

Friends of the Flitch Way

Notes from Committee Meeting of Wednesday 7 November 2018

Venue	Discovery Centre, Great Notley Country Park
Present	Chairman, Alan Trigg. Secretary, Sandra Reynolds, Treasurer, Margaret James Committee Members, Val Blamire, Stan Davies, Bob Lucas, John Moss, Wendy Moss Ranger, Tom Hamilton, Senior Ranger Claire Bunn (for start of meeting)
Apologies	None

Minutes of previous meeting

Accepted as a true record and signed accordingly.

Matters arising and review of action points.

AP2.5 Tom reported that Essex County Council (ECC) were now registered with the Land Registry as owners of Flitch Way (FW). He said that designating FW as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) would be welcomed by Planning Authorities. The proposed designation of FW has been discussed with ECC Land Agents. ECC Legal Dept have no objection and the position is being reviewed by ECC for any implications or problems which could arise. Tom to report back on progress in due course. Ongoing

AP4.3 Wendy said although no further work on the carriage roof had been done by the contractor, opinion was that it was in a better state than it was before the work had been done. It was agreed, therefore, not to pursue the contractor for him to undertake further remedial work as it was not felt to be required.

AP4.8 Sandra reported that due to pressures on preparing notice boards for Rayne and Felsted, she had not had a chance to prepare the new ones for Stane Street and Bannister Green. Ongoing.

AP5.1 Chairman said that the application to Garfield Weston Trust for funding work in Dunmow Cutting and the Boardwalk area had been unsuccessful as funds available for distribution had been greatly oversubscribed by applications from other charities seeking support. There was no objection to further applications being made to the GW Trust, but a new rule has been introduced by them that meant we would have to find half of any amount being sought. Given the total cost of the required work being over £30,000, current FW funds would not allow that to happen but if we wished to re-apply, the work could be split between different aspects of the proposed project and costed separately according. Consideration could also be given to applying elsewhere, to Stansted Airport for example, as Dunmow was within their 5 mile funding radius limit.

AP5.3 Meeting with bridge engineer not yet taken place. Ongoing.

AP5.5 Claire said that the Country Parks manager had tried to contact the Essex Hunt re. the problems being caused by the exercising of their dogs in Garnetts Wood. Nobody was optimistic, however, that the problems would be reduced by getting them solved by any voluntary actions likely to be taken by the Hunt. Tom said that he and Claire were working on byelaw signage to be put in place throughout the Wood and that would happen once legal backing for the right form of words was found. Ongoing.

AP6.1 In view of the time it was taking them to do the work, John had recently returned to the local window replacement business who had agreed to replace the 2 windows in the carriage. They

still proposed doing the work but were overstretched with work elsewhere. John will speak to them again to get a date for the work to be done. Cost for replacing both windows will be £300. Ongoing.

AP6.2 Wendy said that she had liaised with Sandra and Pam Maskell, carriage steward co-ordinator, and a new system introduced whereby volunteers were able to see messages from other people giving their available dates. System was felt to be working satisfactorily.

AP6.3. Tom said that signs were ready, but he had been waiting for the large blocks at the entrance to the FW near the travellers site at Felsted to be moved into a better position before putting them in position. He will check whether that has been done. Ongoing.

AP6.4. Sandra showed the sign which had been approved by the Committee, to go at Rayne station and fixed to the level crossing gates. The position of the other one for the top of the Felsted slope had also been agreed and would be installed once finished.

Chairman's Report.

Alan said that he had recently taken part in the BBC Essex Quest Sunday morning radio programme at Langford Halt where Peter Blaney, the owner of the Station House also spoke.

Appreciation was given for the £500 donated to Friends funds by Josh and Grace following the Rayne Festival.

Chairman said that it was good to see work currently being carried out to improve the Byway between Little Dunmow and Great Dunmow.

Treasurer's Report

Margaret reported the balance of the current account to be £7,920.11 with £2401.20 in the savings/contingency fund.

Although a deposit of £5 had been paid to have a stall at Stebbing Fete, the event was cancelled due to bad weather. Despite a request being made, the deposit has not been returned. The matter is not being pursued in view of the amount involved.

Donations continue to be made by visitors to the carriage and the café, averaging around £40 per week.

