

BRANCH LIAISON OFFICER

Irene Rabbitts, 34 Victory Park Road, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 2AZ

Telephone: 01932 855015

e-mail: liaison@rcts.org.uk

Officers' Newsletter 212

30 April 2022

Dear All

Welcome to Newsletter 212 which is mostly about Regional Meetings.

Regional Meetings

These are planned to take place during May and June this year with dates and venues now confirmed for three out of the five. The reason for publishing the table now, although it is incomplete, is that the first is due to take place in just over a week which means that it is essential to publish the agenda and accompanying notes now.

Trustee representatives are being appointed for each meeting and the format for that item on the agenda is slightly different this year. In previous years, the Trustee or Management Committee representative was given a brief to work to with set subjects to include for presentation to the meeting that they attended. Partly due to lack of time and partly because of the extraordinary circumstances since the last Regional Meetings held in 2019, there is no set brief this year. Instead, we have included 'Ask the Trustee' on the Agenda and it means exactly that – ask anything you like, including the National Action Points from the 2019 meetings – published with Officers Newsletter 180, and any other questions that you may have for your national representative. It is intended as a 'no holds barred' item and if your representative does not have the answers, they are asked to find out if possible, either replying themselves to the branches in the group or to provide me - as Branch Liaison - with the questions/answers and I will complete the feed-back. This is all part of the two-way communication between branches, the regions and the centre to help improve relationships and share expertise and ideas in both directions. The beauty of having different trustees at each region – preferably not covering their own branch area, means that each will be different and bring their own skills and field of expertise to a new group of people.

You will see below on the next page, the table as it stands for this year's Regional Meetings with 'tbc' (to be confirmed) in place where confirmation of the details is still outstanding.

The Agenda and Accompanying Notes are attached as Appendix 1.

The late John Cowlshaw

Those of you who have been involved with Regional Meetings in the past will notice the absence of the long serving Chairman and Secretary of the Midland and North Western Group - John Cowlshaw, who passed away earlier this month. John was a gentleman and will be sadly missed for all that he contributed to the Society, both to his branch – Merseyside, Cheshire and North Wales (MC&NW), the Midland and North Western Regional Meeting, and as an Image Editor for the RO amongst others. Details on the MC&NW Branch pages of the website: <https://rcts.org.uk/branches/branch-mcn-merseyside-cheshire-north-wales/>

Regional Meeting venues, dates, times

	GREAT WESTERN	LONDON & SOUTH	NORTHERN HOME COUNTIES	MIDLAND & NORTH WESTERN	EMNESH
LOCATION	59 Kenmore Crescent Filton Park BRISTOL BS7 0TP	Meeting Room Maybury Centre 27 Board School Road WOKING GU21 5HD	Digswell Village Church Warren Way DIGSWELL AL6 0DH	Waverley Hotel 9 Pedley Street CREWE CW2 7AA (tbc)	Edmondson Room National Railway Museum, YORK (tbc)
DATE	18 June 2022	14 May 2022	07 May 2022	tbc	tbc
TIME	12noon	11.00	11.00	tbc	tbc
TRUSTEE ATTENDEE	tbc	tbc	Irene Rabbitts	tbc	tbc
CHAIRMAN	Brian Arman (secretary Stewart Jolly)	Jeremy Harrison (secretary Geoff May)	Robert Warburton (secretary David Elsdon)	tbc (secretary Paul Treby)	Malcolm Hammond (secretary Tony Skinner)

Great Western Railway Bristol; Cheltenham; Thames Valley; South Wales; West of England

London & South Chichester; Croydon & South London; Solent; Surrey; Windsor & Maidenhead

Northern Home Counties
Watford Cambridge; Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City; Ipswich; Milton Keynes; Northampton; Peterborough; South Essex;

Midland & North Western Furness, Lakes & Lune; Lancashire & North West; Merseyside, Cheshire & North Wales; West Midlands

EMNESH East Midlands; Humberside; North East; Scottish; Sheffield; West Riding

Regional Meetings continued

Since I took on the role of Branch Liaison, we have still not quite managed 100% branch representation in person although there has been good feed-back on the subjects covered by the agenda where a branch has not been able to attend.

Please will all regional secretaries/chairmen ensure that details of the arrangements for the day are circulated to the branches in their region in good time before the meeting if you have not already done so. I have no doubt there will be engineering work somewhere on the network so the usual care is advised when checking train times for attending meetings – you know your area best. If you are already aware in advance of the meeting who is likely to attend, please let me know as this would be really helpful.

2022 Minutes

Minutes should be printed in Arial 11 point font and sent as an attachment to an e-mail to liaison@rcts.org.uk which will make the task of compiling five sets of minutes in to one Summary Document easier. It also makes the compilation easier if they are sent as a Microsoft Word document in .doc, .docx or .rtf format and **NOT** as a pdf.

