



*Minutes of Meeting held* Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024

*Location* Darlington Cricket Club, South Terrace,  
Feethams, Darlington DL1 5JD

*7.00 pm*

*Members Present:*

Alan Townsend (AT Vice Chair), John Raw (JDR Trustee), Ross Chisholm (RC Planning Officer), Norman Hugill (NHu, Trustee), Yvonne Richardson (trustee), Jonathan Ratcliffe (JAR, Secretary), Paul Boden, Jane Hackworth Young (JHY), Rose Drew, Catherine Yates, Keith Halifax, Margaret Fenwick , Trevor Fenwick David Newmarch, Gerry Wilkinson, David Newmarch, Alastair Culff, Steve Sidgwick, Peter Spence, , Cllr Jim Atkinson, Alan MacNab, Bill Stewart, Richard Barber, Steve Green, Dave Pennington, Angela Pickering, Tim Taylor

*(Note: Actions highlighted in Red)*

<b>1</b>	<b><u>Welcomes &amp; Apologies for absence.</u></b> <b>Apologies</b> Matthew Pease (President), Chris Lloyd (Vice President) Niall Hammond (NHa, Chair), Caroline Hardie (CH) Peter Bainbridge (PB, Membership Secretary), Barry Thompson (BT Trustee), Alan Kellett, John Parker, Andy Simmons, David Watt, Francis Annett, John Giles, Dave Reynolds, Hugh Jackson, Bill Stuart, Mike Brown, Keith Simpson, Sue Fleury, Ed Chicken. David Thompson, Maureen Rigg. Leigh Taylor, John Parker, Paul Harle, Maurice Burns, Cllr Maggie Beadle  <b>Welcomes</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
<b>2</b>	<b><u>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</u></b> <b>Corrections:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Add non- functional Stockton to Locomotion Replica to clarify which replica has been scrapped</li><li>• John Carr missing from attended.</li><li>• Correct date of next meeting to 6<sup>th</sup> June</li></ul>	<b>JAR</b>
<b>3</b>	<b><u>Matters Arising</u></b> John Raw updated on the meeting	
<b>4</b>	<b><u>Declarations of Interest</u></b> None declared	
<b>5</b>	<b><u>Chair's Report</u></b> Heighington Station campaign is going well, NHa is working on Community ownership fund bid to go in on 24 <sup>th</sup> June.  Hopetown museum is opening on 6 <sup>th</sup> July	

	<p>The Chair expressed thanks to the Darlington Interest Group for the substantial work carried out since their establishment.</p> <p>The trustees had been updated at their last meeting by Jill Read (SDR 200 Communications and Stakeholder Manager) regarding the communications strategy for the Stockton &amp; Darlington Railway festival.</p> <p>RC expressed concerns that without consultation with other trustees that the Tricolor bid to HLF may not cover all bases and asked when the other trustees were planned to be consulted. JAR said that the initial meetings were establishing the work plan for Tricolor. <b>JAR to raise question of other trustee involvement with NHa.</b></p> <p>John Carr said that the frame of reference for the bid was too small. That there are a lot of small groups that are too small to be sustainable and that they should be consulted as part of the project to look at how their work should be sustained.</p> <p>Peter Spence raised concerns that the embargo on the festival was inhibiting planning by groups as they don't know what's already in the pipeline and what gaps need filling in the program. He also raised that Niccy Hallifax had spoken to a Stephenson Locomotive Society meeting in Middlesbrough and was willing to answer questions about the festival and asked why we could not have had the same opportunity this month?</p> <p>JHY responded that the Friends need to focus on putting together their own program and submitting to Niccy Hallifax and that she would likely suggest changed dates or collaborative working if two groups events clashed.</p> <p>Peter Spence repeated his concern that with everything so undercover that we are being kept in the dark.</p> <p>AT explained that it's so that the festival were wanting to present a firm offering in September so that there was clear communication.</p> <p>JHY emphasised that the Friends should focus on their own contributions to the festival program rather than wasting time worrying about what other groups were planning. Rose Drew supported JHY's point based on her event planning experience.</p>	
6	<p><b>Planning Officer Report</b></p> <p>Hopetown – 2 applications for North Road Station and Carriage works have been passed with amendments.</p> <p>Objections have been raised by (environment officer?) to the environmental damage to the Fighting Cocks section of the walking and cycling route by the widening of the footpath to 3.5m wide. RC asked the meeting if they would support a narrower path. The meeting agreed for RC to write in support of a narrower path as long as it was wide enough for 2 wheelchairs to pass. JDR added</p>	

