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REFERENCE BT26-2301

Final

MINUTES OF MEETING BT26 OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE RAILWAY CORRESPONDENCE & TRAVEL SOCIETY

Held at Somers Town Coffee House

on Saturday 21st January 2023

TRUSTEES PRESENT AT THE MEETING

ACM	Callum MacLeod	Chairman
RLM	Richard Morris	Secretary
MSR	Mike Robinson	*RO* Managing Editor – via Zoom
DPG	David Goddard	Membership Secretary
JM	James Milne	Strategy Group Leader
MS	Matthew Shaw	Digital Officer
APD	Andy Davies	Archivist
ILR	Irene Rabbitts	Branch Liaison Officer
JR	John Redgate	via Zoom
DBB	David Bird	Deputy Chairman
ARW	Reg Wood	Treasurer

Others present

BRA	Revd Canon Brian Arman	President
PJC	Paul Chancellor	Minute Taker
DC	David Cross	Guest

2301.01 – CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The meeting commenced at 11.10 with the Chairman welcoming those present including David Cross as a guest. A request from David Kelso to be present at the meeting had been received. Following a pre-meeting discussion with some Trustees, the request had been declined by the Chairman. James Milne has been nominated for election as the next Chair of the Society. Andy Davies and Richard Morris will also be standing for election. After recent problems with the current meeting venue, the item was on the day's agenda.

2301.02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE – None.

2301.03 Confirmation of the Minutes of BT25

MS advised that the minutes had failed to record the decision that responsibility for managing the digitisation project would be undertaken by the Administration Group. It was agreed that this should be added to minute 26.11.14. Subject to that change the minutes of BT25 were accepted as a correct record of the meetings and approved.

2301.04 Matters arising not covered elsewhere in the agenda

It was confirmed that AVR should be set at zero and would be applied in 2024. Those not wishing to accept AVR could still opt to take it and then donate the sum to the Society to attract gift aid.

2301.05 Updates from Action Points of BT 25

AP1 Advise branches of the outcome of Zoom meeting charging trial. Maidenhead and Surrey branches would be carrying out trials in the coming weeks. For the Maidenhead meeting 18 people had already paid to attend. Report C/Fwd. **AP1 ILR**

AP2 Advise dates for the Society Diary. Some dates were still not advised to ACM. Ongoing. **AP2 All**

AP3 Include length of time to complete financial information on renewals in the finance team meeting agenda. The Finance Group had not met since the date of this action and it will be on the agenda of the next meeting. This year's information should be complete in mid-March. Carry forward. **AP3 ARW**

AP4 Request answers to accounts queries raised with ARW by JR – agenda item.

AP5 Chase up requested monthly management account information from ARW. ARW questioned if monthly management information had in fact been requested and explained why in his view that was not practical. The meeting agreed that quarterly information would suffice but questioned why that information took a long time to produce. ARW advised that late receipt of expenses claims was a factor. As a first step to producing more timely information, an accountancy timetable should be published according to a quarterly schedule to include cut-off dates, so that the Finance Group reports to an agreed timetable. **AP4 ARW**

AP6 GBRf guest speaker- DC to follow up with GBRF. This had been done and GBRf have nominated a speaker. A date has yet to be agreed.

AP7 Progress Photography competition idea with Mortons. A meeting will take place shortly.

AP8 Publicise the WTT collection in *Running Lines.* Supply text to JM. **AP5 MS/JM**

AP9 Send copy of the Regional Meetings report to branches – complete.

AP10 Agree Terms of Reference for Commercial Group. MSR thought that this action was complete. However, ACM disagreed. Discuss outwith the meeting. **AP6 ACM/MSR**

AP11 Discuss Eric Palmer memorial with John Day. Ongoing. **AP7 APD**

AP12 Include AVR rate on BT26 Agenda – done.

AP13 Advise proposals on authority of Publications committee to set prices for digital products by BT26. This had not been done. However, the subject was then debated later in the meeting.

AP14 Propose rule amendment for move of Digital Officer to the Administration group – done. See Doc 06a

AP15 Financial assistance to Branches. Carry forward to BT 26 agenda – done.

AP16 Agree deputy for the Treasurer (and amend ways of working if appropriate) in respect of succession and cover for any unavoidable absence. A discussion had taken place and deputies agreed. However, there was only one cheque book and this continued to be with ARW. The current signatories were ARW, DPG, JR and ACM. Following the AGM, ACM should be replaced as a signatory by the new chairman. However, it was agreed that digital banking should be used much more and authorities should be expanded, this to be discussed and formalised after the AGM. **AP8 ARW**

AP17 Review Gratis *RO* copy list and advise amendments to DPG. The Strategy Group was still in the process of doing this and a query had arisen concerning the New Zealand *RO*.
REDACTED **AP9 JM/APD/DBB**

AP18 Review advert/website text with respect to having a postal address and QR code for enrolment – complete.

