

## Friends of the Flitch Way & Associated Woodlands

### Notes from Committee meeting of Friday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2020

**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. Guest, Bob Wright.  
Ranger, Tom Hamilton

#### Minutes of previous meeting of 22 November 2019

Agreed as a true record and signed accordingly by Chairman.

#### Matters arising and review of Action Points

No matters arising from minutes of previous meeting. Action points brought forward as follows:-

**AP7.4** Notification has appeared in the current week's issue of the Braintree & Witham Times re. Local Nature Reserve designation for the Flitch Way. It was agreed that the designation gave a nationally recognised status to the Flitch and would enable a more robust response being made to proposed developments. Tom will notify local Parish Councils and other relevant parties. Signs and all references to the Flitch will need to reflect the Local Nature Reserve status. The Committee thanked Sandra for the work she had done in preparing the application for LNR designation.

**AP7.5** Nothing to report from Stan on Talking Bench options. To carry forward.

**AP8.3** New sign in memory of Nigel Wood which will be sited at Gatewoods Pond is ready. Re. proposed other new information boards, Sandra said that some further information had been received and was under consideration. New sites for further benches are still being looked at. Some existing benches need repairing or replacement including the one at Gatewoods Pond. Survey of existing benches required. Sandra to report on new information boards and bench sites at next meeting. Tom to report on benches needing repair or replacement.

**AP10.3** Wendy reported that work had been completed at Stane Street Halt which involved replacement of horizontal scaffolding poles and new supporting posts. Posts have been painted and decision had been taken to leave poles unpainted.

**AP10.4** Stan reported that Rayne Parish Council have put the concrete base for the telephone box in place at the front of Rayne Station. Date for delivery and installation of the box is not known. Although some work will need to be done at the site including replacing sleepers, that won't be done until the telephone box is in place. Tom noted that there appeared to be cable ducting in the concrete base which suggested the PC was planning for power to be laid on for the box. He will make enquiries. Stan to report on progress at the next meeting.

**AP10.5** As reported earlier, the new board for Gatewoods Pond commemorating Nigel Wood has been received and John will make the sign and arrange installation.

**AP11.1** No progress to report on opening the bridge at Langford Halt. Sandra to carry forward.

**AP11.2** Nothing to report on recruitment of new member of staff. Tom continues to be the lone Ranger.

**AP11.3** Christmas event in the carriage had gone very well. 2020 event to be discussed later in the meeting.

#### Chairman's Report

Alan welcomed everybody to the first meeting of 2020.

As reported by Wendy and Margaret, the Christmas event went very well, despite poor weather conditions. Thanks were due to all who helped on the day including the elves and others who had decorated the carriage and looked after Santa.

Garnetts Wood Christmas event was well attended by volunteers despite the weather.

The Christmas lunch at Weavers' restaurant had been a success once again thanks to Margaret and Wendy's input in making the arrangements.

Congratulations were given to our three new first aiders, Peter, Ian and Bob who have successfully completed their training.

Congratulations were also given to Bob and Sue Lucas who had planned a 10km run to fundraise for cancer research. Bob advised that although the event had been cancelled due to high winds, he and Sue

had undertaken an "informal" run covering the 10km. Bob thanked everyone who had sponsored them both and he was pleased to report a total of £3,500 having been raised for Cancer Research.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Margaret reported the current bank balance to be £5,450.97.

A donation of £15 has been received via Virgin Money and further donations and payments for Santa tickets totalling £50 had been made through Paypal.

### **Social**

A visit to Bardfield vineyard has been booked for 11<sup>th</sup> May at a cost of £22.50 per person to include coffee, wine tasting and lunch.

Weavers has been booked for Christmas lunch on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

Details of a Christmas event at Layer Marney Tower have been received and will be emailed to members to assess interest.

### **Secretary's Report**

Online statistics were given, showing 479 web page visits and 887 page views in the last month. Top pages were Flitch Way, Downloads, Information and Maps and Blackwater Rail Trail followed by Access(FW). Facebook shows 1394 "likes", up 77 since the November meeting.

No new housing development applications affecting the Flitch have been made. The proposed Refuse Site at Canfield has been refused. Uttlesford District Council have delayed a decision on the other site, next to the River Chelmer.

Updating matters re the Flitch Way Action Group, Sandra has got ECC to respond about the River Chelmer crossing bridge as part of ECC Public Rights of Way user group.

As reported by Treasurer, a donation of £15 was received via Virgin Giving in January. System for payments to be made via PayPal is now set up and as a charity we will incur reduced charges. Some railway items have been sold by Brian on eBay and we await payment through the PayPal Giving Fund. We may need to review how we do this if the payment process is too long.

Tom had recently attended a meeting re. the Traveller site at Felsted and Sandra will write to him with Friends' concerns to be included in future discussions on the subject. While unable to discuss the detail of his meeting, Tom said that he felt there to have been a positive outcome.

### **Flitch Way Work Party Report**

Wendy said that recent work parties had seen a really good turnout of volunteers. Since the beginning of January, average numbers had risen from 10.5 to 13.5 with 19 volunteers on one occasion. We have had new volunteers starting and some old ones returning. A great deal of work has been done since work parties re-started after the Christmas break and everyone taking part seems happy with what we have been doing.

### **Railway Carriage Report**

Stan said that the carriage had been open for 35 sessions over 24 days in January with a total of 329 visitors in that period. 2 new volunteers have recently been recruited meaning that, with the exception of Wednesdays when Brian and Richard undertake work on the model, the carriage has been open to visitors from Thursday through to Tuesday in most weeks.