A new window cleaner for the carriage has taken over and although we continue to pay him, Stan commented that the windows don't look as if they have been done. The cleaner submits an invoice to Margaret when he has done the job and she will let Stan know when that next happens and before he is paid so that the state of the windows can quickly be checked to see that they have been done satisfactorily. **AP7.1**

Despite having previously agreed reduced monthly direct debit payments to EDF for the carriage, they had advised the treasurer that the amount was to be increased. After speaking to Margaret, the supplier agreed to put it back to £60 per month.

On social events, Margaret said that all the spaces for the FW Christmas lunch at Wildens have been filled. She will let them have people's menu choices within the next couple of weeks.

The meeting thanked Margaret for the work she puts in to finding interesting places to visit and all agreed the visits made during the year to have been very good. Margaret said that, along with Wendy and Val, she had recently been to an Essex Travel show and had come away with a few ideas for future outings. These would include a tour of Tiptree Jam factory and farm followed by a cream tea, Coggeshall Abbey and one or two other properties on the Invitation to View list.

Secretary's report.

Sandra reported online statistics as 1690 unique web page visits and 5489 views in the last 30 days. Top pages this month have been Flitch Way 53, Downloads 36, Blackwater Rail Trail 39, Access 28 and Contacts 29. Facebook shows 993 'likes', up 107 since the last meeting.

Re. Flitch Way Action Group (FWAG), the proposed bridleway linking the 2 ends of the FW are steadily moving forward..

The Byway between Little Dunmow and Great Dunmow referred to earlier by the chairman has now been re-surfaced and there has been a lot of reaction and comments on our Facebook page. It was noted that despite the improvement work that had been done, it was still being misused by some irresponsible off-roaders.

On planning matters, Sandra said that the Bonningtons Application had been turned down but an appeal has been submitted by the developer. A watching brief was being kept on the proposed large development along the Blackwater Rail Trail. An application for 260 houses at Felsted was subject to consultation and Sandra will respond on our behalf. Committee agreed to Sandra joining the Essex Local Access Forum and thanked her for the important work she continued to do on the Friends' behalf in responding to the flood of applications being submitted.

Work Party Report.

Alan thanked volunteers for attending work parties since the last meeting. These had taken place at Colne Valley Linear Park, Langford Farm, High Cross Lane, Garnetts Wood, Pods Brook to Gore Road area, Rayne Station, Dunmow Cutting, Felsted Traveller Site and Great Notley.

Wendy reported that 240 volunteer days have been worked with an average of 10 volunteers on each work party. Several new volunteers have joined this year, so we have had sufficient numbers to undertake whatever work was required. Tom trained several volunteers on using hedge trimmers which meant that we were able to finish work in the cutting in good time this year.

Wendy said that she had had reports of Himalayan Balsam growing in the ditches in Rayne, near Oak Meadow and along past Gore Road bridge which could be pulled/removed if an opportunity arose. In addition, the wildflower garden at Rayne Station will need digging and replanting. Stan said that Josh had asked whether that area would continue to be used for wildflowers. If that was not the case, he would like to put some children's' play equipment there, perhaps a climbing frame in the shape of a train. Stan will speak to him re. the intention to replant with wildflowers.

Railway Carriage Update.

Wendy said that there had been 3387 visitors in the period from 1st April. The carriage had been open to visitors on 157 occasions with a total of 85 volunteer days. Donations from visitors continue to cover carriage costs. Stan said that a new volunteer had recently started. A former BR employee, he has lots of experience in model railways and railway matters generally. New volunteers continued to be required as we are down to a small number of regular stewards who have managed to maintain weekend opening and also opened on a number of weekdays during school holidays.

Stan thanked Andy Horder for the maintenance work he continues to do on the bodywork of the carriage where no major issues have arisen. He felt that a re-paint of the carriage exterior would be needed in the Spring, however. Stan said that Andy had visited the North Norfolk Railway at Sheringham while he was on holiday and had met with staff who worked on the maintenance of their rolling stock. They had provided details of a company, Robex Industries, based in Hitchin, who supplied roofing materials for their carriages. Stan said that the company website showed that they manufactured a range of materials and could also quote to supply and apply. Depending on the

condition of the carriage roof in the Spring, it could be worth contacting them then, he felt, as they were likely to be more reliable than the contractor we had used.

Footpath Work Group (P3) report.

Referring to Facebook details, Alan said that the group had undertaken work at the following sites: June: Springwood Industrial Estate, Ranks Green and Takeley. Footpath clearance. Pleshey, installing bridge.

