

BRANCH LIAISON OFFICER

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Officers' Newsletter 227

20 December 2023

Dear All

The main reason for this edition of the Officers' Newsletter is to share the Regional Meetings Summary document and the précis version. There are reminders about branch returns as well – all required - so branch officers please take note.

Regional Meetings Summary & Précis

The Summary document appears to be quite lengthy but the format is quick and easy to read. It is collated from the minutes of those meetings and highlights the importance of all branches being involved with the Regional Meetings, to have your say and exchange ideas. Where branches that were unable to attend and did not send a report to your Regional Group, please take note, we value your contribution, it is important. The précis version is useful for anyone interested in a quick outline of what went on at the meetings. The Summary can be found as Appendix 1 and the Précis as Appendix 2 of this Officers' Newsletter.

Reminders to Submit Branch Returns

i) Branch AGM minutes for 2022/2023

There are still a very few Branch AGM minutes outstanding for 2022 and 2023. I appreciate that some branches have not yet held or have only just held their 2023 AGM, but there is no excuse for not providing the minutes from the 2022 AGM. Please contact me using liaison@rcts.org.uk with the correct spelling of liaison or it will not get through.

ii) Branch Attendance Statistics for 2023

Six branches have still not submitted this information yet. It is a new thing but important for the Society. My reputation is on the line for this as I personally guaranteed that you would all comply! Returns as soon as possible please via liaison@rcts.org.uk. Any problems please talk to me so that we can find a solution.

iii) Branch accounting returns

The deadline for the returns for the six months to 31 October 2023 was 15 November 2023 and I understand that there were still **10** returns outstanding at the beginning of December. If this applies to your branch, please contact the Assistant Treasurer Branches urgently via email branchfinance@rcts.org.uk or telephone 01606 889280. If your branch is owed money from central funds, this cannot be dealt with unless the returns are completed.

Branch returns are vitally important if the Society is to comply with its legal and financial responsibilities and its status as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), as well as helping us to work out the best way forward into the future as an organisation.

You have a holiday over Christmas and the New Year before I start chasing AGM minutes and Branch Attendance stats again.

On a Positive Note

I have received an email on 12 December 2023 confirming branch reimbursements have been paid for VAT returns to 31 October 2023, branch donations (PayPal), Regional Meetings travel, Officers' Conference travel and two other individual outstanding claims. I am pleased to report that reimbursements to my own branch are now showing in the branch bank account with a note about what they are for which is really helpful and what the branches asked for. Thank you to the Finance Team for listening.

Thank you for all your support over the past year, I greatly appreciate it and welcome your feedback. The Society could not exist without all that you do as volunteers at all levels so thank you.

And now I would like to wish you all a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year. Happy reading.

Kind regards

Irene

Appendix 1 2023 Regional Meetings Summary

Introduction

I am pleased to say that all five of the Regional Meetings went ahead this year after only four took place last year. Unfortunately, some branches were not represented again this year so there is work to do for the next time.

1 Present and Apologies

Great Western – branches represented: Bristol; Cheltenham; South Wales; Thames Valley. West of England Branch was not represented. Trustee representative David Goddard

London & South – all branches represented: Chichester; Croydon & South London; Solent; Surrey; Windsor & Maidenhead. Trustee representative Richard Morris

Midland & North West – branches represented: Furness, Lakes and Lune; Merseyside, Cheshire & North Wales. Apologies from: Lancashire & North West; West Midlands. Trustee representative Reg Wood.

Northern Home Counties – branches represented: Cambridge; Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City; Ipswich; Peterborough; South Essex; Watford. Apologies from Milton Keynes. Not represented: Northampton. Trustee representative James Milne.

WREMNESSH – all branches represented: East Midlands; Humberside; North East; Scottish; Sheffield; West Riding. Trustee representative Irene Rabbits.

Trustee comments/Action Points

There have been changes over the years and the viability of the smallest of the regional groups is in question so reviewing how many regions there should be and which branches are included in each region is an option for consideration for future years. If this option is seriously considered, there will be consultation with the branches. Ideally all branches should be represented however this is done.

2 Minutes of the previous Local Regional Meeting

Great Western	Accepted.
London & South	Accepted.
Midland & North West	Not applicable as meeting not held in 2022. However, all branches agreed to exchange meeting programmes.
Northern Home Counties	Accepted after two minor corrections.
WREMNESSH	Accepted.

