

BRANCH LIAISON OFFICER

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Officers' Newsletter 218

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Dear All

First and foremost I hope you all had an excellent Christmas and I wish you a very Happy New Year.

Regional Meetings

The first item of this Officers' Newsletter is about Regional Meetings. Unfortunately, branch representation was not as good in 2022 as it had been before the pandemic. I know there were a number of reasons for that but, this year, I hope we can do better.

We have managed full participation by **ALL** branches sometimes in the past, either by attendance in person or by a considered response to the agenda, and it would be good to achieve that again this year. It is really important, in my opinion, that all branches have the opportunity to take part and make their views known. It is also an excellent opportunity to share good practice as well as talk to one of the Trustees in person. This, especially, is about closing any gap that branches may feel between them and the 'centre' in the form of the Board of Trustees. I cannot promise that all issues raised will be dealt with but managing to resolve at least some of them is a positive. Good ideas can come out of these meetings that can contribute to the RCTS as a whole for the benefit of all of us and, ultimately, help us to meet our objectives as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

If you are having difficulties with Regional Meetings either as a branch or as a regional group, please let me know now so that we have time to try and resolve any issues in good time before this year's round of meetings is scheduled to take place. These are usually held in May, June or early July depending on local circumstances.

The Regional Meetings Summary from 2022 and the much shorter two page précis are both attached to this newsletter as Appendices 1 and 2 respectively. Comments welcome.

Coordinator for the annual Members Weekend starting in 2023

You may or may not know that I have been involved in helping organise a number of these events in recent years. From the first one I attended before getting personally involved, I have enjoyed the programme of activities and would like to see them continue so that others can enjoy them too. Originally, they were organised by individual branches (my first one with my own branch in 2007) and then by a small team of volunteers (from 2012 to 2019) which is how I became more involved. However, we need a Coordinator to take on the task of overseeing the organisation of this event

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going forward, and you will probably have seen the item in Running Lines in the January 2023 *Railway Observer (RO)*. Help and support will be available. It does involve some work but it can also be great fun.

This is just a quick prompt for anyone who may be interested in becoming involved. You do not have to currently be a Society Officer to take on this role (you do need to be a member) so anyone receiving this Officers' Newsletter, please share this with friends and colleagues within the Society and, in the case of branches, with your branch members. Please contact me if you are interested in finding out more either as an individual or as a branch.

Zoom and Hybrid meetings – charge or donation for attending?

A number of branches have run Zoom meetings or hybrid in-person/Zoom meetings and the issue of donations for attending remotely has been raised. It is much easier to successfully request donations from people attending a meeting in person, than it is for those attending virtually. It costs money to run meetings of any sort but particularly for hybrid meetings where venue hire etc have to be taken into account as well as a contribution towards the Zoom licence. If more people attend remotely with fewer in person then the level of donations is often reduced which is a real financial issue for some branches. This is particularly noticeable after the pandemic when individual branch finances were hit quite hard in many cases.

A trial is being run to allow charging for remote access to hybrid meetings rather than simply requesting donations. A charge rather than a requested donation may put some people off attending remotely, and charges are liable for VAT whereas donations do not attract VAT. Because of the financial implications, the possible effect on remote attendances, and the need to make sure we have a robust process in place, a pilot is being run by Windsor & Maidenhead and Surrey Branches for their next few hybrid meetings to see what is/is not feasible. We will let you know the outcome of the pilot once it has been completed.

RCTS Standard Series Volume 4 – The 9F 2-10-0 Class.

According to the annual Branch returns, some branches are still holding stocks, albeit small in numbers, of this title. As the RCTS is running out of stock centrally and we are still getting orders, could we ask those branches still with copies of this book to securely pack them up and return them to our central store. The address for this is David Bird, 16 Welby Close, Maidenhead SL6 3PY.

And Finally.....

In summary, we have continuity from Regional Meetings in 2022 to Regional Meetings in 2023, a request for a volunteer to take on the role of Members' Weekend Coordinator, trialling charging for remote access, particularly for hybrid meetings, to help branch finances going forward and a request for branches to return any remaining copies of BR Standards Volume 4.

