

Friends of the
Stockton and Darlington Railway

Minutes of Meeting held Thursday, 5th February 2026

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

7.10 pm

Present: Niall Hammond (NHA Chair), Jonathan Ratcliffe (JAR), Caroline Hardie (CH), Alan Townsend (AT), John Raw (JDR) Barry Thompson (BT) Jim Rees (JRE), Peter Bainbridge (PB), Yvonne Richardson (YR), George Alderslade, Andy Lowes, Julia Armstrong, Niccy Hallifax, Leigh Taylor, Colin Garthwaite, Alastair Culff, Nick Alderson-Rice, Keith Halifax, Simon Nicholson, Stephen Green, David Watt, Ray Gasper, Sam Gasper, Jim Atkinson, Gillian Bryant, Paul A Boden, Fred Pole, Chris Lloyd, Frances Annett, Neil Pickersgill.

(Note: Actions highlighted in Red)

1	<p><u>Welcomes & Apologies for absence.</u> Apologies Matthew Pease, Jane Hackworth-Young, Margaret Fenwick, Trevor Fenwick, Carena Parmley, Mark Barrow, John Carr, Robert Raine, Steve Walker, Neil Parker, Bill Stuart, Sue Boyle, Mike Norman, Andy Simmons, John Fletcher, Richard Gardner, Hugh Jackson, Maurice Burns, Richard Barber, Malcolm Dunstone, Bob Scott, Lesley Brown, Catherine Yates, Tim Taylor, Angela Pickering,</p>	Responsibility
2	<p><u>Talk Niccy Hallifax – S&DR 200 Festival</u> Niccy Hallifax gave a talk and Q&A on the S&DR200 Festival.</p>	
3	<p><u>Declarations of Interest</u> <u>No new interests declared</u></p>	
4	<p><u>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</u> Minutes were accepted as an accurate record</p>	
5	<p><u>Matters Arising</u> Kings Award ceremony is pencilled in for the 6th June at Hopetown. Thanks were offered to Mike Crawshaw for offering the carriage shed free of charge for the ceremony. More details to follow.</p> <p>No Matters Arising</p>	
6	<p><u>Chair's Report</u></p>	

	<p>(Report Attached)</p> <p>The Friends have been offered spacious accommodation in Central House. We're just waiting for the lease to be finalised. This will allow our team to cohabit with the S&DR 26 mile team to allow greater collaboration between the 2 NLHF projects. It will also allow us to collate the items spread among various members' houses.</p>	
7	<p>NLHF Project update</p> <p>The conservation management plan is progressing and will inform the conservation of the line.</p> <p>Tourism UK is working on a business plan, Julian Lomas is looking at our governance and setting up the Marketing & Comms and Fundraising strategy are underway. ??</p> <p>These will be presented to local authorities to be stamped.??</p>	
8	<p>Heighington Station Update</p> <p>Jim Rees updated the meeting on the Heighington Station project. In March of 2025 preapplication was put in, September of 2025, asbestos stripped out of the building. Ray Glasper and his team from Westholme Engineering have removed the metalwork from the old kitchen. Coal cells have been revealed. AHF grant was successful which will go towards initial surveys and investigations as well as initial masterplans. Internal archaeology and how the building operated. Community archaeology to understand the platform and building will be taking place. Full topographic survey will take place to understand the wider site. Rebuild of southwest chimney and repairs to the roof should take place in February. The builder has offered to make minor repairs to other chimney stacks free of charge while the work is being carried out.</p> <p>AIA grant will be put in to fund the restoration of the coal cells and will involve some volunteer work to restore the proper levels. Missing walls will be rebuilt. Replica chaldron waggon is going to be built by Westholme engineering. Request to DCC has been put in regarding support for repairs Intermediate NLHF grant is being put in to get all detailed planning complete. Replica carriages for the accommodation need to be designed to help ensure that the site is sustainable. Heighington Group are meeting on 6th</p> <p>March 7th Heighington fundraising</p>	
9	<p>2026 Walking Festival</p>	

	<p>DIG brought forward the possibility for a repeat of the walking festival and how this is publicised to ensure that this is successful. JAR is tasked to convene a meeting of key stakeholders to discuss collaborating on the festival.</p> <p>The Friends as part of this would contribute a program.</p> <p>The West End groups are discussing the possibility of a bigger, better, brighter event including a repeat of the anniversary walk.</p> <p>Leigh Taylor raised that doing regular events would ingratiate it into community consciousness. Also raised that it's important to get these into the diary early.</p> <p>Nick Alderson-Rice asked if we will be organising talks as well. CH suggested approaching venues to book talks in September. Mini film festival. Annual festivals to be added to standing item. Members to feed into BT will provide a spreadsheet to the trustees with costs for repeating Stockton events.</p>	<p>JAR</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>Reports from S&DR Area Groups.</p> <p>The chair thanked the area groups.</p> <p>BT suggested that the groups provide a short report to the meeting, rather than the minutes of meetings, which could be added to the members area of the website.</p> <p>Minutes to be added to members area</p>	
<p>11</p>	<p>S&DR Research Group</p> <p>The new research group had its first meeting on the 2nd February and has developed an initial research agenda covering the Black Boy Branch, Heighington Station and The Royal George as these are upcoming anniversaries.</p> <p>Members are also working on their own projects as well.</p> <p>New research topics will also be identified through the CMP.</p> <p>If you are researching any S&DR subjects please let Gillian Bryant know.</p>	
<p>12</p>	<p>Planning Officer Report</p>	

	<p>The Friends have been approached regarding the installation of CCTV poles at the foot of the S&DR embankment. The aspect has already been damaged by the installation of the panels, RC has suggested that the applicant should submit information about how they will impact the setting of the S&DR and then the Friends will be able to comment on the information provided.</p> <p>The chair asked what the planning conditions listed on the HMO on garden street are? These are standard conditions connected with conversion to a HMO and aren't related to the conservation issues.</p> <p>George asked if there would be any impact of water and other chemicals used for cleaning the solar panels near Coatham Grange eroding the footpath or affecting walkers. RC will raise the question.</p>	
13	Questions on other Circulated Officer Reports	
14	AoB None.	
15	Date & Time of Next Meeting Thursday 5 th March 2026, Darlington Cricket Club	