



Chair's Report/Activity for April 2024

Dear Friends,

April has been exceptionally busy on a number of fronts, for myself the Heighington Station appeal has taken up much of my time. The majority of the funding to buy the site and undertake the first phase of works to allow the world's 'oldest railway station' to open in time for the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary is turning into a full time job. We're hoping to get the lion's share of the £500,000 budget from the Community Ownership Fund, and we expect the next opportunity to apply will be in late May. For this we need a business plan and the identification of lots of costs to demonstrate we have a robust, planned future and the support of a wide variety of partners. This requires an awful lot of correspondence with everyone from MPs to electricians. Thanks of course to all our wonderful volunteers and helpers, but especially this month to Durham County Council for substantial support. Our crowdfunding appeal continues to go well, with over £10,000 pledged from people locally, nationally and internationally. Many other approaches for funding are going well, and without tempting fate I'm increasingly confident we'll reach our target of £100,000 to match the Community Ownership Fund application by September, our key date. Still lots to do, but things look positive and I've just received a report on asbestos risk in the building we've commissioned (it's a glamorous life!), which is reassuring that there are no big problems in this respect. Please keep spreading the word and encouraging people to donate. Please do circulate the webpage details (<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/save-heighington-station>) to everyone you know and spread the word. If you can't afford to donate then you can show your support by signing our petition at <https://forms.office.com/r/9sfYKNLbHr>

With 50% funding from ourselves and 50% from the S&DR Community Grants Programme funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund, Lewis of Durham Spray Paints is as I write this completing the new mural at Fighting Cocks (thanks to Maz Holmes for use of her garage wall!). School groups have already been out for a look and I hope the community open day (advertised to members and on Facebook) on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> goes well. In addition to the mural, the local FSDR group will also have a chance to show off all their hard work in conserving the old station site and tell people about forthcoming projects.

Press attention continues from various angles and thanks to Caroline Hardie (and Cleo the dog), for taking journalists from the national press (Mail/Express), along the line as part of a travel feature recently. We've also had a fantastic feature in Living North on Heighington Station.

Tim Hedley-Jones Director of the Rail Heritage Trust (RHT), came for a visit and we looked at sites in Darlington, Heighington and Shildon. Plenty to talk about and Tim was very positive about potential partnership projects over the next few years. One of these was our long running campaign to clean up and restore the site of the 1827 Merchandise Station on North Road, Darlington. Opposite the entrance to Hopetown, it deserves so much better. Finally (and fingers crossed), after the meeting with the RHT, and pressure

**Chair, Friends of the S&DR CIO, Marian Cottage, Lartington, Barnard  
Castle, Co. Durham, DL12 9BP.**

**Email: [chair@sdr1825.org.uk](mailto:chair@sdr1825.org.uk)**

# **Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway.**

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from Peter Gibson MP, we now have correspondence with Lord Peter Hendy of Network Rail and fingers crossed something might now happen before 2025.

Our developing support from Husqvarna whose factory is close to the line at Aycliffe Business Park, continues to develop and I, together with several members of the Friends, were pleased to attend their factory for discussions and the presentation of a cheque for £2500 which will allow us to update and rewrite our guided walk booklet for Shildon to Heighington. Big thanks to Dan and Caraline at Husqvarna. We need to get all our walk booklets into the new updated format for 2025, so if you know of any companies who would like to discuss sponsorship to help with this please put them in touch (they'll get their name on the cover!).

Looking to the future our project supported by the Rail Heritage Board to look at post 2025 management has started; and we were also invited by Durham County Council to a workshop in Newton Aycliffe for the start of a National Lottery Heritage Fund Priority Places project which will look to provide at least £10 million pounds over 10 years to heritage in Shildon/Newton Aycliffe...clearly we'd love to help them spend their money wisely!

Beyond our usual 26 miles, I'm really pleased to see an emerging FSDR group in Barnard Castle who are keen to celebrate 2025 and the S&DR's later railways to Barnard Castle, Middleton in Teesdale and over the Pennines to Tebay.

Along with other Rail Heritage Board members we hosted Lord Neil Mendoza, Chair of Historic England on a visit to Darlington where he was extremely impressed in how much work has gone on through rail heritage to try and make a positive cultural and economic impact on the area. Lots of other meetings including helping with Caroline Hardie's 'Tales from the Rails' podcast, an excellent meeting on education along the S&DR convened by our good friend Felicity of the Community Rail Partnership together with museums and others to make sure we have coordinated education offer (and thanks to my Vice Chair Alan for attending the CRP meeting on our behalf). We've also been approached by interested parties in Darlington who are looking at producing an S&DR play, while this is something we have limited time for, we are keen as always to make sure people have their facts right. Finally I gave a talk to Spennymoor Probus club.

