

BRANCH LIAISON OFFICER

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Officers' Newsletter 222

28 July 2023

Dear All

There is quite a lot to go into this newsletter and some of it applies to all, whereas other items are specific to particular branch officers so please look through all of it, share it as necessary with other branch officers and members, and take particular note as appropriate.

Finance Vacancies

APPEAL FOR FINANCE VOLUNTEERS

ASSISTANCE FOR OUR FINANCE TEAM

Are you comfortable with numbers? Fairly numerate?

Your Society finance team is seeking help and you are invited to volunteer. We need help with:-

- Analysis of transactions (eg membership renewals, donations)
- Bank account reconciliations
- Gift Aid claim preparation
- VAT return preparation
- Managing investment of funds

Most of our financial work can be done at home with electronic communication with others so, in addition to some numeracy skills, you will need IT skills in Word and Excel, and access to a computer and email.

Our small finance team offers good camaraderie and occasional meetings, and any expenses are refunded.

Please contact Treasurer Reg Wood on 0117 302 6634 or email treasurer@rcts.org.uk

This advertisement is for sharing with **ALL** RCTS members at branch and national level.

Officers' Conference

The good news is that the Officers' Conference will go ahead on Saturday 28 October 2023 from 10.00hrs to 15.30hrs at Danum in Doncaster. As no Members' Weekend has been arranged this year, Conference will be a one day event to include a short introductory session followed by workshops, and finishing with the main 'wrap-up' session to complete the day. At present we propose to provide three workshops to cover the following subjects:

- 1 Updating web pages on the RCTS website
- 2 Training for Branch Treasurers – this is for the benefit of **ALL** branch treasurers both experienced and for those who have more recently stepped into the role
- 3 Introduction for new or fairly recently appointed branch officers

As the size of accommodation at the venue has a smaller maximum number of people than we have been used to previously for Conference, we may have to restrict numbers attending. Branches - please note that prospective branch officers can also be considered for the training sessions and we would request all branches to send at least one delegate. Additional delegates may need to be placed on a waiting list if the event is oversubscribed. Although the training is largely aimed at branch officers, the day is for all Society officers.

If there are subjects that you would like to see covered at Conference, please let me have your suggestions and we will include them if possible; also if there are particular aspects for the training sessions that you would like to see covered, please let me know.

Because of limited numbers, booking in advance is essential and further information will be circulated shortly including how to book and suggested options for overnight accommodation but, in the meantime, please ask if you would like to know more by emailing liaison@rcts.org.uk or telephoning 01932 855015. Please leave your name and telephone number clearly on the answerphone if I am unable to take your call immediately otherwise I may not be able to return your call.

Danum now houses the railway collection from Doncaster Grammar School and you can find out more about the venue – the Danum Gallery, Library and Museum - by looking on their website www.dglam.org.uk.

VAT returns – an IMPORTANT update for all branch officers

HMRC have made some changes regarding VAT reporting so please read the letter from Society Treasurer Reg Wood which is included in full as **Appendix 1** to this newsletter. If you are a branch treasurer, this applies to you. However, please note that all branch committee members are collectively responsible for the running of their branch so should be aware of the changes and overall branch responsibility regarding submitting all financial returns, especially VAT, on time. If your branch treasurer is not on the Officers' Newsletter circulation list, please let me have their email address so that they can be included and, in the meantime, share this information with them urgently.

Hybrid Meeting Charging Trial - Outcomes

Following discussion at last year's Officers' Conference in Reading, the trial of charging for online access to hybrid (ie combined in-person and online) branch meetings took place from January to May of this year, carried out by Windsor & Maidenhead (MHD) Branch. The small charge made for a Zoom ticket was a flat rate of £2.00 and, because this was a charge and not a donation, VAT is payable.

The online attendances have been stable and in line with those seen joining hybrid meetings of this branch prior to the trial. Overall, the branch feels that the experiment has been successful with no significant reduction in numbers attending.

Comparing the income from donations prior to the trial, with income from charges during the trial, shows that net branch revenue (after deduction of VAT) has increased to double what it had been previously.

The outcome of the charging trial can be summarised as follows: it does not deter attendees and it substantially improves branch revenue. MHD Branch would, therefore, recommend other branches adopt the same process for their Zoom and Hybrid meetings.

