

South Fylde Line AGM – May 2023

Chairman's Report

If I was to detail everything that has taken place on the South Fylde Line over the last year I'm afraid I'd be here all day so apologies if I miss out events or people but I'll just pick out a few highlights.

I'll get the one negative out of the way first:

Disappointed about some of the interruptions to service – not just by the strikes but by crew shortages which result in cancelled or short-running trains. It is no surprise that these events are causing rail users to lose confidence and we read moans about the service online and hear about them when we are at the station.

From now on its all positive..... on the plus side passenger numbers and patronage are up and we are one of the best-performing routes in the western area post COVID. Overall though I think the change to what is effectively a shuttle service is paying dividends and overall we are enjoying improved reliability. (Odd glitch last weekend.....)

Great support from Owain & Martin and Mick – yes there are odd tensions but in the main, we have a very harmonious relationship which benefits every station group and ultimately the passengers. New planters have been funded and several adoption groups have received grant funding for projects (Ansdell & St Anne's come to mind).

The accompanying series of slides shows the extent, variety and diversity of events and activities that have taken place along the line. History posters, the St Anne's Foundation Stone, painting, litter collection and links with other community groups ie Stitch together Kirkham, Ansdell Primary School, In Bloom, UR Potential, Wesleys Larder, the Mayoralty and the Moments Cafe show how much of a **community railway line** we are.

We have supported national events such as the Queen's Jubilee and the King's Coronation with Community Rail Week coming soon after when the much-acclaimed Shifting Sands exhibition comes to the SFL.

St . Anne's Station adopters are planning events to mark their station's 150th Anniversary later in the year. Already the group have done something every month and are looking forward to a guided Railway Walk, a birthday party and the burying of a time capsule in the coming months.

The SFL has been well supported by all three local councils and Community Rail Lancashire whether through grants, awards or help in kind.

We have benefitted from increased media coverage which has enhanced the line's standing in the communities it serves.

A lot has been achieved but there is always more to do. I'd like to thank all our station adopters and volunteers for the magnificent work they do to provide colourful welcoming stations along the South Fylde Line.