As every month my thanks goes out to all our volunteers and trustees without which none of our work would be possible. We can of course always do with more active workers so if you have time or skills you can spare to help with then please do get in touch.

## 2025 Planning.

Again we still wait for September when the official 2025 Festival programme is announced.

And finally a reminder for contacts:

Cait Barratt the 'S&DR Heritage & Community Participation Manager' is the person to talk to regarding the S&DR community Fund which can provide grants of a few hundred to a

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few thousand pounds and which are available over the next 4 years to help people celebrate and conserve the S&DR, If you have an idea then get in touch with Cait and she will provide initial feedback on your idea and if it fits the community grant objectives encourage you to submit an application. Ideas can be submitted to Cait on the following email address [s&drcommunitygrantsscheme@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:s&drcommunitygrantsscheme@darlington.gov.uk). Cait also now has two officers supporting her in volunteer and education development and we hope to meet them at our March monthly meeting, contact details to follow.

The team of various officers in the local authorities including Niccy Hallifax the 2025 Festival Director, can all now be contacted through one single email address which is [info@sdr200.co.uk](mailto:info@sdr200.co.uk) which people should use for any general enquiries.

As ever if you want to discuss anything S&DR related drop me a line at [Chair@sdr1825.org.uk](mailto:Chair@sdr1825.org.uk).

All the best.

Niall Hammond,  
Chair, Friends of the S&DR. 26/04/2024.

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Castle, Co. Durham, DL12 9BP.**

**Email: [chair@sdr1825.org.uk](mailto:chair@sdr1825.org.uk)**

## **Planning Officer's Report; S&DR Friends Meeting 2 May 2024**

Any further updates or new applications will be reported at the meeting. Otherwise, this report will be taken as read unless members have comments or questions to raise. Decisions and new applications are highlighted in **red**.

### **1 DURHAM COUNTY**

#### **k DM/22/01891/FPA Craggwood Holiday Park proposed extension**

Revised details of how the embankment of the Haggerleases Branch is to be affected are expected soon.

#### **l DM/23/00486/FPA Proposed Bluestone Solar Panel Farm, High Lands, Cockfield**

Further to last month's report, we await consultation on the interpretation panel(s).

#### **n DM/22/03739/FPA New wall etc at Northern Metal Recycling. Hackworth Industrial Park, Shildon**

Further to previous reports, we await being consulted by Mr Bell on the design of the mural.

#### **p DM/23/01151/FPA Change of use from agricultural land to private garden; Land North Of Chapel House Phoenix Row**

Further to last month's report, the planning authority has agreed that an information panel is not required given that the new Walking and Cycling Route and information boards are being provided by the Council.

### **2 DARLINGTON BOROUGH**

#### **i North Road Rail Heritage Quarter – Hopetown**

##### **23/00186/CON Details for the Head of Steam Station Building**

Revised details have been submitted but the Conservation Officer still has concerns about some of the proposals.

##### **24/00133/CON Details relating to alterations to the Hopetown Carriage works building**

The Conservation Officer has advised improvements to the submitted details.

##### **23/01175/DC Formation of a play area etc.**

An up to date tree report has been submitted.

#### **m 21/01353/FUL Site of Former Corus Works (East Site) Whessoe Road**

Further to previous reports, the applicant is preparing revised proposals to take into account comments received. We raised concerns about the appearance of the development from the railway and the need to include a link to the Walking and Cycling Route.

#### **o 22/00213/FUL Installation of a solar farm on land north of Burtree Lane**

There is still nothing to report on the details for information displays and the walking and cycling route. There is evidence to suggest that this development may be delayed for some time.

**p 22/01342/FULE Greater Faverdale (Burtree Garden Village) Phase 1 re-submission**

It is understood that this application will be recommended for approval soon. We have recommended a suitably landscaped lineside corridor for the walking and cycling route.

**w 23/00632/OUT Outline planning application for the erection of 3 no. units for industrial/business/storage and distribution use, Land At Lingfield Point. Darlington**

Further to last month's report, our comments were copied to Richie Starrs and Chris Slaughter, who are making enquiries.

**y 24/00083/DC Walking and Cycling Route; Upgrade between Mill Lane to St George's Way, Middleton St George.**

An extension of time to decide this application has been agreed for 7 June. We requested seating along the path.

