

DARLINGTON INTEREST GROUP OF FRIENDS OF THE S&D RAILWAY

Notes of Meeting – Thursday 29 August 2024

Present: JT, Ross, Neil Pi, Neil Pa, Keith, Andy, Hugh, Steve, Simon, Yvonne, John Raw, Peter Bainbridge.

Apologies: DaveW, DaveM, Angela.

HAPPY 80TH BIRTHDAY TO ROSS, with thanks for all his excellent work in organising and inspiring our efforts!

GUIDED WALKS:

Information from John Raw:-

-Etherley Garden Party, 15th September. Please let John know as soon as possible if you are going for catering purposes. jraw2883@aol.com

-Blue Badge Training is being held on 14 October. Steve, Simon, Hugh all aware of it, Keith would like to be go also.

-3 of the trustees, Jane, John and Peter, had decided their FoS&D Walks would be every Wednesday between March and September 2025 and this could be included on the Fringe Programme.

Walks would be about 5 miles, numbers limited to 20. Hopefully Darlington walks will be included in this programme. There's a variety of walks that can be done, e.g. John has 9 walks that can be done around Etherley.

-On the 25 September 200th Anniversary there will be a Walk covering the whole 26 miles over a few days.

-Discussion still on going around the Darlington route – Northgate to Hopetown – following Northgate one way, and returning via North Lodge Park to Hopetown.

Further discussion needed about timings, who the walks are aiming at, and the various options available, still to be decided. (SG,HJ, SN)

TORNADO SLEEPER BLOCKS:

-Andy reported that Weardale (Wolsingham) ash ballast would be best option. It will be available late September and will need co ordinating re collection and moving. Neil Pi will help with transport. Andy has the dumpy bags which have been donated.

-The frames are being made and painted and the membrane will be donated by Andy's neighbour.

-Andy has strimmed round the sleepers and put down weedkiller so they remain visible. He hoped it would be possible to install some rails in future.

-Info board should be installed. Ross explained about costs if they have to conform to the current Standard required for the whole line.

-Yvonne will be approaching Petch (and other businesses) adjacent to the line again to inform and try and get donated employee hours and funding. Perhaps there could be a formal opening with publicity acknowledging the huge amount of voluntary effort and donations given to this.

TORNADO TREE PLANTING AND CORRIDOR:

Ross had visited the site and spoken with the contractor for DBC who had mown the corridor through to Red Hall. Standard trees were to be planted along the corridor, which would have encroached on the site of the original Line, which deviates slightly from the corridor.

It was agreed the trees could be planted on the edge of the site of Line. Ross had visited since the planting was finished, and noted the path that was being worn already along the site of the Line!

Need to keep up the strimming.

AUTUMN ACTIVITY PROGRAMME:

-Skerne Bridge: Northern Gas are doing work to the railings. They are also doing work to the 'viewing window'. Leave until the work is finished.

-Cleveland Bridge: Needs a tidy up. Also strimming which will need DBC to do.

-Throstle Nest Bridge: Clean up, possible clear the opposite side of the bridge.

-Allan Street/The Sidings – Litter pick, trim.

Ross will put programme together

-Leaflets/notices needed so people know about the importance of these sites and also about the Friends and how to help. Yvonne will draft something we can print off, and we can hand out Friends leaflets when they are available.

INFORMATION/INTERPRETATION SITES: (see Ross's report, circulated)

5.3/5.4 Submit proposal to Friends, which has already been submitted to Bright White, to mark the (actual) site of the crossing, and provide a viewing site and interpretation.

6.0 Haughton Road roundabout coal depot manager's house. We have repaired the boundary wall and the land could be purchased but funding doubtful. Information about the site is needed.

(Clarification needed about DBC plans for a walking/cycling route and a possible 'Discovery Trail'. It seems likely that the Walk Route 6 along Cleveland Street/The Sidings may not be part of the DBC Walk/Cycle route). (Possibly approach the businesses and inform and ask for support).

Walk Route 6: Funding needed and some research to revise this booklet.

9.0 Lingfield Lane level crossing: Information Panel is needed.

10.0 Tornado Sleeper blocks. Information panel needed.

10.2 Tornado Culvert – needs investigation to see what remains.

10.6 South Burdon woodland, beyond green bridge. Car Park needed for people following the path to MSG.

Ross to put proposals for funding to the Friends.

FUNDING/PUBLICITY: Little had been achieved in August, but gearing up for September. Other routes to try and engage Petch and other businesses need to be found. And community and councillor involvement.

UPDATES:

-Conservation Area extension: Conservation Officer will attend the Friends members' meeting on 3rd October. It will be going to Cabinet in September. Ross will circulate the report to cabinet when published.

-Walk 5: Caroline will be revising this. Funding needed and appeals being made to councillors and business.

Agreed that:

- this should not include the town centre, but Northgate to Pease House;
- the return should be through North Lodge Park and the back of the Regency terrace.

Ross will draft comments to Caroline.

Dobbins View and Merch Station: Not yet decided but they may need to be included.

Skerne Bridge: Despite Network Rail closing the line so the vegetation could be removed some months ago, there seems to be little difference. Initially it was hoped that this could be because weedkiller had been applied, but this does not seem to be the case.

Could be insurance issues if masonry becomes dislodged.

This is a listed building. Are they meeting their obligation.

Does the Network Rail person on the RHQ board know about this.

Who is responsible for communicating about this? Yvonne to do a note for the Friends meeting.

-Pease House: negotiations on plans with the DBC ongoing.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

-Westbrook: Amanda reported that their submission for funding for artwork for the coal drops was being considered end July. Outcome not yet known.

-S&D26miles Takeover Day in Market Square: 20 August. Andy and Yvonne attended and took info about the work DIG has done, with the photos. There was a good display from Etherley, membership, and the Friends publications. It was well attended, though noisy. There was lots of interest and conversations and some new members! Still people confused about Rocket though!

NEXT MEETING: 26th September.