

Friends of the Flitch Way and Associated Woodlands

Notes from Committee meeting of Wednesday 5 June 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: Tom Hamilton, Bob Lucas, Barry Brighton, Wendy Taylor, Pete Hanks.

Minutes of previous meeting of 27 March:

Accepted as a true record and subsequently signed by Chairman accordingly.

Matters arising and review of Action Points.

AP7.2 Updated under Secretary's report.

AP7.3 No word from Highways on proposals for Fenton's Bridge replacement. AP carried forward.

AP7.4 In Tom's absence, nothing further to report on Local Nature Reserve designation for the Flitch. Felt to be progressing, however, and Sandra has discussed new by-laws for the LNR with Tom. AP carried forward.

AP7.5 Nothing to report on options for Talking Bench. AP carried forward.

AP7.6 & 7 Nothing to report on signal box and redundant telephone box for Rayne Station.

AP7.9 In Tom's absence, nothing to report on availability of first aid training. AP carried forward.

AP8.1 To be covered in Sandra's report.

AP8.2 New signs now installed by John and Stan at Stane Street and Bannister Green Halts.

AP8.3 Sandra has contacted Parish Councils along the FW as well as Stansted airport re. potential sites for new information boards and information to go on them. Ongoing. AP to be carried forward.

AP8.4 Repair work at High Cross Lane picnic site now done as part of a recent work party.

AP8.5 Position on Highway's proposals for Fenton's Bridge to be carried forward as per AP AP7.3

Chairman's report:

Alan felt the recent AGM to have been successful with an interesting presentation by Dougal Urquhart on the red squirrels of Mersea.

The following week's scheduled work party was likely to be short on numbers due to Stan, John and himself being otherwise involved with the setting up and running of the Lions Beer Festival taking place the same week.

Chairman said that he and John Moss would be running the FW stall at a Braintree Scouts fundraising event on 7th July.

Alan, Sandra and Stan had been interviewed on the 'Your Essex' programme on BBC Essex Radio on Wednesday 8th May which had focused on Rayne. Alan felt the interview to have gone well and provided information on the Friends and the Flitch Way. Josh Meehan from the Booking Hall Café had also spoken separately on the programme.

Treasurer's report:

Margaret reported the current bank balance to be £6,376.67 with £2,402.40 in the contingency/savings account. The agreed annual sum of £800 has recently been paid into the latter account.

Energy supplier for the carriage, EDF, had written to advise that the monthly direct debit needed to be increased to £89 to cover estimated costs. Committee asked Margaret to speak to EDF to try and reduce that figure as our consumption would be reduced over the summer months, thereby making the suggested figure too high and result in an overpayment.

Donations from visitors to the carriage continue to be good. The donations box in the café had recently been emptied and found to contain £59.85.

On Social Events, Margaret said that the walk around Quendon had been enjoyed, as had the pre-arranged pub meal which followed.

The visit to Tiptree Jam Factory on 4th July was the Friends next event. 19 people have booked and we need to have a minimum of 20 persons.

Margaret said that she and Wendy were planning an outing sometime in September, details of which would be sent to everyone in due course.

Work Party report:

Wendy said that she had little to report other than seven work parties having taken place since April, four of which having been accompanied by Tom or one of the other Rangers. In view of Tom currently being in hospital and with a potential shortage of volunteers, the meeting felt it prudent to cancel the following week's proposed work party. Providing a Ranger was available the, the next FW work party would take place on Tuesday 18th June with Stan leading in the absence of Wendy or Alan.

Railway Carriage:

Stan reported that the carriage had been opened for 64 sessions since the last meeting with a total of 1,388 visitors. With the exception of the odd missed Sunday session, volunteers' attendance in the carriage had been good. A new volunteer, Bernie, had done the previous Saturday afternoon with Lloyd and Gwyneth and the other new(ish) volunteers, Derek and Susan, had settled in very well and were doing an excellent job in welcoming visitors. Derek is at the carriage every Thursday and Friday and Susan intends opening up every Monday during the summer.

