

Friends of the Flitch Way and Associated Woodlands

Notes from on-line Zoom meeting of Friday 20 November 2020

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

Approval of Minutes from last meeting of 11 September 2020.

Agreed by all and signed as such by Secretary on behalf of Chairman.

Matters arising and review of Action Points

AP7.4 Regarding Local Nature Reserve designation for the Flitch Way, Tom believed the only reason for it not appearing on maps etc was staff at Natural England being on furlough and, therefore, unable to process. He had spoken to ECC legal department, however, who had said that it could be considered as declared and finalised. Update to meeting – The Flitch Way is listed as a LNR by Natural England and should appear on the mapping layer in February 2021.

AP10.4 Re the telephone box at Rayne station, Stan said that he had spoken to the Parish Clerk who said that the missing window glass would be replaced to make it weatherproof but the painting etc would not be done before Spring 2021. Completed sign is with John for storage and will be put in place once work on the box is completed.

AP10.5 Nigel's sign at Gatewoods Pond has been put in place by John and Stan.

AP11.1 Sandra said that Countryside Properties were still interested in possibly opening up the bridge at Langford Halt but matters were on hold until Spring 2021. To carry forward.

AP11.2 Tom had no news regarding the recruitment of a new Ranger. A further re-structuring exercise by ECC is pending. To carry forward.

AP12.2 No progress on replacing damaged gates etc to report. Tom said that he had received two quotes and was chasing a third. To carry forward.

AP13.1 Sandra said that several potential bench sites have been identified, eastwards from the Station. Tom reminded that BDC landscaping team would need to be consulted if a bench near Clap Bridge was proposed as they had responsibility for that section of FW. Tom also asked to be consulted re. proposed sites in order to ensure he would be able to mow and flail those areas once the bench was in place. To carry forward.

AP13.2 Re. Grant spending, Stan said that the one from BDC for £1050 was to cover the cost of re-painting the carriage and planting up two areas at the Station. All work had been satisfactorily completed with an overspend of £30.87. The ECC Grant of £1605 was for 4 benches and information boards and tools and equipment for volunteers, including high visibility vests. Vests have been purchased and distributed and one bench installed at Rayne Station. A claim for the money spent to date has recently been submitted to ECC, payment of which is expected within the coming week or two. A balance of £1154 remains which needs to be spent by 31 March 2021. The position on progress re. ECC Grant to be carried forward.

AP13.3 Stan reported carriage painting to have been completed with some minor work remaining to be finished in Spring 2021. Thanks were given to Graham, Andy, John West, Val and Brian for the work they had done.

Chairman's report.

Alan welcomed everybody to yet another meeting, taking place online via Zoom due to Covid 19 restrictions.

A number of work parties have taken place since the last meeting but 5 November saw us back under lockdown so back to square one. P3 work parties have also ceased.

Chairman said that he had been interviewed on Sunday 18 October by BBC Essex as part of their Essex Quest programme, a virtual version all done over the telephone, during which they went to Bannister Green Halt.

Railway Carriage Museum regrettably remains closed for the safety of stewards and visitors although Derek and Sue have been collecting donations and talking to visitors outside the carriage prior to the latest lockdown.

Thanks were offered to Stan and the team for excellent work on re-painting the carriage and to Val and her team for the re-planting work done at the station.

Chairman had no updates on contact with the previous roofer. Due to lack of work due to Covid 19 he had not been able to pay us at this stage but it is hoped that he will be able to do so in the coming months.

Concluding his report, Alan thanked all volunteers for their patience and encouraged everybody to stay safe.

Treasurer's report.

Current bank balance £2357.87 as of the previous day. Figure includes £151 from HMRC in Gift Aid arising from membership fees. Margaret also confirmed receipt of £1050 Grant from BDC and added that £434.26 of the ECC Grant has so far been spent.

As advised by Chairman, Derek has been sitting outside the carriage on 2 or 3 days each week, talking to visitors, obtaining donations and selling books, DVDs and surplus model trains. He has done a brilliant job and raised £198.62 towards Friends funds.

Treasurer said that £470.94 had been received from Gordon Cameron following his sister Barbara's funeral, as part of which Gordon had asked for donations to be made to the Friends as a memorial to Barbara. It was understood that further money was to come. Several payments have been received via Paypal arising from posters displayed around Rayne Station requesting donations.

Monthly Direct Debit to EDF for power in the carriage has been reduced to £58 per month and the overpayment of £161 has been refunded to us. The DD is to be reviewed in the new year.

On social activities, Margaret said that she had confirmed that Wildens Restaurant at Bocking where we had booked the FW Christmas meal unfortunately no longer existed. Although the Club at Bocking is providing bistro type food, we would not be able to go as a group due to current rules. Accordingly, there will be no pre-Christmas get together this year.

Secretary's report

Sandra reported on-line statistics as 643 web page visits and 1405 page views in the last month. Facebook shows 1666 'likes', up 84 since the September meeting.

Housing Developments:

UTT/19/1166/OP. Land to the south of B1256 at Little Canfield went to the Planning Inspector and was then withdrawn on 10 November. There are rumours that Uttlesford DC have offered or intend to offer to purchase the Banana depot which lies to the south of the proposed site.