If you would like to know more or are interested in trying this out, please ask. Adoption of charging will **NOT** have an adverse impact on branch VAT accounting as this will be deducted centrally before the net payment is made to the branch.

Active Volunteer Recognition (AVR) – advance reminder

This is the first reminder that all branches, and leaders of the various national groups and teams, need to think about nominations for AVR now. This will work in the same way as in previous years and there will be more information in due course including a reminder about the criteria, nomination form, and deadline date. Any queries at this early stage, please ask.

Branch Attendance Statistics – Branch Meetings

This is something that our new Society Chairman has requested for a number of reasons, not least as it helps us to know how the branches are doing regarding branch activities. This information may also help when we are looking at how we promote the Society, recruitment and where we can make improvements for example. We would like this information backdated to January 2023 and then on an on-going basis but if the backdated information is likely to be a problem, please let me know and we can find a solution.

Outside fixtures will be included in the future.

Please complete the simple form attached to this Newsletter as **Appendix 2** and return it to me preferably via email to liaison@rcts.org.uk by 30 September 2023, to enable discussion of this topic at the Officers' Conference. Thank you.

A word version of the form is available on request.

Updating branch web pages!!!!

I am not going to apologise for the excess of exclamation marks above. I know that quite a few of us may not have a great deal of confidence working with IT but it really is not that complicated once you know how to do it. Have a look at the branch pages on the website and compare them with each other and with your own. I have a confession to make here in that I had not realised that some of the information on my own branch web pages had not been updated as it should, but I am happy to say that has now been put right. There are training videos available and personalised help if you need it, as well as a training workshop planned for this year's Officers' Conference.

After this year's Regional Meetings, the idea of a buddying system for more experienced branch officers to support less experienced ones met with a positive reaction so we plan to set this up – relatively informally – whether for help with IT, branch accounts, fixtures or any other aspect of branch activities. If you are unsure and worried about making a mistake, mistakes can be corrected as I know from experience.

So no excuses, if you need help - just ask, and support through a 'buddy' branch will be facilitated. Let us get all the branch web pages working well with up-to-date, accurate and engaging content. This is your Branch's 'shop window' to inform and attract new participants to join in your activities.

In Brief

Thank you to everyone who contributed and took part in the Regional Meetings this year, the summary document will be collated and circulated once all the minutes have been received. It was good to be able to meet up with others - to share experience, learn, socialise, make new friends and catch up with old ones, and to build better networks between us.

This is a repetition but, most importantly for this Officers' Newsletter, please do not keep it to yourself but share it with your fellow Officers and, where appropriate, with the wider membership.

Kind regards

Irene

Appendix 1

THE NEW VAT PENALTY REGULATIONS

Dear Branch Treasurer

You may have seen that HMRC have tightened their grip on VAT registered organisations – which of course includes the Society. A new system of penalty points and fines has been introduced, applied when VAT returns are delayed. Full details can be found on HMRC's website.

The Society has 5 weeks from period end to VAT return due date in which to prepare our returns.

Please note the timetable for branch VAT and other financial returns shown in the Branch Officers Handbook section 10.01. **Branches are asked to send in their full year returns (covering the year to 31 October) by 15 November and half year returns (the half year to end April) by 15 May.**

This gives the Society just 3 weeks to include them in our next VAT return.

Please remind your branch committee colleagues of these deadlines and make every effort to achieve our (and HMRC's) timetable.

Your returns should of course be sent to Eric Rattray, his email address is branchfinance@rcts.org.uk and his address is 18A Forest Close, Cuddington, Northwich, CW8 2EE.

A number of branch treasurers have changed since 2014 when we last ran a training event. To address this, all branch treasurers are invited to our Officers' Conference to be held on Saturday 28 October 2023 at Doncaster during which we will hold a training event for you. I believe we can only accept a maximum of 2 delegates from each branch this year, so please see if you could be 1 of them!

I look forward to meeting you there if at all possible.

A REG WOOD
RCTS Treasurer

Appendix 2**Branch Attendance Record for Physical Branch Meetings**

Indoor Meeting	Date	Day of the week	Time	Subject *	Attendees in person

*Subject subdivisions should be one of the following:
Steam/Transition/Diesel/Heritage/Museum/Modern/Technical/International/AGM/Members'
Contributions

It is noted that many branches have a presentation after the business of the Branch AGM has been concluded so there would be two entries for that date.

A word version of this document is available on request.