

Friends of the Flich Way

Notes from Committee meeting of Monday 1st August 2016

Venue Railway Carriage, Rayne
Present Chairman, Alan Trigg. Secretary, Sandra Reynolds.
Treasurer, Margaret James.
Committee members, Val Blamire, Stan Davies, Bob Lucas,
John Moss, Wendy Moss
Tom Hamilton, Ranger

1. Minutes of the last meeting

Accepted as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman accordingly.

2. Matters arising from the minutes.

Letter of thanks for their donation has been sent to Dunmow Beavers.

3. Chairman's report

Apart from the maintenance work done around the station, no work parties have taken place since the last meeting. Other than thanking the volunteers for their contribution on the day, Alan had little to add accordingly.

4. Treasurer's report.

Current balance is £16,496. That figure includes the £9,000 from Tesco, being 75% of the funding for the Langford Halt project. The balance will be paid on completion of the work. The figure also includes the £400 donation from the recent Rayne Festival for which **(AP1) Wendy** will send a letter of thanks to Josh and Grace of the Booking Hall Café. Weekly donations between £12 and £25 continue to be made by carriage volunteers and £53 had been taken from the box in café earlier in the day, that coming from book and leaflet sales.

(AP2) Stan will contact Braintree Athletic Club regarding the £1,400 they had raised from their run and which they had promised to the Friends.

(AP3) Margaret will go ahead with the changeover of the Friends account from Co-operative Bank to Nat West.

5. Secretary's report.

Sandra referred to printouts showing the increasing number of hits on the website and Facebook pages.

A number of enquiries have been made through the website which she had responded to, several referring to difficulties encountered around the Travellers Site at Little Dunmow and which would be discussed later in the meeting.

Comments have been made most recently about the closure of the bridge by ECC Highways which would also be discussed at the meeting.

Secretary said that she had made contact with the person who offered printing services at little or no cost and who could be a useful person to have on board.

(AP4) Sandra to distribute details of offer of printing services help to committee.

6. P3 report

Footpaths team continues work each Wednesday at various sites. Since the last meeting, several visits have been made to Radwinter where stiles were replaced with gates and bridges and way marker posts were installed and to Crix Green where 2 bridges were built. Between 6 and 9 volunteers have attended each work party.

7. Ranger's report

Tom reported that he had recently been cutting back the verges of the track which had revealed a lot of litter. A litter pick was arranged for the following day. While working along the track, Tom said that he had also been identifying potential work sites. Regular work parties were planned to start from the second week in September at Dunmow Cutting. As well as the usual clearance of the banks, some work to improve drainage in parts of the cutting might also be done.

With regard to having fires while on work parties, Tom said that they hadn't been banned but greater management of fire sites would be required which he would discuss as work parties took place.

There was no objection to work parties taking place without a Ranger being present. New risk assessment guidelines have been issued by Country Parks, however, which Tom will also discuss with individuals regarding use of tools, particularly the hedge trimmer and other machinery. Health and Safety booklets previously issued to volunteers will be updated.

Regarding the Langford Halt and Garnetts Wood project, Tom will act as project manager as previously agreed. For the footpaths at both sites and the car park improvements at Garnetts, he is of a mind to use the contractor who has done similar work at Great Notley and who was normally available to start within a reasonable time of agreeing the work to be done. Tom felt late Autumn/early Winter to be the best time for the work to be done. The platform at Langford Halt was more of a problem, it was felt. Several committee members had recently visited the site and found the platform completely overgrown. It would be necessary, therefore, to clear the front and top of the platform even before asking contractors to visit and give estimates for the work to be done as what was required to be done could not be seen at present. Tom said that it was planned for him to do cutting back work along the Blackwater Rail Trail in late September and that would be a good opportunity for volunteers to do the required clearance around the platform. The meeting was reminded that as a condition of receiving the Tesco grant, all work included in the applications needed to be completed by 18th April 2017.

(AP5) Wendy agreed to contact the current owners of the station house at Langford Halt to let them know what work was planned and get them on side as their garden backed on to the platform.

(AP6) Stan has a list of builders who he will contact, initially to discover whether any would be interested in doing the required work on the platform structure. Following on from that, the area would need to be cleared before inviting interested parties to submit quotes for the work.

Re the Travellers Site, the increased number of reported incidents was acknowledged, and although not the answer to the problem, an alternative route around the site has been put

on the Friends website and is available in the carriage. Tom encouraged everyone to report all incidents to the police. He said that he awaited feedback from Jenny who had met with Steve Andrews, the ECC Traveller Unit Manager, as to what was planned to happen, the proposal being that contractors be used to clear commercial type waste with volunteers following up. The costs involved in getting the work done were down to Country Parks who have an extremely tight budget. **(AP7) Tom** will report back on progress at the Traveller Site.

