

FAVERSHAM FOOTPATHS GROUP

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 12 NOVEMBER 2020.

(Note: Subject to approval at next AGM)

The Group's fifth AGM was held at 7.30pm on 12 November 2020 by the Zoom Process due to the Covid19 restrictions imposed at the time. Fifteen Members were present on the 'screen'.

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Trevor Payne (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting,

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies for absence from Sheila Renwick, Brian Turner, Andrew Osborne together with Sue and Chris Taylor.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF AGM ON 14 NOVEMBER 2019

The minutes were approved.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS AGM

There were no matters arising that were not covered in the Executive Committee's report for the present meeting.

5. REPORT BY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON WORK OF GROUP

This report summarises briefly the main activities of the Group since the similar report produced for the 2019 AGM.

6. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS.

The EC had met four times in the past year, including a 'virtual' meeting held in April. Minutes of meetings have been posted on the website (and delivered to members without internet access) and updates on the main developments have been supplied regularly to Members. Between meetings EC members have liaised as necessary by email.

7. CREEKSIDE PATH AT FAVERSHAM REACH / WATERSIDE CLOSE

Present position. Last November KCC formally rejected the attempt by the Faversham Reach Residents' Association (FRRA) to have the original obstructed path

there, deleted from the Definitive Map of Footpaths on the grounds that it had been wrongly added to the Map. The FRRRA appealed to the Planning Inspectorate against KCC's decision. That appeal was eventually dismissed by a Planning Inspector in June this year. The FRRRA had until mid-September to seek leave to challenge the decision by way of judicial review but did not do so.

There are now no legal obstacles to KCC proceeding with steps to open the Creekside Path, which exists in law, but the use of which has been suspended throughout. However, it is clear that we cannot expect early progress. KCC have still to conclude the negotiations with the two sets of residents about compensation (likely to be negligible, if any) and mitigation (e.g. signage, fencing). There is also work to be commenced on design of the ramps and the linking of the two promenades at the slipway between the two housing developments plus various permissions to be obtained before practical work can begin. In addition, the KCC team involved are under considerable pressure as a result of Government initiatives to implement new walking and cycling schemes stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic. We can therefore expect the Order temporarily closing the path to be extended beyond its current date of September 2021.

In the past year the EC:

- a) continued to liaise with KCC about progress in their negotiations with residents about possible mitigation/compensation
- b) submitted comments to the Planning Inspectorate in response to the FRRRA's appeal against KCC's decision not to amend the Definitive Map
- c) liaised with KCC, following the Inspectorate's decision, about the timetable for opening the path.

8. ENGLAND COAST PATH

Present position. Natural England's report recommending a route for the Whitstable to Iwade section of the England Coast Path was published in June 2017. It proposed that the route should go along Standard Quay and Provender Walk on the town side, over the bridge and then along the Creekside, assuming that the Faversham Reach/Waterside Close Creekside path had been opened by then. In the interim it proposed that the Coast Path should follow the present route round the back of Faversham Reach / Brents Industrial Estate. The Group welcomed the report, with a minor caveat concerning the route at the Iron Wharf boatyard. An inspector was appointed to consider objections by landowners as well as representations by others. The submission of the Inspector's report was, however, greatly delayed by a requirement for a habitat regulation assessment, following on from a court judgment of wide application. We understand that the Inspector's report is complete and is awaiting a decision by the Secretary of State.

It is hoped that the Inspector's report will also dismiss arguments by the Faversham Reach Residents' Association and the Waterside Residents' Association that the communal areas of their estates would not be subject to public access if the Coast

Path were to run around the back of Faversham Reach / Brents Industrial Estate. If so, this ought, in theory at least, to soften their resistance to the Creekside Path, which would confine public access to the promenades only.

In the last year the EC:

- a) has liaised regularly with Natural England over the expected timetable for the Inspector's report
- b) wrote to Helen Whately MP in June about the long delay in agreeing the route. The reply which she received from Defra in August failed to respond to the key question of the likely timetable for this decision. The EC wrote again to Mrs Whately on 2 September, asking her to pursue this point. She undertook to write to the Minister to emphasise the importance of agreeing the route and to suggest that the Department works with the Group to achieve this aim. We have recently received a further reply that still does not answer this initial question.

9 ORGANISED WALKS

The EC has been very grateful to Linda Harrison for organising and leading walks on behalf of the Group. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic led to only four walks taking place following the last AGM. Linda has offered to arrange walks for a group of up to five people who would benefit from a local walk. She will also continue to monitor the situation with a view to re-starting the walks programme when possible, hopefully early in the new year.

