

Essex Coastal Path

I went along to see what was doing at Maldon Library on Saturday 30th January to the Essex Coastal Path Drop in Session and was shown into the little section Natural England delivery team had for the morning. Desks were set out with all the maps of relevant sections, Today's session was billed to cover two sections Maldon to Salcott and Burnham-on-Crouch to Maldon, yes I know it sounds like they should logically read the other way round but for simplicity I will stick with the titles as given.

I was greeted warmly as a VIP by Claire Cadman and introductions were made, to Phil Sturgess and Patrick Welsh from Natural England and Jack Ellum from Maldon District Council.

While I was asking questions about any possible path between Heybridge Hall and Fullbridge Road and Phil, Patrick and Jack were going over the possible options with me Claire asked for permission to take a photo. Later I agreed that as Vice President of Essex Area Ramblers I was happy for them to use it for publicity.

I was able to ask and get more information about Steeple Creek to Stansgate Abbey Farm and the possible options there, and on the same map from St. Lawrence to The Stone. Having the maps and pointing made clear the options they were outlining. I was also able to put forward my opinion on what I thought may be a good route from a walker's point of view. Things like the number of car movements I have experienced to and from the Marconi sailing club if you get caught walking down the road it at a time of the tide when all the sailors wanted to launch or get home quickly.

I came away with the feeling they are well aware of most of the issues and will have a balancing act to get the best path. Claire told me she had a meeting with Jackie Harrop that very afternoon, so no doubt we will get some feedback later from that. I asked if it was too soon to start planning another liaison meeting between herself, James Lamb, Alan Goffee and myself, Claire made a note to email to get that sorted and we have since been able to fix a date for mid-April.

Claire told me how delighted their team were in receiving the submission on the coastal paths from further up the line - Jeff Coe's teams' piece I believe. It was their first in Essex and came complete with loads of pictures she proudly told me. Well done and Thank You Jeff.

Claire asked about things in Ramblers so I said all OK we were having our AGM on 13.2.16 and we were so sorry because of Governance changes that need to be addressed we would not have a time slot to ask Natural England along, but again, asked her to put forward bits for EAU and the Web site. She said she would send over some paper copies of their Coastal Path 'getting involved' leaflets for us to have on display at the AGM. I am delighted to say they duly turned up in the post this lunch time, so they will be available on the History and Interest table for all to see. I am hoping it will not be too long before we can fix a slot for her to come along to Area Council or the like and meet more Essex Ramblers.

I was also able to have a chat with Jack about his ambitious plans for tourist information that he plans for visitors to the coastal path when its open. He also spoke about a brand new series of leaflets on Coast and Countryside Walks Maldon District Council has produced. As the members of the public had started to stream through the door it was time for me to make room for them.

I went over to the local Tourist Information Office to have a detailed look and purchased my own personal copy of the pack of all 21 of them. To me they are modern day Wainwrights. Being both a map person and retired local author I have taken delight in making my way through the pack. I will have them with me at the AGM if anyone wants to take a quick peak. They are so new they were just unpacking the boxes from the printers when I arrived at the TIC.

So in conclusion for any of you who are feeling it is too late to attend a 'drop in session' in person, the answer is NO.

Ann McLaren