

FORHS AGM 23rd May 2022

Chair's report

I'm happy to report on the hard work and achievements of our energetic volunteers, with excellent new planting at the station, other projects in the pipeline and another award for us to be proud of.

Far less welcome, is the necessity to report, yet again, the deficiencies in the timetable on our line and the lack of any meaningful discussion about providing an improved rail service.

Highlights

We have two newly planted areas which greatly enhance the appearance of the station area. The planned rose bed past the bike shelter is now in place. We are looking forward to summer blooming. And the area behind the carpark (the other side of the phone mast from the orchard) has been laboriously prepared, landscaped and planted with a selection of perennial shrubs and trees. It looks great - do go and see if you haven't viewed it yet.

We drew heavily on the grant we received from the Manchester Airport Community Fund for this planting and we express our thanks for this.

That grant has also supplied us with new, self-watering barrel planters for the platform to replace some which were falling apart. We will complete the new planting for these now they are all in place.

The grant also enabled us to instal the 6 Eamonn Murphy prints of local landmarks which you can see on the platform. Our first public event post-Covid took place in November when these were unveiled by the Mayor of Stockport, Adrian Nottingham. It was quite exciting to be able to have visitors to the station again.

The pictures look great. Eamonn was present with a stall to sell some of his prints and cards. He very generously donated some of his cards to us for sale to boost our funds and we still have some of these. Let us know if you would like a pack.

We were thrilled to be able to bring Santa to the station again in December after, of necessity, missing the event in 2020.

However, before speaking about the actual event, it is with great sorrow that I have to report the sad death of our 'Santa', Geoff Bennett. Geoff performed this role for a number of groups, as well as for us, and he was a very popular and kind Father Christmas. It was very moving for us to hear from his family how much Geoff looked forward to and enjoyed his events with us. We have passed our condolences to the family.

The event in December was as popular as ever. We made the decision to hold it entirely outdoors, with the grotto in a gazebo, due to the ongoing pandemic. The cheerfulness and enthusiasm of the families waiting in a long line up the passenger ramp was impressive. It seemed that a good time was had by all.

I gave the planned presentation for the Community Rail Network (CRN) webinar on Creative Projects and Storytelling in October and that seemed to be well received. These seminars/webinars are also an opportunity to hear what other groups are doing.

In April, we attended the Cheshire Best Kept Stations (CBKS) Awards Evening and were gratified to receive the TfGM award - the totem is now displayed at the station along with

those we have received over the last many years. We are very grateful to the CBKS team and to TfGM for their ongoing support and encouragement.

We also gave a slide presentation for the annual TfGM event to thank the Friends groups of stations in the Greater Manchester area.

By the time you read this, our first rail trip in three years with the children of Rose Hill Primary School (Reception classes) should have taken place. Previous excursions have been full of excited chatter and enjoyment. The trip is a return train ride between Rose Hill and Guide Bridge and will give the children the experience of travelling by train and lots to observe out of the windows. The trip is funded by Northern, for which the school is very grateful and which works to increase the passenger base for the future.

'Big' news is that our **website is updated**. Use the same address (www.forhs.org.uk) and you will now find a more modern site which is mobile phone friendly.

We are pleased that Mark Angelucci, TfGM has taken the initiative to pursue the question with Network Rail of how to improve access to the Middlewood Way directly from the platform. Discussions are ongoing.

In the meantime, we continue to explore the best way to improve signage to the existing entrance (past the tip).

The Hyde Loop Line

A small group of us have been meeting to press the case with Northern for a return to the half-hourly daytime timetable which was in place in March 2020 and for a later evening and a Sunday service. We have the support and help of the Goyt Valley Rail Users Association and the Friends groups from Marple and Romiley and we are indebted to them for the support they give.

We have provided an abundance of evidence which can form the basis for a business case (a full business case would require cost information from Northern which we do not have access to). We have pointed to the areas of housing development along the route, the social and travel profile of populations along the route and the existing and potential leisure and tourism opportunities that Northern could (and should) look to exploit in their quest to draw passengers back to the railway.

Passenger numbers are, in fact, increasing on our line as well as others. We will be conducting our passenger account again to monitor this.

However, I am frustrated to report an implacable response from Northern. There is no evidence of understanding that passenger numbers are more likely to increase when the timetable is regular throughout the day and no apparent interest in providing a Sunday service which could be advertised strongly as a route to and around (including station to station routes) the Middlewood Way.

This is all the more frustrating when we observe that MerseyRail has now restored full half hourly services, at least, to its routes.

As ever, when we are working at the station on Sundays, we always meet people who have come to catch a non-existent train and we redirect them to Marple.

A positive development is the recent formation of a Friends of the Hyde Loop group. They will work on improving the environment of the stations at Woodley, Hyde North and Hyde

and we are looking forward to planning joint projects with them. We hope that they will be able to add force to the arguments for an improved timetable as well.

Looking to the Future

We continue to take part in meetings and events organised by Northern, TfGM, Community Rail, Network Rail and the Goyt Valley Rail Users Association (GVRUA).

We have been pleased to start work with John Kenny and Sarah Morgan who now share the South East Manchester Community Rail Network role.

Our next immediate project is to put in place a Welcome to Rose Hill sign on the roundabout outside the car park entrance. We hope that this will make the station more visible from Railway Road. Once again, we have the Airport Community Fund to thank for funding this.

We also plan to commission the Woodbank Park nursery to provide our hanging baskets again after the magnificent display they achieved last summer. They work with a mental health charity and we are pleased to support them.

And we will be keeping an eye on the platform fence for any patches needing attention after our labours last summer to varnish the entire length.

We are hoping to develop a pictorial 'map' to show the station's location in relation to Marple centre and local places of interest. The Friends of Marple Station have a similar plan and we hope to take the project forward together.

We also hope to contribute to a booklet of short walks from the station, aimed specifically at those who do not wish to go too far.

On a less positive note, the difficulties about the gap between the trains and the platform will continue. The idea of installing a Harrington Hump has now been formally rejected (due to the width of the platform). We have been told that a public lavatory and a baby changing area are to be installed. We have not been informed of when this might happen.

Membership

Membership of FORHS is free. New members are always welcome, with whatever skills and ideas you can bring, whether it be gardening, IT, campaigning or any other. Be assured that we also value it when people who do not have time for an active role join, as this enables us to communicate with you easily and demonstrates interest in our station.

Whether or not you choose to join, do please follow us on Facebook and Twitter. And you can always email us with comments or queries: **forhs142@gmail.com**
Also, find us at **www.forhs.org.uk**

Working groups

We usually work at the station the first Sunday morning of the month, from 10.00am, so do drop in to have a look at us, if you can. But please check our notice board or website

for dates, as sometimes these change. We expect to have additional midweek gardening sessions throughout the summer.

Rachel Singer
Chair, the Friends of Rose Hill Station
May 2022