Here's looking forward to a happy and prosperous 2023.

Kind regards and best wishes for the coming year.

Irene

Appendix 1 - 2022 Regional Meetings Summary

Introduction

This is the first series of Regional Meetings since 2019 so it was more important than ever for branches to have the change to get together to discuss any issues that they might have, to compare notes on what has or has not worked since the pandemic struck and activities were curtailed, and to see how things are going now that the situation is getting back to 'normal'.

1 Present and Apologies

Great Western – branches represented: Bristol; Cheltenham; South Wales; Thames Valley. Apologies from West of England Branch. Trustee representative: Matthew Shaw

London & South – branches represented: Chichester; Solent; Surrey; Windsor & Maidenhead. Not represented: Croydon & South London. South East Branch has closed so is no longer included. Trustee representative: Andy Davies

Midland & North West - unfortunately, due to the sad loss of John Cowlshaw earlier this year, the Midland and North West Regional meeting did not go ahead as he was the key person for that group and we were unable to set up alternative arrangements in the time available.

Northern Home Counties – branches represented: Cambridge; Hitchin; Ipswich; Watford. Not represented: Milton Keynes; Northampton; Peterborough; South Essex. Trustee representative: Irene Rabbitts

WREMESH – all branches represented: East Midlands; Humberside; North East; Scottish; Sheffield; West Riding. Trustee representative: Richard Morris

Trustee comments/Action Points

It is not entirely clear if some branches had or had not tendered apologies so they have been recorded as not represented. This is not as good a record of branch attendance as in 2019 so there is work to be done to ensure that all branches are included and can have their say next year.

2 Matters Arising from Local Minutes not covered by the Agenda

Great Western	None
London & South	Discussion re the new website - some initial specific problems now improved; still primarily designed for members rather than non-members; should the site more clearly articulate the Society's ethos and vision.
Midland & North Western	Not applicable
Northern Home Counties	Updates to Officers Handbook to be published
WREMESH	None

Trustee comments/Action Points

All minutes agreed with updates to Officers Handbook awaited. Task for Branch Liaison to prioritise once other current tasks have been completed.

3 Action Points from 2019 Regional Meetings and Matters Arising

Great Western The Officers Handbook is now available on the website and all branch officers should be able to access it. Matthew Shaw as Trustee representative confirmed that feedback would be welcomed and he would discuss updates with Irene Rabbits. An induction process for new officers would be welcome which could include an introduction to the Officers Handbook.

London & South National Action Points had been covered under Item 2 above.

Midland & North Western Not applicable

Northern Home Counties Some items had been put on hold due to the pandemic whilst others are in hand. There are still issues surrounding the recruitment of new members with the majority of Branches. Long service awards to nominated members has been discussed and updated.

WREMESH Updated Officers Handbook will be in digital format.

Trustee comments/Action Points

Branches are advised that updated branch member lists are sent out at least once a year but additional updates can be requested as required eg if there is a change to the person at the branch responsible for the list – usually the branch secretary. The new format for the Regional Meetings summary has been accepted. The formal complaints procedure has been reinstated in the Society Rules. The new Society Structure was put to and accepted by members at the delayed Society AGM in 2020.

4 Branch Presentations

Great Western

Three of the four branches represented had successfully used Zoom during the pandemic whilst the fourth had not had the resources to do so. All branches had kept in touch with branch members throughout. Those using Zoom either plan to incorporate Zoom into their regular fixture programme or were considering hybrid meetings which requires good WiFi which is an issue at some venues. This will help cater for those who cannot attend face to face meetings. All had returned to face to face meetings and some had canvassed for member preferences about meeting type (ie in person, zoom or hybrid); attendances were still generally below pre-pandemic levels although there were signs of a gradual increase in numbers. One branch noticed higher numbers of visitors at face to face meetings but lower numbers of members attending. Book sales have been on-going during the pandemic for South Wales Branch via Ebay and at in-person meetings for Bristol Branch. Bristol have large stocks of second hand books for sale and offered to share, said offer being taken up by South Wales. Both South Wales and Thames Valley Branches are working on building good relationships within the railway industry for the benefit of members and the Society more widely. Other initiatives at South Wales include working with Facebook group 'Railways in South Wales' to try and attract younger members. Bristol Branch has had to change its indoor meeting venue.

