

Notes from Friends of the Flich Way Annual General Meeting

Date: Friday 12th May 2017
Venue: Discovery Centre, Great Notley Country Park
Present: Chairman - Alan Trigg, Secretary - Sandra Reynolds, Treasurer - Margaret James, Volunteer co-ordinator - Wendy Moss, Committee members - Val Blamire, Stan Davies, Bob Lucas, John Moss

Names of all attendees shown at foot of report.

Chairman thanked everybody for attending the 13th Annual General Meeting of the Friends and confirmed that everybody had a copy of the charity's annual accounts and associated papers. Alan welcomed guest speaker Claire Mathews who proceeded to give an informative and entertaining talk on Daisy Greville, Countess of Warwick and the forgotten gardens of Easton Lodge.

After thanking Claire for her presentation and taking a short break for refreshments, the Chairman began the formal part of the meeting by referring to the minutes of the 2016 AGM. There were no matters arising and a proposal to accept as a true record was made by William Chastell and seconded by Alan Harris. The Minutes were accepted unanimously

Chairman's report

Another interesting year for the Friends, particularly the successful completion of the Langford Halt project, photos of which were on display. Alan said that details of other achievements would be reported on by other speakers as the meeting progressed. Overall, it was pleasing to note that the objectives set out in the Constitution when the charity was formed continue to be met.

On behalf of the Trustees, Alan wished to record thanks to a number of individuals.

Wendy Moss, chief organizer for work parties who stood down as secretary at the start of the year but has supported Sandra in her new role during the year.

Chairman added that Wendy was one of the founder members of the Friends and continues to be the person to contact about all things connected to the group as well as being a valued committee member and volunteer co-ordinator.

Margaret James, treasurer and social secretary who continues to expertly manage the charity's increasingly complicated finances as well as organizing group outings.

Sandra Reynolds for taking over the secretary's role at the start of the year in her stride despite being laid up following an operation. Sandra continues to do a tremendous job re-vamping and improving the Friends website as well as project managing our 2 key projects during the year. Alan said that Sandra has also been instrumental in preparing a case to have the Flich Way declared as a Local Nature Reserve, receiving plaudits from Essex County Council for the work she has done.

Pam Maskell, co-ordinator for carriage stewards who often has the frustrating task of organizing people to fill the rota. Carriage volunteers play an important role and continue to be needed, Alan said, mainly at weekends but also during school holidays. He urged members to keep in touch with Pam if they had any time to help in the carriage.

Andrew Adair for all the work done on the Friends' behalf in lodging objections to the proposed Brook Green development and, together with Sandra, dealing with matters arising from the application to have the Flitch Way listed, along with a few encroachment issues.

Pete and Ann Lane for the work in organizing P3 work parties which involved a lot of work behind the scenes in surveying prospective sites etc.

The Ranger service with the contribution of Tom as volunteer co-ordinator being particularly worthy of thanks.

Chairman gave thanks to all volunteers whether on the Flitch Way, in the carriage or on P3 duties. Without volunteers, where would we be? In conclusion, Alan thanked the Committee for the support given him through the year.

Treasurer's report

Margaret confirmed that everybody had a copy of the balance sheet, which showed a credit balance of £2,343 being carried forward. That lower than usual figure was due to only having received two thirds of the Langford project costs from the Tesco Bags of Help grant when the accounts were prepared. Treasurer advised that the balance of £3,000 had since been received, together with Gift Aid repayment from HMRC.

Margaret said that she had full details of income and expenditure available should anyone wish to see them.

Margaret advised that donations from visitors meant that the carriage was breaking even. Meter readings are taken every Monday to ensure no sudden increases in electricity usage. Santa's visit to the carriage had again been a success with a small nett profit of €38.00.

Treasurer asked for Gift Aid forms to be completed by anyone who hadn't already done so.

