

## Friends of the Flitch Way and Associated Woodlands

### Notes from Committee Meeting of Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019

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

#### Minutes of previous meetings of 5 June and 23 July.

Accepted as a true record and signed by Chairman accordingly.

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

Other than Action Points, there were no other matters arising.

AP7.4 Tom had nothing to report on the designation of the Flitch as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR), other than to say that everything had been approved locally and that the decision was awaiting ratification by Natural England. No problems in that happening were envisaged and the delay is being caused by the backlog of cases at NE. AP to be carried forward.

AP7.5 Nothing to report on talking benches. AP to be carried forward

AP7.9 Tom reported that 2 First Aid courses were available, in October and November but neither are being held locally. Pete Hance to decide which one is preferable for him. Wendy will speak to Bob Wright to see whether he would also be interested in attending one of the courses.

AP8.3 Various sites for new information board sites on FW identified and some information received by Sandra. To be carried forward.

AP8.5 Tom reported that Highways' preference seemed to be to replace Fenton's bridge with a metal structure but retaining some of the character of the bridge by utilising some of the existing brickwork. To be carried forward.

AP9.1 To be covered in Chairman's report.

AP9.2 Revision to monthly direct debit for power to the carriage discussed and agreed with EDF.

AP9.3 Val reported on a good day's visit to count orchids at Dunmow Cutting. Total numbers down on the previous year but still a good display. Bee orchids in particular doing well. Butterfly count was also done on the same day.

#### Chairman's report.

Alan began by offering the Friends' congratulations to Stan on his award of the British Empire Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. Stan thanked the committee and said that he saw it as very much a recognition for the work done not just by him but by all the volunteers in whatever capacity they helped.

Alan said that he and John Moss had manned the FW stall at the Braintree Scouts' fundraising event on 7 July which Stan had also attended. The Nail Game had gone well and raised money and there was quite a bit of interest from people at the event in the Flitch Way and what the Friends did.

Chairman thanked Andrew Adair for the very good letter which he had sent to BDC requesting Heritage Status be granted to the Flitch Way. Andrew has kindly written to UDC with a similar request.

Good coverage for the Friends of the Flitch Way had been achieved on the recent Anglia TV walkabout series with speaking opportunities for a number of committee members. Feedback from people after the broadcast has been positive. The film can now be viewed on the Downloads page of the Friends website and on You Tube, with other FW related pieces, under Friends of the Flitch Way.

#### Treasurer's report.

##### Finance:

Margaret reported the bank balance at 5 September to be £5,960.74.

Donations continue to be made by visitors to the carriage with £135 received over the previous 3 weeks.

Payment of £234 in respect of the new print of FW leaflets has been made. The agreed contribution of £200 from Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership for including their logo on the leaflets has not yet been received. Stan will follow up.

Payment of £150 in respect of the carriage window replacement has also been made.

Treasurer said that despite the best efforts of herself and Wendy, the application to HMRC for Gift Aid has still not been resolved. Sandra to advise and Margaret to report back on progress in due course.

#### **Social:**

17 people will be visiting Talliston House in Dunmow on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> with some people having lunch at the Kicking Dickey beforehand.

Details of the Christmas lunch at Wildens have been received, the cost of which will be £20.50 for 2 courses and £24.50 for 3. An email giving those details will be sent to members at the beginning of October.

Margaret said that, on the coming Monday, she and Val would be joining with Essex Tourism to visit places of potential interest for the Friends group to visit. Margaret, Val and Wendy will also be attending an Essex Tourism Roadshow on 8 October to get new ideas for visits in 2020.

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

Online statistics were provided by the Secretary as follows. 1038 web visits and 2175 page views in the previous month, the top pages being Flitch Way followed by Information and Maps, Downloads, Blackwater Rail Trail and the Museum. Facebook shows 1263 "likes", up 77 since the June committee meeting.

Reporting on the current position regarding the numerous Planning Applications being monitored by the Secretary, the Committee were pleased to hear of the Planning Inspector's refusal to grant permission to Gladman Developments for 135 houses on land West of Great Canfield Road, Takeley following an appeal hearing. As is being done with other Planning Applications, Sandra had spoken on the Friends' behalf during that appeal hearing on the effect of the development on the Flitch Way.