London & South

All branch activities had been curtailed in early 2020 because of the pandemic but three of the four branches represented had held virtual meetings and the support received from Croydon & South London Branch in setting these up initially was given a special mention and had been greatly appreciated. All branches have returned to face to face meetings with some trialling hybrid meetings which had highlighted a few technical issues still to be fully resolved. There were concerns about lower numbers attending in person and thus donations, especially for hybrid meetings which, in some instances, appeared to be discouraging in-person attendance. There was a request to make more information available to branches about online donations to individual branches. There were concerns that meeting costs were not being covered. Chichester Branch has had to change meeting venue which seems to be working well even though there is now a cost whereas the previous venue was free. Solent Branch are also faced with seeking a new venue as the current one is due to close. The membership is dispersed which is a difficulty although the overall consensus is to continue to meet in Eastleigh. Attendance at exhibitions has been adversely affected by pandemic restrictions with the knock-on effect on branch finances. Two branches in particular mentioned the difficulty of recruiting new committee members.

Midland & North Western

Not applicable.

Northern Home Counties

Two of the four branches represented had held Zoom meetings with help from David Jackman and Jeremy Harrison with Watford starting as early as June 2020. The other two branches did not do so but remained in contact periodically with their members. All have returned to face to face meetings now, although there have been problems with speakers cancelling, due to pandemic concerns, requiring alternative arrangements at short notice. Some branches started live meetings in Autumn 2021 but reverted to Zoom because of poor in-person attendance due to another wave of the pandemic. Face to face meetings were resumed again in March 2022. Ipswich Branch has now returned to evening indoor meetings except between November and February when they will hold them in the afternoon instead. There have been branch newsletters during the pandemic, some more frequent than others. Cambridge has recruited a new committee member to take care of their branch web pages and Hitchin has now ensured that its monthly branch newsletters are uploaded onto their branch web pages. Hitchin also reported attendance at face to face meetings is down at both venues. Hitchin has just attended its first exhibition in two years.

WREMESH

All branches in the group were represented and all had had to cancel meetings because of the pandemic from the first lockdown in March 2020. Three of the six branches ran Zoom meetings. All have now returned to face to face meetings although numbers are still down from pre-pandemic levels. Scottish Branch used to hold joint meetings with the SRPS pre-pandemic but there have been some communication issues with SRPS members not receiving notice from their own committee that RCTS Scottish Branch have restarted indoor meetings. At least four of the branches have issues with recruiting new committee members with some current members either retiring or wishing to retire. Those branches who previously did exhibitions have returned to doing so with the exception of North East Branch who have an excellent record of supporting the branch financially with book sales. Unfortunately, they too need new committee members to take on the work both for exhibitions and to restart

Newcastle meetings which had to close due to a lack of new volunteers coming forward to run them. On a brighter note, indoor meetings have restarted at the Darlington venue. Some exhibitions have returned better than others. Humberside have low membership but run two meeting venues with attendance of half members and half non-members however, the age profile is a concern. The branch no longer has a sales stand.

Trustee Comments/Action Points

It is apparent from the above that most if not all branches have concerns about an aging membership, recruiting new committee members, and numbers attending face to face meetings generally not yet up to pre-pandemic levels; there are concerns about a reduced level of donations for zoom or hybrid meetings which will affect the financial viability of indoor meetings. On a brighter note, help and support from Jeremy Harrison (and Croydon & South London Branch) and David Jackman in starting Zoom meetings during the pandemic in 2020 has been greatly appreciated. Branches are keen to have better information about donations for branch virtual meetings.

Action Point – ILR to discuss with the finance team about better reporting of donations for virtual meetings to enable branches to manage their meeting budgets more efficiently.