10 OTHER MATTERS

The EC has also acted on the following main matters:

- a) **'Lost Ways' / 'Don't Lose Your Way' initiatives** – liaised with Kent Ramblers and Ramblers HQ about local and national initiatives to safeguard paths which are in danger of being lost as a result of legislative changes due to come into force on 1 January 2026; and also wrote to Helen Whately MP in August asking her to raise with Defra the possibility of seeking a deferral of this deadline to 2031. In response, Defra confirmed that they would be considering the case for a referral of the deadline. They will contact us if they need further information, but in the meantime the National Press recently had articles in a number of daily papers about 'Lost Ways' which was put across as quite a large topic
- b) **Designation of local footpaths** – finalised a list of local paths with a view to seeking the Town Council's support for applications to be made to add them to the Definitive Map of Footpaths.
- c) **Replacement swing bridge** – continued to monitor progress and made representations to KCC to remind them of the importance of ensuring that the footway on a permanent bridge should be of an acceptable width and that plans did not preclude subsequently creating a Creekside path on the Shepherd Neame side of the Inner Basin

- d) **East Kent Recycling Ltd at Oare** – made representations to EKR Ltd, urging that a dedicated footpath, on the lagoon side of the access road, should be provided voluntarily rather than simply providing pedestrian refuges as required by the planning agreement. Met EKR and continued to pursue the matter with KCC and a letter to Bretts (the landowners)
- e) **Cleve Hill Solar Farm** – monitored progress on the proposal, which the Government agreed at the end of May
- f) **Faversham Neighbourhood Plan** – wrote to the Steering Group, urging that the proposed Plan should take account of, and build on, the provision made for public rights of way in the Faversham Streetscape Strategy and the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan
- g) **Proposal for a footpath from Jubilee Way to the Recreation Ground/Railyard planning application** – monitored progress in creating the path (now open) and access from Jubilee Way via Sidings Close to Station Road, which would also allow the ‘trolleying’ of deliveries to the Rec Lodge
- h) **Front Brents/Town Green** – wrote to the Environment Agency, through Andrew Osborne, about the operating arrangements for flood defences and about progress in carrying out agreed landscaping improvements
- i) **Walking and cycling provision in Faversham** – monitored proposals to improve provision for walkers and cyclists in Faversham; expressed support for the Town Council’s ‘20s Plenty’ experimental scheme; and opposed the proposal to reduce the hours during which town centre ‘pedestrianisation’ applies.
- j) **‘Garden village’ proposals** – monitored progress
- k) **Path alongside Oyster Bay Warehouse** – made unsuccessful representations to Brian Pain to improve the state of the path. In the meantime, it had however been noticed the surface had been stoned over recently, be it the puddles still seem to occur due to wet weather.
- l) **Proposal for a permissive path from corner of Vicarage Lane/Eastling Road to corner of Lorenden Park** – sought Cllr David Simmons’ (landowner) view at the end of May on the possibility of a permissive path. The EC is still awaiting a response in spite of two reminders.

11 REPORT BY TREASURER

- a) **Introduction:** Ann Ashton introduced her report on finances and membership, which had also been circulated in advance:
- b) **Membership:** Subscriptions for the Faversham Footpaths Group (FFG) become due on January each year and as a result, financial records are kept using the calendar year as the financial year. For COVID and logistical reasons this report has been drawn up as at the end of September 2020.
- c) **Accounts and membership 2020:** During 2020 the group had an income of £425, most of which came from subscriptions, with the remainder coming from donations. Our expenditure was limited to website hosting, insurance and a group subscription to the Ramblers Association and came to £308.43. This left an annual balance of £116, which, added to a surplus from previous year, left us with an overall bank balance of £1545.37. Last year the group received a substantial donation of £500. This explains why our income is rather different from last year.

- d) Membership Audit:** During the year an audit of membership was carried out. There were some duplicated forms, and some forms with two names on them. The overall outcome is that current membership is 83. We had [one] new member, who joined during lockdown, which is encouraging, and two who have failed to renew. 53 members paid their subscription electronically, which is very helpful to the Group.
- e) Gift Aid:** During the year extensive effort was made to finalise reclaiming Gift Aid. This included considerable online research and contact with HMRC. Sadly, the conclusion was reached that the way the Group would need to maintain its records to reclaim gift aid did not make it feasible. The overall impact this will have on the Group's finances is £50 each year. Accordingly, the committee decided that it was not cost effective to attempt to reclaim Gift Aid and the membership form has been amended accordingly.
- f) Other actions:** A Data Protection Policy and Privacy Statement has been in place since April 2019 in order to ensure that the Group is acting in line with the new Data Protection regulations.
- g) To conclude the finance report:** The Group's income continues to meet its expenditure, despite the purchasing of public liability insurance. A small surplus has been built up at the bank which can for the moment cover any decline in membership income or increase in costs.
- h) Further Information:** If any member wants further information on our finances or a copy of our annual financial and membership report please feel free to contact Ann at ann_ashton@hotmail.co.uk

12 ELECTION OF NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Trevor Payne unfortunately reported that Brian Caffarey had stepped down as Secretary due to he and Jackie moving away from the Faversham area. The EC are very grateful to Brian (who is staying on as a member) for initially setting up the group and for his work as Secretary. The EC however, were pleased that Robin Sayewell although not previously being a member had joined the group and through recommendation had now taken over the secretarial role from Brian following a fast track handover process between them within the last two months. All the other Officers and Members of the Executive Committee had indicated that they were content to stand for election and no new nominations for Officer or Member positions had been received. Accordingly, he recommended that the following should be elected to serve on the Executive Committee: Trevor Payne (Chair), Ann Ashton (Treasurer), Robin Sayewell (Secretary), John Coulter (Member), Andrew Osborne (Member), Anne Salmon (Member) and Cllr Julian Saunders (Member). This was agreed unanimously.

13 ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION FOR 2020

The meeting agreed that the subscription for 2020 should remain at £5 per person.

14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS RELATING TO THE GROUP

No other matters were raised.

Trevor Payne declared the meeting closed at 7.45pm.