**z 24/00179/FUL Erection of extension to form additional showroom and sales office; S G Petch Ltd McMullen Road**

There is nothing further to report since last month. We want a hedge and some trees to screen the open storage of vehicles.

### **3 STOCKTON BOROUGH**

**m 23/1768/DCH discharge condition no5 (Soft Landscaping) of planning approval 21/2240/FUL - Erection of industrial/business units at Uray Nook Road Eaglescliffe.**

There has been no progress with this application since November 2023

**n 23/2223/FUL Erection of 87no. dwellings on land East Of Mandale Park Uray Nook Road Eaglescliffe**

We have been notified of revised plans which omit the row of trees alongside Uray Nook Road shown on previous plans. This is not acceptable as far as the setting of the railway is concerned.

**p 24/0249/COU Application for the conversion of 1no dwelling into 2no dwellings to include associated external works and new boundary wall at 519 Yarm Road Eaglescliffe**

Further to last month's report, Tees Archaeology have been consulted (at our request) and they agree that a condition requiring archaeology work be attached to a permission.

### **4 MIDDLESBROUGH**

**Draft Local Plan**

Further previous reports, the Council has acknowledge receipt of our comments but have not yet responded to our request for a meeting to discuss policy the protect the 1830S&DR extension.

Ross Chisholm, Planning Officer, 26/04/2024

## ***Membership Report – 30 April 2024***

Fees & Donations: - 27 September 2023 to 30 April 2024:-  
Ordinary Members - £3169.95 (including donations of £286.73)  
Corporate Members - £800  
Total - £3969.95

### **Membership**

Individual Members – **269**.  
Members on Facebook – **31.60 %**

Corporate Members – **16**.

### **Membership renewal**

I will be sending renewal invitations end of August/beginning of September.  
As with the last 3 years the emphasis will be on renewal via Standing Order.  
All new members since 27 September 2023 were advised in their welcome email that renewal would be via Standing Order.  
The problem is with existing members who joined prior to 27 September 2023.  
Despite my efforts these members are reluctant to set up a Standing Order and therefore I have to contact them every year and then wait weeks/months for them to pay by whatever method.  
Every member who renews via Standing Order is one less member to contact each year.

Peter Bainbridge  
Membership Secretary  
30.04.2024

## **Editor's Report**

### *S&DR Podcasts*

The third S&DR podcast went live on the 27<sup>th</sup> April (well I am writing this on the 26<sup>th</sup> late at night so fingers crossed). The main subject was Heighington Station and the Star of the S&DR section was John Falcus Carter who designed and oversaw the building of it between 1826-7. We were able to include more interviews his month and Niall co-presented along with me and Archie Mackay from SW Durham News. Obviously I have no figures for podcast 3, but the previous two podcasts have been downloaded 412 times. I am hopeful that we are reaching a new audience as well as existing followers of the S&DR.

If you haven't listened already or if you know someone who might enjoy listening, you can access them all here: <https://talesfromtherails.podbean.com/>. Please forward this link to as many people as possible and spread the word.

I am hugely grateful to Dave Reynolds (of the Stute in Shildon) for composing the theme music for the podcast, to Lee Morris, Darlington based actor from Tall Tales Mysteries for being the voice of Robert Metcalfe and to Archie Mackay of SW Durham News who manages the technology and edits despite working full time on various local newspapers.

If you'd like to be a guest on the podcast, please get in touch. You can join me in Shildon where we do the recording, we can chat on site or I can chat with you via phone, so you don't need to be local to take part. We can cover anything to do with the S&DR. Also, let me know of any events coming up and we will include them in the podcast and on our web site.

### *The next walk booklet revision*

Work is underway to update and redesign the walk booklet between Shildon and Heighington. This is generously being funded by Husqvarna who are located along the route on Preston Road on the Aycliffe Business Park. Indeed a number of us attended a visit to Husqvarna on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April where we received a cheque to pay for the new booklet. You should have received an invitation to attend the Walking the Line event on the 11<sup>th</sup> May where we will look at the old text and see what needs updating. It is surprising just how much does need updating. That is because so much research has been done since 2016 and there are new things to see such as the ironwork for the Gaunless Bridge and a New Hall at Locomotion. We've also got more research on the Goods Station, on the Locomotive Refuelling Drops and the bridges between Simpasture and Heighington Station. If you haven't received an invite and you are a member, or a member of staff at Husqvarna, do let me know.