5 a) Training sessions for branch/potential branch officers

Great Western

Training sessions for branch/potential branch officers (like those set up previously for branch treasurers). There was agreement that training would be useful. The Officers' Handbook would be a useful starting point (see section 6), and specific topics felt to be of value were i) the running of Branch meetings, particularly regarding the generation of a welcoming atmosphere for attendees, and ii) safeguarding of younger and otherwise vulnerable members and visitors. It was suggested that the Members' Weekend would provide an opportunity for a short training session each year with many Officers gathered in one location. BA as Society President offered to facilitate training sessions with Branch Committees or new Officers.

London & South

The concept of training sessions was considered potentially useful for the roles of Treasurer, IT web support and Branch Secretary but questions were posed over the cost-effectiveness of any formal training. Several of those present commented that Zoom could be a relevant medium in this regard, particularly at committee changeover time that usually happened post Branch AGMs.

Midlands & North Western

Not applicable

Northern Home Counties

It was generally agreed that any training sessions were always useful.

WREMNESSH

It was agreed that learning had been piecemeal and usually happened after individuals had taken up branch officer roles. The conclusion was that the first step would best be to have a Zoom presentation and group session with each branch encouraging those who would like to take part to come forward.

5 b) Owning the Branch pages of the website

Great Western

Matthew Shaw (Trustee representative at this meeting) emphasised the importance of the Branch web page as its 'shop window', 'selling' both the Branch and the Society to potential new members. Several specific Branches nationally were commended for their use of photographs and Branch newsletters to enhance their web pages, and all present were encouraged to take a look and emulate where possible.

Suggestions from around the table regarding possible new features within the Society website were discussed, with comments from MS with the Society perspective. Suggestions included:

- a) An area for members to store and display their own digital images (similarly to websites such as 'Flickr'), with the added benefit that these pages could become a source of material for the Society Archive. **Comment:** The Society has a project ongoing to look holistically at its approach to digital photographic archiving, details likely to be communicated from next year. Digitisation of slides and negatives is an expensive and time-consuming process, such that resource would not presently be available to examine members' images for inclusion in the archive.
- b) A 'gen group' for members to post sightings, forthcoming interesting workings etc. **Comment:** Experience with the Society online Members Forum (recently discontinued) showed that there was insufficient critical mass within just the membership to provide fluent discussions and maintain interest.
- c) A page on which members could advertise items for sale or to be given away. Many members have railway ephemera which are sufficiently interesting to be preserved but are of no financial value and often have to be disposed of. **Comment:** it was suggested that members use 'RCTS News' for this purpose.

London & South

It was felt that this had generally worked well not least because Webmaster Matthew Shaw had been very helpful in responding to any queries. The issue of back-up to the main person in the branch was raised and it was proposed that every branch should have at least two people able to update the relevant pages on the site.

Midland & North Western

Not applicable

Northern Home Counties

This issue affects some Branches, in some cases it is the same old problem about getting volunteers with computer skills to help amongst ageing members.

Comment: Please ask the webmaster/digital officer for help in getting started.

WREMNESSH

There was some lack of awareness of there being a new website. Richard Morris (Trustee representative) explained that Matthew Shaw had done what was necessary. The meeting disagreed with this, expressing the view that there had been an on-line training session which did not cover everything. All agreed with or accepted what had been said, and that more comprehensive instructions from the webmaster were necessary.

6 Branch contributions to the RO

6 a) Branch Fixtures reports

Great Western

All were happy with the present limit of 200 words; no-one saw it as inhibiting the content.

London & South

The general consensus was that the existing 200 word limit was about right and encouraged both brevity and succinctness.

Midland & North Western

Not applicable

Northern Home Counties

Branch fixture reports in the RO are limited to 200 words and are often amended to suit. A suggestion was put forward that a word increase to 250 words per fixture report would be helpful and some re-formatting would make for easier reading.

WREMNESSH

There was confusion amongst the group as to what the word limit is. It was noted that full reports are put on the website.

