

FRIENDS OF WESTHOUGHTON STATION

INAUGURAL MEETING

21st November 2012 at the Communiiversity of Westhoughton

Present:

- Joanna Parncutt
- Steve Magner – Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM)
- Stephen Curry – Northern Rail (NR)
- Preva Crossley – Friends of Hindley Station (FOHS)
- Sheila Davidson – Friends of Hindley Station (FOHS)
- Councillor David Chadwick – Westhoughton Council

Joanna opened by welcoming everyone to the first meeting of Friends of Westhoughton Station and thanked everyone for their help, support, interest and for attending.

Joanna ran through the agenda for the evening then asked Preva Crossley to outline what had been involved and how Friends of Hindley had gone about transforming Hindley station to its present regenerated state.

Preva explained that Hindley had been in a terrible state of repair, and that before anything could be started it was necessary to look at exactly what it was possible to achieve and what was necessary to get this result.

Considerations:

- Local involvement/volunteers
 - Posters
 - Local schools (projects)
 - Local organisations (e.g. Scouts)
- A – Volunteers with specialist knowledge – sometimes creating sub-committees involved with specific jobs (they had sub-committees for Planting – with knowledge of appropriate flowers, trees, soil types etc; Painting; Creation of pathway etc)
- B – The area to be transformed
- C – Contact with Railway Authorities – risk factors, legal permissions etc
- D – Set up costs – possible sponsorships from local businesses etc

Preva presented slides showing the land that had been tackled, which included not only the removal of rubbish/overgrowth but also the creation of pathways, walks and gates. An enormous amount of groundwork had to be done including felling of trees and removal of large shrubs in order that pathways could be restored (they also made use of reclaimed cobbles provided by Wigan Council). Subsequent replanting of flowers and trees was then undertaken to create a more landscaped effect.

However, before any work can be undertaken it was important to contact relevant Railway Authorities to obtain their permissions.

Help had been offered from various sources – they even had work done by Youth Offending Teams. Local schools had been encouraged to get involved, also local Scouts, as well as specialist volunteers. Both schools and scouts have gained achievement awards for getting involved.

As the work continued, volunteer numbers fluctuated but not drastically enough to affect the overall plan/result.

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Sheila Davidson (FOHS) emphasised the importance of being realistic about what could be achieved. In the first instance it was probably better just to tidy up the general area of the railway platforms and embankments close to the platforms.

Steve Magner (TfGM) and Stephen Curry (NR) cautioned the need for absolute safety when undertaking any work at the station. Under no circumstances could members of the public be allowed to do any work which involved them going down onto the railway lines. A useful booklet to refer to was A Guide to Station Adoption from ACORP (N.B – I have emailed you all a copy of this) which gives all the necessary information. In addition, no work on the railway banking could be undertaken without referral to the appropriate authority lest any work resulted in a destabilising effect. Underground cables could also be a potential hazard and it will be necessary to consider this when, at a later stage, actual digging is to be carried out, and the necessary authorities will need to be consulted to gain permission.

Steve Magner advised the need to:

- Obtain a licence
- Have a method statement
- Do a risk assessment
- Create a constitution
- Form a committee – with at least a Chairman, Secretary and a Treasurer
- Apply for a bank account

Stephen Curry confirmed that Northern Rail's insurance would cover us as long as we had provided him with details beforehand of what work we were going to do, where, how, when and by whom.

The maintenance in respect of the tarmac and the stone edging on the platforms falls under the general NR maintenance contract – if any work needs doing we should contact NR.

Westhoughton station is currently in the process of being painted, but the work to paint the platform edge is being held up due to the weather.

Everyone who wanted to be involved was asked to provide their contact details, and some volunteered to be on the committee.

Chairman	–	Joanna Parncutt
Treasurer	–	Councillor Jack Speight
Secretary	–	Preva Crossley

Committee members: Martin Tighe
Tom Briggs
Councillor David Chadwick
Stephanie Baglow
Karla Campbell
Ted Wisedale
Cindy Ritchie

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Any other business

Preva and Sheila (FOHS) both stressed the importance of encouraging local involvement of like-minded people. As far as Hindley was concerned, there had never been any evidence of vandalism during the entire time the project had been running. Stephen (NR) confirmed that they had fewer issues with stations that had "Friends of" schemes in operation.

Hindley is now winning awards for their achievements.

Steve Magner emphasised the need to keep up the momentum and encourage volunteers to work on projects at the station on a regular basis.

Following on from this it was agreed that volunteers would meet again on Sunday 2nd December at 1pm at Westhoughton Station in order to clear the station of litter.

A regular work date was agreed – the first Sunday of each month at 10am. People can come along just for the morning, just the afternoon, or all day. Additional work dates may be added for specific large projects.