



Dear Friends,

Welcome to the first short monthly newsletter from the Friends of the S&DR. Over the last year with all the restrictions Covid has brought, we've missed seeing members at our regular monthly meetings at Darlington Cricket Club and being able to tell you about what's going on and hear from you about your activities and opinions. The newsletter is meant to be a simple way to give you a brief update. If you have any thoughts or questions on S&DR matters at any time just drop me an email at info@sdr1825.co.uk. Niall Hammond, Chair FS&DR.

Progress!

Really good to see that many of our members have continued getting on with things during covid lockdown. In particular it's great to see the re-sited sleeper blocks and restored signal at Masons Arms Crossing by the Brusselton Incline Group; and the establishment of new area groups at West Auckland and soon hopefully at Aycliffe.

Locomotion No.1.

Many of you will have followed the saga of the Science Museums Group (SMG) decision to end the long-term loan of Locomotion No.1 to Darlington and relocate it to Shildon. After considerable debate and studying the legal position of ownership, trustees decided to stay neutral on the issue and work behind the scenes to get the best deal possible for the heritage of the whole line. Clearly No.1 is a cultural icon for Darlington and we feel their loss, but the agreed outcome sees No.1 returned to Darlington for long loan periods including the first half of 2025, the movement and repair of the excellent 1975 replica of No.1 to Darlington as a focal point for the new Rail Heritage Quarter when it opens in 2024 and firm agreements on other key loans from Shildon to Darlington. We were also pleased to clarify with the SMG a statement in one of their emails which claimed the FSDR had supported the move. Sarah Price Director of Locomotion provided us with this agreed statement:

I also thought it would be helpful to clarify the statements about the Friends of the S&DR in the recent FOI releases with regard to Locomotion No 1. In one of the notes, it said that there was support from the Friends to not extend the loan of No.1 to Darlington. This was based on conversations we had with members in their own private capacity who expressed different views to us in good faith. However, we have always acknowledged that the Friends as an organisation remained neutral. Clumsy phrasing arising from the fact that this was intended for internal use may have given a different slant but I can assure you that there was no intention to cause any upset or make any public claims.



Planning & Protection

A key part of our work is through the planning process trying to make sure proposals for new buildings and development not only don't harm historic S&DR buildings and sites as well as their settings, but also where we have the chance to get developers to contribute to conservation and access works. We have over the last few years ensured that the local plans for Durham, Darlington and Stockton all have specific policies in them to protect and conserve the S&DR, and have seen some notable successes in the design and extent of several schemes to the benefit of the S&DR. Sadly it's not all success and we were bitterly disappointed by the Darlington planner's decision to allow the Fighting Cocks pub of c.1830 to be given permission for a radical alteration to a convenience store. We are continuing to work with the community pub group who want to acquire the site, and have a line of communication with the developer so if the scheme does go ahead, we can make sure requirements for landscaping and interpretation are met.

On a more positive note, we're working closely with Historic England to ensure more S&DR heritage is protected through designation. This has recently seen Timothy Hackworth's house at Shildon upgraded to II* and a number of other buildings added to the list. This work will continue on for several months.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/in-your-area/north-east/shildon-railway-heritage-celebrated/>

Meetings, Meetings and More Meetings!

Much of the work of trustees and volunteers goes on behind the scenes. If we are to persuade funders to spend millions of pounds on the S&DR for 2025 and beyond, this requires a substantial amount of talking and commissioning of studies before anything can happen. Good progress is being made on an interpretation strategy to give the full 26 miles an overall coordinated look, an economic impact assessment to provide the key figures on why the S&DR is a good investment; and we're pleased to hear that Durham CC will be appointing a rights of way officer just for the S&DR to sort out footpath and cycleway issues.

Keeping in Touch

Thanks to a grant from the Culture Recovery Fund, we've been able to re-design our website including a fantastic and growing library/archive section with reports, documents and photos. Do have a look and let us know what you think.

WWW.SDR1825.org.uk

Our Facebook page continues to be a great source of news and debate (sometime heated!), so do join up to it if you can.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/304912612980375>