

Save Our Stute - Monthly Meeting
Weds 9th Feb 2022
Shildon Railway Institute - Lounge - 7:30pm

In attendance:

- Joh Raw (JR)
- Trevor Horner (TH)
- Paul Harle (PH)
- Sue Clarke (SC) - in the chair
- Dene Clark (DC)
- Samantha Townsend (ST)
- Michelle Armstrong (MA)
- Dave Reynolds (DR) - minute taker

Apologies were received from: Jane Hackworth-Young, Lisa Knight, Anth Knight, Colin White, Catherine Howard, Kelly Ambrosini, Lisa Turnbull

Agenda Items Covered

Item 1: Welcome & Introductions

There were no new persons for introduction, but apologies were acknowledged.

Item 2: Review of previous minutes

Minutes from the previous meeting, held on 12 Jan and distributed in advance with the agenda, were reviewed with no requests for corrections.

Item 3: SHA Financial Update

SC provided a financial update to the effect that there was £1,596 in the bank, with a further £1095 to be banked plus funds received at the meeting of £148.75 (takings from 2x sessions of our community choir plus extra donations), and a further £490 to be transferred from the ticketing account from the most recent event on 5th Feb - this equates to just over £3,329
SC also pointed out that a reminder had been issued by HMRC as to the need to submit accounts this year.

Item 4: Volunteer hours update

DC explained that 90 hours worth of volunteer activity had been logged during January 2022, with the likelihood that some volunteers would surely have a little more to add if reminded.

Item 5: Events

- The Feb quingo is to take place on 11th Feb. Posters have been put out and it has been posted on social media.
- Tickets are now available for the 1940s fundraiser night for the Shildon History Recall Society to help fund a plaque to mark the crashed Stirling bomber site. Posters have been put out and tickets are available from behind the bar. DR to put on website and to share details with MA for Facebook posts
- March Quingo: JR volunteered to provide another set of questions, and his offer was gratefully accepted. The date for it is the 11th March. DR to produce posters.
- An opportunity to have a stall at the Shildon Fun For All day in Hackworth Park on Sat 6th August and the group felt this would be beneficial. The possibility to team up on a display with the Brusselton Incline Group was also discussed should that group be otherwise engaged on that date. DR to notify Kath Regan of the decision to take a stall.
- Steam at the Stute - DR explained the recent discussion he had had with Anth Coulls regarding an event where the owners of steam traction engines and rollers would converge upon the Institute, as well as an exhibition of small static steam engines. Dave briefly outlined Anth's explanation for the potential in the event. It was expressed that something would need to be done to expand the usable capacity of the car park for such event. DC suggested that it might be good if some steam powered machines played a part in that tidy up. PH and TH took actions to speak to Arthur Sowerby and Mike Spence respectively regarding availability of road planings to add to the car park surface. DR explained that Shaun Thompson was hoping to

engage one of his accountancy clients to scrape back some of the overgrown car park surface. ST and DR offered to look into getting discarded planings from the County Council highways department. JR offered to speak to Anth Coulls to discuss combining with the annual Steam Heritage Exhibition on 17 July. DR explained that one of the conditions would be that we could acquire a load of coal for the engines to use. TH expressed that getting the correct grade of coal could prove difficult.

- SC raised the matter of the upcoming concert by The Moobs. MA took action to put on Eventbrite and Facebook and DR took action to create poster art and put on website.
- The evening with Danielle the Happy Medium is set and booked to take place on 28th March. MA expressed that in her view there was no need for posters as the uptake is usually good based on social media and word of mouth.
- Members of the group are collaborating with the Royal British Legion Shildon Branch to host a C&W evening on 14th May with Hank & The Hot Dogs
- MA Explained that The Breakfast Club had been booked for a return visit on 25th June - but that Melting Pot had as yet not provided a date as to when they might return.
- DR asked MA if we should revisit the idea of a ceilidh, but MA felt that there had been little interest in the one that had been organised in 2020 that had been cancelled due to Covid.
- PH raised the question of a Northern Soul night - and it was explained that Peter, who had DJd the Mews Reunion Disco on 5th Feb intended to plan in a Soul Night
- The idea of a Queen's Jubilee event was deferred to a future meeting.

Item 6 - Heritage Compass

DR gave a verbal report on his learnings and experiences of Heritage Compass so far - covering:

- a) the Welcome session and
- b) The first seminars on Audience Development - The Basics

Dave explained that the engagement and content had been very informative and insightful so far and an eye opener as to the level of organisation and work that would be required to be successful. He requested that members and directors review the programme of seminars and advise on whether there were any that they would like to attend for the group.

