

## Friends of the Flitch Way and Associated Woodlands

### Notes from Committee Meeting of Wednesday 23 January 2019

- Venue** Discovery Centre, Great Notley Park
- Present** Chairman, Alan Trigg. Secretary, Sandra Reynolds. Treasurer, Margaret James. Committee members, Val Blamire, Stan Davies, John Moss, Wendy Moss. Ranger, Tom Hamilton.
- Apologies** Bob Lucas.

Chairman welcomed everyone to the first committee meeting of 2019.

#### **Minutes of previous meeting**

Accepted as a true record and signed by Chairman accordingly.

#### **Matters arising and review of Action Points**

**AP2.5** To be covered under Ranger's report.

**AP4.8** The second of 2 drafts prepared for replacement/updated notice board at Stane Street Halt approved. Val and/or Wendy to forward photographs to Sandra. New board for Bannister Green still being worked on.

**AP5.3** To be covered under Ranger's report.

**AP5.5** Nothing to report. To be carried forward.

**AP6.1** 2 carriage windows replaced. John and Stan will attach screening film to windows.

**AP6.3** Nothing to report on signage at Felsted travellers' site. To be carried forward.

**AP7.2-4** Already covered under AP4.8.

**AP5** Felt to have been a successful event. Treasurer to provide financial outcomes in her report.

**AP6** No action taken on updating Charity Commission details. To be carried forward.

#### **Chairman's report**

Alan expressed disappointment at the funding application for work at Dunmow Cutting and Boardwalk replacement having been turned down due to applications having been greatly oversubscribed against the funds available for distribution. Consideration will be given in due course to re-submitting the application to other funding bodies.

Referring to the Brook Green enquiry, Alan said the outcome would not be known until April at the earliest and shared everybody's hopes that the developer's appeal would be refused. Thanks were given to Andrew and Irene Adair, Wendy Moss, Sandra Reynolds and Pam Maskell who spoke on the Friends' behalf at the enquiry,

The unveiling of the Frederick Fuller sign at Rayne Station received good feedback and publicity, Alan said, and it was good to see many members of the Fuller family in attendance on the day.

Thanks were also given to local historian, Mike Bardell, for his contribution.

#### **Treasurer's report**

Margaret reported the balance of the Current Account to be £8,497.25 with a further £2,402.40 in the Savings/Contingency account. £600 has been spent on a new hedge trimmer and £179 on

replacement saws and blades, Treasurer said, which needed to be deducted from the Current Account figure.

Re. the Christmas event, £310 was raised from the sale of Santa tickets, £113.70 from the Tombola and £15.30 from the Nail Game. £87.00 was spent on toys/presents. Thanks were offered to everyone who provided items for the Tombola which included prizes donated by Rangers Claire and Tom.

Margaret reported that donations from visitors to the carriage and the Café continue to be made, with good recent amounts due to the carriage being open longer, £58.61 having been collected the previous week, for example.

Online donations towards Friends funds have also been received, including £258 from Hare & Tortoise running group following a recent event and £150 from a local long distance walking group. Stan will contact Malcolm Richardson to see whether he would check over the Friends annual accounts again. He will also confirm Malcolm's availability in April to do so in good time for the AGM

On Social Events, Margaret said that the Christmas lunch at Weavers restaurant had again been successful. A booking for Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2019 has already been made and, as always, members need to book early to avoid missing out.

So far as future social events are concerned, Margaret is considering a visit to the Abbey at Coggeshall under the Invitation to View scheme. The proposed date is Friday 5 April and will include a guided tour with tea or coffee and cakes at an inclusive cost of £20 per person. Lunch at the White Hart in Coggeshall before the visit can also be booked. Wendy will email members with full details.

A visit to Wilkins at Tiptree Farm which will include a tractor/trailer ride around the farm and afternoon tea is also proposed for Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> July. Margaret is waiting for confirmation from Tiptree and, as before, Wendy will email members with details in due course.

Details of a proposed walk of approximately 3.5 miles in the Quendon, Ugley and Rickley area will also be emailed to members to gauge interest in taking part. An early evening in May when bluebells are in bloom was felt to be a good time to undertake the walk which would take around 2 hours and finish with a meal in a local pub for those who wished it.

### **Secretary's report**

Secretary gave online stats as follows. 1977 web page visits and 6156 page views in the last month, the top pages being Flitch Way 256 and Blackwater Rail Trail 208. Downloads 148, Flitch Way info and maps 145 and Museum 115. FW Facebook page shows 1023 "likes", up by 30 since the November committee meeting.