6 b) Branch area correspondent

Great Western

There was concern about the time commitment that such a role would entail. It was noted that some Branches have keen individuals acting unofficially, and the consensus was that such members should be encouraged to send in reports on an unofficial basis. It was reaffirmed that contributions are welcome from all members. The inevitable time lag between submission of information and its appearance in print was suggested as a possible disincentive for many members to send in reports, but it was also pointed out that the RO constitutes a trusted, widely cited historical record and that time invested in its content is time well spent.

London & South

Given that most committees are struggling with resources it was thought it would be difficult to attract people to this role. In an age where internet forums publish information almost in 'real time' it was generally thought that this idea falls into the category of 'nice to have'.

Midland & North Western

Not applicable

Northern Home Counties

It would appear that some of these notes are as reported by other local societies also and are included to increase interest within the local areas. It was generally felt that the system was reasonably adequate as it stands.

WREMNESSH

On balance, there was no support for this

Trustee Comments/Action Points

Retain the current word limit for branch reports for the RO as it is at 200 words and ensure that all branches are advised about the word limit to avoid confusion.

7 Branch Newsletters/Bulletins – circulating to members

Great Western

This information was noted.

London & South

The pros and cons of 'Mailjet' and 'Groups.io' were discussed. 'Groups.io' requires people to actively sign up and can be used for both members and non-members. Mailjet is used, for example, to distribute 'RCTS News' and is driven by the Society's membership list. It is not suitable for

communicating with non-members. It was confirmed that as long as RCTS has the member's email address then they should receive 'RCTS News'. If they have provided an email address and are not receiving RCTS News then the member should in the first instance contact the RCTS webmaster Matthew Shaw.

Midland & North Western

Not applicable

Northern Home Counties

It was agreed that Branch newsletters are thought to be a very useful tool in putting information across to members but could prove expensive if the Branch is required to send postal copies to non-computer owning members, of which there seemed quite a few.

WREMNESSH

It was noted that Matthew Shaw has said that there is not enough Mailjet space for every branch to have a separate account and that a common difficulty is the number of members who do not do email.

8 Branches, community rail partnerships, local TOCs

Great Western

It was agreed that Branches should encourage their members to become involved on an individual basis as appropriate (rather than more formally).

London & South

All branches appeared to have a good relationship with their local TOC although this was mostly on an informal basis. There was some scepticism as to whether such a formal relationship would be beneficial either to the branch or the RCTS more generally. There would be an issue with finding volunteers.

Midland and North Western

Not applicable

Northern Home Counties

This is a very good idea in principle but communication via members is often very limited although some do get out and communicate. Certainly, people within the rail industry are often the most interesting speakers.

WREMNESSH

Experience here was mixed although North East has been and will be involved in special events relating to Stockton & Darlington 2025. However, there had been no response from LNER for speakers. Humberside had found that Trans Pennine Express had felt threatened about being contacted. Derek Stuckey (Sheffield) had personally participated in station adoption through a community partnership from 2016. A small group is involved – ‘The Friends of Shireoaks Station’. It was felt that the interaction between the area CRP (North Notts. & Lincolnshire Community Rail Partnership) and the various TOCs, via this community group, may prove useful to the branch. East Midlands had found that the RCTS was not a “go-to body”.

Trustee comments/Action Points

Maintain informal or individual relationships where possible unless volunteer resources allow a more formal approach.

9 Minimum numbers for Branch AGMs

Great Western

It was agreed that a minimum number would be unduly restrictive.

London & South

After discussion it was agreed that it would be logical to have a number greater than one and that a quorum level should exist but no-one at the meeting wished to recommend a precise figure.

Midland & North Western

Not applicable

Northern Home Counties

This is always an age old problem as many members just will not turn out when the AGM is on the agenda. It would be much more helpful if the numbers required could be remain flexible as it was felt any change could prove more difficult.

WREMNESSH

Members noted that the Society rules stated only that there should be an AGM with no details of what it should consist of. Reference was made to attending a branch AGM where there were neither minutes nor agenda, just an unstructured re-election of officers. An opinion was that it is now decades too late to start being proscriptive about such things because of the high risk of driving branch officers away. However, if there has to be a minimum number it should be four including committee members.

