

Friends of the Flitch Way and Associated Woodlands
Notes from Committee Meeting of Friday 22 November 2019

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. Guest, Bob Wright.
Ranger, Due to appointment elsewhere, Tom Hamilton joined meeting midway.
Apologies: John Moss, Wendy Moss

Minutes of previous meeting of 18 September.

Accepted as a true record and signed by Chairman accordingly.

Matters arising and review of Action Points:

No matters arising from the minutes other than Action Points, as follows:

AP7.4 Local Nature Reserve designation still with Natural England.

AP7.5 Nothing to report on options for talking bench or similar. Stan to carry forward and report back.

AP8.3 Some information received on new information boards but no decision on content or siting of new benches yet made. Sandra to carry forward and report back.

AP8.5 No updates on Fentons Bridge replacement but on Highways high priority list. Tom to carry forward and report.

AP10.1 Donation towards cost of leaflet printing received.

AP10.2 Gift Aid application submitted and subsequent payment of £296 received from HMRC.

Ap10.3 Repairs to station sign completed. Scaffolding bars donated by local business will be put in place in due course and posts replaced where appropriate. Wendy to carry forward.

AP10.4 Preparatory work done at front of Rayne station and delivery of telephone box awaited. Stan to carry forward and report.

AP10.5 Clearance around bench at Gatewoods Pond completed. Proposal is for notice commemorating Nigel Wood's involvement with the Friends to be erected before Spring 2020. Stan has liaised with Wendy on form of words and photographs for the sign which will forward to committee for agreement. Stan/Wendy to carry forward.

Chairman's report.

Alan opened by welcoming Bob Wright to the meeting. Bob is considering joining the committee.

Chairman also congratulated William Chastell who had recently been recognized and given an award by Dunmow Town Council for his work on reconnecting the Flitch Way as part of the Flitch Way Action Group. Thanks were given to Sam and Rachel who had joined the work party at Felmore Farm in October as part of their personal business objectives.

Alan said that he was very disappointed with the recent spate of damage and misuse of the Flitch Way by mindless individuals around Rayne.

Thanks were given again to Andrew Adair for his recent comments on the Little Brook Green Planning Application submitted to Braintree District Council.

Treasurer's report.

Margaret reported the current bank account balance to be £6,492.23.

As mentioned earlier, the £200 donation towards the cost of re-printing the Flitch Way leaflets has been received. Margaret said that the monthly Direct Debit for electricity in the carriage will be reduced in December from £80 to £78.

Social.

Margaret reported the Christmas lunch at Wildens to be fully booked with all monies and menu choices received. No further outings booked for 2019. Planning for 2020 social events will take place in the new year.

Secretary's report.

Secretary gave online statistics as 284 web page visits and 516 page views in the last month. Top pages this month were Flitch Way, Blackwater Rail Trail, Information and Maps followed by Downloads. Facebook shows 1317 "likes", up 54 since the September meeting.

Reporting on Monday's meeting of the Flitch Way Action Group, Sandra said that some of the barriers installed along the Little Dunmow to Takeley stretch to deter irresponsible off-roaders had been moved. There has been a lack of response from ECC Public Rights of Way regarding the replacement of the bridge over the River Chelmer and it has been recommended to refer to the Highways panel. Various issues have arisen around the Ongar Road crossing. The proposed development at Staggs Farm/Follys Farm may include provision for a bridleway.

Regarding the opening up of the bridge at Langford Halt on the Blackwater Rail Trail, Sandra has met with representatives from Maldon District Council and Countryside Properties. The developer is keen on the idea of opening a pathway beneath the bridge and has agreed to undertake a feasibility study.

Update on planning since the meeting – The Planning Inspector has dismissed the Planning Appeal to build 37 houses on land south of Smiths Green in Takeley (ref UTT/19/0051/FUL). This means we have won all four planning appeals on the detrimental impact development would have on the character and appearance of the area including the Flitch Way.

Work Party report.

