

Friends of the Flich Way and Associated Woodlands

Notes from online Committee meeting of Friday 11 September 2020

Taking part:

Chairman, Alan Trigg. Secretary, Sandra Reynolds. Treasurer Margaret James.
Committee members, Val Blamire, Stan Davies, Bob Lucas, John Moss. Wendy Moss.

Apologies.

Bob Wright.

Approval of Minutes from previous meeting.

Agreed and signed as such by Secretary on Chairman's behalf.

Matters arising and review of actions taken.

Carried forward from previous meetings:

AP7.4. Local Nature Reserve designation. Although no official announcement has been made, Public Notices have been published in local press. Delay in publicising further likely to be as a result of coronavirus restrictions on staffing etc. Carry forward to next meeting.

AP8.3. Siting of new benches and information boards. To be discussed later in meeting.

AP10.4. Siting of telephone box at Rayne Station. Now done and box awaiting cleaning, repair and re-painting by Parish Council who intend using the box as an Information Point. Area surrounding the box to be tidied with previously prepared sign giving history of the station to be put in place when work completed. Limited input required from Friends. Carry forward.

AP10.5. Installation of Nigel's sign at Gatewoods. Although volunteers have done some work at Gatewoods including replacing the information board, installing the sign in memory of Nigel has been delayed as it was hoped to do so on the next visit to the area by Nigel's partner, Janet. Wendy to send her a PDF copy of the sign and enquire when that visit might take place. Due to coronavirus restrictions, numbers of Friends attending the installation will need to be limited to those who knew Nigel. Carry forward to next meeting.

AP11.1 Opening up of Langford Halt bridge. No progress. Carry forward.

AP11.2 Recruitment of new Ranger. No progress. Carry forward.

AP12.2 Replacement of damaged gates. At top of Tom's priority list. Carry forward.

AP12.4 Provision of high visibility vests for volunteers. Details of required sizes received and order placed by Wendy. Cost to be covered from BDC grant funding. (to be reported on later in meeting).

AP 13.1 Setting up postal address at Rayne Station already done and Friends' post will be accepted at the café.

Chairman's report.

Alan welcomed everybody to the meeting, taking place online via Zoom due to the ongoing Coronavirus situation. Work parties have re-started, doing work previously agreed with Tom, subject to certain restrictions including travel arrangements and a limit on the numbers of volunteers in attendance. The Railway Carriage remains closed to visitors due to safety concerns for visitors and volunteer stewards. Work on the Carriage roof has now been completed and looks in excellent condition. Alan continues to pursue the contractor who had worked on the roof previously for a refund due to the poor standard of work he had done. He has been unable to work due to Covid-19 so is unable to make the refund which he had previously offered. Alan remains hopeful that he will eventually make good his offer.

Chairman thanked Stan for the success he had achieved in obtaining grant funding, details of which would be explained by Stan later in the meeting.

In conclusion, Alan thanked all volunteers, whether Flich Way, P3 or Carriage for their patience and for the work undertaken during the coronavirus crisis.

Treasurer's report.

Finance: Margaret gave the current bank balance as £1875.89 in credit. That figure does not take account of expected grant funding** or the money already spent on buying shrubs for the areas at Rayne Station. Recent statement from EDF for power supplied to the carriage shows we are £37.13 in credit.

Social Activities: Due to the ongoing coronavirus situation, it has not been possible to arrange any outings this year. Wildens' restaurant at Bocking where we had booked our Christmas lunch for December appears to be closed and Margaret has been unable to contact them. Committee members agreed, therefore, that it seems likely that the lunch will not take place this year, at Wildens or elsewhere.

