

Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway.
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Chair's Report/activity for October 2021

Following a busy September and the revised date of our regular monthly meeting to the 14th of October in the wonderful historic surrounds of the Railway Tavern, this month has less to report than some, but has one or two big announcements.

Firstly congratulations to those who walked in the footsteps of George Stephenson and completed a three day walk from Witton park to Stockton exactly 200 years after the re-survey of the line which created the S&DR.

We've held meetings with a number people as follows;

With the North East Railway Association to discuss possible joint publications and the future of archives at the Darlington Rail Heritage Quarter when it is built.

With the staff of The National Archives at Kew to begin exploring a project to digitise the archives of the S&DR together with other partners.

With Darlington Borough Council over the terms of any lease we might take on to occupy and use the Lime Cells as our offices.

With Sarah Price at Locomotion (Shildon), on a variety of subjects on the development of the museum and interpretation.

With Historic England and local council conservation officers on taking forward a piece of work to designate large sections of the S&DR as a conservation area. With our support Historic England also continue to designate and protect other parts of the line as well.

On the 2/3rd of November we will hold together with DCC an event to gain public feedback on a landscaping plan to significantly improve the track bed through St Helens Auckland and around the Gaunless Bridge.

Implementing this landscaping plan and several other major pieces of work has been planned for some while but with baited breath we were waiting for an announcement in the Autumn Budget on Levelling up grants. I'm pleased to tell you the money (around £10 million including funding for Locomotion Museum), has now been agreed and announced in the Chancellor's autumn statement. Over the next year we should see some significant spend on conserving and interpreting the S&DR.

**Chair, Friends of the S&DR CIO, Marian Cottage, Lartington, Barnard
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Our excellent definitive booklet on the S&DR authored by our own Caroline Hardie with fantastic support from many members, has been available as pdf. download from our website for a few weeks (<https://www.sdr1825.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/stockton-and-darlington-railway-key-facts-booklet.pdf>), finally the printed versions have arrived and all members will now receive a copy in the near future. Further copies are available for £5 (plus P&P) from the shop page on our website (<https://www.sdr1825.org.uk/product/sdr-book/>). Now we have the printed booklet this will also allow us to take forward works with schools.

Looking ahead, November looks like a busy month in getting detail on Levelling Up grant spend, and on the detail of taking forward the Lime Cells project. As ever myself and your trustees continue to work hard on achieving things. Some of this is obvious, but a lot of the work in researching and campaigning for better planning, or engagement goes unsung but is no less valuable. In fact as we develop as a charity myself and the trustees find ourselves taking on more and more 'dull but essential' stuff such as annual reports for the Charity Commission, Corporation Tax returns and making sure we are insured and risk assessed for events and walks. We'd welcome additional help in whatever way or amount of time anyone can spare so if you'd like to be more involved then please just drop me a line.

Regards to all

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