

Note: Subject to approval at next meeting

FAVERSHAM FOOTPATHS GROUP

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING ON 12 DECEMBER 2016

Present: Trevor Payne (Chairman)
Brian Caffarey (Secretary)
Julian Saunders (Treasurer)
John Coulter
Andrew Osborne
Anne Salmon

WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Julian Saunders was welcomed to his first EC meeting. Brian Turner sent his apologies for absence.

MINUTES OF EC MEETING ON 26 OCTOBER 2016

2. The minutes were approved.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT ON SUBSTANTIVE AGENDA

(i) Recent and forthcoming walks (para 3)

3. The walk on 20 November 2016, which started from the Gunpowder Works, had taken place following heavy rain, which had probably affected the numbers taking part. Further walks had been arranged for Sunday 8 January 2017 and Sunday 5 February 2017.

(ii) Website hits (para 4)

4. In the last 30 days 118 users had used the website for 263 sessions, looking at 634 pages in total. This high usage probably reflected the fact that the Natural England presentation on the England Coast Path had been uploaded as well as the minutes of the AGM.

(iii) Social media etc (para 5)

5. The website was fully up-to-date but more frequent Facebook postings were needed. John Coulter said that he would see if he could update details on the faversham.org site directly without the Secretary having to send them to the administrator.

ACTION: JOHN COULTER

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

6. John Coulter said that there had been no change, with the proposal for securing limited vehicular access from Jubilee Way to the Rec still being considered by Swale Borough Council.

(v) Neighbourhood Plan (para 7)

7. Andrew Osborne confirmed that the hearing of the judicial review relating to the Swan Quay element of the Plan was still due to take place on 12 January 2017. He mentioned that there had been a recent judgment in a case involving a Local Plan where the Court of Appeal had backed a judge who had given a direction concerning an amendment to the plan, rather than requiring the local authority to reconsider the matter. It was noted in discussion that if Swan Quay was not developed because of the restrictions imposed by the independent inspector it would make it more difficult to achieve a Creekside path there.

(vi) Parish Footpath Wardens (para 9)

8. Brian Caffarey said that he had sought more information from the Ramblers co-ordinator about what was expected of Parish Footpath Wardens (a role Faversham Town Council had asked the Group to take on). It was clear that the requirements were not very prescriptive, amounting to an expectation that Wardens would keep an eye on parish footpaths in their area and draw problems to KCC's attention. It was agreed in discussion that it might be helpful to ask Members explicitly to make a note of problems and to report them to the Group so that it would have an overview of issues raised by Members and be able to liaise effectively with KCC. It was noted that this linked with the following item on the agenda.

(vii) Monitoring the state of footpaths/carrying out remedial work/litter clean-ups (para 10)

9. It was agreed in discussion that the Group had now reached a stage when it ought perhaps to consider whether it could be more actively involved in helping to maintain and improve the footpaths in the area. It was noted that a number of other footpath groups undertook work of this kind e.g. in forming work parties to undertake remedial work. However, this could only be done if there was sufficient interest shown by Members. It was agreed that a note should be sent to members inviting expressions of interest in leading and taking part in such activities.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

(viii) The bund on the Front Brents (para 11)

10. It was noted that the Group had been formally consulted by KCC about a draft Order regulating the closure of the public footpath at times when it was considered necessary to insert barriers to prevent flooding. There had since been an exchange of correspondence, principally between Andrew Osborne and KCC. The latter had now modified its proposals so that much more limited sections of the path would be shut and had also agreed that the Order should reflect the operating arrangements, which provided that in a flood risk situation the barriers should be in place only two hours before and two hours after high water. It was agreed in discussion that the revised arrangements were acceptable. Brian Caffarey would write to KCC accordingly.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

(ix) Footpath by Oyster Bay Warehouse (para 16)

11. Brian Caffarey said that, as agreed at the last meeting, he had written to KCC about the state of the footpath which ran close to the Oyster Bay Warehouse. In the meantime this issue had also been raised on the Faversham Matters Facebook page, the posting also referring to the unsatisfactory condition of the path between Belvedere Road and Abbey Street. In the case of the latter KCC said that they would examine this stretch to assess its condition. In the case of the former KCC had pointed out that the path did not follow the definitive line of the public footpath, which

runs through the parking area and through the 'garden', and that they were not therefore responsible for its upkeep.

