

Shildon Heritage Alliance CIC - Save Our Stute Monthly Meeting

Weds 8th February 2023 at 7:30pm
The MacNay Room - Shildon Railway Institute

Attendees: D Reynolds (DR), K Ambrosini (KA), C White (CW), M Armstrong (MA), T Horner (TH), P Harle (PH), S Townsend (ST), L Littlefair (LL)

Apologies: J Hackworth Young, J Raw, H Johnson,, S Clarke, D Clarke

Review minutes/ actions carried forward

- A round of introductions was entered into given that the meeting had been joined by Laura Littlefair a PhD student who has commenced work with Locomotion.
- An update as given on reasons that the previous two meetings had not been held, which was principally due to the number of events that needed to be supported in December and the need to concentrate in January on meetings of the new Transformation Steering Committee for Shildon Railway Institute.
- As the previous minutes were from Nov 2022 there were no issues raised.

Financial update

- D Clarke was not present, and no advance update in writing had been provided - so this was carried over to the March meeting

Volunteer hours update

- D Clarke was not present, and no advance update in writing had been provided - so this was carried over to the March meeting.
- There was however an acknowledgement that several members had volunteer hours they had not yet logged. All were reminded to try to submit their volunteer hours.

Events

- **DR** gave an update on the Revamps concert at which a small profit had been realised by the group
- **DR** also explained that he had updated the What's On page of the website based upon input from CW, for which the latter was thanked. It was noted that the St Patrick's fun night was missing and needed to be added. **Action: DR** to update the page further.
- **DR** raised the matter of the book launch for Mike Norman on 4th March to coincide with the launch of the new MacNay Room. He requested the support of the group on catering and set-up for the event, and gave a run down of planned publicity. He mentioned also that there were some small tasks to finish off the MacNay room and that he intended to discuss in AOB. **DR** also asked **CW** if he might assist Mike Norman on a visit to test his presentation material.
- **CW** gave an update on the forthcoming Live Lounge events starting with Steph Austin in November

Future Events

- **CW** and **KA** proposed that we need to start considering the 40th Anniversary Reunion of the closure of Shildon Works which will be next year - and also that some form of minor reunion could be held this year

Update on Ideas for the 190th Anniversary

- **DR** gave an update on his proposal for a programme of events tied in with the celebration of 190 years of the Institute and to start a count-down of the last 10 years to

its bicentenary in 2033. The programme did not have to be too grand, but it was a significant year and should be recognised - ideas were as follows:

- **A.** A 190th Anniversary enamelled badge
 - **B.** Opening of the MacNay room and Whitfield Library (connected to our beginning as a library)
 - **C.** The Steam at the Stute event - as long as it proved to be feasible
 - **D.** A challenge football match with the BR Sports club
 - **E.** A book telling the Institute's story
 - **F.** A birthday party concert evening
- The proposal was broadly accepted, though there was a query as to whether the book should be a film instead.
 - On item A **DR** showed those present a badge design. A discussion was had as to how it should be priced and the meeting resolved that £4 per badge was a fair price to pay. **Action: DR** to order badges.
 - On item C as John Raw was not present and he had been leading on feasibility planning it was decided to defer the discussion to the next meeting. A brief conversation was had however as to the lack of availability of the correct grade of coal. **PH** had been seeking a source and obtaining a price. **TH** also mentioned that the Weardale Railway also face challenges sourcing coal and have some but may want it.
 - On item D **Action: DR** to contact the Secretary of the BR Sports and Social club to check appetite for holding such an event. It would be very in keeping with the theme as both the BR and the Institute were once part of the same organisation - having common roots and thus sharing that anniversary.
 - On Item E **DR** mentioned that he had already made a start, but that we could also make a film of current members memories.
 - On Item F **Action: DR** to look to build a potential list of artists to provide entertainment. Starting with Sam Slatcher, Richie Boddy, Steph Austin and members of The Shamrocks. **Action: CW** to ask Bosko Green

Committee Update:

- **CW** and **MA** gave a high level update on things that the Institute committee have been progressing.
- It was reported that progress had been made on deciding to stock a premium lager that would potentially offer customers more choice on price point and potentially generate more revenue for the Institute.
- **CW** noted that the pace of membership renewals for the year ahead had now slowed down, suggesting that most of those who intended to do so had now renewed.

Progress on the Transition of the Institute to become a Community Benefit Society:

- **MA** gave an update on the forming of a Steering Committee to manage the transition and what had been covered in the initial meetings.
- **PH** expressed an interest in attending the Steering Committee going forward so we agreed to add him to distribution and invitations going forward

Discussion on the viability of the Shildon Institute Singers

- **KA** explained that she had requested the matter to be discussed over concerns that the weekly singing sessions were not raising enough to cover the cost of coaching and that consequently the SHA were subsidising the activity and might not be able to do so going forward.
- **DR** showed the meeting the figures as he had been tracking takings vs projected costs each week since November 2022. These showed that the activity was creating a loss in

the region of £25 per session. It sometimes does better, but occasionally much worse if only a handful attend.

- **KA** also queried the value being provided for the weekly fee as the printed sheets were provided by **DR** and the singing coach was only using YouTube for backing rather than professional tracks. **ST** revealed that she had queried with another singing coach how they run their sessions in comparison. It was questioned whether we should be getting more service for our investment.
- **DR** offered his thoughts on the strategic value of the singing group, but conceded that as SHA had recently lost volunteers and fundraising events were fewer than in the past sustainability was questionable. Though the numbers fluctuate, those that come seem to get a real benefit from it and enjoy it - it would be a shame to not provide the activity.
- A discussion was held as to what measures could be taken to keep the activity viable. Options suggested were a) to reduce the cost per session, b) to make it so that those attending paid a set amount, c) to seek alternative coaching in line with what we could afford or d) to cease the activity. It was thought that as those attending do not know what each session costs they might be more generous in their contributions if they know. **Action: DR** to discuss the situation with the singing coach to see what could be done.

AOB

- **KA** raised a proposal to take the 1970s Shildon Works NUR banner to the 2023 Durham Miners Gala with the RMT. She explained that **DR** had written to David King of the North East Rail and Catering Branch to ask if they would consider it, and they had responded positively. **KA** felt it would be a great way to have Shildon participate in this great annual celebration of our County's heritage seeing as there are no NUM branch banners in the town - and rail and coal are intrinsically linked. **Action: KA** to put a story out in the Town Crier to see if there's much support for the idea and to look into the viability of providing transport (booking a coach)
- **DR** raised the unfinished activities needed to complete the MacNay Room and specifically the need to acquire tables. He asked if a budget might be provided to acquire some - ideally 4 that could be put together to form one large meeting table, or split, or stowed away if the room was wanted without tables. The meeting agreed on a budget of £200 if suitable used tables could be found. **Action: DR, KA, CW** to look out for tables

Next meeting Wednesday 8th March 2023 at 7:30pm