

Friends of the Flich Way & Associated Woodlands

Notes from meeting of Friday 3 July 2020

Venue: Zoom Video Conference

Participants: Chairman, Alan Trigg. Secretary, Sandra Reynolds. Treasurer, Margaret James. Committee members, Val Blamire, Stan Davies, Bob Lucas, John Moss, Wendy Moss, Bob Wright. Ranger, Tom Hamilton.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first meeting since AGM. In the ongoing situation re Coronavirus, Alan said that he hoped that everybody was well and keeping safe.

Minutes of previous meeting of 1 April 2020:

Agreed as a true record by all and signed on Chairman's behalf by Secretary.

Matters arising and review of Action Points.

AP7.4 Local Nature Reserve designation. Delay in publicising due to effect of Coronavirus, restrictions on staffing etc. Carry forward.

AP8.3 Sites for new benches and information boards. No progress. Carry forward.

AP10.4 Siting of telephone box at Rayne Station and associated work. No progress. Carry forward.

AP10.5 Installation of Nigel's sign at Gatewoods. Sign made and ready to be installed together with repaired information board but waiting for volunteer work parties to recommence. Carry forward.

AP11.1 Opening up Langford Halt bridge. Sandra said that any such work could be affected by the proposed re-opening of the Witham to Maldon line, about which more information needs to be discovered. Carry forward.

AP11.2 Recruitment of new Ranger at Great Notley. Nothing to report. Carry forward.

AP12.2 Replacement of damaged gates. No progress. Carry forward.

AP12.4 Provision of hi-viz vests for volunteers. Wendy said that vests will have "Working together with ECC" on front and "Friends of Flich Way Volunteer" on back. They will be offered at very low cost to all volunteers in coming weeks.

AP13.1 Setting up postal address for the Friends at Rayne Station in the former wash room. Sandra reported that Josh has kindly offered to have Friends mail delivered to the café address.

Chairman's report:

Alan welcomed Bob Wright as a new Committee member who he was sure would be an asset to the Committee.

Unfortunately, work parties remain suspended due to Coronavirus restrictions and clearance and guidance from Essex County Council was awaited before they could be re-started.

Footpaths group (P3) work parties have recommenced but on a reduced scale and with restrictions.

Railway Carriage Museum remains closed for the safety of carriage stewards and visitors.

Chairman thanked all volunteers for their patience. Stay safe was the watchword.

Treasurer's report:

Margaret gave the current account balance as £5,417.26 with £3,210.00 in the contingency/savings account.

Commenting on Social matters, Margaret said that summer outings planned before the Coronavirus lockdown had been cancelled. It is hoped that the situation will have improved by December which would allow the planned Christmas meal to take place.

Secretary's report:

Sandra reported as follows: -

Online statistics: 854 web page visits and 1746 views in last month with top pages this month being Flitch Way downloads, Info and Maps, followed by Blackwater Rail Trail. Facebook shows 1519 "likes", up 75 since the April meeting.

Housing Developments: Input into the planning consultation for the new Helena Romanes School at Great Dunmow which will border the Flitch Way. There is to be a planning appeal for 8 houses on land south of The Street in Takeley which needs to be reviewed and commented on as appropriate. UTT/19/2168/OP. Land to the west of Bonningtons Farm, Station Road, Takeley for 32 houses was refused on 15 June.

UTT/19/1219/FUL. New refuse site on land to the east of B1256 at Great Dunmow was approved but is still showing as Awaiting Decision on UDC Planning site, We need to establish a link to the Flitch Way through the site.

Flitch Way Action Group update. The route for the new bridleway between Buttleys Lane and Ongar Road as part of the Staggs Farm development needs to be modified slightly. We have asked Shirley Anglin at ECC Public Rights of Way for help to ensure the correct route goes forward.

The Group is writing to Kevin Bentley, ECC Councillor for Highways to get his support for the improvements to the Flitch Way connection at Great Dunmow.

Online sales: All monies from eBay sales of model railway items have been paid and moved to Friends bank account.

Work party report:

Wendy reported no current work parties taking place on the Flitch Way due to Coronavirus restrictions. During the lockdown, several individual volunteers have been litter picking at Great Notley, along the Flitch and in areas that they walk. Wendy has supplied litter pickers and purple BDC bags to help them to do so.

Railway Carriage report:

As referred to by Chairman, Carriage remains closed for the foreseeable future. Even with the possible relaxing of social distancing to 1 metre, the internal carriage structure will not allow more than 1 person or family group to be inside at any one time, not to mention the constant cleaning of surfaces etc which would be required. We also have a duty of care with regards to the safety and wellbeing of our volunteer carriage stewards, all of whom are classed as vulnerable due to age.

Good news is that Martin Petchey Roofing began work on the carriage roof on 29th June. Work began with pressure washing to remove muck and flaking paint, followed by grinding/sanding down to bare metal. Any damaged areas will be repaired before painting takes place using a specialist paint. Stan said that he has been impressed with the contractor thus far and believes the end result will be very satisfactory. The footpath and areas around the carriage have been closed off while the preparatory work takes place. Josh has been kept informed as work has progressed and it is felt that no meaningful disruption to the café and visitors has been caused. The position re. the siting of the telephone box at the station remains unchanged, no doubt affected by the Coronavirus situation. Josh is unhappy at the lack of progress and is pursuing the Parish Council for the move to take place as quickly as possible.

On other carriage/station related matters, Stan commented on the splendid job done by John Moss in remaking and replacing the three LNER notice boards on the platform.

It is hoped to start work on re-painting the sides of the carriage once the roof is finished.

Footpath work group (P3) report:

Work parties re-started with a reduced number of volunteers, social distancing and no car sharing. Details extracted from Facebook as follows: -

May-Footpath clearance at Sheering, Wimbish and Bradwell. Bridge repairs at Rayne.

June-Footpath clearance at Sheering, Blake End, Felsted, Stansted Mountfitchet and Elsenham.

July-Bridleway clearance at White Notley.

Ranger's report:

Tom hoped that we would be able to start reduced number work parties on the Flich Way shortly and was preparing a list of work areas.

Any other business:

Sandra plans to organise a small exploratory walk with Bob Wright, John and Wendy Moss and Rod Jones to investigate linking the Flich Way near Langleys with the David Cock Community Woodland in the hope that the new refuse site will be located in the adjacent area.

Next meeting:

10am Friday 11 September 2020. Venue to be decided.