3 Matters Arising from Local Minutes not covered by the Agenda

Great Western	None.
London & South	Badges would be useful if customer facing.
Midland & North Western	Not applicable as the meeting was not held in 2022.
Northern Home Counties	Correction to spelling of names and one person present having been inadvertently omitted from the minutes.
WREMNESSH	There was a query about the national survey (raised at last year's Regional Meeting) asking about a report back to the membership.

Trustee comments/Action Points

New stocks of badges have been bought and advertised to all Society Officers - available on request. Although the response to the WREMNESSH query was delayed, it has now been answered and the information shared with the questioner, the relevant Regional Meeting (RM) Secretary and both outgoing and incoming chairmen for them to share with the rest of the group.

4 2022 Regional Meeting Action Points

Great Western	These were addressed in Officers' Newsletter 218, Appendix 1.
London & South	There appeared to have been a lack of communication from the centre about PayPal donations which needs to be resolved. An interest in further training for Branch Treasurers was raised, the last sessions taken place in 2014.
Midland & North Western	There was a query about updating branch membership lists and any email addresses provided. The advice was to ask the Membership Secretary as necessary in between regular updates of the branch membership lists.
Northern Home Counties	This was passed without comment as no-one had received any information about this topic.
WREMNESSH	This was discussed with the next item on Matters arising from National Action Points.

Trustee comments/Action Points

It appears that not everyone has noted that the National Action Points were covered in the RM Summary for 2022 so it is clear that these need to be labelled more prominently. The finance group has been looking at how better to communicate with the branches on PayPal donations. It is expected that this will be better in future. The query about updated training for Branch Treasurers is being addressed as it has been included as one of the training sessions for the 2023 Officers' Conference.

5 Matters Arising from 2022 National Action Points

Great Western A lack of volunteers willing to take on the commitment of becoming branch officers is an on-going problem. There had been discussion on archiving contemporary photographs. The payroll for hybrid meetings at Windsor & Maidenhead Branch had not resulted in any significant drop in virtual attendance. However, some presenters would only consider in-person presentations.

London & South It was agreed that this had been covered under the previous agenda item so no further discussion required.

Midland & North Western Nothing to report.

Northern Home Counties As no-one had received any information, this subject was passed over.

WREMNESSH The Trustee representative had brought a copy to the meeting and it was requested that these be made available online, in an Officers' Newsletter.

Trustee comments/Action Points

Please see the Trustee comments/Action Points under 4 above re publication of the Action Points from the previous year's meetings. There will be updates regarding the photographic archive and plans for future development. The hybrid meeting charging trial has been reported as a success with the outcome shared in Officers' Newsletter 222 (September 2023).

6 Branch Presentations

Great Western All four branches represented at the meeting confirmed that they are fully back to face to face meetings which was felt to be important. All are seeking to attract younger members and have difficulties with attracting new committee members although there are volunteers who are willing to help out with tasks at meetings. Although not yet back to pre-Covid levels, most are seeing a slow but steady increase in numbers attending meetings. South Wales have been actively pursuing a good relationship with Transport for Wales and have a good relationship with the 'Railways in South Wales' Facebook group which has a good membership including younger people. It was felt to be important that national initiatives do not conflict with local and vice versa – referring specifically to the photographic competition arranged by one branch potentially conflicting with a national initiative. All agreed the importance of a warm welcome to all attendees at meetings and taking good care of speakers.

London & South All branches have faced difficulties in recruiting new members to the branch committee with the potential of branch closure if volunteers are not forthcoming, although there are people willing to help at meetings. Numbers attending are generally still below pre-Covid levels although steady and, in some case, improving. It is harder to attract good speakers than previously. There is a financial issue with the loss of income from lower numbers attending meetings, except for Windsor & Maidenhead who have successfully trialled charging for virtual attendance at hybrid meetings. The other issue regarding finance is that there are generally fewer exhibitions for branches to attend now resulting in a reduction in sales income. Both these issues mean that branches are having to seriously consider how they manage their finances. One branch is facing the threat of closure of its venue with some uncertainty for the future after May 2024 with the possible requirement of finding a new venue.

