

## Friends of the Flich Way

### Notes from Committee meeting of Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2016

**Venue** 31 Kidder Road, Rayne  
**Present** Chairman Stan Davies, Vice Chairman Alan Trigg  
Secretary Wendy Moss, Treasurer Margaret James  
Committee members Val Blamire, Bob Lucas, John Moss

The minutes of the meeting of 6 October were agreed.

#### **Matters arising from the minutes**

Stan reported that the talk to the local history group had taken place at Braintree museum on 6 November and had been well received. A donation to Friends funds had been made by the group and Val had collected further funds from individual members in attendance, amounting to a total sum in the region of £90

The hedge work at Rayne station requested by the scout hall had also taken place.

Samples of Christmas cards had been produced by a local artist and the committee agreed with the decision not to proceed. Consideration of producing something for 2016 will be taken later in the year.

Tom advised that the mower, used at Rayne station had been fixed. There were some issues with regard to the condition of the machine, however, which will be addressed before it is next used.

#### **Chairman's report.**

Stan said that he had nothing specific to report that would not be covered later in the meeting under various topics.

#### **Treasurer's report.**

Balance of bank account currently stands at £6,923.10, Margaret reported, which included the £777 raised at the Christmas event in the carriage.

Donations from visitors to the carriage had decreased as expected but the direct debit for power to the carriage had been reduced to £15 per month since the previous meeting and a refund of £78, overpaid in the previous year, has been received. A close check on power consumption continued to be made with John taking a meter reading every Monday.

Enquiries to change our account to a bank located in Braintree continued and Margaret said that she intended approaching Barclays and Nat West shortly, both of which appeared to be more customer friendly than others. It was agreed that there needed to be three signatories, Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, with cheques to be signed by 2 of those 3. A savings account would also be opened to hold the carriage contingency fund, it having previously been agreed to build up to a sum of £4,000 to be used in the event of the carriage needing to be disposed of and removed from the site.

#### **Secretary's report.**

Wendy said that 17 work parties had taken place since the previous meeting with an average of 10 volunteers attending.

4 new carriage volunteers have been recruited.

The carriage opened to visitors for 20 days in October, 19 in November and 12 in December with a total of 4,688 visitors from April to the end of December.

Wendy said that 2 applications for grant funding had recently been submitted and she asked Tom to give some background information. He said that the Environment Manager at ECC had advised that funding was available from Tesco under their local community grant scheme and encouraged applications to be made. Grants of up to £12,000 per project are available. There had been very little time to do so before the closing date for applications but he and Wendy had submitted 2 project ideas, one around Langford Halt on the Blackwater Rail Trail and one at Garnetts Wood. Both involved improvements to footpath or car park surfacing, installation of benches and picnic tables, installation of interpretation boards and circular route markers. Although the information provided in the applications did not ask for too much detailed information, positive responses have been received to both and consideration is currently being given to them. The outcome of both applications is awaited.

Wendy expressed disappointment and frustration about the lack of response from Stephen Andrews at County Hall who is the person responsible for travellers sites in the County. The footpath at Felsted Station is in desperate need for a clean up and complaints are regularly received from people trying to access the Flitch Way at that point. Although both Friends' volunteers and Sandra Reynolds on behalf of Sustrans have repeatedly offered assistance to do the clearance, no response has been received from Stephen Andrews. Tom could only suggest the Friends making a formal complaint to Tim Dixon to see whether that would have any effect.

### **P3 report.**

Regular Wednesday work parties continue with visits to the following having taken place since the last meeting.

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| October:  | Hempstead, clearing footpath through wood.  |
| November: | Woodham Walter, installing bridge and 8 steps and re-siting way marker post that had been blocking the footpath.<br>Stow Maries. 2 visits, widening a bridleway on an old railway line.                                       |
| December  | Stow Maries, continuing work.<br>Debden, relocating footpath from field edge to edge of wood and installing way marker posts.<br>Great Tey. 2 visits on a major job in opening up a sunken lane to become a restricted byway. |

A letter had been received from the Parish Council at Wakes Colne, thanking the team for the work done in that area.

Pete reported that more volunteers were needed to go out on P3 work.

### **Ranger's report.**

Tom said that he was currently working along the Flitch using the tractor and flail, during the course of which he was surveying areas for follow up work by the volunteers. One area he had identified was at Little Dunmow where cutting back and high pruning was needed, together with a lot of work to improve drainage along that section. There being no funds available for Country Parks to do so, the Committee agreed that the Friends would cover the cost of hiring a digger to do the work. Tom will obtain prices and suggest dates for doing the work.

Volunteers were currently involved on hedge laying at Great Notley which are estimated to take 4 work parties to complete. There was also some light trimming to be done there. Val commented that it was important to have work parties along the Flitch in order to retain the volunteers who didn't want to work elsewhere. Wendy had asked for work party suggestions from members and reference was made to the list of potential jobs, some of which were along the Flitch Way.

The need for drainage and surface work to be done at Pods Brook Road bridge had been highlighted by Gordon Glanfield but that area was noted as being proper to Braintree District Council whose Flitch Way responsibility went from Braintree station to Clap bridge, west of Pods Brook Road. Wendy will refer the matter to BDC.

Poor drainage was also a problem at several places along the FW including the area east of the village hall at Rayne where ditch digging was required. Wendy will circulate members to see whether that could be done in the week commencing 18<sup>th</sup> January.

The Little Dunmow stretch which Tom had identified could possibly be done once the hedge laying had finished.

Tom agreed that ditches needed digging out at Dunmow Cutting and suggested that be done in September at the same time as the banks were cut.

