

## **Item 11- Appendix 2 – Town Council 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 2021.**

### **Feedback Community Rail Partnership – forming meeting and local Station Groups**

#### **Forming Meeting**

- Recognition that Commuter Travel is unlikely to return to pre pandemic levels given movement to home working/part home working for many.
- Will need to refocus on Railway as a leisure mode of transport and to build links into towns along the route for enhanced visitor experience.
- As part of that shift to build on increasing use of off peak travel and ticket options to support that shift.
- Stengthening of rail use for younger groups

#### **Local station groups**

- Independent and have established themselves without help of a CRP
- At present don't see need or synergy in being part as do not believe a community focus and their involvement seen more of a tick box re consultation as the strategic partners focus not on community but on railway/network/timetabling issues.
- About what community want to give not be told – small projects to gain momentum and more volunteer involvement -
- Important that people's efforts and ideas are respected in order to get the best out of any group formed.
- Gateway to town and pleasure to pass through involving small incremental attention – floral displays, use of local railway land for community.
- Groups share many common aims but yet are different in their 'style' and approach.
- CRP an unsolicited proposal - essential that an awareness of need be created before the proposal would receive any consideration.
- Nowhere in the proposal is there any attempt to clarify the organisational goals of 'Friends' groups nor to identify any issues which the proposal would address.

#### **Detailed note provided by Friends of Brighouse Station**

Brighouse Station was (re)opened in 2000, a newly constructed station best described as 'utilitarian' with 2 platforms , limited passenger shelters and no other facilities. It was, and remains, unmanned. By 2014 the station was looking distinctly 'neglected' and in January 2015 a group came together with the aim of rectifying this situation.

The Group objective was, and still is, to make the station 'A Gateway to the Town' by making the Station one which it 'is a pleasure to pass through'

Two other key decisions were that: (a) the Group would actively seek the involvement of local businesses to support the planned activity and (b) that the Group was a 'doing' one and would not be involved in any aspect of user group 'campaigning' . Point (a) was extended to be that the Group would only continue if it could raise local funding and hence would not be 'grant dependant'.

On point (a): whilst the Group has received grants from several sources for specific projects in 2020 some 30 local businesses continued their financial support by sponsoring fence planters, barrels and garden areas – more than enough money to cover our planned activities . There are also some 46 individual members of whom some 17 or so regularly work on/at the station.

For a couple of years we also had the Area Scout Group involved with different units coming to our monthly ‘working Sunday’ – this has now ceased as we were no longer able to provide ‘interesting’ tasks (they wanted ‘action’ rather than more mundane cleaning and weeding !)

We do not directly advertise for volunteers/members finding that personal contact or our attendance at the ‘Older Persons Information Fair’ in Brighouse which Craig Whittaker MP organises are more productive (incidentally Craig is also a sponsor)

We have notice boards on both platforms and we have contact with various local societies , Churches etc who’s activities we publicise. Note that notices are non-profit only not commercial.

A fair question then is ‘what do you actually do on/at the station ?’: I’d divide this into 2 parts:

- 1) Keeping the station clean and tidy. A somewhat trite statement perhaps, but as an illustration – on one area when we first started on the first month’s session we removed, if I remember correctly, some 6 bin-liners of rubbish. A month later perhaps 1, now ? a few odd pieces. We work very closely with the contract cleaners providing cover on the occasions they can’t get there and also making sure that the litter bags don’t get over-full at the weekends. We have a wheelie bin , provided by Northern for any rubbish to be removed from the station which the contractors take away for us.
- 2) Floral Displays. This can again be divided into 2 parts: Planters and Tubs, garden areas. We have some 28 fence mounted planters and 16 tubs – the plants in these are changed Spring and Autumn. There are also several garden areas which we are progressively working on. The displays have won many awards, including a ‘National Distinction’ from the RHS.

### **Detailed note provided by Friends Mytholmroyd Station**

One project currently in process is the provision of a range of ‘Information Boards’ featuring local interest people, companies, buildings etc. These are being done in collaboration with the Local History Society, Civic Society and a number of individuals with specialist knowledge.

Finally our relationship with Northern is excellent and has been built since we started based on our proving our competence, delivering what we say we are going to do and sorting out any (rare) problems on a basis of mutual trust and respect and not via press or social media.

Community rail has successfully harnessed the support of and reached further into their local communities and the rail industry through the partnership approach they have taken. Community rail flourish as inclusive, independent and sustainable groups so they are well placed to deliver benefits both for their local community and the rail industry generally.

The inspirational community rail projects that Todmorden Station Partnership produced in the 2000s was the starting point for our involvement. Mytholmroyd decided to form a station adoption group in 2006 – to transform the vandalised village station. At the first meeting, Northern Rail suggested we choose to be either a community station or a campaigning

group dealing with trains etc. We chose the former and the highly successful Partnership between the local community and Northern was formed.

We have developed a relationship with all sectors of the railway and community that is mutually respected and trusted by all parties.

Within the first year, we had all four schools 'on-board' and they have been keen supporters ever since – and despite the Covid lockdown, they are rareing-to-go in 2021!

Local businesses are supported – our unique 'Fanfare for Local Business' has attracted national interest. Groups of primary scholars go into a local business (weaving-shed, clog-making, lighting designers and their favourite – Ice cream factory. They then produce their interpretation as artwork to be displayed (after the Mayor has unveiled) on the station for 12 months.

Our relationship with Northern is excellent – we do not tell them how to do their job and they fully explain why some of our timetable requests cannot fit in with the national network. On the other hand, they quickly responded to our request for travel permits for local NHS staff to travel between the various health centre during the first lockdown.

The Partnership never claims to be responsible for the £5m car park at Mytholmroyd, but it is acknowledged that a survey by the station volunteers in 2010 influenced the decision.

The renovation of the derelict station building is due to the Partnership requesting its use as a Community Hub. Final funding is being sought while a Lease is being prepared together with Planning Applications for the Listed Building.

In addition to the Calder Valley Stations Liaison Group meetings, we have had our annual Sing-along-the-Line – with 50 youngsters going to meet the Mytholmroyd Santa at Sowerby Bridge for their present from Northern Trains. The other station groups also come along and quite often meet the Northern directors who never seem to miss this lovely event.

Our involvement with the local community is acknowledged by Hebden Royd Town Council who have given valuable support and encouragement over the years. Many of our founder members are still with the Partnership which in turn has offered them and many other local people extra avenues to friendships – especially in times of stress, like the present.

Community rail is much more than trains. The growth in footfall for all the Calder Valley stations far exceeds the nation average and this is acknowledged being partly due to work done by the volunteers enhancing the area both for visitors and local resident/commuters.

The community stations along the valley have been the ambassadors for Calderdale – successful participation in regional and national awards has been given widespread media coverage.