AP19 Gift Aid claims related to donations to the Image Digitisation Project should be included when Society match funding is applied to the project – done.

AP20 Prepare revised Digitisation Plan including copyright issues for BT26. Agenda item.

AP21 Advise ARW of digitisation spend approval – done.

AP22 Prepare Self Help guide for those who may donate image collections to the Society – agenda item.

AP23 Require those receiving WTT collections to provide a letter confirming that they will not be resold. It was agreed that what was required was an 'anti embarrassment' clause. Item open. **AP10 RLM/MS/APD**

AP24 Arrange for item in the *RO* to request an organiser for the 2023 Member's weekend – done.

AP25 Send Fraser Pithie contact details to ACM – done.

2301.06 Administration Report
Document 06 refers. There were no questions or matters arising.

ILR then reported on branch matters. She had attended the AGM of Merseyside branch **REDACTED** John Cashen had been appointed as chairman but the branch would require a new secretary and treasurer from May 1st. It was agreed that the minutes of the AGM be circulated to all branch members as a matter of urgency. **AP11 ILR**

The withdrawal of Life Membership was discussed. It was confirmed that the Trustees had approved this. However, a rule change was required to implement this and it was now too late to implement this at the 2023 AGM. It was agreed that this should take place at the 2024 AGM with wide publicity at the next renewal round to advise members of a final opportunity to take this benefit. It should be tabled at regional meetings. **AP12 RLM/ILR**

2301.07 Commercial Group Report
MSR advised on the composition of the group and its aims and objectives. A meeting had been held in the preceding week and a report would be issued shortly. It was proposed that the group would meet twice annually.

A subject of debate was why members who were authors did not come to the Society to get books published. From comments made by BA it would appear that there could be a number of reasons, both personal and commercial but more research was required on this subject. The RCTS process/policy should be publicised in the *RO*. **AP13 DB/MSR**

The *RO* printing contract had moved to Elgar from the January issue. The proofing process had caused some challenges.

JM questioned if the original proposal that chairmanship of the group should be rotated between MSR and DB would be implemented. MSR advised it would be reviewed by the end of 2023.

2301.07(a) *RO* sustainability.

MSR advised that in the short term the East Coast editorial vacancy had been resolved. However, the imaging work team only comprised of DK plus a new volunteer and there was no obvious candidate for a successor to MSR. Nevertheless, MSR felt that there might be one *RO* section editor who might be able to do the work and he should be approached. The Society might need to supply additional software and computer equipment at a cost of around £1500.

2301.08 Digital Services report

MS advised that there were no noted issues with the website which had around 180 visitors daily.

The membership renewals process had worked well. Those who had not renewed had now been sent a letter. Go Cardless had worked well and Mailjet was being used for renewals, the Officer's newsletter and RCTS news. A Zoom charging system had been set up.

The digital archive had generated sales for LNER books contributing £755 and PDF sales were at £604. For the *RO* PDFs, the older issues were the preferred digital downloads and sales were £1,346 giving a total surplus of £2,705.

Purchasers contact information was being gathered but had not yet been used. 340 people had registered but at this time it was not known how many were members.

A debate then ensued concerning free access the digital archive. MSR thought that all users should have to pay. Before any decisions could be taken, more information was needed on what proportion of those who had registered were society members prior to a discussion at BT27 **AP14 MS**

To aid future discussions Trustees should register and view the digital archive. **AP15 All**

2301.09 Finance Group Report

Documents 09(a) and 09(b) refer. These show that for the last financial year the Society had a profit of £751. However, the way in which the stock of publications had been valued had reduced this figure by over £8000. After considerable debate it was agreed that the accounts to be submitted for scrutiny should have the profit figure increased by £4500.

Post meeting note: The decision to reduce our Publications Excess Stock Provision by £4,500 has changed the Publications result from a deficit of £762 to a surplus of £3,738, much more appropriate. Our overall surplus increases from £751 to £5,251 **AP16 ARW**

Concerns were expressed about the growing cash reserves but it was agreed that no action be taken until the Leatherhead lease etc. had been resolved A revised Heads of Terms agreement document was being considered by trustees as it had a number of differences to that seen previously. APD advised that electricity supply costs might be some £4000 higher than at first thought.