Sandra had also spoken at the hearing against the refusal by the Local Authority to allow 240 houses on land East of Station Road Little Dunmow. The date for that Inspector's decision is not known.

The formal application for the large development around Staggs Farm, Dunmow, has yet to go to UDC Planning for consideration.

Discussions with Maldon Council are ongoing in connection with the opening up of the route below the bridge at Langford which had been filled in following the closure of the Witham to Maldon line.

Secretary referred to the proposals for the 12,000 Garden Community West of Braintree (WoB) which had received a lot of publicity along with similar plans for other new communities in North Essex. Following discussion on the plans, while committee members expressed their individual concerns about the effect such a large development would have on the environment, it was felt that submitting comments to BDC on behalf of the Friends would not be appropriate as there would be no direct effect on the Flitch Way. It was for members to comment as individuals if they wished to do so.

The Rapid Transport plans, linked to the WoB plans, were a different matter however, as they contained a proposal for a rapid transport network linking the new communities and going as far as Stansted airport. One proposal contained in the report was for a trackless tram system which would run West from Braintree along the Flitch Way. That would clearly have a profound and catastrophic effect on the Flitch Way and Sandra will comment and object to the proposal on the Friends' behalf.

Chairman thanked Sandra for the time-consuming efforts being put in by her on the increasing number of planning applications.

Tom commented on the proposed Business Park development planned for Great Notley alongside the A131. The land for it had already been purchased by BDC who were pushing for the development to take place.

#### **Work Party report.**

Wendy reported several ad hoc work parties having taken place during the Summer break, most recently at Stane Street Halt repairing the station sign which had been vandalised. Previously, another work party had tidied up the Halt prior to the Anglia TV visit and then gone on to repair and re-site the picnic benches at High Cross Lane which had also been damaged. Thanks to John for his work on repairing the sign and the benches.

The scaffolding poles used as a barrier at Stane Street had been found to be badly corroded, beyond repair and requiring replacement. Contact was made with DET Scaffolding, a Braintree firm who have kindly given us replacement poles, free of charge, which will be put in place during a future work party. John advised that some of the wooden posts holding the poles would also need replacing. Wendy will send the scaffolding business pictures of the completed work and also put an acknowledgement on Facebook.

Wendy commented that although lots of applications to take part in work parties had been completed by visitors to the carriage, none had resulted in people actually turning up despite her having made contact with them. Thanks were offered to Andrew and Irene Adair who had again manned the Friends stall at the recent Stebbing Summer Fete.

### **Railway Carriage update.**

Stan reported the carriage to have opened on 84 occasions since the previous meeting of 5 June with 1,685 visitors. Good coverage had been achieved during the school holidays and thanks were given to all the carriage stewards who had manned the carriage which now opened on most Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays in addition to weekends. St Michaels Beavers group had visited on two evenings doing litter picks as well as spending time in the carriage. One private party had taken place in the carriage and on another occasion Braintree Easy Riders had held a committee meeting there.

An organised walk from Braintree railway station to Rayne had taken place on 31 August culminating in a talk in the carriage on the history of the branch line being given by Stan to those taking part. 21 people had taken part and the organizers may well set up a similar event in the future. Chelmsford Alzheimers group have visited the carriage before and propose doing so again in the near future. Stan to confirm.

Stan had contacted Dolphin WI with a view to the knitted model of Braintree Station being removed from the carriage, the committee's view being that the space it occupied could be better used for other items. WI had requested the model be left in the carriage until the end of September while they considered where it would go next. The possibility of it being placed in Braintree Railway Station was one option. Stan to follow up.

One of the carriage windows had been broken since the previous meeting and was subsequently replaced. Thanks were given to Pam for co-ordinating carriage volunteers, to Brian and Richard for maintaining the model each Wednesday and to everyone who had helped in and around the carriage.

### **Footpaths Group (P3) report.**

Having taken details from Facebook, Alan gave details of work undertaken by the group since the previous meeting, as follows:-

June: Footpath and bridleway clearance at Ugley.