Dick had proposed work parties taking place West of Takeley Station and Tom will have a look at the area.

Litter clearance proposal for the Rayne to Pods Brook Road stretch had been covered by the work party earlier in the day. The area around the travellers' site at Felsted had already been discussed and was dependent on the involvement of the responsible person at ECC.

Sandra Reynolds had made a number of suggestions some of which were proper to Public Rights of Way or Highways and Tom will follow those up. Those relating to the Flitch will be considered and discussed further in due course. Sandra had also suggested a project to create an art trail map covering Rayne, Braintree and Great Notley which the committee felt was worth further consideration. In relation to that, Tom mentioned a "Crowd Funding" scheme which had been referred to him by Tim Dixon who felt it could be something worth following up. There was a related website and, put simply, the idea is to come up with ideas and proposals which would capture the public's imagination. All agreed how hard it was to identify such projects but Sandra's idea could be worth exploring.

### **Carriage.**

A get-together of carriage stewards took place in the carriage before Christmas and had been a very pleasant social event, giving the opportunity for faces to be put to names and to get feedback and suggestions.

Fixed heaters linked to a thermostat have been installed since the last meeting, to come on when the temperature drops below a set level. Although the idea was that when the carriage is open on colder days, stewards could turn the thermostat to a higher setting in order to make the carriage more comfortable, that doesn't seem to be working at present and the electrician is to be asked to check the heaters and thermostat to try and rectify matters. In the meantime, the blower/heater can be used by stewards when the carriage is open to the public or when any work is taking place inside. \* see footnote

Although the carriage roof is still weatherproof, the paintwork on the southern, New Road, side has deteriorated due to having the sun shining on it all day causing blistering. It had been the intention to scrape and re-paint the carriage roof before the onset of winter but that had not proved possible and will now take place in early spring. Examination of the whole carriage can also take place then with any repairs or painting to the bodywork done at the same time.

As Margaret had reported earlier, electric usage continues to be monitored each week and although numbers of visitors have dropped off because of the weather with a consequent reduction in donations, it is hoped that the carriage will be near to being self sufficient so far as heating and lighting costs are concerned.

A visit from members and supporters of the Fritch Way Action Group will take place on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> January. The carriage will remain open to the public during their visit. At present, the only other planned visit is on the evening of 14 July when Weathersfield History Group have requested a visit and a talk on the history of the branch line.

#### **Any other business.**

Stan reported that following a request from Essex Community Foundation, the High Sherriff Award shield which we won in 2015 has been returned to them. Similarly, the Rayne signal box sign and the bridge number plate have been returned to the owner, having only been lent to us until Christmas.

Val commented on the draft for the Friends website which Sandra had prepared. Everybody agreed it to be a big improvement on the old and Stan thanked Sandra for all the IT work she was doing for the Friends.

Margaret felt that the Christmas lunch at Bocking had gone well and the same venue has been booked for 2016, on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> December.

Margaret and Wendy will attend a travel show at Marks Hall later in February to get ideas for summer outings for the group. 2 suggested possibilities for the group are another sail from Paper Mill Lock and a sail from the Quay at Sudbury.

Wendy has had an e-mail from Martyn Phillips of Rayne PC asking if the Friends would be interested in acquiring a red telephone box for the platform. It currently stands on Shalford Road. Agreed in principle but Wendy will need to check with Country Parks and speak to Josh at the café. One suggestion was for it to be placed at the corner of the station building next to the entrance to the platform. The offer has not yet been formally agreed by the Parish Council, however, and removal costs could be a factor in whether we took it or not.

Wendy showed the meeting a letter sent to Andrew and Irene from Little Havens Hospice thanking them for the donation of £95 collected at the Christmas meal.

With her Fritch Way Action Group hat on, Sandra has asked whether the Friends would issue a letter of support for the proposed bridleway at Dunmow. The background is that one

of the landowners affected by the new bridleway has objected to the proposed route. Essex Public Rights of Way wants to issue a formal notice to get the bridleway link established and has asked for letters of support from interested parties. The meeting agreed to do so and Stan will draft a reply and circulate it to committee members for agreement prior to sending it out.

Val reminded the meeting that Braintree Athletics Club had offered to do a sponsored run in March with the proceeds going to the Friends.

Date for the AGM was proposed for Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May, subject to Tom confirming availability of the Discovery Centre that evening. Stan asked for suggestions of a suitable speaker. A pre-AGM meeting will be held at Bob's on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March.

There being nothing more to discuss, Stan thanked Wendy and John for their hospitality and brought the meeting to a close at 9.20pm

**\*footnote.**

Wendy accompanied the electrician when he visited the carriage. There is nothing wrong with either the heaters or the thermostat. Following instructions on what he believed was required, the heaters which he purchased and fitted are on all the time and kick in once the temperature drops to the agreed minimum level and that is what is happening now. The wattage of the heaters and their wiring will not allow higher temperatures to be achieved, regardless of how high the thermostat is set. The 2 heaters in the museum could be replaced by ones with a higher capacity but that would require re-wiring and obviously incur replacement costs, together with using more power. The electrician will give us a price to do that work in order for us to consider whether that is what we require. He also suggested that the lobby areas at the ends of the carriage could be better insulated.

3 suggestions for action.

The former heating vents under the seats to be blocked to prevent cold air from beneath the carriage from circulating.

The sliding door was removed from the Braintree end of the carriage and put in the centre, the view being that it would provide more privacy if we had pre-booked groups holding meetings at the same time as people were visiting the museum. As that hasn't happened, the door to be put back in its former position.

The lobby areas to be reviewed to see if they could be better insulated