	<p>that the section at Shildon was 2.25m wide so there is precedent for a narrower path. RC to write in support of reducing the path width below 3.5m</p> <p>Planning officer has noted that there are pre-existing issues regarding the planting of screening trees and bushes at Petch's garage site on Tornado way, RC to write to the planner for more information about these pre-existing issues.</p>	
7	<p><b>Conservation Area Consultation</b></p> <hr/> <p>Report on Darlington Conservation Area consultation won't go to cabinet until 15<sup>th</sup> July so Gabby Rose unable to attend meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> July to discuss the consultation area.</p> <p>RC to inform Secretary when report is available and the Secretary to circulate to the members for consultation.</p> <p>Alan Macnab reported that the conservation area consultation for Middleton St. George to be now expected late in the year.</p> <p>Consultation for Durham County Council conservation plan going to meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> June. RC to email AT list of questions to raise on Friends behalf.</p>	
8	<p><b>Guided Walks for the Anniversary Year</b></p> <hr/> <p>AT proposed two questions for the meeting to discuss:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can we create a program of guided walks for the anniversary year?</li> <li>2. How do we book these in?</li> </ol> <hr/> <p>RC passed on information from Chris Slaughter that no continuous walk over the full 26 mile route would be in place in time for the anniversary but there is a possibility of shorter and circular walks with online/virtual waymarking. Chris Slaughter will be arranging a meeting of interested parties sometime. There is a need for updates regarding DBC and SBC sections of the walking route.</p> <p>NHa &amp; CH have had a meeting and delivered training to Blue Badge guides about their paid for walks. He asked what NHa &amp; CH had discussed with them and what were their planned walks and would the Friends own guides receive similar training opportunities? He also asked how the walks would be co-ordinated between the two organisations? Also would there be charges/donations for Friends walks?</p> <p>DIG are researching walks but no program is likely to be available by September. DIG volunteers have come forward to be available for guided walk training and leading.</p>	

DIG requires a central booking system for managing walks such as eventbrite. Guides will need names and contact details. Peter Bainbridge and John Raw would prefer to be contacted directly.

RC raised a concern that chaos could ensue if multiple members are handling bookings for the walks and using multiple methods of managing the walks.

RC informed the meeting that the trustees had committed to the reworking of walk booklets 1-7 (2&3 have been completed and 4 is currently nearing completion) in time for next year. The next booklet will be walk 5, the Darlington Circular. It was noted that walk 7 will need significant revision.

JDR raised the need for a mechanism for cancelling walks in the event of poor weather etc. **To be raised with Niccy Hallifax**

JDR had held a meeting with RC, PB, JHY & PB to discuss the development of the walk program. Requirement for training program for guide leaders identified.

JDR organising a meeting with blue badge guide to co-ordinate walk programs.

AT stated that it doesn't seem practical to organise walks more than 3 months ahead.

JAR to email Niccy Hallifax asking for clarity on what information she needs by September cc. in Richie Starrs

Hugh Jackson suggested the use of Eventbrite to manage walks. Rose Drew said that it was now only free for free events for up to 24 participants after which it incurs significant fees.

JAR to check on what booking systems are proposed for the wider festival program and if we can use this.

JAR to investigate Eventbrite's suitability.

#### Risk Assessments

Gerry Wilkinson updated the meeting on the development of standardised risk assessments for events.

1. Walks should be carried out in a professional controlled manner
2. All walks should have at least 2 leaders to ensure that someone brings up the rear.

3. Under 18s need to be accompanied by a parent/guardian for safeguarding purposes.
- 

GW reiterated the meetings disappointment that the whole 26 mile route will not be available.

RC asked if informal walks where members meet to go for a walk together need Risk Assessing. GW confirmed that only officially organised Friends events need risk assessing.

Meeting thanked the team leading on this for their hard work.

AT asked JAR to clarify limits of insurance.

---

- Covered up to £5m per event in public liability
  - Covered for environmental damage
  - Not covered for any underground exploration or rock climbing. IE entering underground culverts or spaces or climbing with ropes.
  - We need to run events responsibly and in line with relevant legislation
- 

AT said that we should aim for high standards and asked what needs to be implemented in terms of training.

JHY raised that all walks should be based on the correct historic information in the walk booklets.

Richard Barber proposed the development of set scripts for each walk.

JDR suggested drawing on local knowledge of the subgroups.

JHY suggested limiting walks to warmer months between May and October and to limiting the number so that the Friends aren't over committing.

RD and JHY both raised the idea of running a number of accessible walks for those with limited mobility.

RC asked for guidance on what to feedback to Chris Slaughter.

JAR suggested that as the Friends have already developed guided walks along the lines that Chris Slaughter was proposing that RC ask about the possibility of using the Friends experience and commissioning us to help with the development.

9	<p>Questions on Circulated Officer Reports Reports appended No questions were raised on these.</p>	
10	<p>Reports from FSDR Area Groups JDR updated the meeting that WASH are organising a walk on 14<sup>th</sup> June and a litter pick on 21<sup>st</sup> June.</p> <p>Alan MacNab updated the meeting on the Middleton St. George committee activities. A report is attached of the 4<sup>th</sup> June meeting. The next meeting will take place on 4<sup>th</sup> July to develop an activities program for Middleton St. George to feed into Niccy Hallifax.</p> <p>Middleton St George wants to develop a wider heritage trail covering the history of the village as part of a legacy offering.</p> <p>Fighting Cocks. (Report attached)</p>	
11	<p>AOB It was noted that North Bay Engineering has gone into administration. The replica train is not affected by this. Locomotion replica is due to be test run in January – April next year. It is expected that North Bay Engineering is likely to be bought out and continue operating under new management.</p> <p>NHu is still not aware of any appointment of a Train Operating Company to run the replica train or other live steam with an announcement expected in September.</p> <p>Peter Spence updated the meeting that Niccy Hallifax had spoken to a Stephenson Locomotive Society meeting and had answered questions from that meeting about next year's festival.</p> <p>John Carr and NHu both raised concerns that no-one was consulting those involved with 1975 and 2000 festival planning for background information.</p> <p>Angela Pickering reported that representatives from Rail200 had been approaching heritage railways to discuss their participation in the wider Rail200 program</p>	
12	<p>Date and Time of Next Meeting</p> <p>Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> July 7pm, Darlington Cricket Club, South Terrace, Darlington, DL1 5JD</p>	