Mill Lane bridge had been closed by ECC Highways on discovering the dangerous state of the bridge. Tom said that as soon as Country Parks had been notified, he had made urgent contact with all interested parties including the Parish Council and Rayne Riding School. It was possible for pedestrians and cyclists to go around the bridge from either side by using the steps and slope and an alternative route for bridleway users has been posted on the fencing enclosing the bridge. It was felt that some of the criticism of ECC posted on social media about the closure had been unfair as Highways had had no alternative but to close off the track due to the real danger of people passing under the bridge being injured by falling masonry. Tom said that he had no idea of Highway's plans regarding the future of the bridge which all agreed was an integral part of the Fritch Way and its history.

8. Railway Carriage

Stan expressed the Committee's thanks to Andy Horder and John West for the work they were doing on repairing carriage bodywork. Once that has been finished, volunteers will be invited to give the sides of the carriage a fresh coat of paint.

Pam was also thanked for her continuing efforts in getting volunteers to open the carriage to visitors. It was hoped that sufficient numbers would come forward to allow opening on some weekdays during school holidays as well as at the weekend. Stan said that a new volunteer had recently been inducted.

Wendy advised that the window cleaner would no longer clean the insides of the carriage windows due to the time taken in moving items and his fear of causing damage in doing so. The outside of the windows would continue to be cleaned however, with Brian and Roy looking after the inside.

(AP8) Sandra suggested ways of encouraging visitors to put their thoughts on the online TripAdvisor site as well as in the carriage visitors book.

Several specific donations to the carriage have been received, from Dunmow Beavers, Braintree Athletic Club and Rayne Festival. It was felt that such donations should be allocated to specific items rather than going into the general "pot".

(AP9) Stan will update enquiries into buying a wind-up device which visitors could access and hear information and stories about the branch line. The cost would be in the region of £1,200, Stan said and people such as Sam Marriage or Jim Gepp could be approached to record material to go on it. Stan will report back once he had more information.

9. Online donations

(AP10) Sandra will set up the online donation system on the Friends website once the bank account is changed.

10. Use of wood processor and chipper

Tom confirmed that the chipper would be used during Autumn work parties.

Although suitable timber had been felled and left on site during the Autumn/Winter period, the wood processor had not been used and no income from wood sales had been received as a consequence. The reason for that was the lack of storage space at Great Notley, the previous place adjacent to the Discovery Centre judged to be no longer appropriate. There appeared to be no plans for the situation to change in the near future and the committee questioned whether the processor should be sold rather than being left unused.

(AP11) Tom was aware of the processor underuse concerns but asked that the matter of the processors' disposal be left for discussion until the next meeting

11. Any other business

An enquiry had been made about installing a memorial bench somewhere along the Flich Way. Tom said that any such requests needed to be submitted to Country Parks.

Sandra was pleased to announce that Cheryl Harris had agreed to be the back up person for the website.

Sandra reported that the proposed housing development at Saling could affect the Flich Way near Felsted. Tom was not aware of the proposal

(AP12) Sandra to circulate details of Saling housing proposals

Sandra also said that Braintree Council were preparing a cycle strategy covering Braintree, Witham and Halstead.

(AP13) Sandra will get further information on cycling strategy and update the committee

Margaret said that the social event at Paper Mill Lock had gone very well with good weather on the day. The next outing would be to Ingatestone Hall in September. 33 people have booked to go and more names were needed in order to make up 2 groups, the maximum number for guided tours being 25.

Stan referred to the event taking place at Rayne Village Hall on Sunday 7th August as a fundraiser for the "Stop Brook Green" group. John agreed to set up the FoFW gazebo and cover the first session from 12 noon to 2 pm when Stan will take over. As well as the usual FoFW leaflets etc, John will bring books for sale and the Nail Game. Others were invited to come along and help.

Tom said that he and Tim Dixon (ECC Head of Country Parks) would be having an on-site meeting in the Little Canfield area with the ECC Land Agent to discuss Flich Way encroachment by the developers.

Chairman will be on holiday between 7th and 23rd August.

Congratulations were offered to Claire and Steve Bunn on the recent birth of their son.

Next Committee meeting

The next meeting will be Tues 11th October at 7pm at Stan's, 13 Keats Avenue, Braintree.

There being nothing further to discuss, Alan brought the meeting to a close.

Summary of Action Points

(AP1) Wendy will send a letter of thanks to Josh and Grace of the Booking Hall Café.

(AP2) Stan will contact Braintree Athletic Club regarding the £1,400 they had raised from their run and which they had promised to the Friends.

(AP3) Margaret will go ahead with the changeover of the Friends account from Co-operative Bank to Nat West.

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