UTT/18/3538/OP. Land north of Canfield Drive, Great Canfield for 80 houses has gone to appeal. A comprehensive response was submitted on the Friends' behalf on 19 November. Alan thanked Sandra for the tremendous job she does in monitoring and responding to the many planning applications for development along the Flich Way, many of which have been successfully challenged.

Secretary had nothing material to report from the Flich Way Action Group since the last meeting.

As per the Treasurer's report, Sandra advised that 6 donations to support the carriage had been made via Paypal. Josh has also included the Friends as part of the Booking Hall Café donation scheme.

Disappointingly, we have been asked to pay £183.20 for using a copyrighted image in June 2018 as Wildlife of the Month. It had been thought that it was licence free as we had attributed the image owner. We have removed the image from our website and Facebook page and further discussions are to take place to try and get the fee waived. The fact of the Friends being a small non-profit making charity with reduced funds will be stressed, as will the purpose of posting the image to be educational as per our Constitution aims. To avoid a similar situation occurring in the future, the merits of building a repository on Google of images taken by ourselves will be considered.

Work Party report

Wendy reported that since the September meeting, work parties have taken place at Garnetts Wood, Felsted and Takeley and continued at Dunmow Cutting. Volunteers have also been working on the railway carriage to finish the painting. John has created a store cupboard in the toilet by removing the fittings and installing a new floor and shelving. Alan thanked John for the work he had done and Stan added that it would allow tins of paint and related decorating tools and materials to be kept in there which would free up space in the carriage cupboards.

A new bench has been installed at the Station by John and Stan as part of the ECC Grant funding.

Three new volunteers have joined us, Kevin French, Neil Murphy and his son Sam and they have turned up regularly to help with a variety of tasks.

A number of Hi-Viz vests have been given to those volunteers attending FW work parties and to P3 volunteers when we have seen them.

Although Tom has been unable to come out on every occasion, we have managed to get tools to site by John picking them up from Notley and taking them in the trailer.

Work parties have diligently kept to social distancing and the rule of six and Alan confirmed that to have worked well for all concerned. As previously advised in the Chairman's report, Wendy said that no work parties have taken place due to lockdown rules, the last one having been at Garnetts Wood on 3 November.

Wendy said that she had contacted Nigel's partner, Janet, to let her know that the sign had been installed at Gatewoods.

Railway carriage report

Stan said that everything he had intended reporting on had already been discussed. He repeated the thanks to everybody who had been involved in the preparation and painting of the carriage which had been achieved despite the often wet weather. Thanks were also due to Brian who spent time in the carriage each Wednesday making sure that everything was working and, again, to Derek for the time he had spent outside the carriage keeping visitors informed and extracting donations from them towards the upkeep of the carriage.

Footpath group (P3) report.

Alan reported that Facebook showed work parties to have taken place up to the date of lockdown as follows:-

September. Manuden-cleared footpath and installed bridge. Notley and High Easter-cleared blocked footpaths.

October. Sheering-cleared blocked footpath. Pharisee Green-cleared blocked footpath.

Notley Discovery Centre-replaced bridge slats. Gosfield Golf Course-cleared blocked footpath and installed waymarker posts. Notley Golf Course-repaired stile and light cutback.

November. Stagden Cross- cleared bridleway.

Ranger's report

Tom echoed the thanks given to all volunteers in previous reports.

Coronavirus restrictions have restricted the work that can be done but he hoped to be able to re-start work parties in January. As well as areas of the FW needing attention, there would be a lot of work at Great Notley coming up which he hoped the Friends would be able to help with, including work around the lake area. A delivery of trees for planting out in the Country Park was also expected in February.

Chairman suggested that Tom draw up a list of jobs in priority order but without dates for completion.

Any Other Business

Bob Wright said that tree guards which volunteers had removed were still at Garnetts. Tom said that he would be unable to take them from site until ground conditions improved to allow vehicle access.

Margaret said that, depending on the guidance for allowable activities after the current lockdown, it was hoped to decorate the carriage to create a festive appearance, from the outside at least. Stan will speak to Josh to see if something similar was planned for the telephone box.

Tom asked whether local Co-op stores had been approached as they were donating funds to charities arising from use of their store cards. Sandra will check it out along with a similar Amazon scheme.

Alan said that Graham Bridgeman had covered the cost of face masks being sold through Stationery Solutions in Braintree, the proceeds from which would come to the Friends. £152 has been raised so far.

Sandra said that she had spoken to Gordon Cameron regarding the bench to be placed at Rayne station in memory of his sister. As mentioned earlier in the meeting, a considerable sum has been donated in lieu of flowers at the funeral which Gordon was donating to the Friends. A traditional type bench was thought to be appropriate and it would be installed in a place to be decided. It was agreed to invite Gordon and family to see the bench once it had been put in place.

Wendy said that work was needed at Bannister Green Halt to replace the scaffolding poles. Unlikely to take place before the Spring and Wendy will liaise with Tom to arrange transport of the poles.

Although not a legal requirement for our charity, it was agreed to include a Trustees Report with our annual accounts.

Next meeting was agreed for 10am on Friday 29 January, venue and format to be decided.

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