

FAVERSHAM FOOTPATHS GROUP

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF AN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (EC) MEETING HELD ON 8th June 2021.

The meeting was held at 4.30pm on 8th June 2021 at the Guildhall in Faversham. 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, it was appreciated by all that this was the first face to face meeting since September 2020.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR EC MEETING HELD ON 14th April 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 provisionally confirmed she is currently unable to resume running organised walks. However, it is now planned to commence FFG Group walking again on Sunday 27th June 2021, and a poster advertising this diary event is attached as part of these minutes. As an interim arrangement, AA will be leading this first walk.

(ii) Website

Stephen Caffarey has been commissioned as consultant for updating of the website, which will be reviewed on an annual basis.

(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) Path from Jubilee Way to the Rec and proposed Faversham Rail Yard application

TP has agreed to contact John Wilson Business Park advising of the signage and the parking bay issues.

AS raised the issue under any other business that the current revised Planning application for the Rail Yard appears not to contain facilities for a direct footpath / cycleway link between Jubilee Way and the Railway Station. The original application for commercial units did include a continuous path through the development but the new residential application has a fence at its boundary which means the foot / cycle link has to divert via the recreation ground. TP with advice from AS will put in an objection to the new residential application shortly.

Post meeting note RS understands from a friend who lives on the adjacent Estate (formerly the EKP site) that the residents association are also in favour of the pathway link so we will pass on a copy of our objection to them to do the same, if they are so minded.

(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. We are awaiting progress

(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 and to date no contact has been received.

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

(Walking and Cycling)

JS had previously advised that Faversham Town Council (FTC) has 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 have asked 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. JS advised that TP should hear from the consultants shortly.

(Neighbourhood Plan)

TP had received a draft of the Footpath Policy FAV6 which was circulated to the committee for comment on the Footpaths policy. These were passed back to FTC’s Councillor Irwin, who agreed to incorporate what the group had recommended.

TP has written to Cllr Irwin recommending that the sites along the Creek including the inner basin and Ordnance Wharf 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. Cllr Irwin has replied by saying these would all be considered

(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 both the Shepherd Neame car park side and the Inner Basin. JS advised that the Design Drawings should be issued shortly

(ix) Creek Basin

AO had suggested we should write 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. TP has since had a reply from Councillor Irwin that had been distributed.

(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 to at least obtain a response.

(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. Councillor Irwin as in (ix) confirmed this was covered

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

(ZR328) 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 from Homestall Lane where KCC PROW have confirmed that the path (ZR496) will be cleared of crops to a minimum width of 1 meter by the land owner in the near future. The other, between Vicarage Lane and Water Lane, Ospringe alongside the M2 where RS has subsequently had confirmation from PROW, that improvements to the path alongside the M2 are to be carried out.

(xiii) Crab Island Bridge

AO previously 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, although its condition is suspect, to which AO in having a meeting shortly with KCC over Faversham Reach etc, will raise as an issue.

4. TREASURER'S REPORT AND MEMBERSHIP

Bank balance:

Since the last committee meeting we have paid for IT support for website updates, and some future uploads to the website. Assuming that there have been no more membership fees paid by bank transfer in May, this means that the bank balance is now £1261.94.

Membership:

Four members have resigned from membership this year, and there are 22 members who have yet to pay their fees for 2021.

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. He has a meeting with KCC this week to agree a way forward.

6. ENGLAND COAST PATH

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 and TP have written numerous reminders to them over this and will continue to do so

7. EAST KENT RECYCLING LTD (EKR) PLANNING APPLICATION

RS has submitted a report and photos to the EC of works that have been commenced on seven number refuges.

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 has reported on 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. AO has subsequently indicated that he no longer wishes to lead this project, although wishing to contribute, and feels someone else in the group should take over in putting the proposals to FTC.

It is likely that an exhibition in the new Town Hall would be beneficial to obtain support and TP will write to the Town Clerk seeking the Town Council's support with this project.

10. AGM 2021

This took place by Zoom in November 2020 and provisional minutes were issued. It is hoped to arrange a meeting this year at the Guildhall on 18th November 2021 that hopefully may be feasible if restrictions are lowered further.

11. LOG OF ISSUES RAISED

The log will be updated following this meeting.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To hopefully take place at 4.30PM on 10th August 2021 again at the Guildhall.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- i) Claire Windridge at FTC had asked if the Countryside Walks Programme that has been around for ten years now, could be reviewed as an audit by the group. It was suggested that this would be mentioned to members.*
- ii) The item regarding the Rail Yard was mentioned during AOB, but is covered under item 3 (iv) where it had previously within other meetings been raised.*