A Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered with the Charity Commission Registered Number 1169995

REFERENCE BT29/2207

MINUTES OF MEETING BT29 OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE RAILWAY CORRESPONDENCE & TRAVEL SOCIETY

Held at the Malmaison Hotel, Reading on Saturday 22nd July 2023

(Final)

TRUSTEES PRESENT AT THE MEETING

JM	James Milne	Chairman
RLM	Richard Morris	Secretary
DPG	David Goddard	Membership Secretary
MS	Matthew Shaw	Digital Officer
APD	Andy Davies	Archivist
ILR	Irene Rabbitts	Branch Liaison Officer
ARW	Reg Wood	Treasurer
JR	John Redgate	

Others present

BA	Revd. Canon Brian Arman	President
PJC	Paul Chancellor	Minute Taker

2207.01 – CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The meeting opened at 11.00. No conflicts of interest were recorded.
JM, this being his first meeting as Chairman, set out his basic principles for both meetings and for all communications by Trustees. All discussions and decisions should be both inclusive and democratic and he encouraged all relevant views to be put forward. Views aired within Trustee meetings were not to be discussed elsewhere. Once decisions were made all were expected to support them outside of the meeting room. Personal attacks were not acceptable within or without of meetings.

2207.02 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Received from David Bird (DBB), David Cross (DC), Mike Robinson (MSR)

2207.03 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF TRUSTEE MEETING BT 27

The minutes of BT28 were approved and signed. However it was noted that at Action point 8 the individual identified should have been shown as JR rather than JG.

2207.04 MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

None

2207.05 UPDATES FROM ACTION POINTS FROM BT28

AP1 Change e-mail addresses and notify the Charity Commission about Trustee changes. *Completed*
AP2 Investigate use of an Investment House – *Agenda item*.
AP3 Advise branches of the outcome of Zoom meeting charging trial.
Windsor & Maidenhead branch had completed its trial of requiring payment for joining its Zoom meetings and concluded that there was little noticeable change in numbers viewing after the introduction of mandatory payment and receipts benefitting the branch had increased, with the conclusion that all branches should be recommended to follow suit. Assistance in resolving any set up problems would be available but 'setting up' should be delegated to the branches. The sale of season tickets should be suggested. A note to be drawn up and communicated to branches. **DPG/ ILR new AP1**
AP4 Finance timetable – renewals - *Agenda Item*
AP5 Register and view the digital archive – *Closed*.
AP6 Prepare Commercial Group report on the commercial objectives for the scanning on 'per collection' basis. *Still open for BT30.* **MSR new AP2**
AP7 Suggest/follow up photo competition prizes. **Redacted** The SG together with Mortons would finalise the prize offering.
AP8 Advise branches of VAT rule change. *Text still awaited*. **ARW/ILR new AP3**
AP9 Formulate training plan for branch treasurers - *Ongoing* **ARW/ILR new AP4**
AP10 Register new cheque signatories - *Complete*.
AP11 Update the Society asset register. A register as at October 2022 had been completed and circulated. JR requested that a 'current year' register be made available. ARW agreed to provide it although the listing could still be up to three months in arrears. **ARW new AP5**
AP12 Escalate library damp issues with GTR etc. **Redacted**.
AP13 Pay deposit on Library rent with accompanying lease documentation. Still outstanding as the correctly dated lease documents had still not been received. **AD/ARW new AP6**
AP14 Refine draft H&S policy via new working group. *Started* **RLM new AP7**
AP15 Refine proposals on the use of Society funds by year end. Ongoing. Some Trustees suggested that a reduction in membership fees should be considered but it was unclear if the current fee was above that required to cover the cost of the production of the RO.
DC new AP8
AP16 Discuss Digital copies of commercial magazines with editors – *Outstanding.*
DC new AP9
AP17 Continue work to try to establish who gets copies of what affiliate magazines. *Done*
AP18 Supply and review affiliates list-outstanding **ACM/DC new AP10**
AP19 Peter King list to highlight change. *Done*.
AP20 Allow sample pages to be added to website for RO publications – *Completed.*
AP21 Prepare/circulate financial case for Online database and Trustees to advise – *Done*.
AP22 Check availability of Doncaster venue for the Officers Conference – *Done*.
AP23 Book Malmaison Hotel, Reading for BT29 meeting – *Done*.