12. In discussion it was agreed that the Group should await Natural England's decision on the proposed route of the England Coast Path. If the present informal route was chosen it would become part of the national trail and its future would at least be safeguarded. It was noted, too, that Natural England had expressed a willingness, in that event, to consider making improvements to the path. Subsequent responsibility for its upkeep would almost certainly revert to KCC since the highways authority was usually tasked with the maintenance of national trails.

(x) Funding Forum (para 22)

13. Julian Saunders reported on a forum which he had attended in which the Big Lottery Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund had given presentations. While the Group had no plans at present to make an application for a grant, it was clear that both were possible sources of funding for footpath-related projects, especially those with a heritage dimension.

REFLECTIONS ON AGM

14. It was agreed that the Group's first AGM had been a success, with a comparatively high turnout (24 members). The formal business had been conducted smoothly and swiftly and there had been evident interest in Natural England's presentation on the Coast Path. Thought would need to be given to arranging a presentation for the 2017 AGM.

TREASURER'S REPORT

15. Julian Saunders reported on the various tasks he had undertaken since taking over as Treasurer, including a handover meeting with Roy Campbell; changing names and addresses and authorisations for the Group's bank account; liaising with HMRC on the planned recovery of 'gift aid'; and helping to sort out the arrangements for renewal of subscriptions.

16. The Group currently had 65 members and £287.82 in its account, which included £5 by way of a subscription for 2017. He proposed to move to a calendar year accounting arrangement to match the membership period, so the likelihood was that the Group would end the year with a balance of £282.82.

FOOTPATH ZF5 AT FAVERSHAM REACH AND WATERSIDE CLOSE

17. Andrew Osborne said that he understood that legal scrutiny by KCC of the Orders was continuing and that they were not now likely to be sent to the S of S till the New Year. It was noted that the Group should ensure that it was consulted on the proposed timing of the expected public inquiry since it would wish to play an active part.

ENGLAND COAST PATH

18. Brian Caffarey said that he had not been able to obtain an update from Natural England on the latest position on the route of the Coast Path. He would continue to press them and circulate their response to the EC.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

DESIGNATION OF FOOTPATHS BY 1 JANUARY 2026

19. Andrew Osborne, John Coulter and Brian Caffarey reported on a further meeting which they had held to consider KCC's comments on the status of the various paths, alleyways etc in Faversham which they had queried. The response was helpful in identifying some paths which were clearly public highways and others whose status was uncertain and which the Group might well wish to follow up. But some of the remarks by KCC seemed unclear and Brian Caffarey had written again to seek clarification, which was awaited.

20. It had also been agreed that a draft letter to other parish councils should be prepared explaining the background to this issue and inviting them to consider what action might be necessary in their areas.
ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

21. Acceptable baseline maps had now been prepared for a couple of paths in respect of which it had already been agreed designation should be sought. It was noted, though, that a considerable amount of work would be involved in seeking designation of these and other paths and more help would be desirable.

EC MEMBERSHIP: CO-OPTED MEMBERS

22. The EC noted that the Group's constitution provided that the EC could co-opt up to three additional, non-voting, members; and that there was also provision for setting up sub-committees. In discussion it was noted that the meeting had highlighted several areas in which additional help would be valuable and that the best way forward might be to write to the membership as a whole outlining these and inviting people to say if they thought that they could assist in some way.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

LOG OF ISSUES RAISED

23. The Committee noted a revised version of the log of issues raised with, or pursued by, the Group.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

24. The next meeting will take place at 7pm on Thursday 16 February 2017 at 130 Athelstan Road.

16 December 2016