

NORTH EAST INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE NETWORK MEETING	Friday 10th March 2023, 11:00-12:30 Zoom
SESSION 1	
Dr Mike Nevell, Industrial Heritage Support Officer for England	<p>Since 2012, Historic England has funded the Industrial Heritage Support Office post – this will continue until March 2025.</p> <p>The project aims were revised in 2022 and now include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide support and promote best practice • To promote partnership working across the different industrial heritage sites • To provide strategic leadership, post pandemic • To gather data on all the different sites across England • To develop and implement sustainability for the project beyond 2025 • To assess all wind and watermills in England <p>All ten regional industrial heritage networks are now up and running. It is hoped that an in-person meeting will be held for each network within the next 12 months. In-person meetings will be hosted at a members site and include an online hybrid element to allow members to join who are unable to travel. Online meetings will also continue.</p> <p>The online presence of the project has been expanded – it now includes: Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, two websites (which will eventually be merged into a single site) and regular e-bulletins.</p> <p>Mike is currently mapping theme sites across England – the final maps will be available to everyone once complete.</p> <p>Two online seminars are planned for 2023, around the topics of: Heritage Crime; and Climate Change & Net Zero.</p> <p>Data and information is also being gathered on the challenges within the sector. One such threat is the cost of living crisis – as well as increasing resource costs (power, coal etc), people are struggling to visit due to the rising costs.</p> <p>A copy of Mike’s PowerPoint presentation will be circulated with the minutes.</p>
SESSION 2	
<p>The attendees each introduced themselves and the organisations they represented. They described the challenges they are facing and how their sites are coping post-pandemic.</p>	
Leona White-Hannant & Alison Grange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Darlington Railway Museum had a good year last year, with visitor numbers better than pre-covid. • It is encouraging that visitor numbers are so high, even though there is an admission fee. It does offer an annual pass and daily activities for visitors. • The site is currently closed while it undergoes a £35M redevelopment – it will reopen in June 2024. • When it reopens, admission will be free. Although these costs will need to be found elsewhere, the museum felt that free access was important for the local

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	<p>community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The museum is bringing in other council owned buildings including listed buildings on the site, with the aim of restoring them so they can be removed from the Risk Register. All organisations within these buildings will be moved to other buildings on the site. • Volunteer numbers have suffered – many didn't return after the pandemic (due to changing priorities). • Overall in-person volunteer numbers are down but digital volunteers are up – the volunteer programme for transcribing (working at home) has a waiting list of volunteers eager to join in. • The site is planning to recruit more on-site volunteers when it reopens and will have a volunteer and training coordinator role.
Hannah Bryan & Emily Toth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has been difficult to return to pre-pandemic levels – the Victoria Tunnel had its best year in 2019. • The biggest challenge is the tour group size – previously it was up to 20 people but it now only 12 • There are good returns from school visits • A wider range of schools are now booking visits – it used to be mainly local schools within walking distance of the site, but more are now booking and visiting via coach trips. • The outdoor walks programme was started during the pandemic – bookings for this have increased and the site is looking to develop the programme. • The number of digital volunteers (researchers) has remained static, but the number of tunnel tour-guides is less – this could be due to a lack of confidence. • Within the last 6 months, the age demographic of volunteers has changed with younger people coming forward. Many work full time during the week but are volunteering at weekends – some have actively chosen in-person volunteering as working from home means they have little in-person contact with others during the rest of the week.
Andie Harris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the AONB, only 6 members of staff are core-funded – the rest are project funded. • The AONB is developing lead mines projects to encourage a sense of place, engaging people with the lead mine landscape and encouraging them to get out into the Pennines. • There are also levelling-up projects – providing buses and waterproofs for children, so everyone has equal ability to visit the landscape • Issues across the AONB include erosion and zinc (which can be an issue as it's soluble). • The AONB has a large group of volunteers across the Pennines – they carry out a range of duties from maintenance to looking after plants over the winter months. • The introduction of a new online system may have impacted the number of overall volunteers, as individuals have to actively opt-in

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Winifred Stokes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The County Durham Forum for History and Heritage is an umbrella organisation, rather than a visitor site – Winifred will report back what’s been discussed at the meeting to the rest of the forum. 	
Any Other Comments		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mike is actively looking for a venue/site to host a future network meeting in late summer/early autumn – any volunteers should get in contact with Mike. 		

ATTENDEES:	
Hannah Bryan	Ouseburn Trust
Alison Grange	Darlington Railway Museum
Andie Harris	North Pennines AONB
Winifred Stokes	County Durham Forum for History & Heritage
Emily Toth	Ouseburn Trust
Leona White-Hannant	Darlington Railway Museum