, Alan thanked Sandra for her hospitality and brought the meeting to a close.

Summary of Action Points for next meeting.

(AP1) Sandra to draft a response to UDC re Bonnington Green Development.

(AP2) Stan to update on Langford and Ulting station sign.

(AP3) Stan to update on footpath re-surfacing quotes. ***(Now received)**

(AP4) Tom to update on Garnetts signage.

(AP5) Wendy re submission for volunteer group award.

(AP6) Wendy to issue receipt for donation.

(AP7) Wendy/Margaret re Fingringhoe visit.

(AP8) Stan re setting Sandra up as Trustee.

(AP9) Sandra re approval for alternative route at Little Dunmow ***(now received)**

(AP10) John re carriage roofing quotes.

(AP11) Tom re Wood Processor and Chipper.

(AP12) Wendy re availability of Discover Centre for AGM ***(confirmed for 6.30pm, 12/5)**