No formal report or volunteer statistics in the absence of Wendy. Alan advised that since the September meeting, work parties had taken place at Gatewoods Pond, Graunts Court, Felmore Farm and Langford Halt. Current work parties were taking place at Garnetts Wood.

Railway Carriage report.

Stan shared the group's disappointment at the most recent act of vandalism whereby the main power cable into the carriage had been badly damaged, meaning that the carriage was without power for almost a week until the electrician was able to repair the damage, the cost of which was awaited. Stan thanked Barry, the electrician, for acting quickly to put good the damage.

Although he had no numerical statistics, Stan said that the carriage continued to be open from Thursday to Monday each week thanks to Derek, Susan and the other weekend volunteers. Another afternoon visit to the carriage has been made by Chelmsford Dementia Group which was enjoyed by all.

The knitted model of Braintree Station has been removed to its new location, appropriately in the booking hall of Braintree Station. The unveiling of a plaque commemorating Jim Cloke took place with a good turnout of Flitch Way and P3 volunteers in attendance.

A selection of railway (and other) lamps has been given to the Friends by Iris Cloke which will be put on display in the carriage once some research is done on them. Josh Meehan has asked whether we had any railway items which we could lend to him for display in the café. Stan said that he will sort something out for him.

Footpaths Group (P3) report.

Chairman reported on work parties which had taken place since the September meeting as shown on Facebook, as follows:

September. Quendon-Complete laying of road planings. Halstead-Install 10 waymarker posts and path clearance. White Colne-Footpath clearance.

October. Arkesden and Elmdon-Replace bridge and path clearance. Hatfield Peverel-Replace stiles and gates. Mashbury-Open up blocked footpath. Clavering-Clearance of 2 footpaths.

November. Hatfield Peverel-Footpath clearance. Little Canfield-Clearance of footpaths around the High Cross Lane area. Roxwell-Open up an obstructed path.

Alan thanked the P3 group volunteers for the work they did which was often commented on by Facebook users. The group was currently being led by Alan Bridger in the absence of Pete Lane who is recovering from surgery. Best wishes for a speedy recovery were offered to Pete.

Ranger's report

Tom reported that Ranger Frank had now left to join Essex Wildlife Trust which left him as the lone Ranger available for work parties and other duties. A request for a replacement for Frank has been submitted. Tom advised that Country Parks were currently going through another re-structuring process.

With regard to future work parties, Tom said that work would continue at Garnetts until Christmas. Following the Christmas break, work would then move to the Western end of the Flitch Way.

Santa in the Carriage event.

Scheduled to take place on Friday 20th December.

Margaret said that wrapping presents would take place on the coming Tuesday, 26 November, with the carriage being decorated on the following Monday, 2nd December. Sufficient helpers are available for decorating the carriage. Stan will put the signs for the event on the ends of the carriage this weekend. On the day, Wendy and Margaret will be Santa's elf helpers, Alan and AN Other will man the Tombola stall. Alan has items left over from 2018 but donations for 2019 would be welcome. John will need to confirm availability of tables from the Scout Hall.

Any Other Business.

Stan reported that he had recently given a talk on the Flich Way and volunteering to Year 1 pupils at Flich Green Academy, Felsted.

Date of next meeting.

Friday 14th February. 10am at Discovery Centre.

Summary of Action Points for next meeting.

From previous meetings:

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

AP7.5 Stan to report on talking bench options.

AP8.3 Sandra to report on new information boards and bench sites.

AP8.5 Tom to report on current position re. Fentons Bridge replacement.

AP10.3 Wendy to report on replacement of scaffolding poles at Stane Street.

AP10.4 Stan to report on work at front of Rayne Station.

AP10.5 Stan/Wendy to report on new sign at Gatewoods Pond.

From this meeting:

AP11.1 Sandra to report on opening of bridge at Langford Halt

AP11.2 Tom to report on recruitment of new Ranger.

AP11.3 Wendy/Margaret to report on Christmas event.