### *S&DR Music*

The music project is underway, but there is not much to report. The recording studio has been booked, the musical arrangements, arranged and an audio visual person booked. If you've missed previous reports, this project is to produce authentically sounding music as played in 1825 on the Opening Day and which will be freely available to anyone who wishes to use it at their events. It will also create a series of videos on the music and the historic instruments targeting KS1-2 children – again they will be freely available for anyone but will be of most interest to primary schools. I have also had a meeting with Sam Slatcher of Citizen Songwriters about the possibility of a concert combining various musical approaches. The publicity surrounding the Save Heighington Station campaign brought more musicians out of the woodwork offering their services and songs and I have forwarded their contact details to Sam. Let's hope they come up with some fun events.



## *The Globe*

The next Globe is due out in July 2024, so I am looking for contributions by the end of June. You can send them in as soon as you like however. If you are thinking of submitting something, ask me for the Guidance Notes for Contributors. This will save a lot of time when it comes to preparing The Globe and means you are less likely to be asked to make changes. We can also publish research on our web site. This lends itself to raw material and sources such as transcriptions of historic documents – we want your research to be widely available and the web site is a great way to do that. So far we have two juicy offers of articles and editing has begun.

## *The Stockton & Darlington Railway Bicentenary History Essay Prize Competition (if you can think of a shorter name please do!)*



I've had discussions with John Little and Martin Peagam of the Cleveland & Teesside Local History Society about offering a joint competition to encourage writing of a factual nature about the history of the Stockton & Darlington Railway as part of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

We will invite original essays on any subject connected to the history of the Stockton & Darlington Railway. Subject to Trustee approval we will contribute £400 towards a prize and the C&TLHS will contribute £600, bringing the prize money to £1,000. This will be awarded to an essay which fulfills the criteria of the competition and which in the opinion of the judges merits the award.

The winning essay will be published by Cleveland & Teesside Local History Society and The Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway. Essays that do not win the prize but which are deemed to be of sufficient merit may also be published.

Full details will be distributed in September and the competition launched.

Other dates we discussed:

-  31 August 2025: Final Date for Submission of Essays
-  31 October 2025: Announcement of winner and subsequent publication

## *Webmaster's Report*

In the last month we have sold 32 products bringing in £547.48, the bulk of these have been memberships and our Locomotion limited edition pens.

The Locomotion pens are made by Andy Simmons, a descendant of John Falcus Carter of Heighington Station fame. These are sold in order to raise funds for our Save Heighington Station Campaign. I am pleased to say that the sale of these pens has raised about £400 so far (including sales elsewhere). More pens will have gone on for sale by the time of our meeting (indeed they may have sold out). A new range is called the Station Master's Pen and is made from historic timbers taken from the 1871 Station Master's House at St. Helen Auckland (thank you to George Alderslade). These beautiful pens have a really fine grain that you only find in slow grown historic timber. They are more expensive than the others, selling at £50, but worth every penny to hold such an exquisite piece of history in your hand.

Don't forget that we have a number of publications for sale in our [online shop](#) and the beautiful Hattersley maps of the S&DR and A3 sized prints of John Dobbin's Opening of the S&DR.

Caroline Hardie [caroline@aenvironment.co.uk](mailto:caroline@aenvironment.co.uk)



# Proposal to Change Venue.

After feedback from a number of members regarding the current venue for the Friends, Darlington Cricket Club, we have found that members are reporting the following issues:

- Car parking on the site can be very limited during the summer months when the club is holding cricket practice.
- Noise from other events and from the bar area has disturbed recent meetings and those at the back find it very difficult to hear.
- Space is limited and our number has grown and is likely to continue to grow as we move closer to 2025.
- Acoustics in the long narrow room can be difficult.

## **The proposals:**

Several proposals have been put forward:

1. To move the meetings to another town centre venue, with close access to parking and a bar with more space for membership. The only venue that seems to fit this brief is the Dolphin Centre. We have negotiated an initial rate of £10 per hour to use the central hall along with the centre's projection equipment. This price will be reviewed depending on the takings in the bar and café from refreshments and represents a substantial discount on the usual hire rate for the venue. The big risk here is increasing cost later on. Parking is available in the multistorey car park behind the venue and there are a limited number of spaces available in the marketplace. The multistorey car park is also available for use when we're at the cricket club and the difference for walking is a matter of a few hundred meters closer.
2. To stay at the cricket club and rearrange the room. We would move the tables and screen closer to the end of the room to increase the space available and move members away from the doors. We would need volunteers to help rearrange the room before and to put it back after the meeting. This would increase space for about 10-20 more attendees and help with intelligibility. The groundsman has informed Ross Chishom that additional parking is available on site alongside the pitch accessed by following the roads either side of the clubhouse and the multistorey carpark which is free after 6pm is only a couple of minutes' walk from the venue.
3. To look at venues further out from the town centre to widen our choice. Venues suggested include, the Railway Athletic club on Brinkburn Road and several of the working men's clubs in the area. These are further away from public transport hubs but out of town sites may have some additional parking.