Sandra said that the Flitch Way Action Group AGM was coming up shortly and any FW committee members would be welcome to attend. Some positive progress was being made on the new bridleway to join the two ends of the Flitch although some problems in getting agreement from landowners' agents still exist.

There were ongoing problems with the byway at Dunmow, Sandra said, which was still officially closed to users and the local newspaper, the Dunmow Broadcast, was taking an interest in what was happening there. Sandra is in communication with ECC Public Rights of Way in an effort to resolve the situation.

Sandra said that she was in the process of responding to an Outline Planning Application for 240 houses on land East of Station Road at Little Dunmow. Referring to a spreadsheet she had previously prepared, Sandra said that in the last 12 months there had been 11 Applications or

Appeals submitted for land adjacent to the Flitch Way for a total of 5703 houses. 1600 (not including Brook Green 2) have been submitted to Braintree District Council and 4103 to Uttlesford. Responses have been made to 7 of those.

Correspondence has been received from ECC Highways regarding Fentons Farm Bridge, Milli Lane in Rayne which was currently closed due to the unsafe structure. Highways are considering their options, one of which would be to demolish and re-build the structure. If that decision is made, the committee's view was that it should be faced with brickwork sympathetic to the nature of the Flitch Way and the design of the existing bridge. Sandra advised that Rayne Parish Council were also involved in discussions with Highways and a representative from ECC would be coming to a Parish Council meeting to which the Friends were also invited.

Secretary also reported that Essex County Council were reviewing their Green Infrastructure Strategy in conjunction with Sustrans.

### **Flitch Way Work Party report**

Wendy said that several weeks had been spent at Start Hill clearing the ditch and adjacent slopes in preparation to Tom opening up the ditch with a digger to alleviate flooding and consequent erosion of the path. Good numbers of volunteers had turned out with an average of 13-14 people on each work party, including several new people. Work parties would be taking place at Garnetts Wood until Spring, starting the following day.

### **Railway Carriage update.**

As reported earlier, Stan said that the two windows with blown seals have recently been replaced. The UV protective film would be applied to the windows once the appropriate temperature was reached. Some unavoidable damage had been done to the model when replacing the windows and Brian and Richard were thanked for their ongoing repair work and for the work which they did each Wednesday in keeping the model up to scratch.

Work on painting the outside of the carriage is proposed for the Spring along with any bodywork repairs which it is hoped Andy Horder will undertake as he has done in previous years. With regard to the roof, the opinion is that its condition has improved since the last work was done on it. A closer examination will take place once the weather improves when a decision will need to be made as to whether any further work will be required. Details of a potential supplier/fixer have been obtained by Andy Horder on a visit to North Norfolk Railway for which he was thanked.

Although no numerical stats were available for the period since the last meeting,, Stan said that volunteers continue to man the carriage at weekends and during school holidays and a new volunteer now opens up every Thursday and Friday as well as stepping in at the last minute to fill vacancies in the rota. Another new volunteer is being shown round the carriage over the coming weekend. A get-together of carriage volunteers is to take place in the carriage on the evening of Monday 28<sup>th</sup> January which is a good opportunity for people to meet up, put faces to names and raise any concerns they might have.

Stan said that the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the branch line would take place in February and he had recently visited the Maltings Museum at Great Dunmow to see what they had on display. He said that, understandably, most of the items which they had related only to Dunmow Station with several interesting photos and items he hadn't seen before. There was nothing specific to the anniversary of the line, however, and Stan said that he was trying to get hold of newspaper records or any related materials. Tom suggested Stan contact Saffron Walden Museum who might have something relevant in their archives.

### **P3 Footpath Work Party report.**

Alan reported from Facebook that since the last meeting P3 work parties had taken place at: November - Cobblers Green and Cocks Green, clearance and installation of steps. Cold Norton, major clearance of byway.

December - Catmere End, clearance of footpath and byway. Cold Norton, continuing byway clearance.

January - Cold Norton, continuing clearance of byway.

Alan expressed the committee's appreciation for the work done by Pete and Ann and all the P3 volunteers.

### **Ranger's report.**

Tom thanked volunteers for the hard work done by volunteers at Start Hill which had enabled him to operate the digger to open up the ditch and cut drainage channels which would hopefully solve the problem of the path being flooded each year. The work had been completed by the end of the previous week, Tom advised.

