

Friends of the Flitch Way and Associated Woodlands

Notes from Committee meeting of Wednesday 27th March 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, John Moss. Ranger, Tom Hamilton.

Apologies: Wendy Moss

Minutes of previous meeting:

Accepted as a true record and signed by Chairman accordingly.

Matters arising and review of Action Points:

AP7.1 Malcom Richardson has agreed to review the annual accounts. Margaret will shortly pass all the necessary paperwork to him.

AP7.2 On the present position re. improvements and closure of the byway at Dunmow, Sandra said that it remained closed. All Terrain UK have planned a working day on site on Saturday 11 May and are looking for volunteers to help them make the area less attractive to the inconsiderate individuals who had caused the damage. Sandra will notify FW volunteers and agreed to co-ordinate the response from Friends volunteers.

AP7.3 Sandra had attended Parish Council Meeting with Stan and John when ECC Highways had set out their options for repairing or replacing Fentons Bridge. Their view was that the whole structure would need to be replaced as repairs were not possible. One option was a ramp which would involve wholesale removal of trees, another was building a metal bridge. Friends stated preference was for a brick faced structure using bricks from the old bridge wherever possible in order to retain the character and appearance of the bridge.

AP7.4 On the application for declaring the Flitch as a Local Nature Reserve, Tom said that ECC Land Agents had approved the application which was awaiting a response from DEFRA who had a backlog of work.

AP7.5 Tom said that, as reported previously, ECC would be happy to give advice and some training on interviewing techniques. Other options to a Talking Bench were available. Stan will do some research and report back.

AP7.6 Sandra said that the possibility of getting a signal box at the Station had been discussed by Parish Council members at their meeting. It had been made clear that should it be decided to go ahead with plans to find a suitable structure, the Friends would not have the resources to look after it. The matter was left with Parish Council for them to give further consideration to the idea.

AP7.7 Stan said that nothing further had been heard from the Parish Council about relocating the disused telephone box from Shalford Road to Rayne Station.

AP7.8 No progress on replacing the sign at Garnetts Wood.

AP7.9 Alan reported on Wendy's behalf that one of the regular volunteers, Peter Hanks, had offered to take on the role of a first aider on work parties. Tom will make enquiries re. availability of training.

Chairman's report:

Alan said that following the last Friends' meeting, he had attended the Flitch Way Action Group AGM with Sandra, followed by their Committee meeting. Quite a bit of progress was being made on the proposed bridleway route joining the two ends of the Flitch but issues with Siemens remained to be

resolved. Alan and Sandra had also attended a meeting to discuss the alternative site proposed for Council waste vehicles near the David Cock land in Dunmow. The plans opened up opportunities for the Flitch including a potential link to the Saffron Trail and a safe route into the town centre. It was felt that there were lots of positives in the proposal, but it hinged on the original application at Canfield failing. Chairman said that he and John Moss would be running a stall at the Braintree Scouts' Fundraising day on 7th July.

Alan also reported that the P3 group had been grateful for the purchase of the hedge trimmer which was proving very useful on their work parties.

Treasurer's report:

Current bank balance was reported as £7,287.03.

Margaret said that the annual accounts would be finalised over the next couple of weeks and passed to the auditor for checking at the beginning of April. It was essential, therefore, that all expense forms and anything else needing payment were passed to her by the end of March.

On Social events, Margaret said that there were 24 attendees for the Coggeshall Abbey outing on 5th April. Menu choices for lunch have been given to the White Hart.

The walk around Quendon planned for May was looking good with 19 people taking part and 16 having a meal. The Pub will be contacted shortly for eating arrangements and menu choices will be sent out.

Margaret said that she has booked the tour of Tiptree Farm for 4th July and will send an email with all details shortly.

Secretary's report:

The online statistics were provided as follows:- 2,384 Friends web page visits and 6,876 page views in the last month. Top pages have been Flitch Way 275, Blackwater Rail Trail 371, Contact 213, Museum 180, Info/Maps 155 and Downloads 138.

Facebook shows 1091 "likes", up 68 since the January meeting.

Sandra said that part of the land for the proposed Flitch Way connection at Dunmow was owned by Bishops Stortford College. She had had a meeting with them to discuss uplifting the short stretch of footpath to a bridleway and the initial response had been positive.

On Planning Applications, Sandra reported that those at Maldon and near Felsted ramp had been refused. An appeal against the refusal of the Takeley application will take place in May and Sandra will attend on behalf of the Friends.

Sandra has heard that the Green Café at Canfield will not be opening this summer.

Secretary had brought the completed signs for Stane Street and Bannister Green to the meeting, both of which met with the committee's approval. John hoped to install the signs during the Easter school holiday period.

