

Note: Subject to approval at next meeting

FAVERSHAM FOOTPATHS GROUP

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING ON 22 JULY 2020

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

MINUTES OF EC MEETING ON 22 APRIL 2020

1. The minutes were approved.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES NOT ON SUBSTANTIVE AGENDA

2. The following matters were noted:

(i) Walks (para 2)

3. The walks programme had continued to be suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Linda Harrison had indicated, however, that she would be willing to arrange informal walks for a group of up to five people if there were members who would benefit from a local walk, either because they lived alone or had no one else to go walking with. This would be drawn to members' attention.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

(ii) Website (para 3)

4. The website was up to date. Because of the suspension of walks fewer emails had been sent to members, resulting in less use of the website in recent months. But, in the 90 days preceding 12 July, 263 users accessed the site for 307 sessions, viewing 584 pages.

(iii) Social media (para 4)

5. Two postings had been made on the Group's Facebook page, relating to the Inspector's decision on the Faversham Reach residents' DMMO appeal about the Creekside path (see paras 18-19 below). Brian Caffarey had also posted a link on the 'Faversham Matters' Facebook page to the Open Spaces Society's piece about Andrew Osborne's campaign concerning the Creekside Path. This received a number of positive comments. It also led to the article published in the Faversham News on 16 July.

(iv) Proposal for a path from Jubilee Way to the Rec/Faversham Rail Yard application – (para 5)

6. The steps from Jubilee Way were still fenced off. Work did not appear to have started on the Faversham Rail Yard development.

(v) Front Brents/Town Green (para 6)

7. Andrew Osborne said that there had been no new developments regarding remedial works to the Front Brents/Town Green and his correspondence about the circumstances in which the flood defence arrangements were activated.

(vi) Lost Ways Initiative (para 7)

8. The Kent Ramblers' 'Lost Ways' initiative, to which the Group had contributed, appeared to have run into the sands as a result of disagreement between Kent Ramblers and the national body about how the local data should be integrated with the national 'Don't Lose Your Way' project. Brian Caffarey had written to Ramblers at national level to discover whether they were lobbying the Government to defer or even abandon the 2026 deadline for making claims to put 'lost paths' on the Definitive Map. The Group might then approach Helen Whately MP.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

(vii) Walking and Cycling provision in Faversham (para 8)

9. Julian Saunders updated the meeting on the Town Council's project to introduce a 20mph speed limit in the town and the latest discussions regarding the pedestrianisation of the town centre. The former would be introduced in September by way of an experimental order, using funds from the Government's Emergency Active Travel Fund, which was designed to encourage more walking and cycling. After six months' experience of the scheme, which would apply to the whole of the town, there would be a public consultation programme to decide its future. There would also be opportunities, through a dedicated website, to suggest other improvements and it was also hoped to publicise walks which could be taken from the town centre. In discussion it was agreed that the project fitted very well with the Group's aims to encourage and facilitate walking. The Group would write in support of the project and encourage members to do so too.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

10. As regards pedestrianisation of the town centre, Julian reported that the Town Council had decided the previous evening to recommend to Swale BC that the hours should be reduced from 10 to 3 on market days and from 10 to 2 on other days. The EC agreed that pedestrianisation of the town centre was of considerable benefit to pedestrians and regretted the Town Council's decision. The Group would write to Swale BC and the Town Council to urge that the new arrangements should not be changed.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

(viii) Standard House/New Creek Road planning application (19/501612/FULL)
(paras 9 and 25 (i))

11. It was agreed to pursue the matter of the condition of the footpath alongside the Oyster Bay Warehouse later in the year when the condition of the path would be more apparent. The EC welcomed the fact that the part of ZF39 which links Belvedere Road and Abbey Road, as well as the section that runs in front of the new houses adjoining Standard House, had both been re-surfaced.

(ix) Cleve Hill solar complex (para 10)

12. The EC noted with regret that at the end of May the Government had announced that it had approved the solar park development at Cleve Hill. Swale BC and campaigners had decided that it was not possible to seek a judicial review of the decision. If the development goes ahead as planned, the route taken by the existing public footpaths on the site will not be affected – although the experience of using them will be very different – and a short additional permissive path will be added.