Dave broke down some of the key messages from the Audience Development session and made suggestions as to ways in which our campaign and work with the Institute needs to be better informed. His suggestions included:

1. A full audit of Institute Membership to tighten up on our understanding of the volume and make up of the current membership - plus a deep dive into the broken nature of the membership process today and improving engagement with members a) when their membership was processed and b) over renewals
2. Acquisition of a footfall counter for the main entrance so that we can get metrics on use of the building over time - setting a benchmark today (with tolerances built in for smokers entering and leaving the building repeatedly)
3. A market research survey of the neighbourhood around the Institute. DR explained that the Heritage Compass course contained a clear message that direct face to face engagement with the community is deemed essential when making a case in a funding application.

It is suggested that an Audience Development deep-dive workshop to strategise will be a key activity going forward.

DR offered to circulate the course content when received from Heritage Compass

(addendum) DR had also updated the SHA CIC website with the Heritage Compass logo

As an additional item in this section DR also told of a further seminar he had attended with the Heritage Lottery Fund North advising people on how to successfully raise an application for funding between £10k and £250k. The session had again been insightful and eye opening and given indications as to where we would need to raise our game. DR explained that he had raised a question as to the organisational relationship between the Institute and the SHA on an application and had a tentative reply back from a North Region official that a joint application could be fine as long as the recipient organisation was non-profit and had a constitution that made clear that if the organisation were to receive funding that should it subsequently disband the assets would be divested to another nominated non-profit and not split by the members. DR had discussed with the Institute Secretary who was unaware of the whereabouts of the current Institute constitution, so both had discussed the possible necessity to re-constitute the Institute.

Item 7 - Team development - growth and specialism

- DR gave a brief talk on how members of the group, despite managing to do everything we take on, becomes overburdened under the current operating model of everyone trying to do everything. He suggested, as had been said prior to the meeting, that we need to take additional measures to try to grow the group. The premise being that a bigger volunteer pool would enable subsets of the group to take on more specialisms - e.g. event organisation, progressing funding applications, physical projects, marketing. There was general feeling that this would be good and ideas were pitched as to how we could encourage more to join our movement.
- MA explained that Lisa Turnbull had expressed an interest in coming along to meetings and perhaps in organising more events.
- SC queried whether we should advertise for more volunteers. A press release to this effect was suggested as an alternative approach as advertising has a considerable cost. We could talk about the successes and the next stage. A question from a previous meeting as to whether we should change the campaign from Save Our Stute to a new phase, but as previously decided it was agreed to retain on the basis of now saving the building rather than the organisation from going bust.
- TH expressed the communication was key - we just need to get the right message out there. He told of his learnings through his involvement with the Weardale Railway.
- DR explained to the group how the Brusselton Incline Film had recently acquired a new traction attracting 200-300 views on some days and a total of over 14k views overall. He wondered whether a film of similar quality on the Institute might help communicate our case. DR resolved to plan and make this film during 2022.

Item 8 - Institute Committee Update

The committee members at the meeting agreed that there was little of significance to raise that the group was not already aware of

Item 9 - Spruce Up projects

- DR gave an update on the middle room upstairs (the MacNay room?) and set out the need to complete painting the ceiling and to carpet the room so we could start to offer it for use. he suggested that the scaffolding needed to be dismantled to move to the other side of the beam, but PH pointed out that one of the remaining two light fittings needed to be fitted first. DR explained that Elaine Kelly's husband was going to provide some carpet samples. He also set out some of the assets that we would be able to put on display. TH explained that he had some of his father's Railway Association boxing trophies that could be displayed if there was a way to keep them secure. PH to fit remaining lights when able
- On the stairway DR explained that he had not had an opportunity to have a follow up discussion with Darren Blood but that this should be progressed as we are approaching a position where we may be able to pay for the stairwell redecoration. He would arrange something this month. But it was acknowledged that we'd need to be able to receive an invoice for accounting. DR to contact Darren

Item 10 - AOB

- JR expressed his thanks for the quality of the Banner Unveiling event on Sat 5th Feb and particularly the quality of the speakers. Jane H-Y had been particularly impressed by Michael Lynch's speech. The songs provided by Sam Slatcher were also commented upon. DR explained that the speeches and songs were now up on YouTube if anyone was not able to see them first hand.
- TH asked about the situation with heating bills and the sustainability of the building. It was noted that energy prices were due to increase and that the minimum wage for staff was going up. MA explained that there were plans to increase bar prices at the Institute accordingly. The membership fee was discussed but there were mixed feelings on whether it should increase and it would be a matter for the Institute Committee anyway. DR explained that he had heard nothing from Steve Robson with regard to business sustainability grants through South Durham Enterprise Agency. He would reach out again to Steve Robson. PH suggested looking at solar panels though there was a concern that the building is Grade II listed and that the roof would need replacing in the not too distant future. Ground level solar in the car park was deemed prone to vandalism. TH gave an opinion on heat pumps as ineffective and suggested that it could be worth investigating ground sourced heating, again using bore holes in the car park. It

was also questioned whether perhaps a combined approach might be necessary given the size of the building.

- DR had brought along a few copies of his recently self-published book

Next meeting - Wed 9th March 2022