Midland & North Western Although only two of the four branches were able to attend the meeting, all four provided written reports for the meeting. There is an on-going issue of numbers attending meetings still not quite back up to the level seen before the pandemic although this is improving. Furness, Lakes & Lune surveyed their membership about attending meetings, their membership is quite small and widely dispersed across the catchment area. The branch is accessing other media in the area to advertise their activities. All branches noticed an aging membership and some reluctance to go out on a dark winter's evening; more consideration is being given to holding afternoon meetings where this is not already being done. Some have faced having to change their meeting venue and all have faced rising costs, putting pressure on branch finances. One branch is still having difficulties in uploading their branch information onto the website and will need more help in achieving this. Ill health of some committee members has been a problem although this is improving and all four branches have their new indoor meeting programmes well in hand for the 2023/2024 season.

Northern Home Counties Seven of the eight branches in the group reported on activities in spite of one not being able to send a delegate to the meeting. There was no report from the eighth branch. Some have a mix of in-person and virtual branch meetings whilst others have in-person only meetings. Virtual meetings have tended to be during the winter months and attract much higher audience numbers. One branch had better attendance at afternoon meetings than in the evenings, whilst another is still seeking a suitable venue for afternoon meetings to add to their evening programme. There is quite a variation between branches regarding requested door donations depending on the associated costs of running meetings. Some are seeking lower cost speakers to help their meetings programme remain financially viable whilst others have increased door donations, or a combination of both. Milton Keynes have moved venue and no longer face a charge for room hire. There is limited exhibition activity although most have reasonable book sales. Some have better website pages than others and help was offered at the meeting if required to make improvements. The increasing cost of venue hire was a common problem as is encouraging new committee volunteers to come forward. Key to successes highlighted seemed to be keeping branch pages on the website updated and interesting, and reaching out to other local organisations to work more collaboratively.

WREMNESH All branches in the group had provided written reports and a number of points were highlighted such as disabled access at venues as not all have this. The difficulty of attracting new committee volunteers is an on-going problem and the branches are aware that they are not alone in this respect. Attracting members and good speakers to meetings is not as easy as in the past with some speakers being reluctant to present at virtual meetings. This is an issue where a branch wishes to hold zoom meetings to try and include more of their members and guests who cannot attend in person. Attendance at meetings was varied between the branches and some are now seeing an improvement in numbers. All the branches are currently financially viable in spite of facing increasing costs, with some using proceeds from book sales to subsidise meeting costs.

Trustee comments/Action Points

Common themes are definitely present particularly the difficulty of attracting new committee volunteers. Most, if not all, are facing increasing costs of running meetings but all are currently financially viable by way of increasing requested door donations or subsidising meeting costs through book sales. Some still require help in updating branch webpages so it is hoped that the web training session to take place at the Officers' Conference in October will be a help. Where further help is needed please contact the Digital Officer directly or let the Branch Liaison Officer know with a view to setting up mutual help with another branch that has already mastered the basics.

7a) Officers' Handbook – short form Officer Checklists

Great Western These were felt to be worthwhile and covered the basics.

London & South The summary was felt to be very clear and the proposal to split the Handbook into two sections covering Branch and National Officers separately was seen as useful. Flexibility regarding branch officer roles was felt to be essential.

Midland & North Western The availability of the checklists on the website should be well publicised now that it has been accepted in principle.

Northern Home Counties The group discussed the profile of the RCTS ie who we are and what we provide. There were no other specific comments recorded re the Officers' Handbook, training needs and updating branch pages of the website.

WREMNESSH Although the short form checklists had been circulated before the meeting, not everyone had read them thoroughly. However, any comments and concerns would be fed back to the Branch Liaison Officer. It was agreed that the full Officers' Handbook might be daunting for new officers so the short forms were welcomed.

Trustee comments/Action Points

As the short form checklists had been widely welcomed, these will be included in the updated Officers' Handbook, the new edition of which is to be launched at this year's Officers' Conference.

7b) Branch Officer Training Needs

Great Western Proposed training for branch treasurers was welcomed but there was doubt about the possible travel that might be required.

London & South Branch Treasurer training would be welcomed. IT training was felt to be essential too. The suggestion of a buddying system between more experienced branches and those less knowledgeable – particularly re IT and updating webpages was thought a good idea as was a list of people who might be able to help. A newsletter summary was requested.

