

Note: Subject to approval at next meeting

FAVERSHAM FOOTPATHS GROUP

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING ON 15 OCTOBER 2019

Present: Trevor Payne (Chair)
Brian Caffarey (Secretary)
Ann Ashton (Treasurer)
John Coulter
Andrew Osborne
Anne Salmon
Nick Williams

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Julian Saunders was unable to attend and sent his apologies for absence.

MINUTES OF EC MEETING ON 15 AUGUST 2019

2. The minutes were approved.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT ON SUBSTANTIVE AGENDA

(i) Walks (para 3)

3. Since the last EC meeting a walk had taken place on 15 September, taking in Oare Church. Other walks had been planned for 20 October, 17 November and 15 December.

(ii) Website (para 4)

4. The website was up to date. In the previous 30 days it had been accessed by 95 users for 112 sessions, viewing 211 pages.

(iii) Social media etc (para 5)

5. There had been no recent Facebook postings.

(iv) Proposal for a path from Jubilee Way to the Rec (para 6)

6. Preparatory work was proceeding on creating the path.

(v) Front Brents/Town Green (para 7)

7. Remedial work to the flood defences at Front Brents was due to start the following week. It was noted that the defences had been activated during the recent high tide. Andrew Osborne said that this had been unnecessary, given the wind direction, but it appeared that the gates had at least been taken down quickly afterwards.

(vi) KCC's CAMS reporting system (para 10)

8. Brian Caffarey had written to members to draw their attention to KCC's CAMS system for reporting problems with rights of way.

(vii) Replacement Swing Bridge (para 11)

9. The meeting noted the recent update circulated by Paul Carter, the retiring Leader of KCC. This included the plan to lift and inspect the current swing bridge. Peel Ports was no doubt being pressed to make up the shortfall in the funding required. A Listed Building application had also been made to take down part of the wall to allow lorries to reach the BMM Weston site but Andrew Osborne questioned whether this was absolutely necessary.

(viii) 'Lost Ways' initiative (paras 12-13)

10. Kent Ramblers had recently provided an update on progress with their initiative to identify, from studying OS maps, apparent anomalies (e.g. footpaths that suddenly ended at parish council boundaries) in advance of legislative changes which could mean that any 'unclaimed' paths could be lost permanently. Over 200 such anomalies had been identified and survey work had been completed or was in train for about three-quarters of this total. (EC members had completed four surveys.) The next stage would be to carry out historical research to back up any claim to add paths to the Definitive Map. Brian Caffarey said that his recent note to members passing on Kent Ramblers' request for volunteers to help with this work had led to two FFG members putting their names forward. This was very welcome.

11. Brian said that he had also written to Kent Ramblers to ask if any initiative was planned to try to identify other paths which had existed in the past but which had been lost as a result of, for example, landowners' action in closing them off. He had not yet received a reply.

(ix) Walking and Cycling provision in Faversham (para 14)

12. Brian Caffarey said that he and Julian Saunders had not yet been able to get together to follow up the agreement at the previous meeting that they would draw up some initial proposals to put to the Town Council's Public Spaces Committee. Julian had reported, however, that some proposals had already been drawn up to improve lighting in Cross Lane with a view to securing financial support from a Swale BC fund.

ACTION: JULIAN SAUNDERS/BRIAN CAFFAREY

(x) Standard House/New Creek Road planning application (19/501612/FULL)

13. The application had been approved, and preliminary work had started, but the applicant had still to submit further details. While the development should lead to improvement of part of the path leading from Standard Quay to Iron Wharf, it was suggested that it might be worth seeking to add the whole section to the Definitive Map so that KCC would then be responsible for its maintenance. It was noted, though, that this route would form part of the Coast Path and that Natural England had undertaken to make improvements.

TREASURER'S REPORT

14. Ann Ashton, who had taken over Treasurer duties from Julian Saunders, circulated a note setting out the present position on finances and membership. The Group had some £1450 in its account, although payments were outstanding for insurance and hire of a room for the AGM. There were 83 members of the Group.