All the stewards were thanked for their efforts and Stan also mentioned the sterling work on the carriage bodywork being done by Andy Horder.

Footpath Work Group (P3):

Work parties have taken place every Wednesday since the last meeting as follows:

March	Philpott End, Byway part clearance
April	Black Notley, Footpath clearance Bradwell, Bocking, Tye Green, Waymarker posts, footpath clearance
May	Elsenham, major clearance over several weeks. Several sets of steps, 2 bridges, footpath clearance, waymarker posts.
June	Ugley, Footpath and bridleway clearance.

A number of appreciative comments and thanks for the work done by P3 have put on Facebook by users and visitors which was good to see.

Ranger's report:

None given in Tom's absence. Good wishes for Tom's speedy return to fitness were expressed by the committee.

Secretary's report:

Sandra gave the latest on-line statistics as follows:
2628 web page visits and 7291 page views in the last month. Top pages were Wildlife, Flich Way, Blackwater Rail Trail, Information and Maps, followed by Downloads. Facebook shows 1186 "likes", up 95 since the last committee meeting in March.

Updating news from the Flich Way Action Group, Sandra said that several of the Friends had helped All Terrain and other volunteer groups improve the security of the byway near the River Chelmer at Great Dunmow. A successful community effort by all involved, the Friends have given a small donation towards the cost of a sign at the site which will record the work done and show the names of the groups who took part. The Byway is still officially closed but is due to re-open shortly. Helen Baker of Essex Highways is exploring options for crossing the Chelmer.

On Planning Applications, Sandra recently attended the Appeal Hearing re. the Council's refusal of an application by Gladman Properties for a development at Great Canfield and, on the Friends' behalf, had read out a statement at the Inquiry. The same developers have also appealed against the refusal decision against a proposed site in Felsted. Secretary said that a new planning application has been submitted for a Refuse Site near High Cross Lane. Friends have submitted an objection as the

application includes plans for buildings around 10 metres high next to the Flitch Way with a very small buffer zone.

The space beneath the bridge at Langford Halt was filled in after the Witham to Maldon line closed and Friends are waiting for a meeting with Maldon District Council in order to discuss clearing the infill from underneath the bridge which would open up the Blackwater Rail Trail.

Secretary advised that a request had been received from Essex County Council for the Friends to make a short video on why we volunteer. After discussion, it was agreed that the best time to do it would be in early Autumn after the Summer break and Sandra will let ECC know.

A brief review of the checklist for actions and procedures was made and a list of activities will be sent out to the lead committee members.

Sandra also advised that volunteer statistics for the last few years have been uploaded to the Friends website.

Chairman thanked Sandra on behalf of the Friends for the valuable and ongoing work she was doing to monitor and react to the increasing number of applications being submitted by developers for sites near or alongside the Flitch Way.

Any Other Business:

Val proposed doing a count of the orchids at Dunmow Cutting on 20th June, weather permitting. All agreed that proposal and Margaret, Sandra and Sue Lucas have offered to help with the count. Chairman said that he had received a request for the Friends to attend Dunmow Carnival, to be held in late September. Committee agreed not to attend and Alan will advise accordingly.

Date and venue for next meeting:

Wednesday, 18th September. 4.30pm at Discovery Centre.

There being nothing further 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/Sandra to report of Flitch Way LNR designation.

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

AP7.9 Tom to report on availability for First Aid training courses.

AP8.3 Sandra to report on progress of new information board sites along the FW.

AP8.5 Tom/Sandra to report on Highway's proposals for Fenton's Bridge replacement.

This meeting

AP9.1 Alan/John to report on Braintree Scouts event

AP9.2 Margaret to report on discussion with EDF re. monthly Direct Debit

AP9.3 Val to report on orchid count at Dunmow Cutting