A message had been posted on our Facebook page during the previous week alleging comments of an inappropriate sexual nature to have been made and complaining about the same person smoking around the carriage and café. Sandra had acknowledged the message and asked the writer for further details to allow us to pursue the matter. No response had been received and it was agreed to leave matters in abeyance unless and/or until such further detail was received.

Community Rail Partnership proposed organising another walk along the Flitch from Braintree to Rayne station on Sunday July 19<sup>th</sup> with a talk on the FW in the carriage at the conclusion of the walk. That date not being convenient for the speaker, they will try to re-organize.

Chelmsford Dementia group have booked the carriage for 3 separate afternoons which John and Stan will co-ordinate.

A recent visit to the carriage had been made by pupils from John Ray School. Stan had tried to contact the organiser at the school before that visit took place in order to get an application form completed but without success. A note had been left in the carriage at the time of their visit to say that they intended returning at a future date and asking for someone to give a talk on the Fitch to the children at their next visit. It was agreed that organised groups of visitors needed to complete an application form and Stan will try again to contact the organiser at the school, Tracey Buckley, after the half term break in order to obtain further details.

### **Footpaths Group (P3) Report**

Chairman gave details of work parties shown on Facebook to have taken place since the November Committee meeting as follows: -

December: Little Maplestead - bridleway clearance. Earls Colne and Little Henney - sunken lane and bridleway clearance.

January: Henney Street - bridleway clearance. Colchester MOD training area.

Little Waltham - open up unused byway.

Broomhills Estate, Braintree - installation of way markers.

February: Lindsell - replace 2 bridges.

Radwinter - clearance work.

Skitts Hill and Blackmore End - opening up and clearing footpaths.

### **Ranger's Report**

Tom thanked everyone who had attended recent work parties in the Hatfield Forest area where a tremendous amount of work had been done and he shared Wendy's comments that volunteers appeared to have enjoyed the way that the work parties had been organised.

Tom updated the position re. replacement of the crossing gates which had been vandalised. He said that although insurers had agreed to cover the cost of new gates, they required 3 separate quotes and obtaining that information was causing the delay. Due to many other demands on his time, he had not yet been able to chase up suppliers for the prices required by the insurers.

Upcoming work parties would continue the work started the previous day at Takeley.

In answer to Wendy's questions, Tom said that the large concrete blocks at Rayne and elsewhere would remain until the gates had been replaced. Although causing trip hazards, the tree roots emerging from the path at Rayne could not be removed, Tom advised, because of the damage doing so would cause to trees. He agreed that the level of the path would need raising by the addition of material. Several other areas requiring attention in and around Rayne Station were also mentioned by Wendy and a day's work party to do the work will be arranged in due course. Wendy will forward details of such work to Tom. Val said that a decision needed to be taken on what was to be done with the former wildflower bed in the base of the signal box at Rayne. It was agreed that the area needed re-planting and Val will give some thought to what could go in there. Stan said that the unpaved area at the eastern end of the platform also needed attention.

Bob W said that the car park at High Cross Lane was in a very poor state with deep potholes. Tom will arrange delivery of appropriate material to level off the surface.

Tom reported that the café at Great Notley was being refurbished which could have a knock-on effect on availability the adjoining conference room for meetings.

### **Annual General Meeting**

Set for Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020. In view of the refurbishment of the café at the Discovery Centre, Tom will enquire whether the conference room will be available.

Suggestions for a speaker were discussed and Joe Andrews and his wife will talk about their bike trip to India and beyond.

2020-21 will be Alan's fifth and final year as Chairman and a replacement will be required at the end of the year.

Bob Wright agreed to be nominated as a new Trustee/Committee member at the AGM.

A date for a pre-AGM meeting was agreed for 10am, Wednesday 1 April at the Discovery Centre.

### **Any Other Business**

Committee agreed Wendy's suggestion that the Friends purchase high-visibility vests for volunteers' use when on work parties. Tom also agreed the suggestion but said that he felt ECC should be responsible for providing them. He will speak to Steff accordingly and let Wendy know.

Margaret's proposal to hold the Christmas 2020 event on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December was agreed, the feeling being that holding it on Friday in 2019 had had no effect on the numbers of visitors and many more tickets to meet Santa could have been sold. It was decided, therefore, to extend the opening hours and for John and Stan to share Santa duties on the day. Some Christmas items were left from 2019 and more for 2020 had already been bought.

Stan said that he had been booked to give a Flich Way talk to Dunmow U3A group on Wednesday afternoon, 25<sup>th</sup> March at Foakes Hall. It would be much shorter than usual due to the organiser's request for it to last no more than 10-15 minutes.

There being no further matters to discuss, the Chairman brought the meeting to a close at 12.

### **Action points for next meeting**

Carried forward from previous meetings:-

**AP7.4** Local Nature Reserve designation. Tom to report on actions taken since status granted.

**AP7.5** Talking benches. Stan to report progress.

**AP8.3** Sites for new benches and info boards. Sandra to report progress.  
Repair or replacement of benches. Tom to report.

**AP10.4** Siting of telephone box at Rayne Station. Stan to report progress.

**AP10.5** Installation of Nigel's sign at Gatewoods Pond. John to report.

**AP11.1** Opening up bridge at Langford Halt. Sandra to report progress.

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

From this meeting:-

**AP12.1** Proposed walk organised by Community Rail Partnership. Stan to report.

**AP12.2** Replacement of damaged gates. Tom to report.

**AP12.3** Proposed work at Rayne Station area. Wendy/Val to report.

**AP12.4** Provision of hi-viz vests for volunteers. Wendy/Tom to report.