

FAVERSHAM FOOTPATHS GROUP

MINUTES OF AN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (EC) MEETING HELD ON 14th April 2021.

The meeting was held at 4.30pm on 14th April 2021 by the Zoom Process which was caused by continuing the Covid19 restrictions imposed at the time. All seven Members were present at the meeting, Trevor Payne (TP), Ann Ashton (AA), Anne Salmon (AS), Andrew Osborne (AO), John Coulter (JC), Julian Saunders (JS), Robin Sayewell (RS).

1. WELCOME / APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

TP welcomed everyone to the meeting, although JC was having some issues with his Zoom connection.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR EC MEETING HELD ON 3rd February 2021

These were approved.

3. MATTERS ARISING

(i) Walks

The walks programme has continued to be suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, Linda Harrison has been unwell since February, but it is planned provisionally to commence FFG Group walking again on 21st June 2021, that will be reviewed at the next meeting.

(ii) Website

The website has been updated with thanks to Stuart Harrison and his sons.

(iii) Social media

TP has been sent the link to the group's Facebook page by the previous secretary and will look at using it when necessary.

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

The steps from Jubilee Way had been opened. It might be helpful, however, if there was some signage in the car park at the top of the steps to indicate which way to go when walking from the Rec. Work did not appear to have started on the Faversham Rail Yard development and RS would check and note if the signage had been installed which it still has not.

An FFG member had subsequently written to RS advising that one parking bay covers the entrance to the steps. RS has further inspected this and the bays are

actually reservation posts for the companies who use the Car Park. There are no parking bay line markings as the surface is just hardcore. TP has agreed to contact Planning at SBC advising of the signage and the parking bay issues.

(v) Front Brents/Town Green

The Environment Agency have advised AO that both the Covid 19 restrictions and recent wet weather prevented their Operations Team from being able to complete the remedial works to the flood defence at Front Brents in the autumn as previously planned. They aim to complete the remedial works this spring once the weather improves and the ground begins to dry out. They will complete the repairs alongside some other maintenance to the flood defence which will include mowing, weed removal, topping up and reseeding low spots along the embankment and some tree maintenance.

In terms of the tree planting they will work with their biodiversity colleagues to look into the suitability of planting saplings in the area suggested. Their current priority is to complete the remedial works and maintenance to the flood defence at Front Brents in the spring, and then potentially look at tree planting in the autumn depending on the availability of both funding and resources.

(vi) Lost Ways Initiative

Following correspondence with Ramblers HQ, Trevor Payne had written to Helen Whately MP on 21 August asking her to raise with Defra the possibility of deferring to 2031 the deadline for making claims for 'lost paths'. She had confirmed that she had forwarded the Group's letter. Colin Sefton of Kent Ramblers had advised the Group that he had picked up this project from Neville Machin. He would be in touch if he required our help.

(vii) Walking and Cycling provision in Faversham linked with future proposals for the Faversham Neighbourhood Plan

(Walking and Cycling)

JS advised the EC, that Faversham Town Council (FTC) has recently been given funding by SBC for two Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure projects as follows :-

a. "Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)". This will be a plan with outline costings for improving the infrastructure for cycling and walking so more residents and visitors make journeys not using cars. It will be developed in line with D for T guidance and will ideally be signed off by SBC and KCC so that it can form part of their plans for improving active travel infrastructure.

b. "The Town to Parishes Project". This will identify walking and cycling routes from local villages to the three largest communities in Swale East – Boughton, Faversham and Teynham and make proposals for improving them so that more journeys are made via active travel.

The FTC has commissioned Phil Jones Associates and Berendt Consulting to deliver the two projects. Both of them have worked with FTC in the development of the Twenties-Plenty scheme. However, the FTC also need the active involvement of expert local organisations and everyday cyclists and pedestrians to make the project successful. They would like to ask for the Group's help in two specific areas for both projects in giving feedback on the initial draft walking network proposed by the consultants They would also be encouraging members to contribute to the 'audit' of walking routes by 'walking them' and making suggestions about any improvements that might encourage walking. TP would respond formally to Julian saying the group would be pleased to help with this project (Post meeting note this, TP has responded and a provisional meeting with the first mentioned of these companies has been set up).

(Neighbourhood Plan)

TP had received the draft plan and it was circulated to the committee for comment on the Footpaths policy which were passed back to FTC's Councillor Irwin, who agreed to incorporate what the group had recommended.

It was agreed that TP would write to Cllr Irwin recommending that the sites along the Creek including the inner basin and Ordnance Walk that were to be developed under the plan should include a requirement for the provision of a Creekside footpath, as was the case with the Creek Neighbourhood Plan

(viii) Faversham Creek Bridge

AO had again asked KCC to comment specifically on the point he had raised about the need to ensure that the plans for the bridge did not preclude subsequently creating a Creekside path on the Shepherd Neame side of the Inner Basin. AO is still awaiting a further response. RS mentioned this should include both sides of the bridge on the East side ie going both North and South directions.

(ix) Creek Basin

AO suggested that the committee should consider writing to the Town Council drawing attention to the missing parts of all footpaths around the creek especially the one that runs alongside the rear of the Shepherd Neame (SN) bottling store and yard to the south and across the frontage of the SN car park to the North of the bridge.