In answer to a question from the floor, treasurer said that £800 was put into a savings account each year to cover emergencies such as the carriage needing to be removed from site. It was shown as such in the receipts and payments account, the current balance being £1,600.

Social report

With her social secretary's hat on, Margaret said that the Friends' Christmas lunch at

Wildens' had again been a success and the venue has been booked for Wednesday 20th December 2017. Menu details will be sent out in due course and bookings taken on a first come, first served basis.

The recent visit to Fingringhoe Wick had also been successful, despite the lack of beer at the pub with our lunch.

Margaret thanked Sandra for organising the visit to Levelly Wood to see the bluebells.

The next scheduled outing will be to Layer Marney on Tuesday 4th July, costing £25 per person which would include a tour, lunch and refreshments. There being a maximum number of visitors, Margaret asked for deposits to secure places as soon as possible.

Secretary's report

Sandra reported the Friends having 70 members with 7 additions during the year. We also have 69 active volunteers.

The Friends Facebook page contains updates on work parties and information on wildlife. The number of followers has doubled to 600. The website regularly gets 250 visitors per week with around 1,000 page views, the most popular being the Flitch Way, the Blackwater Rail Trail and the Downloads page. The site now contains an online donations facility. Sandra thanked Cheryl for her help in updating the website.

Secretary said that we had been unsuccessful in getting the whole of the Flitch Way listed with English Heritage. With help from Andrew Adair, however, the Friends have raised the issue of encroachment with the ECC Head of Country Parks, as a result of which steps are being taken to better protect the Flitch Way by registering ownership of the land. We have also completed a 100 page Management Plan and completed the consultation phase with English Nature to declare the Flitch Way as a Local Nature Reserve. Sandra said that the final stages of the process are being worked through by ECC at County Hall and members will be kept updated on progress.

The Flitch Way in particular has been impacted by a number of proposed housing developments between Braintree and Takeley. The Friends are not against development but we are keen to ensure that an adequate buffer zone is in place with secure boundaries so that the impact on the Flitch Way is minimised. Friends objected to the proposed Brook Green development for 1600 houses between Rayne and Braintree and that application is still under consideration by Braintree District Council.

We responded about land South of the Ongar Road housing development at Great Dunmow in support of the creation of the Flitch Way connection path, proposed by the Flitch Way Action Group. That path will fill in the missing link around Great Dunmow by joining the two ends of the Flitch Way.

Concerns were raised about the Bonnington Green development at Takeley for 275 houses with potential for more and a close eye is being kept on the screening application by Gladman Properties for 210 homes near Great Canfield Road, Takeley.

We have built closer links throughout the year with Essex Wildlife Trust and Essex Field Club and now record the wildlife seen on volunteer work parties.

Volunteer co-ordinator's report

Wendy distributed details of all work parties which had taken place from April 2016 to March 2017. Referring to the list, Wendy said that it showed the variety of work carried out by volunteers on the Flich Way and at other locations, in particular the work completed at Langford Halt funded by Tesco "Bags of Help" and which could be seen in the photographs on display.

The meeting was told that 688 volunteer days on 74 work parties had been worked during the year with an average of 9.3 volunteers on each occasion. That equated to a yearly total of 3440 hours worked by Flich Way volunteers.

This year we have recruited 7 new volunteers, one of whom works regularly with the P3 team, and have attracted 9 new paid up members.

Wendy thanked Sandra for taking on the Secretary's role and for the great work she continues to do on the website, part of which made it so much easier to upload photos. As mentioned by Sandra, Wendy said that wildlife seen on work parties was now being recorded more fully with grid references shown. In conclusion, Wendy thanked all the volunteers for the work done during the year.