Midland & North Western It was felt that the videos alone were not sufficient but a buddying system or asking for individual help was welcomed.

Northern Home Counties Please see note above under 7c).

WREMNESSH Induction for new officers was mentioned and discussed as were comments that the full Officers' Handbook was 'formidable'. The intention to make substantial changes including the short checklists was reiterated. Zoom training sessions were raised as a possibility and had been done in the past for the website.

Trustee comments/Action Points

All comments about training needs were noted. There will be training for Branch Treasurers, updating branch web pages and induction for new/recently appointed officers as part of the 2023 Officers' Conference. The covering email circulated with the Officers' Newsletter now lists the items covered.

7c) Updating Branch Pages on the Website

Great Western As most branch webpage editors use the software infrequently, it was felt difficult to gain and retain expertise. However, the training videos were very helpful so additional training was not felt to be essential.

London & South Please see 7b) above.

Midland & North Western No additional comments see 7b) above.

Northern Home Counties Please see 7a) and b) above.

WREMNESSH Matthew Shaw – Digital Officer was felt to be very amenable and helpful but that not everyone knew this. It was noted that some branches do not seem to do updates.

Trustee comments/Action Points

Help and training is available already and training needs on updating branch webpages will be addressed by including a training session at this year's Officers' Conference.

8 Officers' Newsletters – feedback on Mailjet

Great Western There had been some difficulties in using Mailjet. However, after discussion, it was agreed that perhaps there was a training issue regarding opening/printing documents or saving the pdf to an individual's laptop/PC. Otherwise the format was accepted.

London & South All seemed pleased with the format.

Midland & North Western All considered it 'fine'.

Northern Home Counties Most officers were happy to receive the newsletters this way.

WREMNESSH One officer appeared to have been 'removed' from the circulation list, otherwise it was accepted.

Trustee comments/Action Points

As all seemed to be happy with the use of Mailjet barring some feedback about the best way to use it, the circulation will continue in this way. If there are any queries about the newsletters, please contact the Branch Liaison Officer for help. If there are any officers who wish to be removed or added to the circulation list, please let the Branch Liaison Officer know.

9 Branch Finances

Great Western The process for reimbursements from the centre does work but can take time to appear with the occasional error which can be corrected. South Wales Branch commended the prompt response to the insurance claim for their digital projector. Better notification regarding PayPal donations was requested. It was felt that financial incentives to recruit new members could not be done in an equitable way. Most branches were financially viable but that targeted financial help for branches that really needed it would be appropriate. Payment of subscriptions by Direct Debit was felt to be a good tool to retain members year on year.

London & South A need for better details regarding payments from the centre was felt to be required so good communication with the Assistant Treasurer Branches was considered essential. This included PayPal donations to the branches. It was unanimously agreed not to support the idea of financial incentives to branches to recruit new members. It was also recognised that branch funds are actually Society funds. If a branch is struggling for funds then they should approach the Board of Trustees for help.

Midland & North West It was agreed that Reg would send a copy of the reimbursement form to the branches in the group. It was agreed to be appropriate to charge for national virtual meetings. Financial incentives for branches to recruit new members was not considered a good idea. If branches were to receive a payment from central funds, it was felt that subscriptions would increase which would not be a good idea given that a substantial number of members do not attend meetings.

Northern Home Counties Issues raised about branches receiving funds from the centre and why this question was included on the agenda were discussed but no firm conclusions agreed except possible further discussion required. It was felt that there was a weight of bureaucracy involved in the finances which was not always easy to understand, particularly when branches needed assistance.

WREMNESSH The news that the finance team was looking to make improvements to the system for reimbursing branches was welcomed. There was room for improvement regarding payment to the branches for PayPal donations. Financial incentives for branches to recruit new members was felt to be too bureaucratic and unnecessary. As branch circumstances can vary widely, it was felt better not to make a standard payment to branches from central funds but to continue with branches asking for financial help as and when required with each request taken on its own merits.

Trustee comments/Action Points.

Feedback to the Board of Trustees regarding reimbursements from the centre, PayPal donations to the branches and financial incentives to recruit new members will be given. Making branches better aware that they can ask for financial help if necessary, to remain viable, is also required.

