



Minutes of Meeting held Thursday, 3rd October 2024

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

7.00 pm

Members Present:

Niall Hammond, Caroline Hardie, Alan Townsend (AT), Jonathan Ratcliffe (JAR), Jim Atkinson, Steve Sidgwick, Francis Annett, Neil Pickersgill, Paul Boden, Ross Chisholm (RC), David Thompson, David Waite, Julia Armstrong, Alan Townsend (AT), Richard Barber, John Raw (JR), Catherine Yates, George Alderslade, Keith Halifax, Ed Chicken, David Pennington, Hugh Jackson, Simon Nicholson, Barry Thompson (BT), Keith Simpson, Jeremy Horner, Nick Alderson-Rice, Sir Peter Soulsby, Peter Bainbridge (PB), David Watt, Norman Hugill, Bob Scott, Alastair Culff, Tim Taylor, Leigh Taylor, Yvonne Richardson (YR)

(Note: Actions highlighted in Red)

1	<u>Welcomes & Apologies for absence.</u> Apologies Matthew Pease (President), Chris Lloyd (Vice President), John Carr, Dave Reynolds, Gerry Wilkinson, Mary Smith, Jane Hackworth-Young (JHY), Trevor Horner, Paul Harle, Angela Pickering. Welcomes The chair welcomed Gaby Rose, Darlington Borough Council Conservation Officer	Responsibility
5	<u>Gaby Rose, Northgate Conservation Area Appraisal</u> Moved from item 5 Gaby drew our attention to the Council Conservation page. [insert link] for further information about Conservation Areas in Darlington. Heritage at Risk register shows Northgate CA at risk due to very bad risk. Gaby appealed for any information regarding the conservation area prior to the 2007 appraisal. Contact Gaby if you have any information. The Friends welcome the extensions to the conservation area and the additional protection to the wider setting of the S&DR and other historic sites in the area that add to the character of the area. CH will share the plans for potential Northgate development created by Matthew Pease with Gaby Rose to inform the appraisal.	

	The meeting thanked Gaby for her presentation.	
2	<u>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</u> Minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting Item 7 correct to 8 week turnaround not a 5-7 week turn around. Motion was not unanimous, carried, some abstentions.	
3	<u>Matters Arising</u> Item 5, motion proposed at the last meeting. NHa proposed that the motion should be further developed and brought to the AGM. Resolution passed Jill Read will be organising more meetings and dates will be communicated to members when known. Training for guided walk leaders on 14 th October will feature a meeting afterwards regarding the walking festival. Gerry Wilkinson's risk assessments have been accommodated into the training. Meeting raised their thanks to Gerry Wilkinson for his work on health and safety.	
4	<u>Declarations of Interest</u> No declarations were declared	
6	<u>Chair's Report</u> Report attached. NHa thanked all who represented the Friends and organised events for the 199 th anniversary. NHa highlighted the Heighington Station appeal. The Friends have raised the match funding required and have progressed the necessary work. Sam Rushforth and Lola McEvoy and they have made enquiries and there is a pot of money for community groups to purchase buildings. Plan B is to approach Kim McGuinness NE Mayor for funding, Plan C is to take out a long term lease. Graffiti has appeared at the station highlighting the appeal.	
7	<u>S&DR Launch Feedback</u> NHa noted that the launch was very stage managed and heavily targeted. The Friends representatives were able to make good connections. There was a disappointment at the friends not being able to give the history. This was done by Sarah Price due to the SMG being a key partner. The Friends were featured in slides and were name checked.	