Trustee comments/Action Points

Further details on running a branch AGM including a suggested agenda are in the Officers Handbook in Section 6.07. I note that since Branch Liaison has been more pro-active in collecting Branch AGM Minutes, AGM practices at Branch level seem to have improved hugely with records since 2016 being much more comprehensive on AGMs. Earlier records are incomplete.

10 Ask the Trustee – including the 2019 National Action Points

Great Western

Discussions regarding the website are noted under section 8. Matthew Shaw presented the following topics:

Reprints of the 'Locomotives of the LNER' series, to be available as hard copy, PDF download, and customised pages on the Society website. The pdf will be free to Society members to read online;

Scanning of all historical editions of the RO back to 1928 has been completed. Copies will be made available online for members in due course;

Two Society photographic competitions are proposed: i) A selection of 'winners' to be chosen this Summer from images submitted to the RO, and ii) a broader competition in Summer 2023 in collaboration with the publisher Mortons, to be organised by Paul Chancellor;

A Members' Day will be held at Barrow Hill roundhouse on Saturday 27th August 2022;

A Members' Survey will be conducted in July.

London & South

a) Feasibility of having a paywall for attendance at Zoom meetings.

b) The impact of the UK moving to an increasingly 'cashless' society in terms of receiving, for example, meeting donations and income from book sales.

c) Membership details to be made available to other defined Branch Officers (eg Chairman and Treasurer) as well as the Secretary, being particularly relevant where a Branch currently had a vacancy for the latter role.

d) Related to c) above, clarification required on distinction between, and access to, Branch distribution lists and National membership lists (raised by several attendees)

Andy Davies - Trustee representative, give the following information for onward dissemination:

i) The RCTS book on the 'Royal Scot' Class should be published by the end of 2022;

ii) In response to comments made about Part 1 of the Michael Mensing book, AD said that Part 2 may well be published in hard back.

Midland & North Western

Not applicable

Northern Home Counties

Nothing decisive came from this item following a discussion. Membership offers at exhibitions are helpful, this seems to work well and is a good way of encouraging new members. The renewal system works well, but has the disadvantage of making the membership offer less attractive as the end of the year approaches. New members have been sent a feedback questionnaire and useful information is being obtained.

Irene Rabbitts – Trustee representative, reported that the new book on The Royal Scot 4-6-0s is almost ready and that the next book would be on DMU's. It was felt that the Society could do with better marketing for the Leatherhead Archive facility. Regarding national Zoom meetings, the group thought that using key industry speakers would be far better for these meetings, rather than speakers already well known to the Society and other groups. There was a lengthy discussion on initiatives to encourage membership and awareness of the Society, but without anything radical and new suggested.

WREMNESH

- a) What happened to the results of the last survey?
- b) Re Agenda item 10 - unclear about what branches can reclaim for one mailing to members.
- c) National Zoom meetings with a general agenda so that branch officers can enquire about the things they know nothing about.

Richard Morris – Trustee representative, advised that the renewals process for 2023 may change. Members will be emailed where possible.

Trustee comments/Action Points

Andy Davies agreed to discuss the points raised by the London & South Eastern Group at a national level on their behalf. There is no facility to reclaim for mailing out branch newsletters or bulletins to members.

11 Confirmation of Chair and Secretary for 2023

Great Western

Brian Arman is willing to continue as Chair with Paul Udey continuing as Secretary

London & South

Steve Ollive agreed to Chair the 2023 meeting but who takes the role of secretary/minute taker is still to be agreed. (This group is using a two year rotation to spread the responsibilities between the branches.)

Midland & North Western

No meeting due to sad death of John Cowlshaw earlier this year so still to be decided for 2023. (ILR)

Northern Home Counties

Steve Lacey agreed to Chair the meeting in 2023 with David Elsdon continuing as Secretary.

