

Note: Subject to approval at next meeting

FAVERSHAM FOOTPATHS GROUP

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING ON 15 AUGUST 2019

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

WELCOME TO ANN ASHTON

1. The meeting welcomed Ann Ashton, who had kindly volunteered to take over the Treasurer role from Julian Saunders.

MINUTES OF EC MEETING ON 7 MAY 2019

2. The minutes were approved.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT ON SUBSTANTIVE AGENDA

(i) Walks (para 4)

3. Since the last EC meeting walks had taken place on 11 May (coast path from Teynham), 9 June (Selling, Rhode Common and Neames Forstal), 29 June (Kings Wood), 27 July (Castle Coote) and 11 August (Bysing Wood and the Gunpowder Works). The next walk, which would be led by Paul Fowls on 15 September, would include a visit to Oare church.

(ii) Website (para 5)

4. The website was up to date but figures for usage were not available.

(iii) Social media etc (para 6)

5. Brian Caffarey apologised for the lack of recent Facebook postings.

(iv) Proposal for a path from Jubilee Way to the Rec (para 7)

6. As reported at the last meeting, the plans now provided for access to the bottom landing of the long bridge. Andrew Osborne confirmed that, following discussions with the landowner, it would also be possible for deliveries to be made by trolley from the car park, thus reducing the need for delivery vehicles to use the main drive.

(v) The bund on the Front Brents (para 8)

7. As reported in the Faversham News that day, various improvements were to be made to the flood defences at the Front Brents. Andrew Osborne said that the Town Council should ensure that its permission was sought for work on the town green. He added that Swale BC had also undertaken to do some additional work not covered by the present plans.

(vi) Planning application in respect of former Oil Depot at Standard Quay (para 8)

8. Anne Salmon confirmed that the s.106 agreement had been signed by all the parties in May and that there was now no obstacle, therefore, to implementation of the plans for the footway along the Creekside when the development was built.

(vii) Expansion of East Kent Recycling Ltd at Oare (para 10)

9. It was noted that KCC had approved EKR's application in July but subject to many conditions, including provision of 'refuges' for pedestrians along the access track. Although the latter were far from ideal, they would at least provide some improvement on the present position. It appeared that the residents' group, Uproare, planned to monitor compliance with all the conditions in the hope of demonstrating that EKR were not fulfilling the necessary requirements.

(viii) KCC's CAMS reporting system (para 12)

10. Brian Caffarey confirmed that he would find an opportunity to draw members' attention to the desirability of using KCC's highly-regarded CAMS reporting system to report problems with rights of way.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

(ix) Replacement Swing Bridge (para 13)

11. It was noted that there had been no further public statement by KCC since Paul Carter's progress report at the end of April. Presumably, discussions were continuing between KCC and Peel Ports about the latter's potential financial contribution. Assurances had been given about the adequacy of the footway in any plans but the scope for this would depend in part on whether the existing swing bridge was simply replaced or a new lifting bridge provided.

(x) 'Lost Ways' initiative (para 14)

12. 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 over half of this total. (EC members had completed the three surveys which had been allocated to the Group.) The next stage would be to carry out historical research to back up any claim to add paths to the Definitive Map. It was understood that KCC had undertaken to provide some help with this work but Kent Ramblers were also asking for volunteers and planned to arrange a seminar in the autumn. Brian would draw this to members' attention.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

13. Brian expressed his concern again that it appeared that no concerted action was being taken 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. A recent article in The Guardian which he had

circulated to members confirmed that, in some areas at least, there might be many instances of 'lost paths'. He said that he planned to write to Kent Ramblers to ask if any initiative was planned to remedy this deficiency.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

(xi) Walking and Cycling provision in Faversham (para 15)

14. It was noted that the Town Clerk had previously indicated that consideration of the Group's letter of 6 September 2018, about a possible initiative to improve walking and cycling provision in Faversham, would be followed up after the local elections. Julian Saunders said that his firm impression was that both the Town Council and Borough Council were keen to make improvements as far as resources permitted. As far as footpaths were concerned, he suggested that it might be helpful if the Group drew up some concrete proposals, for example relating to improved signage, which could be put to the Town Council's Public Spaces Committee to consider. If approved, these might at least then be ready as and when finance became available. It was agreed that Julian and Brian should meet initially to draw up some proposals.

ACTION: JULIAN SAUNDERS/BRIAN CAFFAREY

(xii) Footpath ZR408 at Selling (para 16)

15. The Group had supported Sheldwich and Selling parish councils in opposing a proposed diversion of this footpath but it was reported that KCC had subsequently approved the diversion, presumably because they felt that the grounds for opposing the change were not sufficiently strong to meet the legal test involved.