	NHa asked if anyone has seen any national press coverage. Local press covered the event and the railway press featured it. CH has spoken to Niccy Hallifax and a number of editors have spoken to her. There was a debate about whether it's a national event celebrated here or elsewhere. The Friends are concerned at the lack of coverage, marketing reach and the late organisation. It was felt that Visit Durham's response has been underwhelming. Leigh Taylor raised that she felt that there appeared to be tag on events in the program that had been included that didn't seem relevant to the Railways. YR suggested that these may be in place to satisfy funders. The idea was raised to approach Raby Estate to talk about how they could link up with the event. Ed Chicken will approach Duncan Peake at Raby to suggest a link up with S&DR 2025. NHa pointed out that we have not been as "cut out" as it appears and that councils have been responsive to us and are supporting the Friends for the long term benefit for the S&DR beyond the festival and we need to take the long term view.	
8	Planning Officer Report Richie Starrs has informed RC that Bell's Scrapyard hedge alongside the wall has or will be removed shortly. Members in area to inform Ross if it's been removed. Official planning position is that we're waiting for Mr. Bell to appoint an artist and he is to approach the Friends for consultation. The Friends are going to offer support to Mr Bell and to create a community artwork using stencils. Draft landscaping plan for Mason's Arms has been sent to the Friends, (appended) and the following questions have already been raised. JAR to circulate for comment. What facilities are going to be provided for crossing the road? What's happening with existing features from previous work? All materials are modern and out of character with the area. The Friends welcome the investment in the area. Storey Homes (Developers at Fighting Cocks) are wanting to have a publicity event to hand over the cheque to the Friends for management of the Fighting Cocks site but DBC haven't responded to the invite. RC raised that the Friends need to keep pointing planners back to the conservation area appraisals.	

	Path that runs alongside the riverside in Stockton that follows the route of the S&DR will be closed from Monday until 2026 for utilities works. BT asked whether there should be watching brief in place for railway archaeology. RC will check to make sure one is in place. BT to contact Tees Archaeology to highlight the potential remains.	
9	Questions on Circulated Officers Reports (Reports attached) CH summarised the developments, there was a launch event for walk booklet 4 funded by Husquavana and they have donated money to fund the Darlington Circular. Music project is now available for use for celebrations. Globe is out in December. Thanks to AV Dawson who are pre-ordering 80 copies of the coffee table book which has taken it over the threshold for viability. Write on Track for creative fiction and the Research on Rails competition for history essays are now open for entries.	
10	<u>Reports from S&DR Area Groups</u> Alan MacNab updated the meeting on the progress at Middleton St. George and the development of a history walk that covers the S&DR and other historic sites in MSG. Exhibition of Railway photographs, rail themed Middleton in bloom, scarecrow competition. Local schools are involved. Middleton Hall are holding a number of events. Installation of welcome signs on entry points into the village. MSG will add their program to the Fringe festival. DIG, 3 walk leaders have been developing an alternative walk and have test walked it. DIG are concerned about the Bridge, Lola McEvoy is writing to Lord Hendy and the regional head of network rail to raise this. DIG are concerned about lack of interpretation boards. DIG putting together a list of potential sites. YR urged members to engage their councillors to get the S&DR on the radar.	
11	<u>2024 AGM</u> Mike Crawshaw will be speaking on Hopetown and Owen Plummer the architect appointed for Heighington Station Our first-choice venue of the QMH is unavailable so meeting will take place in 10am-2pm 9th November Grange Road Baptist Church. John Raw raised having an extra meeting in January. Tim Taylor asked for an update. NHa will feedback after the next rail heritage board.	

	7 applications are being considered for the 26 mile fund. Darlington Quoits club have applied for new quoites MSG PC for S&DR play park Restoration of brake van Westbrook villas yard art installation improvement Accessibility to Quaker Burial Ground Community Drama group for S&DR theatre. RC noted that the Westbrook Villas artwork is highlighted in the Conservation Area Appraisal as needing urgent attention. NHa will raise. The QMH application was raised as being important to aid accessibility for the guided walk. Beer and Bread has been funded for Stockton by S&DR200 BT is working on getting funding for a similar event in Darlington	
13	<u>AOB</u>	
12	<u>Date & Time of next meeting.</u> AGM	