July: Install waymarker posts and path clearance at Little Yeldham. Footpath clearance at Cressing.

Footpath clearance at Wickham St Paul. Installation of a bridge at Hyde Hall. Footpath clearance at Takeley Street.

Path clearance at Takeley. Clearance of bridleway at Skye Green Surrex.

August: Continue clearance of bridleway at Surrex. Path clearance at Springwood Industrial Estate. Install steps and lay road planings at Quendon.

September: Complete laying of road planings at Quendon. Install 10 waymarker posts and path clearance at Halstead.

All in all, the group continues to undertake a wide range of tasks over a wide area of the County.

The Committee wished Pete a successful outcome and a speedy recovery from his upcoming surgery.

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

Tom commented that it was good to be back working with the Friends after the summer break.

Current work at Dunmow Cutting was going well with a good turnout of volunteers. Once work at the cutting was done, further work parties were planned in the Hatfield Forest area of the track with some hedge laying and trimming of overhead growth. A return to Garnetts Wood was also planned.

With regard to the travellers site at Felsted, Tom said that ECC Service Managers were now involved and pressure was being exerted to have the fence between the site and the Flitch Way repaired. ECC Travellers Unit could also be involved in clearing rubbish alongside the site.

Following the damage caused by vehicles driving along the track, concrete blocks had been put in place around Rayne before the August Bank Holiday to stop further misuse of the FW by vehicles. Rangers were waiting for

quotes to replace the damaged gates. Once that work was done, the blocks would be removed from their current positions but consideration would be given to whether they were needed elsewhere along the track.

#### **Any Other Business.**

Tom: In the light of the recent death of Nigel Wood, it was suggested that the bench at Gatewoods Pond which bears Nigel's name be cleaned up. Sandra suggested a plaque of some sort be put there to commemorate Nigel's contribution to the Friends and to the Flitch Way itself while he was a Ranger there.

Val: The commemorative bench at Clap Bridge had been vandalised and removed. Val felt a replacement was required. Tom said that where the bench had been sited was the responsibility of Braintree District Council. He took on board Val's comments, however, and will contact the Landscape Team at BDC.

Stan: The area at Rayne Station car park at the entrance to the platform has been cleared of vegetation by FW volunteers in readiness for the telephone box which Rayne Parish Council (RPC) are arranging to put in place there. Permission to do so had been given by ECC and the costs of removal etc were being met by RPC. Josh and Grace would like a bench, planters and a notice board putting there alongside the box. Stan showed the draft of the notice board showing the history of the Station which he had drawn up and which had been approved by Josh who will be covering the cost of the board. There is no financial commitment by the Friends toward the cost of the project which is being covered by the Parish Council and the Booking Hall Cafe but we have agreed to look after the telephone box with regard to cleaning, painting etc.

Friends volunteers may also lay the hedge boundary at the rear of the site.

Date of the arrival of the box which is currently on Shalford Road is not known.

Wendy: Advised that the plaque to commemorate Jim Cloke's contribution to the Friends would be unveiled in the carriage at 11am on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> October. Iris Cloke will attend, possibly with family members.

Committee agreed to holding another Christmas event in the carriage with Santa in attendance and a meeting to discuss the event was agreed for 10 am, Friday 22 November at Great Notley.

A date for Santa in the carriage was subsequently agreed for Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December, committee members having commitments elsewhere for the Saturday and Sunday of that weekend. Stan to advise Josh at the Booking Hall Cafe.

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

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

##### **Unresolved points brought forward from previous meeting(s)**

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

AP7.5 Stan to report on options for talk bench or similar.

AP8.3 Sandra to update on sites for new benches and information boards.

AP8.5 Tom to update on Fentons Bridge replacement.

##### **From this meeting.**

AP10.1 Stan/Margaret to update on donation towards the cost of leaflet printing.

AP10.2 Margaret to report on progress of Gift Aid application.

AP10.3 Wendy to update on repairs at Stane Street Halt.

AP10.4 Stan to update on the work being done at Rayne Station.

AP10.5 Wendy to update on bench at Gatewoods.