

Annual Report by the Chair of Friends of Train Wood & Marriott's Way to the Annual General Meeting on 25th September 2019

It is now six years since FoTW was formed when on 18th June 2013 we adopted a constitution.

Since then we have achieved a great deal. Having achieved our initial aim of preventing Train Wood being sold, we swiftly moved to have the wood listed as an Asset of Community Value. In this we were successful. Doing so enabled us to negotiate a position that helped the County Council change their policy and withdraw the land from sale.

The protection provided by that listing lapsed last year but a fresh application on behalf of FoTW & MW was successful and a further order made on 25th June 2019 for the wood to be listed as an Asset of Community Value for a further five years.

I would point out that if the County Council should seek to dispose of the wood again, the listing only gives us a six week moratorium period to indicate if any community group is interested in purchasing the land. If such notice is given then the L.A. have to allow a further six months for the interested group to explore a purchase. In these austere times with many local authorities being forced to dispose of parks and other green spaces Train wood might again come under threat.

Consequently the need for groups like ours remains paramount in protecting public assets.

However groups need a purpose and active membership to survive and the task of maintaining momentum is much harder when the immediate threat appears to have been removed.

Over the last six years we have created awareness of Train Wood in the Norfolk public consciousness although that awareness needs to be raised continually and the absence of a permanent publicity officer has meant our publicity has been less than consistent in recent years.

The loss of a membership secretary has also meant that our monitoring of members and communication with them has been fragmented, falling to various members of the management committee on an ad hoc basis. If we are to continue to be a meaningful group we need to refresh the membership and develop a programme that will inspire people to participate.

While we have continued to organise quarterly litter picks and facilitated others such as; the Good Gym and local Scouts, this year has seen no new stand-alone projects such as the Bio Blitz or the renewing of infrastructure.

We did however have a successful tree planting day on 26th March when trees donated by the Woodland Trust were installed along the Marriott's Way at Drayton.

We have developed strong links with local and national organisations which need to be developed further if Friends of Train Wood is to survive. Our link as the Tree Charter group for the Woodland Trust gives us a platform to campaign for tree preservation and the importance of trees in our environment. This will need the cooperation of the County Council if we are to encourage the planting of more trees along the entire route of Marriott's Way. This is also a valuable opportunity to promote educational activity in the wood and along the Marriott's way for schools and the wider public.

The Norfolk Wild life Trust have also a part to play in this and with the findings of the bio –blitz might be able to develop projects to help protect and develop the wider aspects of bio diversity that Train Wood and Marriott's Way facilitates.

Future projects will require a strong and committed management team and active membership with some regular activities related to the aims laid down in our constitution part 3. In short to improve the wood and Marriott's Way for the benefit of the public.

The lottery heritage fund grant funding is now reaching its end and there are notable improvements to the railway heritage landmarks along the Marriott's Way. If these projects are to have a lasting legacy than it will require local people to maintain an interest and participate in the management of these spaces.

After six years of attempting to steer this group I feel the time has come for me to step down as chair and to find someone who can drive this project forward with fresh energy and commitment to the work we have undertaken to date.

I would like to thank my fellow committee members for their hard work over the years and a special thank you to my wife our secretary, who stepped in temporarily some years ago and is still holding things together.

Finally thanks to all of our members and supporters who have kept this project alive - long may it continue to thrive.

Alan Cabbage – Chair

Friends of Train Wood & Marriott's Way

24 September 2019