JR questioned why membership income appeared to be lower than in 2021 despite an increased membership fee and higher membership numbers. ARW suggested that this was because full reconciliation with the Renewals team has not been concluded, but the issue should be investigated and reported back at BT27. **AP17 ARW**

JM asked for information on the valuation of the photo archive. It was noted that revenue from *RO* advertising was also down.

£2665 had been allocated from the Life Membership provision to fund for the year.

The cash balances held by each branch at the year-end were requested for circulation to all Trustees. **AP18 ARW**

ILR brought an item from the regional conferences concerning payment of expenses for attendance at the Officers' Conference. At present, each branch could receive expenses for one attendee provided that they had uncommitted funds of less than £1,500. ARW advised that some branches needed advice as to what constituted 'uncommitted funds'. However, it was agreed that this figure be amended to £2,000 and that this should be the new level at which branches were supposed to return funds to the central organisation. This decision to be communicated to branches via next Newsletter. **AP19 ILR**

2301.10 Strategy Group Report

JM advised that Keith Merritt had resigned as publicity officer

REDACTED

A new officer would be sought.

On social media there were now 206 Twitter followers and 793 on Facebook of which a number were railway staff. He believed that the information being posted posed no risks to the Society.

The idea of a 'Volunteer of the Year' award did not find favour with the Trustees. An Outdoor Visits co-ordinator was again to be sought.

The 'new member' offering was being re-evaluated. It was noted that a lower percentage of digital members renewed at the first year than hardcopy *RO* readers. It was pointed out that some people joined the Society for reasons other than having an *RO*.

The Administration group would be responsible for the physical Society image whilst Strategy would manage the more intangible elements of that image.

A summary of the current nameplate agreements was provided – document 10.

Ideas to celebrate the Society centenary were under discussion.

A copy of an article in *Steam World* was circulated concerning image copyright, simply for information.

2301.11 Membership update.

Document 11 refers. DPG advised that as of 20th January 2445 members had renewed with non-renewals standing at 312- some 50% above last year's figure. 162 had signed up for Go Cardless direct debits. However, 850 members needed to migrate to the new system in 2024 which could lead to a number of non-renewals. There was a need to review the number of *RO*s being printed. **AP20 DPG/MSR**

Following receipt of a recent legacy the Society had now received £13,800 in donations this year of which £4297 were specified by the donors to be allocated to the digitisation project. Nevertheless, it was confirmed that all donations received during the 2023 renewals process would be posted to this project.

2301.12 Library and Archive report.

Library open days attract just one or two attendees on each occasion. Library open days need to be advertised on social media via Tim Bellenger. **AP21 APD**

Work is continuing on the Batteson archive which may be available for access towards the year end.

2301.13 Society Insurance.

Overall, the cost of insurance to the Society had reduced, mainly because fewer nameplates had to be covered. However, as part of a three-year deal, costs would increase by 5% in each of the next two years for the currently insured items. The insured value of the slides etc. had been raised to £25,000 although the asset value in the accounts was put at £12,326. The declared asset value would influence the amount of any insurance settlement.

It was thought that the value of stock held at Booklaw was overstated and thus over insured. Assess and advise. **AP22 ARW**

The Heads of Terms agreement for Leatherhead document was again mentioned and it was agreed that there should be a Zoom meeting between those who had received a copy for review. **AP23 ACM**

2301.14 Photo Archive Project.

Documents 14,14(a),14(b) and 14(c) refer.

MS advised that most of the required equipment had been purchased, outstanding items being the broadband connection and desks etc. APD advised that the latest Peter King paper was version (d) and that (e) was under preparation.

MS had prepared a revised action plan which had been ratified by the Administration group and he sought approval for it to be adopted by the Trustees.

It was noted that there were references to reviews of the project both quarterly and yearly. MS advised that as no one was to be employed, it should now require review at year end only. Amend the plan. **AP24 MS**

It was confirmed that Commercial group should look at what we sell and that Strategy was responsible for deciding the long term aims of the project.

Prepare Commercial Group report on the commercial objectives for the scanning on 'per collection' basis. **AP25 MSR**

Scanning priorities needed to be agreed. Commercial group needed to advise their wishes to the project team but 'at risk' media might need to have priority over some commercial desires. The educational objectives also need to be considered.

A proposal to pay travel expenses to volunteers involved in frequent visits to Leatherhead was requested to be modified to only be payable to such people if they advised that their travel costs were at risk of reducing their involvement. A policy needs to be drawn up/agreed. A back up plan was requested covering how media that needed to be sent off site for scanning etc. would be dealt with in the event that insufficient volunteers to work at Leatherhead could be found. BRA said that, in his view, recruitment of volunteers should start immediately rather than wait until the broadband service was in place. The success or otherwise of finding volunteers should be reviewed at each meeting.

