

Friends of the Flitch Way and Associated Woodlands

Notes from Annual General Meeting

Venue: Discovery Centre, Great Notley Country Park

Date: Friday 11th May 2012

Chairman welcomed everybody to the meeting which began with an interesting and informative talk by Robin Cottrill of the Essex and Suffolk Dormouse Project. At the end of his presentation, Stan thanked Robin for coming and asked for questions from the floor. Questions having been answered, the meeting broke for a short interval for refreshments. Stan encouraged those who had not already done so to look during the break at the many splendid photographs taken by Andrew Bloomfield of work done by volunteers on Flitch Way and P3 work parties.

Stan explained the purposes of the AGM to be to hear reports on what had happened within the group during 2011-12, to consider the charity's accounts and to elect officers and committee members for the coming year. The AGM also gave members the opportunity to ask questions of the elected officers. Stan introduced the full committee to those present. The meeting then followed the previously issued agenda as follows:

1. To accept the minutes of the 2011 Annual General Meeting.

Having confirmed minutes having been issued and received, Stan asked for a proposer and seconder to their being accepted. Proposed by Carl Blamire and seconded by John Moss. Minutes duly noted and accepted.

2. Chairman's report. Stan Davies

Stan said that the charity had been formed in 2004-05 to work with the Rangers in maintaining and improving the Flitch Way for the benefit of the community and visitors and to widen knowledge of the environment and the flora and fauna to be found on an around the Flitch Way. Stan felt that those aims to have been achieved over the years, all at negligible cost to Essex County Council, and continued to be so, thereby contributing in no small part to the success of the Flitch Way. For that we deserved all the praise which we received, it was felt.

Chairman said that several examples of the Friends' initiatives in 2011-12 stood out .

- (i) The production of the Flitch Way leaflet, designed and financed by the Friends and which was available to visitors at a number of sites.
- (ii) The design, purchase and installation of the latest information board and benches in Dunmow Cutting.
- (iii) The re-instatement of the two Halts at Bannister Green and Stane Street which had been done over summer 2011 and which had received a lot of praise as well as good coverage in the local press.

The Halts project had been very much driven by Jim Cloke who had spoken at the previous AGM about getting a carriage installed at Rayne as part of the ongoing plan to restore some of the railway history of the Flitch Way. Efforts to obtain grant funding have been unsuccessful so far but despite that and other setbacks, we continue to search for the right carriage and the funds to pay for it. What was important was that we had the right levels of support at all levels for the project. Once the carriage was on site, input from current volunteers as well as from the local community would be needed. Stan thanked Jim and Pete for the tremendous time and effort which they continued to put in to find a suitable carriage and the funding to cover it.

Stan thanked all the volunteers who had attended work parties during the year, regardless of the weather. Thanks were also due to Tom Hamilton who had Ranger responsibility for the volunteers.

Treasurer's Report and presentation of Accounts. Margaret James

Referring to the balance sheet which showed a profit of £719.72, Margaret said that she had a breakdown of the figures making up that figure available if required. A breakdown of donations was provided in answer to a question from the floor. Stan asked for a proposal to

be made to accept the accounts. That was done and the meeting voted unanimously to do so.

Stan thanked Margaret for her contribution as treasurer during the year, particularly after a difficult start dealing with bank bureaucracy.

Secretary's Report. Wendy Moss

Wendy detailed many of the sites at which work parties had taken place during the year, mostly under Ranger supervision but occasionally without. Reference was made to Dunmow Cutting where 3 full banks had been cut, resulting in a good show of wild flowers. An information board and two benches had also been placed in the cutting, paid for from a grant awarded by Uttlesford District Council which covered other items also. It was planned to shortly seek further funding from UDC to enable another wildlife information board to be installed, probably in the High Cross Lane section. Wendy said that messages thanking the Friends for their work had been received from Rayne P.C., Dunmow T.C., Uttlesford D.C. and Lesley Gillman of Little Canfield P.C.