10 Life Memberships

Great Western There were differences of opinion on retaining life memberships with some in favour and one that felt these were no longer relevant and should be abandoned. Those in favour of retaining them felt that they fostered commitment to the Society and were unlikely to lead to significant financial loss for the Society.

London & South After discussion, there was not a great deal of support for continuing to offer this although some felt strongly that it should be on-going. It was suggested that anyone who felt it important to continue offering Life Memberships might wish to raise it at the Society AGM.

Midland & North West It was agreed that this should be discontinued.

Northern Home Counties It was agreed that Life Membership would no longer be offered due to the longer lives that everyone (members) seems to be living.

WREMNESSH The consensus was that there was no argument against discontinuing life membership.

Trustee comments/Action Points

The general consensus was in favour of discontinuing Life Memberships and this will be fed back to the Board of Trustees who will also need to be made aware of the concerns of the minority who wish to retain them. It is highlighted that existing paid Life Memberships will continue to be honoured of course, as will the opportunity to offer Honorary Life Memberships into the future for exceptional work done, and support given, by individual members to the Society.

11 Trustee Presentation

Great Western An informative presentation was given covering: the Archive & Library and progress to date; an update on Publications, up and coming titles, the role for good reference books and the need to find the right authors; discussion on using the large reservoir of information in the RO eg as a basis for a book or series of books about operational aspects of the railway. There was a great deal of discussion on promoting links with heritage railways, achieving charitable objectives, encouraging new members, including new volunteers to cover specific roles. There was also discussion on engaging the young who have wide access to information via the internet etc meaning that there is less incentive to attend meetings for information. As most of this information is free, charging might be a disincentive. The importance of welcoming people at branch meetings was emphasised as was trying to engage non-attending members. Circulation of branch newsletters via email was a good means of maintaining contact and some branches already do this well. Publishing branch newsletters on the branch web page was to be encouraged.

London & South In addition to the Trustee presentation re Archive & Library, Publications, the Railway Observer, and the Officers Conference this year, there was discussion about links with heritage railways with each branch to consider how they might do this after the meeting.

Midland & North Western There was discussion on advertising, collecting renewals, operating bank accounts, website operation, the digital archive project and the photographic archive project and details of how these are progressing.

Northern Home Counties There was discussion on various points that could be addressed by the Society and the Branches, including the need for volunteers at all levels. There was discussion on the potential for a database of members/speakers/those willing to do presentations. There was a desire for all to liaise with and form strong links with local preservation groups to boost interest. A discussion on the RO presented no positive conclusions. An update on social media efforts was provided and an announcement about the forthcoming Photographic Competition to be held later this in conjunction with Railway Magazine.

WREMNESH the main subjects covered, in addition to the Archive & Library, Publications, Photo Archive Project etc, were continuing with local informal links with other like-minded groups, motivating new volunteers (no obvious solutions at this moment), and the challenges already discussed during the meeting.

Trustee comments/Action Points

Thank you to all the Trustee representatives for leading this particular item with discussion details as varied as all those present at the meetings. Problems have been recognised eg re encouraging new volunteers, and support for on-going projects is welcomed eg Archive & Library, Photographic Archive. There is also support for Publications and the Railway Observer, as well as working on better links with other organisations. These responses will be fed back to the Board of Trustees and/or the relevant Governance Group.

12 Confirmation of Chairman & Secretary for next year

Great Western	Chairman – Brian Arman - Bristol; Secretary - Paul Udey or Stewart Jolly - Bristol
London & South	Chairman – John Godfrey - Solent; Secretary - Denis Horsman - Solent
Midlands & North Western	Chairman – Nigel Bowker - Merseyside, Cheshire & North Wales; Secretary – Alan Sattenstall – Furness, Lakes & Lune
Northern Home Counties	Chairman – James Smythe – Cambridge; Secretary – David Elsdon – Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City
WREMNESSH	Chairman – Derek Stuckey – Sheffield; Secretary – Tony Skinner – North East

Trustee comments/Action Points

Many thanks to all those who have volunteered to take on the roles of Chairman and Secretary for 2024.

13 Any Other Business

Great Western As there is no Members Weekend this year, the Officers' Conference will be a one day event. The members of the meeting expressed their appreciation of the hospitality kindly provided by Terri and Brian.

