



## May 2019 Update

Friends of Appledore Station is a Community Interest Group, made up of Volunteers from Appledore/Appledore Heath and neighbouring villages.

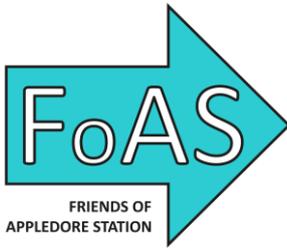
The FoAS Volunteers are a mix of individuals and couples, some retired, some still working full or part time, who allocate their time to achieving the aims of improving the Image of Appledore Station by providing a more attractive, user friendly facility and thereby encourage an increase in the usage of the Marshlink Line. Some of the Volunteers are regular or occasional users of the rail service from Appledore Station. There are now some 20 Members of the FoAS.

Formation was encouraged by Ashford Borough Council and Sussex Community Rail Partnership, (who have both provided initial funding), via Appledore Parish Council, the latter having a nominated representative as a Volunteer Member of FoAS. Support and encouragement has also been forthcoming from GTR-Southern.

Much of the activity of the FoAS during the winter months has been directed to the practical tidying up of the station and immediate surrounding area, (rubbish and vegetation), leading to the recent installation of planters along the platforms. A rota of FoAS Volunteers is being established to ensure that the planters are regularly watered and tended to.



FoAS is about to embark upon a sponsorship drive amongst local businesses with the assurance that their support will be duly and boldly recognised on the planters.



Further work is intended, to tidy up alongside the pathway to the Appledore to Hastings platform, followed by seeding with wild flowers, as well as finishing off the de-vegetation of the enclosed, secure area provided for FoAS storage.

To progress the image enhancement, FoAS continue to press Network Rail to complete the trackside clearance project that was identified and pushed for last year. FoAS have a commitment that the remaining detritus will be removed on the next maintenance visit to Appledore Station; date(s) TBA.

The priority issue repeatedly identified by commuters and occasional users of the Marshlink Line is the lack of parking. Some local residents continue to regularly park one or more vehicles in the station car park, which prevents the users of the Marshlink Line from using the car park. This inconsiderate behaviour also discourages neighbouring villages to use Appledore as their local station, resulting in rail travellers driving to a station where they are assured of available parking. It is particularly frustrating to drive to Appledore Station only to find that you have to drive off to another station to begin your rail journey, often arriving at the destination later than intended.

Payment for parking is still likely to be introduced by Saba, (parking management company appointed by GTR), during 2019. However, no firm date has been set and it is unclear whether this will resolve the above mentioned issue. Meanwhile fines are being applied for parking outside of the appropriately marked bays,

Whilst Network Rail sold off the leasehold rights for the Old Goods Shed to The Arch Company, NR retain the freehold ownership for the main station building which is currently part of the franchise arrangement with GTR-Southern. FoAS are pursuing the possibility of NR releasing GTR-Southern from their obligations for the building and use their Heritage Fund to refurbish the building and in turn grant access to the Appledore community, to use the facility for the benefit of the village.

The regrettable installation of monster camera structures, either side of the track, was described by Network Rail as 'necessary to combat incidents of drivers jumping the stop signal'. No evidence has been forthcoming to substantiate this reasoning and the station is left with two ugly blots on the landscape.



GTR have recently announced the creation of a Passenger Benefit Fund, (approx. £15 Million), to provide tangible benefits to rail passengers in return for the significant disruption and inconvenience they have suffered. This was not a voluntary act by GTR but in response to the requirements of the Secretary of State for Transport.

Monies have been allocated on a proportional basis, with decisions on spend to be made at a local level. Appledore has been allocated £30K. Suggestions on deployment of funds are to be coordinated via the Sussex Community Rail Partnership, (SCRIP). Sadly GTR will retain responsibility for appointing contractors to undertake whatever work is to be done. This means that the 'bang for bucks' will certainly be less than if managed at the local level, albeit that there would be a host of issues to contend with were inexperienced contract management undertaken.

There is discussion ongoing on whether the Marshlink Line stations should combine by pooling the allocated funds to maximise passenger benefits.

## **Improvements Wish List**

### Targeted Short Term Improvements

- ◆ Additional Platform Seating
- ◆ Additional Cycle Storage
  - ◆ Secure Storage Preferred
- ◆ Additional Notice Board
  - ◆ Westbound Platform
- ◆ Signage to/from Station to Village(s)
- ◆ Rebrand as Appledore Station – Pathway to the Romney Marsh Villages
- ◆ Installation of a Defibrillator
- ◆ Cigarette Butt Receptacles
- ◆ Display Units of Bus Timetable & Taxi Service Contact Details
- ◆ Refurbishment of Secure Storage Area
- ◆ Replacement of Station Building Window & Door Panels
  - ◆ Weatherproof Panels with Pictures/Photographs of Local Scenes

### Targeted Longer Term Improvements

- ◆ Expanded Car Parking
- ◆ Establishment of a Unisex/Disabled Toilet Facility
- ◆ Total Refurbishment of the Station Building
  - ◆ Community Multi-Use e.g. Heritage Centre, Parish Magazine Production Centre, Art Club HQ and Display Area etc.
  - ◆ Interim Improvement by Replacement Door & Window Panels
- ◆ Improved Public Transport to/from Station to Village
- ◆ Foot/Cycle Path to/from Village to Station

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