2207.06 FINANCE GROUP REPORT

a) Finance Group Meeting 23rd May (Doc 06a).
A revised Accounting Timetable had been sent to branches. **Redacted.** **ILR AP11**

Item 8 - closure of certain bank accounts, DBB had requested clarification of which account should be used for publications payments. Advise **ARW AP12**

Item 10 – ARW advised that some members had offered assistance and that he would be following up.
Item 12 - Branch VAT claims. ARW was investigating some late payments **Redacted**.
Investigate/resolve **ARW AP13**

b) Investment of Strategic Funds (Doc 6b). ARW gave a summary of the contents of Doc 6b and sought approval from the Trustees to approach an investment house **Redacted**. A discussion ensued about how much financial risk would/should be involved/accepted.
Redacted **ARW AP14**

2207.07 PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE & DIGITISATION PROJECT

a) Photo Archive Update (Doc 07a). BT had responded to the request for information from the Ombudsman which MS regarded as factually correct and showing that communications within BT were at the root of the problem. The Ombudsman was due to adjudicate by 15th August.

b) Photo Archive Sales (Doc 7b). The current sales figures were given as an aid to discussions taking place within the commercial group on what products and prices should be offered for photo archive products going forward. The Zenfolio contract will be renewed for a further twelve months giving ample time to decide on a replacement system which should bring cost and product benefits to the Society. The deliberations of the commercial group were requested for consideration at BT30. **MSR AP 15**

c) Digital Sales Update (Doc 7c). MS stated that sales of the LNER series were much as he expected but that digital RO sales were disappointing, due in part he thought to the lack of promotion concerning their availability.

d) Digital Archive Manager (Doc 7d). MS had set out the options for paying someone to manage the photo archive for 10 hours per week, being employment/agency staff/self employed person on a contract. ARW also suggested an honorarium.

The Trustees accepted the proposal to pay someone for doing the work with the preference being for a self employed contract and if a suitable candidate could not be found then use of an agency. The money for up to one year's employment was covered by donated and matched funds. Project to proceed on that basis **MS AP 16**

2207.08 CHAIRMAN'S OUTREACH

JM had embarked on an exploratory project to establish the health of other railway related clubs and any interest in working with the RCTS.

Redacted

JM will try to meet on a one to one basis with most to establish the true potential. With two societies actively seeking amalgamation he believed there were potential opportunities for the RCTS to clearly establish itself as the leading Railway Society.

2207.09 MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

a) Renewal Summary (Docs 09 and 09a). These showed that the Society had 25 fewer members than at this time in 2022. JM pointed out that he and the SG were no longer receiving the analysis previously prepared by Alan Cooke. Some input to DPG might be required from DC as to exactly what figures he would like going forward. **DC/DPG AP17**

b) Membership Retention & Source. (Docs 09b and 09b (1)). DPG had undertaken a large amount of work to try to identify retention rates and the sources of new members. These had yet to be discussed by the SG but JR had already found some interesting/useful statistics. PJC advise that the SG was working on the issue of membership retention and one action was to provide better information on society activities, this to be sent to new members as part of the membership pack. This was to be implemented by month end.

It was felt that branches should be far more active in trying to retain members, perhaps as part of the renewals process, but no actions were proposed.

DPG advise that an analysis of former South East Branch members renewals had shown that 75 out of 95 had renewed. Thus the effect of the closure of the branch had only had a marginal effect on membership retention.

2207.10 MODERN TRACTION DATABASE

Following the post BT29 approval of funding for the project, work was well underway. A large number of data errors had been identified and removed. Andrew Lait was working on updates from 2015 and Roger Sandford was providing class history text and helping with testing. Work on programming was proceeding although slightly delayed. A request for assistance with testing should now appear in the September RO. A launch was still anticipated for Q1 2024.

2207.11 GENERAL PAPERS

JM had produced position/discussion papers as below: -

a) Mission Statement. Should the Society have one and if so what should it be? It was agreed that this work should not be undertaken at the present time.

b) Audit of Branch Web Pages. The survey of all branch web pages had shown that a number were not actively maintaining their web pages in a way that the Trustees felt was appropriate to helping in the recruitment of new members. Some branches had already responded to the findings by updating their web pages, but the survey results had yet to be widely communicated. An ongoing issue was thought to be lack of skills at some branches, but support was available and branch 'buddies' were also suggested as a means of help and assistance. Bring to the attention of the appropriate branches and try to develop a plan to improve the pages. **ILR AP18**

c) Privacy & GDPR Was the current GDPR policy hindering the work of some Society officers? The Trustees concluded that the current policy was suitable for current needs. Any officer requiring information protected by GDPR rules could request it from DPG who would provide it in an appropriate protected format.

d) Meeting Attendance The Trustees only received anecdotal information on the number of members attending branch meetings. It was agreed that all branches be requested to supply attendance figures for the 2023 meetings YTD. **ILR AP19**

e) National Zoom Meeting Attendance An analysis showed a fairly constant number of attendees for National Zoom meetings and a preponderance of steam related subjects. It was agreed that more modern traction and infrastructure subjects should be covered. This would be taken up with Jeremy Harrison.

Arising at this time was a question about the need to review Society rules and policies. ILR stated that this should be done regularly as a matter of course. Review to be carried out be the Admin Group. **RLM AP20**

In the past there had been 'pen portraits' of both Society officers and the branches in the RO. It was now over ten years since the last of those had appeared. **Redacted**
Discuss with MSR **JM AP 21**

2207.12 LIBRARY & ARCHIVE REPORT

The damp issues noted above were discussed further and the effects of the damp on the books, negatives and slides stored at Leatherhead. JR suggested the purchase and use of dehumidifiers, and this was agreed. **AD AP22**

Visitor numbers were slightly up with some 'unexpected' attendees. It was suggested that any non member visiting should be asked where/how they found out about the library.