(x) Faversham Creek Bridge (para 11)

13. Andrew Osborne had written to KCC to seek an update on the new bridge and to emphasise the need to ensure that the plans did not preclude creating a Creekside path on the Shepherd Neame side of the Inner Basin. In reply KCC confirmed that a new swing bridge was being designed, together with floodgates, road systems and a control system. This was expected to take around six months to complete. They said that they were also looking to provide a segregated footway/cycle lane, but it was not clear from their reply if they accepted the point Andrew had made about an Inner Basin path. He would seek further clarification. **ACTION: ANDREW OSBORNE**

(xi) Vicarage Lane/Eastling Road (para 25 (ii))

14. The Chair had written to David Simmons on 30 May to seek his views in principle on the suggestion that a permissive path might be created to run inside the hedge line from the corner of Vicarage Lane/Eastling Road to the corner of Lorenden Park. A reminder had been sent on 29 June but no reply had so far been received.

(xii) Maron Cottage, Perry Wood (20/501366) (para 25 (iii))

15. As agreed, Brian Caffarey had submitted comments supporting KCC's observations about the need to maintain the width of a bridleway.

TREASURER'S REPORT

16. Ann Ashton reported that the Group had £1525.37 in the bank, plus a further £20 still to be paid in. The Group currently had 82 paid-up members: the suspension of the walks programme had meant that we had not been recruiting new members. We were still trying to encourage three members from last year to renew their subscription. It was noted that an aim might be to encourage at least some of those who walk with the Faversham Walking Group to support our Group's efforts to maintain and improve the local footpath network.

17. The meeting discussed the difficulties in seeking to reclaim gift aid. It appeared that the amount of work involved would be disproportionate to the amount we could expect to receive, bearing in mind that cash subscriptions would not be eligible, but a final decision would be made once Julian Saunders had seen if he could retrieve earlier correspondence with HRMC. **ACTION: JULIAN SAUNDERS**

CREEKSIDE PATH AT FAVERSHAM REACH AND WATERSIDE CLOSE

18. The Inspector's Decision Letter of 17 June had brought the very welcome news that he had rejected the Faversham Reach Residents' Association's appeal against KCC's refusal to make an Order deleting the obstructed footpath from the Definitive Map. The residents' only means of challenging this decision was by judicial review: an application would need to be made by 17 September. Assuming no such application was made or succeeded, the Inspector's decision removed the last legal obstacle preventing work to open the path. The EC expressed its gratitude to KCC's officers for the very considerable amount of work undertaken to consider the DMMO application and to resist the residents' appeal.

19. Although there had been subsequent exchanges with KCC about the next steps, it was felt that the Group should seek more assurances about the various actions required. Andrew Osborne would write about construction work aspects, while the Chair would seek assurances about swift settlement of compensation/mitigation claims and the overall timetable.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY/ANDREW OSBORNE

ENGLAND COAST PATH

20. The Chair had written to Helen Whately MP on 29 June to draw attention to the fact that it was now over three years since Natural England had produced its report recommending a route for the Whitstable to Iwade stretch of the ECP and to ask her to take the matter up with the S of S for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We had not received a substantive reply yet.

21. Natural England had confirmed that it had not lost sight of the fact that the planning permission to demolish the wall between Provender Walk and the Quays expired in December. It was suggested, though, that all planning approvals had been extended by the Government as part of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Brian Caffarey would check the position. **ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY**

EAST KENT RECYCLING LTD PLANNING APPLICATION

22. As agreed at the previous meeting, the Group had written to the KCC officers who had dealt with the EKR planning application to press them to take the lead in trying to find a more acceptable means of ensuring the safety of pedestrians using the access road. This had proved fruitless. The Chair had then written to Bretts with a similar request. Bretts' reply of 30 June said that they had concluded, with KCC, that our proposal for a path on the lagoon side was impractical and that they considered that the refuges agreed as part of the planning approval provided a satisfactory solution. The Chair had then written to the Public Rights of Way team at

KCC, arguing that the access road was not a satisfactory replacement for the original obstructed path and requesting a site meeting. Their prompt reply suggested that they shared the Group's view that Bretts' application to divert the original obstructed path across the lagoon onto the access road was likely to prove controversial and that they believed, as we had argued, that it would be feasible to construct a path on the lagoon side of the road.