Sandra said that after paying for the signs, there remained money left from the donation given by Josh and Grace from the 2018 Rayne Festival. The meeting agreed the merits of using that money to go towards the cost of installing more information boards along the Flitch which could show local history as well as containing wildlife information. Consideration will be given to appropriate sites and suggestions as to sites and the information to be shown on the boards would be welcomed, perhaps by mentioning the matter to members at the forthcoming AGM.

Work Party report:

The meeting was read a report prepared previously by Wendy, as follows:-

"Since 24th February, apart from one day spent bridge building at Notley, volunteers have been working at Garnetts Wood. This seems to have been very well received by the volunteers who have enjoyed the variety of work there and that has been reflected in the numbers attending, 11 being the lowest and 18

the highest. We continue to have the regular 2 day attendees throughout and that has been supplemented by those who choose to come either on a Tuesday or a Thursday or on odd days now and again. We have a new volunteer, John Markham, who intends joining work parties in April once he has retired at the end of March. Since April, the total number of volunteer days has reached 642”.

Railway Carriage:

Stan said that following the windows being replaced, a leak had been found in the cupboard below one of them. John had identified the problem to be the window not having been sealed correctly around the outside and Stan thanked John for having quickly dealt with the problem.

Volunteers evening get-together in the carriage had gone well with good attendance.

Stan thanked Peter Hanks, one of the work part volunteers, who had taken the trouble to visit Hertford Museum and obtain copies of a local newspaper article from 1869 which had reported on the opening of the branch line. The article formed the centre piece of a display with other related items in the carriage. Stan also said that he had visited Dunmow Maltings museum to see whether they had anything on the anniversary of the opening. He found nothing specific but lots of interesting historical photographs of Dunmow Station were on display, many of which he hadn't seen before. The working N gauge model of the station and surroundings were also recommended as worth while visiting.

Stan said that 12 different volunteers had enabled the carriage to be opened on 88 occasions since the last meeting and the committee thanked them for their invaluable support. Derek Atkinson continued to open the carriage every Thursday and Friday and the newest recruit, Susan Baumbach was proving a good acquisition. It was hoped that volunteers would find the opportunity to open the carriage during the week, local schools shortly being due to finish for the Easter break.

Footpath Work Group (P3) report:

By reference to Facebook, Alan reported work parties to have taken place in January at Cold Norton, clearing a byway, in February at Willows Green and Stansted, on clearing a byway and bridleway respectively and in March at Littlebury Green, also on bridleway clearance.

Ranger's report:

Tom thanked everyone who continued to be involved in the work parties at Garnett's Wood which had focussed on clearing the huge amount of material left on the ground during the felling done by contractors. The meeting agreed the merits of continuing at Garnetts until the work was completed.

No work parties would take place in the following two weeks due to school holidays. Following completion of the work at Garnetts, work parties would drop to one day each week, alternating between Tuesday and Thursday and involving lighter work.

Senior Ranger Claire Bunn is on maternity leave and Steph will be returning to Notley from 22 April.

Tom was looking forward to his forthcoming two-day chain saw refresher course.

Damage has been caused at the High Cross Lane picnic site by a vehicle driving through the posts and damaging the bench.

With regard to ECC Highways proposed options to replace the damaged Fentons bridge structure at Mill Lane, mentioned earlier, Tom said that Country Parks had expressed a preference for a steel arched bridge. Committee members expressed the wish that any new structure would be sympathetic to the environment and the history of the Flitch Way.

Annual General Meeting:

Secretary said that the speaker had been booked for the AGM.

The revision to the Constitution to increase committee numbers to 10, including officers, will be put to members for approval.

Members attending the AGM will be encouraged to make contact to informally discuss being a committee member.

Stan said that he had been informed by Josh Meehan that he would not be organizing a Festival at Rayne station this year.

Any Other Business:

Date for the first meeting following the AGM would be Wednesday, 5 June. Time and Venue, 4.30pm at Great Notley.

Summary of Action Points for next meeting.

Outstanding from previous meetings

AP7.2 Sandra to report on Byway progress.

AP7.3 Sandra and/or Tom to report on Highway proposals Fentons Bridge replacement.

AP7.4 Tom to report on FW LNR designation.

AP7.5 Stan to report on possible options for Talking Bench.

AP7.6 & 7 Sandra and Stan to report on positions re. signal box and telephone box.

AP7.9 Tom to report on availability of first aid training.

Carried forward from this meeting.

AP8.1 Sandra to report the outcome of the Takeley planning application appeal.

AP8.2 John to report on installation of the new signs at Bannister Green and Stane Street.

AP8.3 Sandra to report on potential sites for new information boards.

AP8.4 Tom to report on High Cross Lane picnic site.

AP8.5 Tom to update position on Highway's options for Fentons bridge replacement.