15. In discussion EC members agreed that it would be prudent to retain, for the time being at least, the sum in the Group's current account in case it was needed to pursue its aims in relation to the Creekside path or other matters. It was also agreed to recommend that the membership fee should remain as £5 a year.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE AGM ON 14 NOVEMBER 2019

16. The EC noted the arrangements made for the AGM. Members had been circulated about the election of a new EC. Ian Wild of Kent Ramblers had kindly agreed to give a talk following the official business. Brian Caffarey had circulated to other EC members a draft agenda and report, to which Ann would add a report on financial matters and membership.

CREEKSIDE PATH AT FAVERSHAM REACH AND WATERSIDE CLOSE

17. The meeting noted that the Town Council had decided, in view of the delay in beginning work to open the path, to give priority to the Town Jetty and had accordingly transferred its promised £5k contribution to the latter project. There was no suggestion, however, that the Town Council had withdrawn support in principle for the Creekside path. It was expected that KCC would make a decision soon on the application made by the Faversham Reach Residents' Association for a Definitive Map Modification Order, in which they had argued that the original obstructed path there had been wrongly placed on the Map.

ENGLAND COAST PATH

18. No recent update had been provided by Natural England, so it was presumably still hoped that the outstanding habitat regulation assessment for the Whitstable to Iwade route would be carried out in the autumn and that the Inspector would then be able to produce her report on Natural England's proposals before the end of the year.

CLEVE HILL SOLAR COMPLEX

19. Anne Salmon said that there had been further hearings on environmental matters, but not in relation to footpaths. The inquiry was due to finish its work by 29 November, following which it would have three months to write up its recommendations.

PROPOSALS FOR 'GARDEN VILLAGES'

20. Trevor Payne and Anne Salmon outlined the present position regarding proposals for 'garden villages'. Reports were being submitted to Swale BC's Local Plan Panel. There were objections on 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' and highways grounds to the Gladman (North Street) proposals. The 'best presented' proposal was considered to be the Duchy proposals for land adjoining the Selling Road/A2. Part of the argument was that this site was better linked, including by footpaths, to facilities, although it was noted in discussion that the development would in practice be an extension of Faversham, not a 'garden village'. The Bobbing site was considered to be the

second best-presented proposal, with the Quinn proposal for south-east Sittingbourne (now reduced to 8,000 dwellings) in third place.

DESIGNATION OF LOCAL PATHS

21. John Coulter, Andrew Osborne and Brian Caffarey would be meeting the following week to draw up proposals to put to the Town Council to support applications to KCC for the designation of various local paths.

ACTION: JOHN COULTER/ANDREW OSBORNE/BRIAN CAFFAREY

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT A2/WESTERN LINK ROAD (17/505079)

22. Anne Salmon reported on the informal hearing which she had attended that morning concerning Shepherd Neame's plans for development of this site. She explained that the original plans had shown that access would continue to be provided along public footpath ZF9 to the level crossing. However, Shepherd Neame had since submitted revised plans which, if implemented, would block access to the level crossing. These plans reflected Network Rail's desire to close the crossing, having rejected suggestions that improved safety measures should be provided instead. No formal application had been made to divert the footpath, although it was clearly intended that pedestrians would be required instead to take a substantial diversion from the site via the Western Link Road and back into Sumpter Way to reach local amenities. This route would also require steps to be negotiated and of course access across the railway line would be obstructed from the opposite direction too.

23. Anne had submitted a note prior to the hearing and had also orally explained the Group's objections. It was not clear if the Inspector who had chaired the informal hearing (at which Shepherd Neame had been represented by a QC) would approve Shepherd Neame's revised proposals but, even if she did, a formal process would have to be undertaken to divert the public footpath. In discussion, EC members deplored the manner in which Shepherd Neame and Network Rail had approached this issue and agreed that, if the Inspector approved the revised plans, the Group would strongly contest the planned diversion of the path.

24. The EC thanked Anne for her work in representing the Group on this issue.

LOG OF ISSUES RAISED

25. The Committee noted a revised version of the log of issues raised with, or pursued by, the Group. This would be updated as necessary following the meeting.

NEXT MEETING

26. The next EC meeting has been provisionally arranged for 7.30 pm on Tuesday 21 January 2020 at 130 Athelstan Road.

20 October 2019