23. In discussion it was agreed that the Chair would write again to Bretts, in the light of the views expressed by KCC's PROW team, to encourage them to reconsider their position.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

PROPOSALS FOR GARDEN VILLAGES/NEW HOUSING

24. Anne Salmon updated the Group briefly on the stage which Swale BC's Local Plan Panel had reached in considering broad strategic options. Until firmer proposals on sites for development were agreed, there was no action for the Group to take.

DESIGNATION OF LOCAL PATHS

25. Andrew Osborne said that other priorities had meant that he had not made further progress in finalising the maps showing the paths for which the Group envisaged making a claim for additions to the Definitive Map of Footpaths. Andrew thought that the Group should elicit support from the Town Council for the Group's proposals, with a view to a public exhibition of some kind, which he thought would be helpful in gathering the names of people who could provide witness statements about the historic use of the paths concerned. Differing views were expressed about the timing of an approach to the Town Council but it was agreed that this could be considered again once the maps had been finalised.

ACTION: ANDREW OSBORNE

SECRETARIAL DUTIES

26. The meeting discussed how the various Secretarial duties might be undertaken following Brian Caffarey's departure, which seemed likely to occur by the end of August. Members of the EC and a couple of other members of the Group had kindly volunteered to cover certain tasks, at least on a temporary basis, but it was agreed that it would be enormously helpful if someone could be identified who would be willing to take on the limited role of acting as a conduit for correspondence and taking the minutes of meetings. The Chair would write to members again and the EC was also asked to consider if they knew anyone outside the Group who might be willing to take on this role. It was suggested, too, that it might be worth approaching organisations which kept a register of potential volunteers.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY/TREVOR PAYNE

2020 AGM

27. A provisional date of Thursday 12 November had been fixed for this year's AGM. It was agreed that, given the continuing prevalence of Covid-19 and the practical arrangements which would have to be made for a meeting, it was not sensible to

hold a physical event on the lines of past years. The meeting considered two options: simply postponing the AGM till a date to be determined (possibly missing out this year's AGM altogether) or holding a 'virtual' AGM of some kind, for example arranging a Zoom meeting. A majority of the EC favoured the latter course. Thought would need to be given to the precise arrangements, including the election of the new EC. Brian Caffarey would prepare some proposals, which could be discussed at the EC's next meeting.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

PROPOSAL FOR FAVERSHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

28. Swale BC were undertaking a consultation exercise on the scope of the area to be covered by the proposed Faversham Neighbourhood Plan, which it was intended should cover the whole of Faversham, including Faversham Creek, for which a Neighbourhood Plan already existed. It was agreed that there was no need for the Group to respond to the consultation but the Group ought to write to the Town Council to emphasise the importance which needed to be given to public footpaths in the planning process and to ask what the intended arrangements were for consulting bodies such as the Faversham Footpaths Group. The Chair undertook to write to the Town Council.

ACTION: TREVOR PAYNE

LOG OF ISSUES RAISED

29. 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.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

30. The following matters were raised:

(i) Closure of paths in Abbeyfields

Brian Caffarey had corresponded with and met a Millfield resident who was concerned about the closure of a path/paths walked in the Abbeyfields area, in particular a route leading to the bridge by the sewage works. Part of the area is now used by shooters and signs have been erected, and locks attached to gates, making it clear that no public access is permitted. With help from others, he explored whether there might be grounds for seeking an addition to the Definitive Map of Footpaths but it was clear that there was insufficient clarity about the route or routes which had been walked to make it feasible to make an application.

(ii) Planning application for Ordnance Wharf (20/502408/FULL)

It was noted that this application included provision, set out in the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan, for a public access. It was agreed that the Group should write to express its support for this aspect of the application.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

31. The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 9 September 2020 in the Guildhall.

26 July 2020