

Friends of the
Stockton and Darlington Railway

Minutes of Meeting held Thursday, 7th May 2026

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

7.10 pm

Present:

Trustees: Alan Townsend (AT, Vice-Chair) (Chairing) John Raw (JDR),
 Yvonne Richardson (YR) Sue McTague (SM), Kerrin Wilson (KW) Barry
 Thompson (BT), Peter Bainbridge (PB), Margaret Fenwick (MF), Norman
 Hugill (NHU)

Staff: Jim Rees (JRE/BDO), Jonathan Ratcliffe (the Secretary/JAR),

Members: Andy Lowes, Catherine Yates, Colin Garthwaite, Fred Pole, David
 Watt, Gillian Bryant, Steve Sidgwick, Francis Annett, Dave Pennington, Fiona
 Cooper, Peter Cooper, Ross Chisholm, Gerry Wilkinson, Neil Parker, Keith
 Halifax, Paul Robinson, Trevor Fenwick, Paul Boden, Tim Taylor, Leigh
 Taylor, Stephen Green, Michael Brownbridge, Alastair Culff, Peter Soulsby,
 Nicholas Alderson-Rice

(Note: Actions highlighted in Red)

		Responsibility
1.	<p><u>Welcomes & Apologies for absence.</u> Apologies Matthew Pease, Chris Lloyd, Niall Hammond, Caroline Hardie, Mary Smith, John Fletcher, Stephen Higgs, Harold Reay. Mike Norman, Andy Simmons, John Carr, Jimmy Atkinson, Michael Stansfield, Richard Barber, Caraline Robinson, Bill Stuart, Peter Spence, Mark Lay, Paula Ryder, Julie & George Bee, Neil Pickersgill, Simon Nicholson, Mark Barrow, Peter Heslop</p>	
2.	<p><u>Declarations of Interest</u> <u>No new interests declared</u></p>	
3.	<p><u>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</u> Trevor and Margaret Fenwick were at the previous meeting but not listed in the minutes.</p>	
4.	<p><u>Matters Arising</u> Item 4 – Discovery trail marker posts – RC has checked the marker posts and some are missing, some are difficult to see due to location and design.</p>	

	<p>Some direction arrows are misleading. They are also not consistent in placement.</p> <p>Niall Hammond to pass comments onto Richie Starrs.</p> <p>RC asked for an update for the office base. We are still awaiting a decision regarding housing in the annex.</p>	<p>NHA</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p><u>Chair's Report</u> (Report Attached, presented by Alan Townsend, Vice Chair)</p> <p>Kings Award for Voluntary Service, the award ceremony will be in the carriage works from 1-4:30pm on 6th June.</p> <p>A lot of business themes are being discussed in the business plan development looking at how to make the Friends activities self sustaining.</p> <p>We are working closely with the Bishopline CRP to look at a possible rebranding of the former S&DR line to better reflect its heritage.</p> <p>RC asked for an update on the planning process and who is responsible for the fighting cocks signal project and where the finances are coming from for the project. It was uncertain where responsibility for the project lay. RC offered help with submitting the planning application but will not be leading on this.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p><u>Report from Business Development officer</u></p> <p>After closer inspection, all three chimneys have been required to be rebuilt for safety, scaffolding is now down to eaves level ready for final slates and flashing to be applied. Temporary guttering will be applied.</p> <p>SUMO have carried out a geophysical survey which has identified utilities. We are awaiting a further report on any potential archaeological remains.</p>	

	<p>We are still waiting for a start date for the archaeological investigation.</p> <p>Discussions are underway on the transfer of the strip of land south of the station to Millenium Way which is strategically important</p> <p>Ray Glasper is going to bolster the bulging wall of the coal cells is</p> <p>Next volunteering day for Heighington is set for the 26th June. A security door is going to be added to the</p> <p>Anniversary event will be held at Heighington on 27th. Aims are to have tours of the building, displays of architects drawings.</p> <p>Water supplies, electricity supplies and a working disabled toilet will be fitted to facilitate tours and events.</p> <p>AIA grant decision is expected in July.</p> <p>The cellars have reflooded, Mark Jeeves has stated that he believes it had a sump pump running when his family ran it. This may be the best option to keep it dry.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p><u>Report from Secretary</u></p> <p>The secretary gave the following report to the meeting</p> <p>The primary role of a Secretary within a charity setting is to ensure that the charity operates legally and remains compliant with its governing document and any relevant legislation. This includes advising the board of trustees on charity law and maintaining statutory records such as meeting minutes, records of decisions, financial records and tax requirements. With a rapid growth in operations, property acquisition, larger grants, and increased membership over the past 18 months, the charity's requirements have expanded significantly with ever higher levels of complexity requiring rapid learning and development as an organisation.</p> <p>To aid us with this work a considerable part of the NLHF project is a governance review to ensure that we are set up with the correct structures to allow us to grow and take on the projects that will help us fulfil our aims of educating the public, preserving and promoting the S&DR. This will draw on the outputs from the business planning work and</p>	

will also look at whether we will require a trading arm to be set up to allow us to expand our activities beyond the bounds our charitable purposes.