ACM wished to thank MS for his weekly attendance at Leatherhead.

There was considerable debate on exactly what the Trustees were being asked to approve. It was agreed that subject to the above comments/actions being incorporated into the plan that the work and objectives set out for year one was accepted by the Trustees. Years two and three work was deemed to be ‘a proposal’ and would be debated further at the year-end review. Thus, the project manager had to run/adjust/report on the objectives to the Administration group and work with the short-term objectives and requirements set by that group.

2301.15 Health & Safety Policy

The insurers had strongly recommended that the Society should have a Health & Safety Policy document. This was agreed and a draft would be prepared. **AP26 ACM**

2301.16 AOB

ARW/DPG advised that Society officers had attended funerals for Terrence Jenner and Eric Palmer recently. ILR advised that Derek Thompson had passed away. BRA advised that a plaque commemorating Roger Newman would be unveiled at Trowbridge station.
MS requested it be recorded that he had made donations to the Society in respect of his Backtrack article fee and for funds arising on the disposal of the WTT collection.

2301.17 Date and Venue of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 18th March. JM advised that he would not be present and that either DC or PC would represent the Strategy Group.
Following various concerns about the current venue, attempts were to be made to find an alternative with Reading, Waterloo and Kings Cross venues being suggested. DPG will initially investigate the Greyfriars Centre in Reading and will report to ACM. **AP27 DPG/ACM**

The meeting closed at 17.07.

Associated Documents:

06 Admin Group report
06a Proposed rule amendment
09a Society accounts (TB311022)
09b Society Annual Report
10 Nameplates Schedule
11 Membership Statistics 2023-01
14 Digitisation of The Photo Archive – note to Trustees
14a Digitisation of The Photo Archive – Project plan
14b Digitisation of The Photo Archive – Progress Report
14c P King – Collection Status Report

ACTION POINTS:

AP1	Advise branches of the outcome of Zoom meeting charging trial	**ILR**
AP2	Advise dates for the Society Diary.	**ALL**
AP3	Include length of time to complete financial information on renewals in the finance team meeting agenda.	**ARW**
AP4	Compile/circulate an accountancy timetable.	**ARW**
AP5	Publicise the WTT collection in *Running Lines.*	**MS/JM**
AP6	Confirm agreement of Terms of Reference for Commercial Group.	**MSR/ACM**
AP7	Progress Eric Palmer memorial	**APD**
AP8	Prepare plan for Finance Team backup and digital banking options.	**ARW**
AP9	Review Gratis *RO* copy list.	**JM/APD/DBB**
AP10	Require those receiving WTT collections to provide a letter confirming that they will not be resold. It was agreed that what was required was an ‘anti embarrassment’ clause.	**RLM/MS/APD**
AP11	Circulate Merseyside AGM minutes to all branch members urgently. Subsequently advised that the Branch had carried out this action.	**ILR**
AP12	Prepare rule change text for Life Membership withdrawal in 2024.	**ILR/RLM**
AP13	Establish a Society policy on the publication of third-party books and publicise in the *RO*.	**MSR/DB**
AP14	Establish percentage of Society members registered for the digital archive.	**MS**
AP15	Register and view the digital archive.	**ALL**
AP16	Increase 2022 Society surplus shown in the accounts by £4,500.	**ARW**
AP17	Investigate/report on drop in Membership income from 2021 to 2022.	**ARW**
AP18	Compile/circulate branch cash balances as at October 2022.	**ARW**
AP19	Advise branches of revision to balance figure from £1,500 to £2,000.	**ILR**
AP20	Review number of *RO*s being printed.	**DPG/MSR**
AP21	Advise library opening dates via social media.	**APD**
AP22	Assess value of stock held at Booklaw and adjust if necessary.	**ARW**
AP23	Arrange Zoom discussion on Heads of Terms of Agreement document.	**ACM**
AP24	Amend Photo Archive plan an accordance with items noted in 2301.14.	**MS**
AP25	Prepare Commercial Group report on the commercial objectives for the scanning on ‘per collection’ basis.	**MSR**
AP26	Prepare draft Health & Safety policy.	**ACM**
AP27	Look for new BoT meeting venue.	**DPG/ACM**

Note that, to save space, the Appendices are not included here. Any member wishing to view these (subject to any redactions) should apply to the Society Secretary via: secretary@rcts.org.uk