

**Friends of the Flitch Way and Associated Woodlands**  
**Notes from on-line Zoom meeting of Friday 29 January 2021**

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

**Apologies for absence:** John and Wendy Moss (volunteering at Braintree Vaccination Centre)

**Approval of Minutes of 20 November 2020.**

Agreed by all and signed on Chairman's behalf by Secretary.

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

Carried forward from previous meetings.

AP7.4 Tom will email local parish councils to advise them of FW Local Nature Reserve designation. Carry forward.

AP10.4 No information available on progress of work on telephone box at Station. Carry forward.

AP11.1 No progress to report on opening up the bridge at Langford Halt. Carry forward.

AP11.2 Tom had no information on recruitment of new Ranger. Recruitment on hold due to on-going re-structuring of Country Parks. Carry forward.

AP12.2 Quotes for replacement of damaged gates with Insurers and Tom in discussion with them. Carry forward.

AP 13.1 Final decision on location of 3 benches yet to be confirmed. Carry forward.

AP13.2 On Grant funding, payment received from ECC to cover amounts already spent. The remaining £1154 balance of the Grant to cover the cost of the benches at AP13.1 needs to be claimed by the end of March. Work unlikely to be done 'in-house' by Richard and Stan will contact supplier in Colchester with a view to placing an order to enable a claim to be submitted to ECC. Carry forward.

AP13.4 Tom has drawn up a list of outstanding work for volunteers, none of which can be done at present due to Covid restrictions.

AP13.5 Wendy will invite Gordon Cameron and family to see the memorial bench once it has been purchased and installed. Carry forward.

AP 13.6 Trustee Report to accompany Annual Accounts to be discussed later in meeting.

**Chairman's report.**

Alan welcomed everybody to the meeting, again taking place online due to ongoing Covid-19 restrictions.

No work parties have taken place since the November meeting and there is no indication as to when we will be able to restart. Alan commented that he had spoken to a number of volunteers who were keen to do so at the earliest opportunity.

A big thank you was given to Josh and Grace Meehan of the Booking Hall café for the donation of £250 from their on-line cake orders. A letter of thanks has been sent to them and the donation noted on our Facebook and web pages.

Thanks were also given to the family and friends of Barbara Hollingsworth who have made a generous donation. We plan to do something special in her memory later in the year.

A further donation of £60 has been made by an anonymous donor.

Alan had no update on contacting the previous carriage roofer regarding the refund he had offered. Due to Covid -9 he has been unable to make payment so we will have to wait and see what transpires.

Chairman said that we had heard the sad news that Bill Baumbach, husband of Susan, one of our volunteers, had died from Covid on 17 January at the age of 72. Alan said that he had known Bill for over 40 years and he will be sadly missed by all who knew him. Condolences were offered to Susan and her family on behalf of the committee and all members of the Friends.

Concluding his report, Alan thanked all volunteers for their patience and asked them to stay safe in the ongoing difficult times.

**Treasurer's report.**

Current Account balance at 4 January showed a credit balance of £3,154.23. The payment of £442.90 for carriage insurance has still to be debited to the account, however, and there are 2 cheques to pay in making the actual balance to date £2,783.33. Margaret said that she had been able

to reduce the insurance renewal quote by £100 and had confirmed with the insurers that cover for contents and damage within the carriage was included.

Chairman's earlier report that a donation of £60 had been made was confirmed.

Treasurer said that she had had discussions with EDF regarding the electricity supply to the carriage. The monthly direct debit had initially been reduced to £58 although £76 had been deducted in December, the reason for which she was following up. Little or no power was currently being used due to the carriage being closed and that had resulted in our account being in credit. As a consequence, a refund of £115 was to be made and EDF had agreed to reduce the monthly DD to £10 for the time being.

Margaret advised that 2 donations totalling £15 have been made via Virgin Money although only £5 has been credited to the bank account.

Margaret said that she had nothing to report on social activities, all such matters having been put on hold.

### **Secretary's report.**

Online statistics- 660 web page visits and 1370 page views in the last month. Facebook shows 1711 "likes", up 45 since the November meeting.

Housing Development Applications.

20/2784. Land at Takeley Street next to Coppice Close for 23 houses. Objection submitted.

Unfortunately, planning permission was previously granted for 20 houses under UTT/17/1852/FUL.

This site is near to Stane Steet Halt.

19/2168/OP Land west of Bonningtons Farm, Station Road, Takeley. Application for 27 houses has gone to appeal. Objection submitted mentioning LNR designation for Flitch Way.

18/3538/OP Land north of Canfield Drive, Great Canfield for 80 houses has gone to appeal starting 3 February and expected to last 3 days. We submitted comments on 19 November 2020.

BDC 18/01065/OUT Land south of Gilda Terrace and north of Flitch Way at Rayne for 120 houses has gone to appeal. We have submitted further comments dated 25 January 2021.

Flitch Way Action Group update.- Nothing material to report since last meeting. AGM will be held on 24 February.

Online donations- We have had one donation via Paypal to support the carriage.

