



Friends of Sway Station meeting – 20th January 2025

Open meeting 2.15 – 3.45 pm, Jubilee Field Pavilion, Sway

- **Welcome & Apologies**
- **Friends of Sway Station** – information for guests/observers
- **Notes from last meeting 3rd June 2024**
- **Notification of “any other business”**
- **Matters arising** - school student usage & potential for rail travel - update

- **Thanks to Customer & Communities Improvement Fund for grant award and match funding from NCFRP; art installation on Platform 2 completed – positive feedback.**
- **Resignations and new members**
- **New Forest Volunteer Fair – 26th January 2025**

- **STATION ISSUES:**
 - **Staffing**
 - **Seating – platform 1**
 - **Water butt installation, platform 2 – update**
 - **Footbridge repairs – temporary removal**
 - **Parking**
 - **Planting & watering :-** currently no volunteers - alternative options under review
 - **Friends of Sway Station Facebook page – update**
 - **Updating of Sway maps**

- **Friends of Sway Station website established** – grateful to John Goodier and his philanthropic neighbour. – actively seeking content; generally favourable response so far

- **Community Rail meeting October 2024**, update and report – key message from this is benefit to communities, focussing on helping and benefitting communities – disadvantaged groups, “Try the Train” and engaging schools seen as areas where adoption groups and rail partnerships can be really beneficial towards their communities.

- **Railway 200 – 2025** is 200th anniversary of UK passenger rail travel. FOSS and local adoption groups looking at suitable celebrations, Cllr Neil McLocklin has approached FOSS on this topic with an initial draft paper of suggestions (appended below). With local contacts appropriate working groups will emerge and develop suitable suggestions both purely local and more New Forest-wide celebrations. It is hoped that local schools will want to join in along with SPUD works. Information and supportive material can be found at <https://railway200.co.uk>; (NB Sway station was opened on 6th March 1888)

- **Increasing FOSS membership - -**
 - **New member** - John Goodier, Neil Mc Locklin have joined FOSS

- **Ongoing efforts to engage community**, Poster with QR code, advert, social media – SWR et al publicity/education material – attractive projects, “making a difference”
 - **Continued effort by all needed find new members** - - an ongoing challenge!
 - **Support from PC**
 - Support from **Sway News**
 - **Sway cinema advert** – a publicity opportunity to be displayed at local cinema showings

- **“Developing an ECO station” application – collaborative work with ECO SWAY has been agreed** – no further progress – to be reviewed

- **Real-time travel information display on bridge on Station Road** – to remain as an aspiration and a funding target at some future point – would need support from various sources but would be a key part of promoting sustainable transport for the locality and beyond

- **Church Lane Housing development** – work now started – update

- **New Forest Community Rail Partnership** – recently reviewed and not accredited. Its constitution still requires revision to reflect the new composition of the partnership which is also in the process of preparing to be accredited – no further action for FOSS presently

- **Availability of Community Rail information material** – website <https://communityrail.org.uk> – ideas and thoughts for Sway welcomed – but need to be practical!

- **Finance** – following resignation from FOSS Deborah Walker is no longer a signatory to the FOSS account with NatWest – John Goodier has been accepted by the bank as the second signatory. Current balance is ----- £345.21; last payment was to Namesco in September for domain – to be reviewed

- **Rail service concerns** – lack of through trains West of Bournemouth in current timetable remains with prolongation of journey times to Poole and beyond. An unsatisfactory situation that emerged during Covid which has persisted – still no imminent SWR plans to re-instate regular through services. To keep campaigning on this issue, especially after SWR’s franchise status changes after May 2025. Also unsatisfactory to find 450 units being used on long distance services to Waterloo – unsuited for such journeys.

- **Parcel collection point** – YEEP Locker installed by AMEY who manage the tenants on the station – a collection and drop off point for parcels

- **Any other business**

- **Next meeting date** – to be arranged

ADDENDUM

RAILWAY 200 – Neil McLocklin

Proposal for Celebration of 200 years of the Railways

The UK is celebrating 200 years of the railways in 2026 since George Stephenson first locomotive with events up and down the country. The most significant event and impact in the history and development of Sway is the construction of the railway and Sway station with this line opening on 6 March 1888. The construction itself transformed the village with the influx of the workforce that built the railway, and subsequently it has been critical during both World Wars as well as bringing tourists to the Forest and enabling commuting to cities and towns.

The use of the station has dropped by 30% since Covid – with now 75,000 journey starts or finishes from the station per annum. This is largely due to changing commute patterns but we are aware of other issues which include:

- Mental health of young people post Covid
- Challenges for the elderly using the station with the reduced hours of the ticketing office
- Timetabling issues

The proposal is to celebrate the 200 years of the railway working with other villages and towns in the Forest but using this opportunity to have a transformational impact on travel patterns and use of the rail network. A working group would be set up to develop proposals but this may include the following :

A) Within Sway

- The Village Hall had planned a 'Cream Tea Nostalgia Day' in August 2023 at Stamford Rise (dressing up, music, games and stalls). This did not happen but is being considered for 2025 most probably around VE day but the Railway Celebration (& Treacle Mines) could dovetail into it or even provide an overarching theme.
- Working in partnership with St Barbe, an exhibition could be developed, a talk could be hosted and a booklet developed on Sway and the Railway
- Working with EcoSway and Friends of Sway Station (FOSS) we can promote the use of the railway
- A computer and printer to enable people who are unable for any reason to book rail tickets would align to this initiative – if a donation was found.
- Education of the history and importance of the railway with St Lukes school
- Memorial Service at the Church for those who lost their lives in building the railway

B) Across the Forest

- We know Brockenhurst and Lymington are also planning activities (New Milton, Ashurst, Beaulieu Road, Hinton Admiral?). There is an opportunity to co-ordinate activity
- If villages had events during different part of the year other villages could be invited and encouraged to come by train
- We could encourage wider use of the railway by agreeing incentives/discounts on travel from SWR and or venues such as Mayflower Theatre, National Theatre, Theatre Royal

Winchester, the BIC, Pavilion etc for residents, whilst also promoting coming to the Forest by tourists

- Content such as exhibitions, school events and the booklet would benefit from a pan Forest perspective.

Desired Outcomes

Greater use of the railway across the Forest particularly amongst younger people and the elderly with the aim of achieving at least pre Covid levels

Enhanced wellbeing of younger and elder demographic through engagement and enhanced travel

Reduced travel of the road and a contribution to reduced carbon impact

Next steps

Decide if this is something we want to do and set up a working group to plan and source funding/promotions. There maybe a budget requirement but this can be determined by the group.

Suggest need at least two or three councillors involved covering

- a) Promotion
- b) Liaison with other Parish Councils and Friends Groups
- c) Event management - led by Village Hall
- d) Content creation – led by St Barbe