2207.13 STRATEGY GROUP REPORT

PJC advised items provided by DC, these including a review of membership advertising for 2024, a project to define the society 'product', a member's day **Redacted.** New members for the SG were being sought.

Redacted

Discussions continue on celebrating 100 years in 2028 and RLM requested that Cheltenham branch be included as they would be playing a major part at that time. **DC AP23**

2207.14 REGIONAL MEETINGS

ILR reported that these had been a success with all but two branches responding to the invitation to attend, although not all of the others made it on the day. A key outcome was that some branches were prepared to offer help and assistance to some that did not currently have the required skills to carry out some tasks.

2207.15 COMMERCIAL GROUP REPORT

DBB had supplied a Publications report (Doc 15a). This generally showed good sales and planned titles for 2024. Concern was expressed about the relatively low sales of the year book where a further volume was planned for 2023. It was felt that the project should be kept under review.

(Doc CG2306). RLM summarised the minutes of the CG meeting received from MSR which included part of the debate about photo pricing discussed earlier. A key item requiring Trustee discussion was the RO sustainability paper submitted for BT28 and it was agreed that it should be an agenda item for BT30. **RLM AP24**

2207.16 ADMINISTRATION GROUP REPORT

Admin Group Meeting (Docs 16 and 16a). RLM advised that the Charity Commission report had been uploaded and also that amendments to the listed Trustees had been made. RLM had completed a listing of current Wills & Bequests leaflets which showed that the Society only had 22 outstanding. It was suggested that perhaps it was time to remind members about the service.

Officers Conference- Doncaster. ILR advised that two rooms had been booked, the main room seating 42 and the second, to be used for break-out groups, 30. Due to the relatively small space it was essential that key attendees, such as branch treasurers, were given priority when booking attendance and the booking system should accommodate this with a reserve list if required. Branches should pay for transport and overnight accommodation. An unresolved point was raised about providing refreshments free of charge. **ILR/JM AP25**

<u>2207.17 DATE & LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING</u>

The date was confirmed as 23rd September. JM was investigating a number of venues and would advise the location in due course. The meeting closed at 16.05 **JM AP26**

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS.

6a Finance Group Meeting report
6b Investment of Society Funds
7a Photo Archive Update
7b Photo Archive Sales
7c Digital Archive Sales
7d Digital Project Manager proposal
9 Membership update
9a Renewal Summary
9b New Member Retention
9b (1) New Members by Source
11a Mission Statement proposal
11b Branch Website background
11b (1) Branch Website survey
11c Privacy & GDPR
11d Branch meeting attendance data
11e National Zoom Meeting attendance data
15 Publications Report
16 Admin Group report
16a Admin Group minutes
CG2306 Commercial Group minutes

BT 29 ACTIONS ARISING SUMMARY

AP1	Advise branches of the outcome of Zoom meeting charging trial	**DG/ILR**
AP2	Report on the commercial objectives for the scanning on ‘per collection’ basis.	**MSR**
AP3	Advise branches of VAT rule change.	**ARW/ILR**
AP4	Formulate training plan for branch treasurers and circulate.	**ARW/ILR**
AP5	Prepare ‘current year’ asset register.	**ARW**
AP6	Pay library rent.	**AD/ARW**
AP7	Refine draft H&S policy via new working group.	**RLM**
AP8	Refine proposals on the use of Society funds by year end.	**DC**
AP9	Discuss Digital copies of commercial magazines with editors.	**DC**
AP10	Supply and review affiliates list.	**ACM/DC**
AP11	Discuss accounting timetable with certain branches and circulate revised accountancy timetable	**ILR**
AP12	Advise DBB of bank account details.	**ARW**
AP13	Check non payment of Cheltenham and any other branch expenses	**ARW**
AP14	Obtain detailed information on investment possibilities.	**ARW**
AP15	Advise pricing and product sales proposals for BT30	**MSR**
AP16	Seek contracted person to manage the digital archive.	**MS**
AP17	Develop/provide analysis of member recruitment by month/source	**DC/DPG**
AP18	Talk to branches to develop improvement plans for web pages	**ILR**
AP19	Request attendance data from branches	**ILR**
AP20	Review Society rules and policies	**RLM**
AP21	Discuss Pen Portrait articles with MSR	**JM**
AP22	Purchase dehumidifiers for Leatherhead	**AD**
AP23	Liaise with Cheltenham branch re 2028	**DC**
AP24	Include RO sustainability paper discussion in BT30 agenda	**RLM**
AP25	Resolve Officer’s Conference expenses claim eligibility	**ILR/JM**
AP26	Confirm venue for BT30	**JM**