

Friends of Train Wood & Marriott's Way

Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 22nd September 2020, to be a virtual meeting

Chairs Report

In a year that has seen curtailment of work and leisure activities due to a world wide pandemic most of our planned activity for this year was sadly cancelled. However the management committee met this year in March prior to lockdown, virtually in June and in the open in the wood in August, to consider what could be done to continue and enhance the group's activities.

Seven years on from our formation we have asked ourselves if we need to maintain an organisation to support the wood.

Since our initial campaign in 2013 to prevent Norfolk County Council selling the wood, we have built a strong case for the wood's preservation. On 25th June 2019 our second application to list Train Wood as an Asset of Community Value was approved for a further five years.

Norfolk County Council has undertaken considerable work along the Marriott's way to celebrate its railway heritage using money from the Lottery Heritage Fund from an application supported by FoTW and FONCs. The northern part of the old railway was featured in a recent Channel 5 documentary and starred some of our friends from FONC's including Dan Knights who is also on FoTW committee.

A new lighting scheme for the section of the Marriott's Way that crosses Andersons Meadow in Norwich has now been completed adding to the existing section through Train Wood.

I am pleased to announce that as a result of a request by FoTW Norfolk County Council are seeking to include Train Wood on the Woodland Trust map that directs the public to local woods ; www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/woods/#lat=52.6281&lng=1.2993&name=Norwich%2C although the entry has yet to appear.

So in many ways Friends of Train Wood has literally put Train Wood on the map so surely it's "job done"?

Sadly as the Woodland Trusts Tree Charter campaign to which we are linked says,

"More than 1,000 irreplaceable ancient woods have been threatened by development over the last 10 years.

And there are weak levels of legislative protection for our most precious woods. Dwindling grant funding is adding to the pressure."

The value of our open spaces has never been more important than now but despite the value our green

spaces provide in terms of wellbeing for people and nature, we have a government blind to the real needs of people and their environment. Instead developers have been given the freedom to build, build, build and local authority planning is over ridden.

Consequently our green spaces still need protecting and developing in ways that serve their local communities and not the interests of distant corporations.

The work of groups like ours need to go on but it needs the support of an active membership and must grow to reflect the interests of the community it serves. As we have moved from being a campaign group to a development and maintenance one we need to constantly redefine our aims.

The County Council are shortly to publish their management plan for Train Wood and that needs to be our opportunity to create a role for our membership that will provide a future framework for our activities.

I am sad to inform you that I will be standing down as Chair at this AGM but I know there are already suitable applicants wishing to stand and I wish them every success in taking our project forward. I would like to thank all the existing committee members for their work and commitment over the years but a special thank you to my wife Sue who has been our secretary and my support and personal assistant without whom much of our activity would never have happened.

Alan D. Cabbage