July: Clavering, re-route footpath. Ashdon, footpath clearance.

August: High Roothing, path clearance and bridge work. Keers Green, Bamber Green, Wimbish, path clearance. Great Baddow, installing kissing gates.

September: Little Dunmow, installing bridge and waymarker posts. Felsted and Wimbish, path clearance.

October: Strethall, path clearance. Cold Norton, byway clearance.

Letter of thanks had been received from one of the areas worked which was appreciated and the Committee acknowledged the amount and range of work put in by the P3 group.

Ranger's report.

Tom said the next few work parties would take place at Start Hill, starting the following day. He will draw up a schedule for the period up to Christmas.

A new part-time Ranger, based at Great Notley, would be starting in the near future which would relieve some of the pressure on Tom.

Contractors continue to work at Garnetts Wood. Their programme includes felling some of the large ash trees, coppicing and widening rides.

Tom said that he shared the committee's disappointment at fewer work parties having taken place compared to other years. He confirmed that work parties did not always need to have a Ranger being in attendance providing the work to be done had been assessed and agreed beforehand and normal health and safety rules were followed. Tom will check whether machinery such as hedge trimmers can be used by trained volunteers in those circumstances. One important condition of a Ranger not being present, however, was that fires were not permitted.

It was agreed to hold the volunteers' Christmas get-together on Tuesday 11th December in Garnetts Wood provided contractors had finished their work by then. The alternative would be High Cross Lane. Rangers will provide potatoes for baking.

Information Boards. AP7-4

Sandra said that the board for Rayne Station commemorating Frederick Fuller's fatal accident was complete and it was agreed to install it on Monday 26th November at 11am. Stan will notify Josh and Jim Gepp who both wished to attend. Jim also knew of other people in the village who wanted to be there and Stan will ask him to let them know. **AP7.2** Sandra will contact Braintree & Witham Times and ask them to attend with a photographer. **AP7.3** John was still working on the frame for the board to go at Felsted showing the 'Felsted Flyer' locomotive which served Felsted School. A date to fix it in the agreed place would be made once it was finished. **AP7.4**

Christmas event. AP7.5

Committee agreed on Sunday 16th December for 'Santa in the Carriage', to run from 11am to 2.30pm. Sandra will prepare 120 tickets, that being felt to be the maximum number of children to visit Santa.

Cost will be £3 per ticket, the same as in the previous year.

Wendy and Margaret will buy presents up to a budget of £200.

Tombola and Nail Game on the platform. Alan and Annette happy to do the former. Tombola prizes required although some are still on hand from the previous year. Alan will buy a few boxes of Christmas crackers to hand out to any disappointed youngsters.

John will enquire re. availability of tables from Scout Hall.

Stan will confirm the proposed date with Josh and ask whether tickets for Santa can be sold through the café as in previous years. Stan said that he was not aware of Josh making any special arrangements, reindeer for example, for the proposed day.

Carriage to be decorated Wednesday 5th December. Volunteers required.

Any Other Business.

Stan said that the Charity's accounts were now on the Charity Commission website. He had also updated Trustees' details. After checking details with the Treasurer, Stan said that bank account details also needed changing on the CC website. **AP7.6**

A talk/presentation on the history of the railway, the FW and the Friends charity had recently been given to the Dunmow Horticultural Society who gave a donation of £60 to FW funds.

Next Meeting.

Agreed as 4.30pm, Wednesday 23rd January 2019 at Discovery Centre.

There being no further business to discuss, Chairman brought the meeting to a close.

Summary of Action Point for next meeting.

Brought forward from previous meeting(s)

AP2.5 Tom to advise on Flitch Way LNR status.

AP4.8 Update from Sandra on Notice Boards including Stane St and Bannister Green.

AP5.3 Tom to give update on meeting with ECC bridge engineer.

AP5.5 Tom to give update on Essex Hunt and signage in Garnetts Wood.

AP6.1 John to update position on carriage window replacement.

AP6.3 Tom to update on signage at Felsted travellers' site.

New Actions

AP7.1 Stan to report on carriage window cleaning.

AP7.2-4 Stan and Sandra to give update on notice boards (see **AP4.8**, above)

AP7.5 All to report on outcome of Christmas event

AP7.6 Stan to report on CC website update.