On the former an amount of work is required to widen a path but the main problem is getting onto a path at the bridge end (the latter is in regard to differing structural levels in routing behind the pump house). It is believed FTC as part of the Neighbourhood Plan should also be asked to ensure that if SN car park is considered for allocation for development it should be subject to the provision of a creek-side path. This would be the same for the Whittles / Swan Quay section North of TS Hazard.

At some future date SN may need to be approached over assistance in allowing this route to be run alongside the creek behind their Bottling Store building.

(x) Vicarage Lane / Eastling Road

We were still awaiting David Simmons 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. It was noted again that walkers faced considerable dangers on the stretch of road between Vicarage Lane and the entrance to Lorenden Park. After much discussion TP agreed that we should continue to follow this up.

(xi) Planning application for Ordnance Wharf (20/502408/FULL) (para 30 (ii))

It was still noted the current Planning Application had subsequently been withdrawn, but for any future scheme, the group would be checking that a perimeter Creekside path was included and as previously noted included within the Neighbourhood Plan.

(xii) Rail Crossing for footpath ZR328 and other Footpath Issues

(ZR328) A member had previously brought up issues here and TP with AS went to see this crossing on 27th March 2021. On the north side it is very steep and in quite a bad condition, and a couple of photos were sent to the EC to illustrate. The surface and steepness of the first section of the ascent approaching from the north is poor, not much better in the top section and at a minimum should be safely usable. We can appreciate that footpaths do not necessarily need to be like pavements they need to be safe as a minimum. TP has subsequently written to the Kent PROW officers advising that the general condition of the path needs improvement, and possibly because it is so steep, that they should consider installing steps and railings. In response KCC have indicated they will investigate and report back.

(Footpath Issues) Both TP and RS indicated two other footpaths with similar access issues, the first where a farmer had deep furrow ploughed and not reinstated the designated route near Homestall Lane, the other being between Vicarage Lane and Water Lane, Ospringe alongside the M2. TP advised there is online access to the KCC for problems where anyone can create an account on their system. The weblink as follows gives access to the PROW Map website:

<https://webapps.kent.gov.uk/countrysideaccesscams/standardmap.aspx>

This enables you to set up an account and report a footpath problem.

4. TREASURER'S REPORT AND MEMBERSHIP

AA reported to all at the meeting that we currently have £1,543.27 in the bank.

On membership there are still 24 people who have yet to pay, and two members have told us they won't be renewing.

5. CREEKSIDE PATH ALONGSIDE FAVERSHAM REACH AND WATERSIDE CLOSE

AO had advised the group previously by e'mail, that the KCC once COVID 19 restrictions were lifted would appoint a contractor for the works

6. ENGLAND COAST PATH

Just to remind that the group were informed via e'mail by DEFRA on 13th January 2021 that the Secretary of State had fully approved the England Coast Path, details of which were circulated to members shortly after receipt.

We are currently awaiting Natural England to commence works on the East side of the creek with wall at Provender Walk to be demolished. RS has written numerous reminders to them over this

7. EAST KENT RECYCLING LTD (EKR) PLANNING APPLICATION

This is in regard to the EKR traffic along the East Road of Oare Creek, where it was previously mentioned that our best option is to simply sit back and see how things between a number of interested parties develop. As before, hopefully the recent approval of the England Coast Path along here, will bring Natural England into the negotiations at some period.

However, it had been noted that Road Work coloured markings, possibly for the refuges, have been marked upon the Creek side of the road

8. SWALE LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION - Reg19 (previously minuted as 'Proposals for Garden Villages / New Housing')

AS advised previously that Swale BC's decision to favour Option C in drawing up proposals for its new Local Plan pointed to some 3,500 new houses being built in Faversham in a 5-year rolling period from 2022. This would include 2,500 houses on the Duchy of Cornwall site. It remained to be seen how the Government's aims to reform the planning system would affect future plans.

AS also reported Network Rail had objected to the current planning application for 180 houses at Abbey-fields on the grounds that it would increase the use of the Chambers Crossing which is on footpath ZF29. This application has not been determined yet. However, the land north of Graveney Road allocated in the Reg. 19 Local Plan could have a greater effect on use of the level crossing. The Group will make comments supporting the need for the line of the footpath to be retained. We have submitted comments on the footpaths aspects of the plan to SBC. AS considered that it is likely there will be a public enquiry next year.

9. DESIGNATION OF LOCAL PATHS

AO and JC to report on any 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.

10. AGM 2020

This took place by Zoom in November 2020 and provisional minutes were issued. It is hoped a meeting at the Alexander Centre may be feasible this year

11. LOG OF ISSUES RAISED

The log would be updated by RS, following the issuing of these minutes.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This is provisionally arranged for Wednesday 2nd June 2021 at 4.30pm, where hopefully this will be proper venue event and not by the Zoom method, dependent on Covid19 restrictions at the time.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

AO advised his preference over replacing of Crab Island bridge with a proper period style structure where he believed funding could be made available from various funds and trusts. However, it was generally believed that this was not necessarily a high agenda item in terms of priorities.