WREMNESSH

It was unanimously agreed that Malcolm Hammond would continue as Chair for 2023 with Tony Skinner as Secretary.

12 Any Other Business

Great Western

A review of the membership renewals process is under way. Possible outcomes floated might include digital membership cards and electronic renewals. The members of the meeting expressed their appreciation of the hospitality kindly provided by Terri and Brian.

London & South

Some discussion took place on whether the issue of physical membership cards should continue. Steve Ollive – Assistant Treasurer Renewals, said that although alternatives were being looked at, the replacement of physical cards by an electronic one available on a smartphone was not a priority issue, not least because he had at least two years' worth of stock of the existing cards. The general consensus was that membership cards should be retained in their existing hard copy format at least for now. The question of when new membership badges, updated with individual names, will be available was raised. Andy Davies said that stocks are currently very low but that he will supply what was needed a.s.a.p. A further query re RCTS stationery was raised and he confirmed that David Goddard can supply RCTS stationery and Alan Cooke can supply Membership Packs.

Midland & North Western

Not applicable

Northern Home Counties

The group felt that some financial initiatives to Branches for recruiting new members would help and encourage the Branches to find and get new members especially where recruits might be for any branch rather than their own.

WREMNESSH

None.

Trustee comments/Action Points

Information regarding the new renewals process has been circulated since the Regional Meetings took place, with the updated process being used for the first time this year thanks to the efforts of a small national project group working together to resolve outstanding issues. A new stock

of membership badges has been bought with a note going out in Officers' Newsletter 214. The subject of financial incentives for branches to recruit new members has now been raised at national level but change is unlikely at present.

13 Date, time and place of next meeting

Great Western

Saturday 17 June 2023 at 59 Kenmore Crescent, Filton Park, Bristol. Start time to be confirmed.

London & South

Maybury Centre, Broad School Road, Woking at 1100hrs on 13th May 2023.

As before Surrey Branch will make the required booking.

Midland & North Western

To be negotiated.

Northern Home Counties

13 May 2023 at Digswell Village Church, Digswell, Welwyn, starting at 1100 hrs.

WREMNESSH

It was agreed that in February 2023 the Secretary would work on setting up a meeting for some time between mid-May and earlyish June and that it would go ahead using the generic parts of the national agenda as a basis for discussion. Expected to be held at the NRM again.

Trustee comments/Action Points

The Branch Liaison Officer has some additional work to do with the branches within the Midland & North Western Group to try to help set this up for 2023 as circumstances meant that it did not take place in 2022. For 2023, it is also hoped that all branches will contribute to discussions again whether or not they are able to attend. ILR

Appendix 2 - 2022 Regional Meetings Summary – précis

Introduction

This is the first series of Regional Meetings since 2019 so it was more important than ever for branches to have the chance to get together to discuss any issues that they might have, to compare notes on what has or has not worked since the pandemic struck and activities were curtailed, and to see how things are going now that the situation is getting back to 'normal'.

1 Present and Apologies

Four of the five meetings took place whilst the fifth suffered the sad loss of their prime mover with insufficient time to make alternative arrangements. Some branches were not represented and it is unclear whether apologies had been given in some cases. There were Trustee representatives at all meetings.

2 Matters Arising from Local Minutes not covered by the Agenda

There was some discussion about the new website and requests for the next update of the Officers' Directory to be completed as soon as possible. All minutes from the last Regional meetings were agreed.

3 Action Points from 2019 Regional Meetings and Matters Arising

The Officers Handbook is available to officers on the website. There was some discussion that an induction process for new branch officers would be welcome. Long service awards are available. Branches face issues with recruiting new members and there were some comments about branch membership lists.

Trustee comments/Action Points

Branches are advised that updated branch member lists are sent out at least once a year but additional updates can be requested as required. The new format for the Regional Meetings summary has been accepted. The formal complaints procedure has been reinstated in the Society Rules. The new Society Structure was put to and accepted by members at the delayed Society AGM in 2020.

