

# FORHS AGM 27th September 2021

## Chair's report

So, after all, the 2021 AGM was delayed until September. We had hoped that we would have been back to more 'normal' functioning by May this year but that's not how things turned out. However, we are able to look forward now towards our next projects and we are relieved to be able to hold our first face-to-face meeting in 18 months. This report covers the period December 2020 to September 2021.

### Highlights

Reclaiming and restoring the garden areas at the station after the long periods of no, or severely restricted, activity.

Painting the extensive new fence behind the platform and along both sides of the passenger ramp. We are extremely pleased that Network Rail undertook the work to replace the old fence which was falling down - sections blew down on windy days - and we are keen to help the new fence last as long as possible. We are grateful to Northern for providing the funds for the fence preservative and I thank our volunteers for the many - many - hours of work put into the actual painting.

We have repaired, re-varnished and relocated the murals made by students from Marple Hall High School, some years ago now, to extend their life. They are now on the platform fence near the Hermes collection locker.

New trains! I do hope you have taken the chance to ride the newest rolling stock which runs for part of the timetable. These trains are a vast improvement. It's like travelling in Europe! We have travelled home from London on quite uncomfortable Avanti rolling stock (old pendolinos) and then, in great comfort, completed our journey from Piccadilly to Rose Hill.

Not all the stock is new and even though the older units are more comfortable than the Pacers were, they still show signs of their age.

We have found the carriages well ventilated.

Despite this area of improvement, there are issues around punctuality (see below)

Also, the step distance up/down between the carriage and the platform is an issue, causing difficulty for many people. We were told that a Harrington Hump (a raised section of the platform) was to be installed, to address this problem. Sadly, this plan now appears to be 'on hold' with no indication of when the work might be done.

### Lowlights

It is very regrettable that the current timetable for Rose Hill, on the Hyde Loop is - to put it bluntly - a mess. For part of the day, the service is hourly but there are some half hourly trains. The service is reduced from 29 to 18 per day with peak time trains particularly affected. I have found no rhyme nor reason in when the service is more or less frequent and I have found it impossible to commit to memory. Having a 'clock face' timetable (trains at consistent times before and past the hour) really makes a difference to passengers finding a service usable.

Due to the gaps in the peak time service, we have heard from passengers that people drive to Marple station for a more suitable train. This vastly undermines the environmental benefits provided by a station within reasonable walking distance for passengers.

We have received no information, and certainly no commitments, from Northern about when they will restore our service to the half hourly trains we had before the pandemic led to reduced timetables. Apparently, the driver training programme (for the new rolling stock) is still incomplete and there were ongoing problems of staff illness.

It is likely that continuing reduced passenger numbers lie behind the ongoing reduction in service. Passenger numbers are increasing and, we argue, the uneven and incomplete timetable does nothing to attract passengers back to the railway.

Bringing us to the next, perennial, problem: Not only do we want a clear commitment to the restoration of the timetable as it was at the start of March 2020 but we also require the full evening and Sunday service which we have been producing arguments for and statistical information to support these arguments, for many years.

Yet again, we state that: it seems very likely that there will be no straightforward return to historic 'peak' travel patterns as home working, at least for some days in the week, has been found to have advantages for many. The rail industry seems to accept that the focus for the future should be to provide for leisure travel. Rose Hill, located at the head of the Middlewood Way, is ideally placed to promote such usage, as is the Hyde Loop, following the Peak Forest canal for much of the route. To capitalise on this, a Sunday service is essential.

We point out - yet again - that whenever we work at the station on Sundays, we meet potential passengers, looking for a train.

Although Northern achieved significant improvements in punctuality when fewer passengers were using the trains, there have been some recent problems with signalling, and an incident of damage to a bridge, which led to several delays and some cancellations. We hope these problems were temporary.

## **Looking to the Future**

Regarding the issues about the timetable, be assured that FoRHS will continue to campaign in every relevant forum, to make the points described above. I met recently with William Wragg, our local MP, and he promised to look carefully at the paper we sent to him last year, making the case for the full service to Rose Hill.

He is also, together with the MPs for stations along the Hyde Loop, negotiating with the Department of Transport for a feasibility study regarding a new rail link between Marple and Stockport. We will, of course, want to keep abreast of any developments.

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 will also continue our efforts to develop links within those communities along the Hyde Loop who could play a part in the campaign for a full rail service but do not, currently, have active rail campaigns.

As a follow up to our Community Rail Gold Award in 2020, we have been asked by Community Rail Network (CRN) to contribute to a seminar (Webinar) on Creative Projects and Storytelling which takes place on 12th October 2021. I shall be giving a short presentation about the mural project.

For the station gardens, we will continue to develop the planting, we have plans for some new planters and seating and a group of the gardeners have cleared a bed beyond the cycle shed and hope to improve the soil there to plant roses (our signature flower, of course!)

Plans to plant the area behind the car park are frustrated by the discovery of a cable in the undergrowth, which we understand to be 'live' but none of the authorities is taking responsibility to make it safe.

Excitingly, we now have prints of Eamonn Murphy's art work ready to install on the platform fence - as are in place at Marple and Romiley stations and some other stations in the Stockport area. We are hopeful of arranging an event to welcome these. We are very aware that the pandemic is not over. We will discuss possible plans at the committee meeting.

We are also preparing to gather an Oral History about past use of the M,B&M (Rose Hill to Macclesfield) line and about current use of the station, the Middlewood way and the route towards Manchester. A small subgroup has prepared protocols and is investigating where the history can be stored before we launch the collection of stories phase.

## **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.

Rachel Singer  
Chair, the Friends of Rose Hill Station  
September 2021