****Following the Treasurer's report on our finances, Stan said that he was pleased to report that thanks to a lot of support received from Rayne & Saling councillor, Paul Euesden, he had been successful in obtaining grant funding of £1,050 from Braintree District Council under their Councillors' Community Grant scheme. The grant is to cover the cost of repainting the Carriage and planting up the former signal box site and the area at the end of the platform at Rayne Station. It was expected that the grant would be credited to the Friends' account within the coming 2 weeks. A further grant of £1,605 has been obtained from Essex County Council under the ECC Locality Fund scheme, that separate application having been supported by Councillors Schmitt and Butland. This grant is to cover the cost of purchasing and installing 4 benches and information boards together with the purchase of hi-visibility vests, safety clothing and tools for volunteers' use. The ECC grant will be paid retrospectively following purchase of the agreed items and submission of paid invoices. Both grants must be spent by 31 March 2021. Some discussion followed on where the benches and information boards would be placed, 2 of which had to be in Councillor Schmitt's Ward and 2 in Councillor Butland's Ward. Sandra will organise a walk to decide on appropriate sites. (*subsequently arranged for Wednesday 30 September*). The content of what would be shown on the information boards would depend partly on where they are placed but ideas and suggestions would be welcomed. Initial suggestions included typical Essex crops and wild flowers and insects.**

Secretary's report.

Online statistics: Sandra reported 727 web page visits and 1,475 page views in last month. Facebook shows 1,582 'likes', an increase of 63 since the previous meeting in July.

Planning applications:

The Planning Appeal for 8 houses on land south of The Street in Takeley (UTT/18/2049/FUL) was allowed. A disappointing result but this is the first appeal to succeed since we started commenting on applications.

An approve decision was made on 12 August for a refuse site and workshop on land east of B1256 at Great Dunmow (UTT/19/1219/FUL) which includes provision of a footbridge over the Chelmer. The written approval is pending the Canfield depot appeal.

Land to the south of B1256 at Little Canfield for an alternative refuse depot (UTT/19/1166/OP) has gone to the Planning Inspector and a response from the Friends has been submitted. Chairman thanked Sandra for her ongoing work in responding or objecting to planning applications affecting the Flitch Way.

Flitch Way Action Group (FWAG) update. The route for the new bridleway between Buttleys Lane and Ongar Road is being considered as part of the Staggs Farm development. A planning date is awaited. The group have written to Kevin Bentley, ECC Councillor for Highways, to get his support for the improvements to the FW connection at Great Dunmow and are chasing up a response from him. Sandra said that she, Wendy, John, Bob and Rod Jones had walked a potential circular link route from the Flitch Way near Langleys to the River Chelmer and through the David Cock Community Woodland. This was felt to make an excellent access route and would be even better if the Chelmer could be bridged near the proposed Refuse Depot which would also provide greenway access to residents to the south and east of Great Dunmow.

Online sales. Following posters being placed around the carriage and Rayne Station, we have had 2 donations, each of £5 to support the carriage made via Paypal. Secretary said that a few membership subscriptions remained outstanding.

Flitch Way work party report.

Wendy reported that from 23 July, we were given a list of tasks agreed with Tom that could be carried out using teams with a maximum of 6 volunteers on each team. We have had 2 teams working, led by Alan or

Bob Wright and occasionally Ian Cresshull while a third group has carried out maintenance work around Rayne Station. 6 of the 9 FW tasks have been completed as well as 4 of the 6 at the Station and 2 of the 3 at Gatewoods. It is hoped we can carry out the remaining tasks when we start later in September. Work parties have taken place at High Cross Lane, East and West, Dunmow boardwalk, Felmores Farm, Felsted ramp and surrounding area and areas around Start Hill and Stane Street. Work done around the station includes moving one of the benches on the platform and preparing and planting up the signal box site and the area at the eastern end of the platform. Re-painting of the carriage has started. Regarding the repairs to the fencing at Bannister Green Halt, measurements of the required replacement scaffolding poles have been taken and a response to a request to a local scaffolding firm to donate the necessary materials is awaited. (*subsequently agreed by the contractor, D.E.T. Scaffolding*)

High visibility vests for volunteers, referred to earlier, have been ordered with a likely delivery time of 1-2 weeks.

Wendy said that we have several prospective volunteers who joined during lockdown. They have been advised that they might be able to be included in work parties from the end of September once we are re-joined by the Ranger. A couple of the prospective volunteers were supplied with litter pickers which they have been using around Rayne village.

Railway Carriage Museum report.

As previously mentioned, repainting of the roof has taken place and finished to a high standard, Stan felt. While we were left with no choice but to close the carriage to visitors in March, it has been disappointing to see the large numbers of families at the station each day during the school holiday period who are likely to have 'come on board' and made donations to cover the carriage running costs. When that situation will change to allow visitors inside the carriage is unknown but in the last week, and at their suggestion, 2 of the carriage stewards, Susan and Derek, have been on duty outside the carriage talking to visitors and gathering donations.

