

South Fylde Line

Chairman's Report

This is a slightly different report than normal bearing in mind the events over the last 12 months. Everything has been turned upside down with the message *don't travel* and yet we're geared up to encouraging everyone to use the railway. However, that said, lots of things have happened along the line despite the pandemic.

We welcomed Caroline Holden our new Community Rail Development Officer who has made several stations visits during the year but still hasn't been allowed in the CRL office! The Scrubs Project, involving volunteers along the line making essential medical clothing for hospitals and Healthcare settings won an Award and national recognition for their work at the virtual Community Network Event in December.

There has also been good news concerning **Restoring Your Railway** and matters are progressing with regards to a passing loop that would give improve service frequency. Unfortunately, there are still lots of hurdles ahead before we see the 'Orange Army' in action.

Volunteer groups have continued to work within the restrictions on their stations and considerable planning and preparatory work has taken place behind the scenes.

St Anne's station was decked out in Christmas trees made from wooden pallets to bring some festive spirit to the line and the trees spread to Ansdell and Squires Gate. Several stations also managed to acknowledge Remembrance with displays of 'Silent Soldiers'.

Considerable work has taken place along the disused platform at Squires Gate – there appears to be no stopping the enthusiasm of the volunteers there.

Material for History Posters has been prepared with Ansdell being the first to have theirs on display including an official launched with everyone 'masked up'. Moss Side's has been completed and Squires Gate and St Anne's are to follow. The Hidden Gems project at St Anne's is also coming to fruition.

Meetings have taken place with community groups and representatives of organisations along the line, discussions are taking place about artwork displays at Blackpool South and Kirkham & Wesham. A Railway Walk is in preparation at Kirkham & Wesham too.

Despite the pandemic, the South Fylde Line has had a very good year and the best-ever train performance figures for a very long time.

Tony Ford

