

Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway.
WWW.SDR1825.org.uk. Registered Charity 1177252



Chair's Report/Activity for March 2024

Dear Friends,

March has been a strange month, lots of correspondence and keep the ball rolling on a number of fronts without a huge amount of news to pass on to you! As with so much we do lots of it is lobbying on your behalf with partners and developing links and support. Our view is very much on the long term as well as achieving things for 2025 none of which would be possible without your help and support.

Some of the first grant approvals from the **S&DR Community Grant** Pot are now being made (see contacts below), and I'm pleased to say that two of these are coming to the Friends. Firstly, to allow original 1825 music to be recorded using authentic instruments...at last we'll hear what Mr Meynell's band may have sounded like on the opening day! Also 50% of the funding towards the mural at Fighting Cocks to be painted by Leis f Durham Spray Paints who did such a fantastic job on the Hackworth mural at AV Dawson in Middlesbrough last year. I understand from Cait that she has received an awful lot of applications and we look forward to many community groups taking advantage of the funding and being inspired to celebrate their rail heritage.

The mural to be painted at Fighting Cocks will go in towards the end of April and we're hoping that on Saturday 27th of April there will be a community day to 'unveil' it along with activities on site. Look out for more information on our website and Facebook page.

We've had press contact from The Guardian newspaper this month, looking at how levelling up funds are, or are not making a difference. In particular they were looking at our work at Heighington Station. Tim Hedley-Jones Director of the Rail Heritage Trust has also been in touch and I'm looking forward to having a conversation while we visit a number of sites along the line soon.

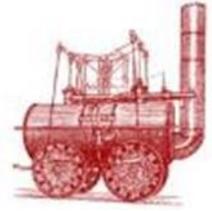
Our campaign to purchase and restore **Heighington Station** launched just over a month ago and gained good press and TV coverage. We have a 'justgiving' donation page which has reached nearly £7,000 with over 200 individual donors from far and wide. We held a fantastic Heritage Day at Heighington Church on 9th of March with over 140 in attendance, huge thanks to all who helped organise this and make it such a success. Since then, we have submitted applications to a wide range of institutions for grants (I've lost count!) and now wait to hear if any are successful. We've held very helpful meetings with Durham County Council and our neighbours at the South Durham University Technical College about partnerships/mutual interest, and we continue to develop our business plan for the site to make sure it is exciting and sustainable. 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>

Our Heighington appeal has led to a number of really worthwhile contacts and offers of support. In particular Husqvarna whose factory is close by are enthusiastic to work with us and hopefully next month I'll be able to give you some details on the support they are

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offering. The press and publicity around our Heighington appeal also struck a chord with a company called Visualskies, who use high-tech kit to provide digital recording of buildings and landscapes to create intricate 3D and 4D models. Much of their work is for the film and TV industry, fashion, gaming, construction projects, but in this case they have very generously offered a full survey of Heighington and creation of digital data which will be of fantastic use in future with site planning, architects drawings etc. We very much hope the material they produce will be used by students at the South Durham UTC to develop plans and ideas.

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 very little to specifically report on the 2025 Festival this month as we wait for the festival director Niccy Hallifax to bring all her planning together for a big launch this September.

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 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. 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 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.

All the best.

Niall Hammond,
Chair, Friends of the S&DR. 01/04/2024.

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