Wendy asked whether a similar ditching exercise could be done at Dunmow Cutting to improve path drainage. Tom felt it to be unlikely due to a lack of time available for him to do the work, coupled with access problems and problems in how and where to dispose of the spoil cleared from the ditch line.

As mentioned by Wendy, work parties would take place at Garnetts Wood for the foreseeable future until Spring, whenever that might occur. Volunteers' job would be to follow up the major work done by contractors in opening up the woodland by clearing invasive species and coppicing the larger hazels. Most of the large cut timber has been removed by the contractor and the areas they had worked on would need a general 'tidy up' which would involve cutting and stacking the remaining larger timber and protecting the coppice stools from deer using brush and lighter materials.

As to progress in getting the Flitch declared as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Tom said that he knew that the matter was being progressed by ECC Land Agents and will follow up.

Mention had been made re. the possibility for installing a talking bench, possibly somewhere around Rayne Station. Tom said that he was in touch with the ECC Communications person and although they currently didn't have the funding to proceed, they would be happy to offer training to Friends volunteers on recording peoples' memories for use with the bench. We would need to identify persons who could contribute to the history of the branch line, local historians or people who still remembered the old days so that the stories they had could be recorded on disc before they were lost forever.

Tom had nothing to report regarding the work needed around the Traveller site at Felsted which would involve getting the concrete blocks moved to a better position and installing new signage.

### **Any Other Business.**

The feasibility of getting a signal box for Rayne Station was discussed. While it was felt to be a good idea in principle, the practicalities of who would be responsible for it and who would look after it meant that the Friends volunteers couldn't do it due to existing pressure on manning the carriage. Although Sandra said that the Parish Council could be interested in a joint venture, possibly as a venue for their village museum, the feeling of the committee was that the Friends would not be able to get involved and should not offer to do so.

Stan said that some time previously, Josh had mentioned to him that the Parish Council had a redundant telephone box, currently located in Shalford Road, which they had offered to re-locate at the Station. Stan had agreed with Josh that it would be a good idea provided that the Parish Council arranged removal of the box from its present site and transported it to the station. Stan's view was that it would need to be a sealed unit as opposed to being used as a library or suchlike as could be seen in other villages. He also informally told Josh that the Friends could possibly/probably look after it, so far as painting etc was concerned.

Wendy said that it would be good to get the sign back in Garnetts Wood which had been located close to 'Mr Garnett' and gave the history of the wood. Tom said that the original metal sign was at Great Notley and there was a reluctance to put it back in the wood due to the high probability of it being stolen for its scrap metal value. Tom said that he would investigate the possibility of a non-metal copy being made.

Alan said that his First Aid 'ticket' would expire later in the year and said that rather than him undertaking the refresher course, he would prefer to have somebody else take over from him. Bob Lucas' 'ticket' was still in date, the feeling being that he had attended a refresher course in 2018. Wendy will make some enquiries to see whether any of the volunteers would like to go on the 3-day First Aid training course.

#### **Dates for Annual General Meeting and next Committee Meeting**

Date for the Annual General Meeting was agreed for Friday 3 May. Tom confirmed the Discovery Centre conference room would be available and will put it in the diary. So far as a speaker for the meeting was concerned, 2 potential candidates were put forward, both members of Essex Field Club. Sandra will make enquiries and report back.

Date for the next Committee meeting was agreed for Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> March, 4.30pm at Great Notley.

#### **Summary of Action Points for next meeting.**

*Outstanding from previous meetings: -*

*AP4.8 Sandra to report present position on signs for Stane Street and Bannister Green.*

*AP5.5 Tom to give an update on Essex Hunt's use of Garnetts Wood.*

*AP6.1 John/Stan to report on carriage windows.*

*AP6.3 Tom to report on signage and movement of concrete blocks at traveller site.*

*AP6 Stan to report on update of Charity Commission website details.*

*Carried forward from this meeting: -*

*AP 7.1 Stan to report on availability of annual accounts 'checker'.*

*AP7.2 Sandra to report present position on byway improvements and closure.*

*AP7.3 Sandra to report on Fentons bridge and Parish Council meeting.*

*AP7.4 Tom to report on status of LNR declaration.*

*AP7.5 Tom to give update on Talking Bench.*

*AP7.6 Sandra to report on Signal Box arising from Parish Council meeting.*

*AP7.7 Stan to report back on Telephone Box.*

*AP7.8 Tom to report on replacement sign for Garnetts Wood.*

*AP7.9 Wendy to give update on potential new first aider.*