Details of work parties up to the end of May have been sent out involving a variety of sites and tasks and Wendy thanked volunteers and Rangers for their work during the year. Wendy said that the Friends had been asked to give assistance at the Rayne Festival which was taking place at Rayne Station in July. The Friends were one of the beneficiaries of proceeds from the event and volunteers were asked to put their names forward to Wendy. Referring to Wendy's earlier comment on volunteers working without Ranger supervision, Stan asked Steve Bunn for confirmation that they were covered for insurance purposes on such occasions. He said that he would check and report to the committee. Stan paid tribute to the huge amount of 'behind the scenes' work done by Wendy in her capacity as secretary. Most went un-noticed but the group was very dependent on Wendy's organizational skills which were much appreciated.

Parish Paths Partnership Report. Pete Lane

Pete gave the background to the Parish Paths Partnership (P3) and explained what the group did. He provided a list of the 24 different sites covering the whole of Essex which our group had worked at in the previous year. During the year, 58 waymarker posts had been installed and 6 standard and 3 large bridges had been built and fixed on site. 35 steps with handrails and 5 field gates had been put in and several footpaths and bridleways opened up or improved. Friends of the Flitch Way installation logos were fixed to wooden structures when tasks were completed.

14 volunteers had worked on P3 tasks during the year and Pete expressed thanks for the hard work done by the group and for the enjoyment gained by everybody involved as well as to Adam Jenkins, Public Rights of Way Officer for his support. Pete also referred to footpath surveys done by Pat and Linda, together with Andrew and Pauline which could form the basis for future work parties.

Stan thanked Pete and Ann for their support and guidance as leaders of our P3 group, both of whom put in a lot of behind the scenes work before and after each work party.

Ranger's Report. Steve Bunn

Steve said that, apart from the national volunteering organizations, the Friends of the Flitch Way was the largest volunteer group in Essex and probably beyond. Referring to the 8 years since the Friends' had been formed he praised the tremendous amount and range of work done in that time as well as the range of skills which individual volunteers had and quoted many examples of what the group achieved. He commented that 86 work parties had been completed in the last 12 months which equated to over 4,000 volunteer hours. Fundraising efforts had produced over £43,000 since the formation of the Friends group, Steve said. The subject of volunteers had been discussed recently at a series of forums at Cressing Temple, Steve stated, and the Friends ticked all the boxes in the categories of good volunteering practice.

Steve expressed his thanks and those of his Ranger colleagues for the amount and quality of work which the Friends continued to produce.

Members' proposed resolutions.

There were none.

Election of Officers and Committee.

Wendy confirmed that members had been circulated with details of the AGM and that she had had no nominations submitted.

Stan asked, therefore, whether members wished the current committee to continue in their posts for the year 2012-2013. The meeting voted unanimously for them to do so and the following persons were re-appointed accordingly:-

Chairman: Stan Davies.

Treasurer: Margaret James

Secretary: Wendy Moss.

Committee members: Andrew Bloomfield. Bob Lucas.

Wendy asked that anybody interested in either coming on the committee or in attending meetings during the year to let herself know. Dates of the next meeting were always included in the minutes of meetings which were sent to all members.

Any Other Business.

Carl asked whether more of the flower and insect photographs which he and Val had taken could be put on the Friends website. Wendy and Stan agreed to look into doing so.

Carl also asked whether the number of hits which the Friends website received was known.

Pete lane said that he would try to find the required information.

Margaret asked for suggestions for this year's group summer outing to go to her or to Wendy.

Margaret also asked whether members wanted a change from The Bell at Panfield for our Christmas lunch. The Green Dragon at Great Leighs was suggested and will be looked into.

Any further suggestions, or preferences to return to The Bell, to go to Margaret or Wendy.

There being no further business to discuss, Stan brought the meeting to a close after thanking everybody for attending. He concluded by saying that the 'friends' in the name of our charity was very appropriate and he hoped that would continue to be the case.