4 Branch Presentations

There was discussion on how the pandemic had affected branches including the use of Zoom meetings and additional branch newsletters/bulletins during that period. There was also discussion on meetings going forward including virtual, face to face and hybrid formats, including attendances at meetings post-pandemic. Other branch initiatives, including building better informal relationships within the railway industry were highlighted as well as book sales during the lockdown periods. All branches had been affected and some were struggling with getting new committee members, recruitment generally and an aging membership. Help from Jeremy Harrison and David Jackman with setting up Zoom meetings in 2020 was highlighted.

5 a) Training sessions for branch/potential branch officers

The idea was generally welcomed and it was suggested that Zoom might be a good medium and that the Members' Weekend might also be an opportunity to provide training sessions. The Officers' Handbook could also be used.

5 b) Owning the Branch pages of the website

The importance of the branch web pages as their shop window was emphasised and possible new web features were discussed. It was generally felt to work well not least because Webmaster Matthew Shaw had been very helpful in responding to any queries. There was a suggestion that each branch should try and have at least two people able to update the relevant webpages although the question of finding suitable volunteers came up. Some wanted more comprehensive instructions.

6 Branch contributions to the RO

The general feeling was that the present limit of 200 words was about right and encouraged both brevity and succinctness although some re-formatting might make it easier to read. Some were unsure about the limit and

one group would have like a slight increase to 250 words. The idea of formalising having a branch area correspondent was not generally supported but all were happy to encourage this on an informal basis.

7 Branch Newsletters/Bulletins – circulating to members

There was discussion on the pros and cons of 'Mailjet' and 'Groups.io' and how they work in context. Mailjet is suitable for members providing email addresses whilst Groups.io is suitable where there is a mix of members and non-members. Branch newsletters can be expensive where they have to be sent out via post to members not on email, so providing an email address is to be encouraged.

8 Branches, community rail partnerships, local TOCs

It was generally felt to be a good idea in principle. Branches should encourage involvement on an informal basis wherever possible or practicable, unless volunteer resources allow a more formal approach. These relationships can be beneficial.

9 Minimum numbers for Branch AGMs

There was general agreement not to set a minimum number as a quorum to allow for continued flexibility.

10 Ask the Trustee – including the 2019 National Action Points

This covered quite a number of topics including the website, reprints of the 'Locomotives of the LNER' series as digital and print versions, digital scanning of all historic ROs, photographic competitions, the Members' Day at Barrow Hill, a member survey in July, setting up a paywall for Zoom meetings to aid viability of hybrid meetings (VAT implications noted), becoming a cashless society, branch membership lists, up and coming publications, new membership offers, better marketing of the Leatherhead facility.

11 Confirmation of Chair and Secretary for 2023

Three of the Regional Groups agreed both chair and secretary and one group agreed chair but still needs to confirm secretary. The fifth group needs to replace both chair and secretary – still to be agreed.

12 Any Other Business

Items raised included the revised renewals process and physical membership cards, RCTS name badges, RCTS stationery, RCTS membership packs and the possibility of financial incentives to recruit new members.

Trustee comments/Action Points

The new renewals process has been used for the first time this year since the Regional Meetings took place. A new stock of membership badges is now available. Financial incentives for branches to recruit new members has now been raised at national level but change is unlikely at present.

13 Date, time and place of next meeting

Great Western

Saturday 17 June 2023 at 59 Kenmore Crescent, Filton Park, Bristol. Start time to be confirmed.

London & South

Maybury Centre, Broad School Road, Woking at 1100hrs on 13th May 2023.

As before, Surrey Branch will make the required booking.

Midland & North Western

To be negotiated.

Northern Home Counties

13 May 2023 at Digswell Village Church, Digswell, Welwyn, starting at 1100 hrs.

WREMNESH

It was agreed that in February 2023 the Secretary would work on setting up a meeting for some time between mid-May and earlyish June and that it would go ahead using the generic parts of the national agenda as a basis for discussion. Expected to be held at the NRM again.

Trustee comments/Action Points

For 2023, it is hoped that ALL branches will contribute to discussions again, whether or not they are able to attend. ILR