Regarding prospective developments, Bob Wright mentioned work which he had seen taking place at the former banana depot at High Cross Lane. A sign for Cage Construction Group has been erected outside and workers seemed to be clearing outbuildings on the site. Tom remarked that he too had seen Uttlesford District Council vehicles on site. The site has been acquired by UDC but it was not known whether it was to be used by them as a council depot. Sandra will watch for applications and monitor local press.

Bob W also said that the road passing the site entrance was carrying an increasing amount of traffic. The view of Flitch Way users crossing the road was limited by the sharp bend which existed and Bob asked whether it would be worth considering re-routing the FW at that point to go through the site to provide a straight-line link between the two parts of the track. Tom felt that that was unlikely to happen.

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

In Wendy's absence, her written report was read by Alan.

Since the November meeting, no work parties have taken place at all. Some volunteers have been out litter picking on the Flitch Way and in other areas. The condition of the Flitch Way has deteriorated in recent months and there will be a lot of work to do once we are able to get out and about again.

More recently, some of our volunteers have responded positively to the call for volunteers to support the vaccination programme in Braintree and elsewhere.

John has mended and replaced the memorial sign on the level crossing gate at Rayne Station and has repaired the small crossing gate between Medley Road and New Road. John is currently replacing the crazed Sustrans sign near the sign post at the Station.

Other than the above, we are keeping in regular touch with those of our volunteers who are living alone and who welcome a chat.

Gordon Cameron has sent details of his family's choice of wording for the bench, as follows. "in loving memory of Barbara Holdsworth, age 92, who loved to rest awhile, smile and engage with all the passers-by".

Tom thanked Wendy and John for the repairs they had done, including their recent efforts in trying to improve drainage along the track around Rayne.

#### **Railway Carriage report.**

Stan had little to report in view of the carriage having been closed since March 2020. Brian Render continued to keep an eye on things and visited most Wednesday mornings. He had recently reported that some of the 'greenhouse' heaters' in the carriage appeared not to be working. John has contacted the electrician who will visit the carriage when he is able and report back to John.

#### **Footpath Work Group (P3) report.**

Alan reported the group to have worked in December clearing a bridleway near Berden, a byway at Little Sampford, a blocked footpath at Takeley and widening a byway at Littlebury. Lockdown has prevented further work parties from taking place.

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

Tom offered his good wishes and thanks to everybody for the work that it had been possible to do in the current circumstances, in particular to Wendy, John and to Sandra for the work she continues to do in responding to matters relating to planning applications.

He said that he had a long list of work which in normal circumstances would have been done by volunteers over the autumn/winter period. In view of the ongoing Covid restrictions, however, it was unlikely that any of that winter work would get done. Work parties would normally be stopping within the next 6 weeks anyway and then be restricted to light cutting back and similar work. Tom appreciated the fact the volunteers were chomping at the bit to get out on work parties but said that ECC were not of a mind to allow volunteers to return to work at the moment.

Referring to the poor surface conditions on the Flitch Way around Rayne which Wendy and John have tried to alleviate, Tom said that there were many more flooded sections at different parts of the track with, in some places, between 12 and 18 inches of water making the track impassable. Tom showed a photograph he had taken while out on the tractor which showed the track to have the appearance of a canal with extensive flooding stretching a considerable distance.

With his colleagues working from home, Tom said that he was currently the only park ranger presence on site at Great Notley where he was struggling to maintain more than a health and safety brief. He has been out on the Flitch Way with the flail, however, and has also been planting saplings in the Country Park as they had been delivered earlier than expected, another task which volunteers could normally have helped with. All in all, everyone was struggling in unprecedented circumstances.

#### **Any other business.**

As mentioned in the November meeting, although there was no legal requirement to do so because of the charity's low turnover, it was felt appropriate to include a Trustees Report to accompany the annual accounts. Sandra had researched the matter and has produced a suggested draft which she will "tidy up" and circulate to committee members for comment. Some clarification on the role of trustees was also required when we next update the constitution.

Looking at ways to generate income for the Friends, Sandra referred the Committee to the Amazon Smile scheme whereby a proportion of the cost of items bought online through Amazon could be donated to a charity nominated by the purchaser at no cost to the charity. Sandra will look to circulating members and supporters with details.

#### **Next meeting.**

Thursday 4 March at 2pm, probably via Zoom.

There being no further matters to discuss, Chairman thanked everybody for their contributions and brought the meeting to a close.

**Action points to take forward to next meeting.**

AP7.4 Tom to advise the LNR stakeholders on the LNR designation

AP104 Phone box at Station. Stan to report progress.

AP11.1 Sandra to report progress re opening up bridge at Langford Halt.

AP11.2 Tom to report progress on Ranger recruitment and re-structuring generally.

AP12.2 Tom to report on damaged gate replacement.

AP13.1 Sandra to report on new bench locations.

AP13.2 Stan to report on ECC Grant and ordering of benches.

AP13.5 Progress on purchase of memorial bench.

AP13.6 Sandra to report on proposed Trustee Report.

From this meeting

AP14.1 Stan or John to report on electrician's inspection of heaters in carriage.