We are asking the members at this meeting for direction of which options they would like us to pursue and a discussion on what the impact would be on the membership?

## B I GROUP

Work on the cycling /walking route running up along the section from Locomotion back towards to the former Wagon Works, then to our site at the former Mason's Arms Crossing has again started up. At the Masons Arms a recent litter pick and square round has taken place. One of our partners in this, the Shildon Litter Group have agreed to adopt this site as part of their fortnightly cycle from the end of April until the end September 2024.

The official opening of the grand hall at Locomotion will be taking place on Thursday 23rd May. The site will have a dedicated area given over to the S&DR. and its role in early railways locally.

Meanwhile this month only the cowslips are in flower on one of the embankments at Brusselton. The group are currently arranging for this area to be maintained jointly between our group of volunteers and Shildon Town Council, during the current growing season.

The group are producing a walk booklet for the local junior schools, in the Shildon area.

The next meeting of this group will be this Saturday from 10.15 at the former Whistle Stop Cafe, New Shildon.

## **2025 – FSDR EVENTS: Suggestions by Jane Hackworth-Young**

I am aware that the Trustees are stretched but I do think we should plan our programme for 2025. **I think we should set up sub committees to orchestrate events/plan dates. We need to have all plans/dates submitted to Niccy Hallifax by this September.**

**S&DR WALKS:** John Raw with BIG, WASH and ETHERLEY is prepared to organise walks on the western part of the S&DR and I am sure the Yarm Groups will want to organise walks on the rest of the line, not forgetting, of course, Heighington, Fighting Cocks etc.

**TALKS:** ‘It Wasn’t Rocket Science’ by Mike Norman and ‘The Three Greeners of Etherley and a model steam engine’ by Tom Walker to be presented at the STUTE (Dates to be agreed). *Members of the FSDR may want to give other talks: to discuss.*

**VENUES on the S&DR** which have particular importance: **The First Five Miles** to include Shildon, **Locomotion and restored buildings, Heighington Station, Fighting Cocks, Hopetown, Preston Park and St John’s Crossing Stockton.**

**COFFEE TABLE BOOK:** Being drawn up by Caroline Hardie.

**S&DR Extensions:** **Circular Walk around Barney to cross the Darlington to Barney Line, Barney to Middleton-in-Teesdale Line, Line to Kirkby Stephen, South Durham & Lancashire Union Railway, Bishop Auckland to Barney line.**

**Montalbo School :** pupils are learning about the S&DR and there is as model engine in the school garden & a model of the Langley Viaduct; the garden will be open to the public during school holidays. Other schools are being approached.

**WITHAM EXHIBITION:** To run Friday 22nd August 2025 to Sunday 7th September 2025 (The Witham is closed on Mondays). A model is being built of the 2nd Barney Station & Langley Viaduct which will be shown at the Witham. A writer on the S&DR will show his books & has access to splendid photos of Deepdale, Broom-ilaw & the Gainford railway crash. Some of John Wigston’s paintings will be displayed. A leaflet will be produced on Teesdale/Barney events & appear in the Festival Brochure.

**THORPE RAILWAY** has obtained a narrow guage model of an old NER loco which is being restored and will be available for the public for rides during the summer,.

**FITZHUGH LIBRARY** will mount an S&DR Exhibition; is obtaining from the Cleveland Model Soc its model of Middleton-in-T Station/will be on display in the Masonic Hall.

Cllr Chris Foote-Wood is lead member on Barney Council for 2025. Applications for funding have been submitted to TAP. GSK has offered use of the Crossing Keepers House for displays & will help to fund a railway monument by the house. We feel a signal would be appropriate and I have talked to Andrew McLean of the NRM. GSK will clean the 7 railway seats (application to be put into Council for attaching plaques).

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**RESEARCH:** By many members. Jonathan Ratcliffe and I have sorted out my railway photos/put them into 30 files for easy access/these are left to the FSDR. JHY 28.04.24