As mentioned by Wendy, work on re-painting the carriage started on 8 September. To date, the platform side has been rubbed down, cleaned and undercoated. Thanks are due to John, Brian, Graham and Derek for their efforts. Weather permitting, it is hoped to work on the New Road side of the carriage next week.

Footpath work party (P3) report

P3 work parties continue with reduced numbers and a lot of good work being done as usual, resulting in many positive comments being made on Facebook. Details of work parties as shown on Facebook are as follows: -

July-Footpath and bridleway clearance at Little Dunmow, Radwinter, Rayne and Shalford. Kissing gate moved at Sheering. Bridges installed/replaced at Sheering, Rayne and Shalford.

August- Clearance of footpaths and bridleways at Black Notley, Shalford, Hatfield Broad Oak and White Colne. Bridges replaced at White Notley, Black Notley, Rayne and Shalford. September- Clearance of Bridleway at Little Dunmow.

Ranger's report.

Tom thanked the volunteers for all the work being done in the current unusual and difficult times which had required new ways of working for everyone. The track bed at Dunmow Cutting has already been cut back and Tom asked whether 5 volunteers would be able to help rake the cut material on the coming Tuesday which would allow him to then use the flail to cut the banks of the cutting. Clearance would probably be done on a more selective basis with not all the banks cut back as much as in previous years. When full work parties start on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the week commencing 21 September, Tom envisaged perhaps 2 or 3 separate teams of 5 which would allow for the required social distancing to be maintained and for him to maintain contact with each group. Unlike in previous years, it was likely that material would not be burned because of the resulting smoke generated; rather it would be loaded on the trailer for him to dispose of in a suitable place. Tom was unsure as to where work parties would take place once work at the cutting was completed. Some discussion followed regarding volunteers sharing cars to get to and from work parties, the situation so far being that people made their own way which Alan said had worked well. Official guidance was available as to the protocol for sharing cars and it was agreed that Wendy would canvass volunteers' views on whether or not they felt comfortable with sharing. Tom was happy for any decision on car sharing to be made by the Committee following consultation with

volunteers, his main responsibility starting once volunteers arrived on site. Wendy will send out an email asking for volunteers for the upcoming Tuesday and get preferences for Tuesdays or Thursdays in subsequent weeks.

Tom said that the Traveller site at Felsted was now fully cleared and blocked off to prevent access. A decision on the future use of the site was yet to be reached.

Wendy asked whether the concrete blocks at Rayne Station could be painted to improve their appearance. Tom said that they were likely to be removed in 2021 once the gates had been replaced.

Any other business.

Although the event could possibly be cancelled, Bob Wright has agreed to attend Dunmow Market on the Friends behalf. Members of FWAG will be alongside Bob.

Margaret said that she would liaise with Wendy and send an email to members regarding the Christmas lunch not taking place and the reasons for the lack of social events during the year.

Val advised that several Friends had recently joined Jim Cloke's widow and daughter when his ashes had been scattered around Gatewoods Pond.

Alan advised that Friends would be receiving a donation from Graham Bridgeman arising from the sale of face masks at Simon Churly's shop, Stationery Solutions which Graham had funded.

There being no further matters to discuss and the timed Zoom session coming to an end, Alan declared the meeting closed.

Next meeting.

10.00am, Friday 23 October 2020. Format to be decided.

Action Points for next Meeting.

Brought forward from previous meeting(s)

AP7.4 Local Nature Reserve designation. Tom to report.

AP10.4 Telephone box at Rayne. Stan to report

AP10.5 Nigel's sign at Gatewoods. Wendy to report.

AP11.1 Langford bridge. Sandra to report.

AP11.2 Recruitment of new Ranger. Tom to report.

AP12.2 Replacement of damaged gates. Tom to report

From this meeting

AP13.1 Sites for new benches and information boards. Sandra to report.

AP13.2 Progress on spending of Grants. Stan to report.

AP13.3 Carriage re-painting. Stan to report.