TREASURER'S REPORT

16. Julian Saunders reported that income this year included £422 from subscriptions and £500 from a bequest, while expenditure had been nearly £90, not including renewal of the Group's insurance. The Group now had over £1450 in its account. He suggested that the EC might wish to discuss at a future meeting how the Group might use its funds. It was also noted that Bensted's Charity had approved a further grant of £100, which could be drawn against for future costs.

17. The Group now had 82 members, compared with 78 at the end of 2018.

18. Julian said that he and Ann would be meeting shortly to make arrangements to hand over the Treasurer duties.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE AGM ON 14 NOVEMBER 2019

19. Nick Williams said that he felt that his various commitments did not enable him to play a full role in the EC and that he would not therefore stand for re-election. Those present expressed regret at his decision but thanked him for his contribution. Ann Ashton confirmed that she would stand for election as Treasurer, while Julian Saunders said that he would be willing to stand for election as a member of the EC. Other members of the EC all said that they would be willing to stand again, although John Coulter said that he would be very content to give way if someone else wished to stand. It was noted that, if all those present were elected, all the positions on the EC would be filled, although it would be open to the EC to co-opt up to three additional members. Brian Caffarey would write round to members to set out the position and invite anyone else who wished to stand for election to get in touch.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

20. It had been hoped that Marion Shoard might be able to give a talk following the AGM but she was unavailable that evening. It was agreed that Brian Caffarey would approach Ian Wild of Ramblers to see if he could provide a general update on present developments, including the proposed solar park and the England Coast Path.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

CREEKSIDE PATH AT FAVERSHAM REACH AND WATERSIDE CLOSE

21. The meeting noted that a meeting had taken place with KCC in July to discuss progress in the steps needed to open the Creekside path and that the Group had also submitted evidence to KCC in connection with the Faversham Reach Residents' Association's application to amend the Definitive Map on the ground that the original path had been wrongly recorded. It was understood that KCC hoped to issue a decision shortly on this application. FFG EC members expected the application to be rejected. The residents would then no doubt appeal, if only to delay the whole process as long as possible.

22. Discussion then turned to the Town Council's plan, at its meeting on 9 September, to review its commitment to provide £5k towards the costs of opening the path. The Group had previously written to Councillors to set out the background to this matter and it was agreed that, among other steps, a further letter should be sent prior to the meeting, setting out the key arguments and attaching a copy of the previous letter. It was suggested, in particular, that Councillors needed be wary of the damage which a decision to revoke the commitment would do to the Council's credibility and reputation and that it would be deeply regrettable, too, if the Council repudiated a key element of its own Neighbourhood Plan and the Streetscape Strategy.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

ENGLAND COAST PATH

23. Natural England had reported that they 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

24. The Group had contributed to the written evidence given on behalf of various footpath groups to the inquiry; and the Ramblers representative and Anne Salmon had both spoken at the hearing on 23 July on 'Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal'. Anne had also submitted a paper on socio-economic tourism. The inquiry had now arranged a few further sessions but none of these focused on issues which were directly relevant to the Group. Anne added that the inquiry's format made it difficult for individuals to make much of a contribution orally.

PROPOSALS FOR 'GARDEN VILLAGES'

25. The newly-elected councillors on Swale BC would be considering the various options for possible garden villages. Anne reported that Swale BC are currently consulting on the Swale Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (consultation 26 July – 9 September). For Faversham it covers an area approximately 2kms from the edges of the town. The site proposed by the Duchy garden village is in an area identified as moderate sensitivity. The Gladman garden village site forms part of two areas, both identified as high sensitivity.

DESIGNATION OF LOCAL PATHS

26. No further comments had been received from KCC about the status of the various alleyways etc in Faversham which the Group had identified as possible candidates for adding to the Definitive Map. Andrew Osborne suggested that he, John and Brian should meet again to draw up a firm package of proposals, covering these paths and several others which had been under consideration, with a view to the Group seeking the Town Council's support. This proposal was agreed.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

STANDARD HOUSE/NEW CREEK ROAD PLANNING APPLICATION (19/501612/FULL)

27. Anne Salmon reported that the revised planning application for this development had not yet been determined. The Group had made its views clear on the need to sort out the longstanding problem of the unofficial diversion of the path running from Standard Quay through to the Iron Wharf Boatyard.

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

28. An appeal had been lodged by Shepherd Neame against the refusal to approve their plans for a 50-house development. A hearing would take place on 15 October. The plans retained the existing public footpath but Network Rail had expressed concern about the probable increased use of the railway crossing.

LAND TO EAST OF HAM ROAD (19/503278)

29. Anne Salmon confirmed that the plans to build affordable housing on this site included access onto the existing right of way that runs from Ham Road into Goldfinch Close.

LOG OF ISSUES RAISED

30. 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

31. The next EC meeting will take place at 7pm on Tuesday 15 October 2019 at 130 Athelstan Road.

19 August 2019