Please ensure that the minutes are paragraphed to contain the relevant information for the topics discussed as per the agenda as this also makes compilation of the Summary Document much easier and saves considerable time. See Newsletter 180 for the 2019 Regional Meetings Summary and Précis if you would like to refer back to the last set of outcomes. Please would the Group Chairmen/Secretaries have all the minutes ready for collation by Branch Liaison as soon as possible after the meeting and not later than Monday 18 July 2019.

Any queries or problems please let me know so that we can try to resolve them quickly.

Kind regards and thank you for all your help.

Irene

Appendix 1

REGIONAL MEETINGS 2022 – AGENDA

Branch Liaison

Irene Rabbitts, 34 Victory Park Road, Addlestone KT15 2AZ
Telephone: 01932 855015 email: liaison@rcts.org.uk

- 1 Welcome by Chairman and introduction of Delegates
- 2 Apologies for absence
- 3 Minutes of Local Regional Meeting 2019
- 4 Matters arising from Local Minutes not covered by the Agenda
- 5 2019 Regional Meetings National Action Points
- 6 Matters arising from 2019 National Action Points
- 7 Branch Presentations – comparing how each branch has coped during the pandemic and over the last three years since the last Regional Meetings in 2019 – see note (i)
- 8 a) Training sessions for branch/potential branch officers (like those set up previously for branch treasurers) – see note (ii)
- 8 b) Owning the branch pages of the new website – see note (iii)
- 9 Branch contributions to the RO
 - a) branch fixture reports – see note (iv)
 - b) branch RO area correspondent – see note (v)
- 10 Branch Newsletters/bulletins – circulating to members. Groups.io versus Mailjet – see note (vi)
- 11 Branches, community rail partnerships, local TOCs – see note (vii)
- 12 Minimum numbers for Branch AGMs – see note (viii)
- 13 ‘Ask the Trustee’ – including the 2019 National Action Points – see note (ix)
- 14 Confirmation of Chairman and Secretary for next year for those Regional Meetings where this is to change either by rotation between the branches or because of retirement
- 15 Any Other Business
- 16 Date, time and place of next meeting

Notes to go with the 2022 Regional Meetings Agenda

(i) The last three years, particularly 2020 and 2021, have been especially difficult for everyone so each branch is asked to prepare a short presentation for sharing with the meeting on what has worked, how they have kept in touch with branch members/guests, what has not worked, new opportunities (eg virtual meetings), returning to physical meetings/hybrid meetings. You can share the highs and lows and any best practice that has come from the experience.

We would like each Region to provide a short presentation to take to the Officers Conference (OC) on 23 October 2022. The discussion at the OC last year included some of this information and was a lot more interactive and interesting than some recent OCs have been. So please bring forward what you have discovered. You will need to delegate one or preferably two who may be attending this year's OC.

(ii) Being asked to take on a branch committee role with no experience of what this entails as an RCTS branch member can be daunting for some. The Officers Handbook provides some detail but there is quite a lot of flexibility with the roles within each branch according to volunteer skills and availability. Please discuss. If there is sufficient interest then we may be able to take this idea further.

(iii) We would like branches to take 'ownership' of their branch pages and some have already done a great job with doing so, but we would like every branch to have the confidence to do this for themselves. Specific areas of responsibility are: welcome words for non-members; adding and editing calendar entries for meetings; uploading images; and publishing meeting reports online. There are already notes on the Members' Pages of the website to help anyone who is posting information on behalf of their branch. However, if there are gaps in what people would like to know, or specific details on additional help that would be useful, please list this so that we can look at filling those gaps. If specific training sessions are required, these could be done remotely via Zoom so it may be possible to set some up in the future as I understand that initial efforts in this direction were very successful.

(iv) From time to time there is discussion on branch fixture reports in the RO. At the moment there is a very tight word limit of 200 words. Is this the right length bearing in mind the space constraints and deadlines for publication? Please discuss. I am not making any promises but would be happy to ask if there is sufficient support for a change.

(v) I have been asked to find out if there is support for re-creating what used to be a branch RO correspondent to encourage branch members to report items either through the branch correspondent or directly to the appropriate RO editor. This has not been done for some time but could enhance local information appearing in the RO. Please discuss.

(vi) Having a large circulation list for emails can cause complications as many email service providers limit the number of addresses that can be included at any one time. There are different possible solutions available within the Society for example using groups.io or using Mailjet. Groups.io requires people to actively sign up, having been sent an invitation, and can be used for members and non-members alike. Mailjet works from our membership list, and is best NOT used for non-members. There could be help available with either option.

(vii) Is there a community rail partnership in your area and do you have any contact with your local TOC? Have you considered that it might be a mutually beneficial arrangement to become involved in your local community rail partnership or a stakeholder in your local TOC? We are railway enthusiasts with good knowledge of railways as well as being users of railway services so we have something to offer as well as useful contacts to gain. Please discuss.

(viii) There is currently no set number for a branch AGM to be quorate which allows maximum flexibility. Any restriction to this flexibility might cause difficulties. Please discuss the pros and cons.

(ix) Ask anything you like, including about the National Action Points from the 2019 meetings.