Carriage report

Stan reported that the carriage had opened on 180 days up to the end of April 2017 and that 855 volunteer hours had been spent on 342 sessions. It had opened on almost every weekend throughout the year as well as on other days, particularly during school holidays. There have been 4,433 visitors over the same period, many visiting for the first time and coming from many different areas, including visitors from abroad. Several groups came to the carriage by pre-arranged appointment, including Chelmsford Alzheimers group, a walking group from North Essex and Braintree Easy Riders cycling group. A couple of birthday parties had also taken place in the carriage.

Beavers groups apart, the low take-up by local organizations and especially schools was disappointing and consideration would be given to a fresh approach to the schools in the area inviting them to make use of the carriage.

The structure of the carriage continued to be in a good state of repair thanks to the efforts of volunteers. Thanks were due in particular to Andy Horder who monitored the carriage bodywork and made good where necessary and to Brian Render, John Easter and Andy Horder for the splendid work they had done to waterproof the ends of the carriage. The ongoing work done on the model by Brian, and Roy Jarvis before he became ill, was also appreciated.

As noted earlier by the Chairman, thanks were also due to Pam for co-ordinating volunteer sessions and to the volunteer stewards themselves, without whose help the carriage could not be opened.

Finally, thanks were due to the many visitors who donated or lent items to display in the carriage.

Footpath Work Group/P3 report

Pete said that the group continued in its work across the County and wherever work was done, a Friends disc stating the bridge, waymarker post etc. was put in place by the Friends which would hopefully lead visitors to the website and show the range of work done by Friends volunteers.

Work parties had taken place almost every Wednesday during the year with 8 or 9 volunteers on each occasion which equated to 1,578 volunteer hours. To illustrate what had been achieved by the group, Pete advised that 17 bridges of various sizes had been installed, along with 4 gates, 2 sets of steps, 39 waymarker posts and work done restoring a much-damaged boardwalk. Many footpaths were opened up during the year, some of them not used for 20 years or more.

Pete thanked all the volunteers who had worked on P3 during the year. The work done by the group could often be very hard and, like all Friends' volunteers, everybody was getting older making it more of an effort to perform as before. The P3 group would shortly be losing 2 volunteers due to their moving from the area and Pete asked anyone who would like to give P3 a try to give him a ring.

Ranger's report

Referring to figures quoted by previous speakers, Tom referred to the tremendous number of hours done by Friends volunteers during the year which he calculated to be almost 6,000. Without the volunteers' input, it was difficult to see how the work could have been done. Tom advised that a new Ranger had joined the team earlier in the week which would hopefully help matters and ease the load on other Ranger staff.

On behalf of Country Parks and himself personally, Tom gave thanks to the Friends and their volunteers for their outstanding contribution in whatever area of the Friends role they had operated.

Members' proposed resolutions

Secretary advised that no proposed resolutions had been received.

Election of Officers and Committee members

After confirming all members of the 2016 Committee were willing to continue, Chairman asked whether there were any other nominations for office. There being none, Alan asked the meeting to vote on the re-appointment of himself as Chairman, Stan Davies as vice-chairman, Sandra Reynolds as Secretary, Margaret James as Treasurer, Wendy Moss as

volunteer co-ordinator and Val Blamire, Bob Lucas and John Moss as Committee members. Members present voted unanimously to do so.

Any other business

There being no matters arising and no further questions from the floor, Chairman brought the meeting to a close.

Attendees

Roger Ashdown	Angela Fuller	Bob Lucas
Richard Bicheno	Terry Gilbey	Pam Maskell
Carl Blamire	Veronica Gilbey	Elizabeth Miller
Val Blamire	Gordon Glanfield	John Moss
Mick Cannon	Tom Hamilton	Wendy Moss
Jan Cannon	Alan Harris	Joyce Reynolds
William Chastell	Cheryl Harris	Sandra Reynolds
Rita Chastell	Andy Horder	Michael Scade
William Chastell Jnr	Carol Horder	John Scates
Ian Cresshull	Margaret James	Pam Scates
Stan Davies	Ben Joscelyne	Wendy Taylor
Mike Fuller	Pete Lane	John West