A full review of our structure including constitutions, policies and procedures is underway with guidance from Julian Lomas, a charity governance specialist to identify policy gaps and to tighten up critical controls. Policies are an important part of operating a charity effectively, allowing us to provide consistent services and operate safely and effectively. Health and safety is an important part of this compliance as we grow and start to take on bigger and more exciting projects and I am grateful to several members who have offered support and their specialist advice in this area.

To aid us in managing our growth we transitioned shortly before Christmas onto a digital accounts platform, the setup of which, although time-consuming, is starting to pay off with much more visibility on financial performance and the tracking of grant expenditure. There are still a couple of accounts areas that need tidying up, but with the aid of our accountant Tim Hardman, this is underway and hopefully will allow us to provide much quicker and in a number of critical cases real-time feedback on our financial position once this work is complete. We can now generate invoices for publication sales in a couple of mouse clicks and any slow payers identified and followed up.

Our publication sales continue to be a steady source of income, contributing to our financial health. While this has understandably slowed down over the last couple of months, there are still orders coming in and Locomotion continues to make large orders of our publications for sale in their shop. We have been able to make good sales at stalls at events and this is potentially an area to develop over the year.

The last couple of weeks have been largely taken up supporting the rail user survey, producing materials for use and administrating the survey. The use of digital tools to run the survey allows for real time feedback on the survey results, reduced costs and time required to process the entries and a quicker turnaround for the project.

Leigh Taylor suggested to share event information to DBC, DCC, SBC Facebook pages.

	<p>8. <u>Reports from S&DR Area Groups/Research Group.</u> Reports attached.</p> <p>Nicholas Alderson-Rice on behalf of DIG asked regarding the progress with Edward Pease's House, JAR said that no reports had been received from DBC.</p> <p>He also asked for a progress report on the proposed Central House Annex accomodation</p> <p>The meeting requested that the secretary chase up the progress on Central House accommodation.</p> <p>George Alderslade informed the meeting that works to install the new Gaunless Bridge has begun.</p>	<p>JAR</p>
	<p>9. <u>Planning Officer Report</u></p> <p>Report attached.</p> <p>The application for redevelopment of land to the North of the S&DR, West of the ECML</p> <p>Whiley Hill Farm is up for sale with a note that there is potential for redevelopment. RC suggested that the trustees consider that the Friends purchase of a corridor of land alongside the east side of the railway to provide a route for the Trail of Discovery.</p> <p>The members asked that this be discussed at the next trustees meeting. JAR to add to agenda.</p>	<p>JAR</p>
	<p>10 <u>Darlington Carnival 27th June – Friends publicity stand</u></p> <p>The meeting was asked for a decision over whether we should have a stand. The meeting agreed to having a stall at the event.</p> <p>JAR to book a stand for the event.</p>	<p>JAR</p>
	<p>11. <u>200th Anniversary of the Railway Tavern – Celebration arrangements.</u></p>	

	Thursday 25 th there will be a toast to the Stockton & Darlington Railway's board decision to establish the railway taverns. All are welcome to join the DIG meeting for a toast at 7pm.	
12.	<u>201st Anniversary Mini Festival</u> There will be a planning session for the event at Heighington Station at the next HAIG meeting.	
13.	<u>Questions on other Circulated Officer Reports</u>	
14.	<u>AoB</u> Ross Chisholm asked if trustees minutes should still have been circulated to the members. The Secretary apologised for the oversight of not emailing out the most recent minutes but stated that approved minutes are filed on the website in the members area and available for members to view there. KW suggested that the format of the minutes should be reviewed. It was requested by the meeting that the trustees decisions are recorded and made available to the members so that they know which way that trustees are voting to help inform their votes for trustees at AGMs. Trustees to review how minutes are recorded. Secretary to ensure that Trustees votes are recorded so members can see which way each trustee voted.	Trustees
15.	<u>Date & Time of Next Meeting</u> Thursday 4 th June 2026, Darlington Cricket Club	