London & South Delivery of individual and additional copies of the RO was raised. A request for branch meetings lists to be shared was made. Brief discussion included what was acceptable re speaker expenses. There is no Members' Weekend this year, so a one day Officers' Conference will be held instead at Danum in Doncaster.

Midlands & North Western The Officers' Conference would be held at Danum in Doncaster on 28 October 2023.

Northern Home Counties None

WREMNESSH There was discussion about whether this (Members' Weekend) could be resumed. It was acknowledged that an organising team, branch or group of branches would need to come forward to organise the event. This year's event would be a one day Officers' Conference – a work in progress at the time of this meeting.

Trustee comments/Action Points

There will be an Officers' Conference as a one day event at Danum in Doncaster on 28 October 2023. By the time this Summary document is circulated Conference will have taken place and will be reported separately. Branch meetings should be listed on the branch pages of the website and in the RO.

14 Date, time and place of next meeting

Great Western	Saturday 15 June 2024 at 59 Kenmore Crescent, Filton Park, Bristol. Start time to be confirmed
London & South	Equivalent date next year ie around Saturday 29 June 2024 at the same venue and same time. Date to be confirmed.
Midlands & North Western	Monday 24 June 2024, same venue. Date to be confirmed.
Northern Home Counties	Friday 24 May 2024 at 1100hrs (provisional at present). Same venue.
WREMNESSH	Thursday or Friday at the same venue – NRM. Date to be confirmed.

Trustee comments/Action Points

My thanks to everyone who has contributed this year both at Branch level and the Trustees, and to those who will be involved in the arrangements for next year. Once you have date, time and venue confirmed I know you will let the branches in your group know and I would be grateful if you could let me know too. Thank you.

Appendix 2

2023 Regional Meetings Précis of the Summary Document

Please note, this document does not detail the Trustee comments and/or National Action Points.

1 Introduction

Two groups had representatives from all branches in the group; one group was missing one branch but apologies from that branch were received; one group was missing two branches and received apologies from one of those branches but no response from the other; one group had only two of four branches present but apologies were received from the missing two. This calls into question the viability of a small regional grouping and it may be that it is time to review the make-up of each regional grouping.

2 Minutes of the 2022 RMs

All minutes from the previous year were accepted with two minor corrections.

3 Matters Arising from local minutes not covered by the agenda

There were queries about name badges, correction of misspelling, and the outcome of the last Members' Survey.

4 2022 Regional Meeting Action Points

It was apparent that some had not recognised these in the previous summary so they should be more clearly labelled in future.

5 Matters arising from 2022 Action Points

A lack of volunteers coming forward to take on branch officer roles is an on-going problem. There was discussion on archiving contemporary photographs and an update on the charging trial for virtual meetings, although some presenters will not do virtual presentations

6 Branch Presentations

Issues with members stepping down due to age/ill health/both and difficulty in attracting new volunteers. Some branches are doing better than others with this but it is still a common problem. Income has also reduced where exhibitions have reduced in number. Attendance at meetings is still generally lower than pre-Covid although slowly improving; and with lower numbers at meetings – with associated lower donations, branches are having to review their finances at a time of increasing costs. Several branches have increased their requested door donations to help balance branch finances, but this was still felt to be good value. Most branches have returned to in-person meetings with some holding virtual meetings in the worst of the winter months. Windsor & Maidenhead are continuing to offer hybrid meetings where the speaker is happy with that option. Branch venues were discussed including having to change venues, uncertainty regarding on-going availability of a venue, and disabled access. All branches reported continuing financial viability in spite of increasing costs. There were some comments on training but these were formally discussed under branch officer training needs.

Offering a warm welcome to everyone, especially new members and/or guests, at meetings was felt to be vitally important to encourage them to come again and become more involved. It was also seen as essential that all new members should receive either a welcome email or letter from their branch when they join.

7a) Officers' Handbook

The Quick Checklists were welcomed and covered the basics. Flexibility regarding branch officer roles was felt to be essential. It was felt that the full Officers' Handbook might be daunting hence the quick checklists. Now that these have been generally accepted, they should be made available on

the website and this should be publicised. There was some discussion at one RM in particular on the profile of the RCTS ie who we are and what we provide.

7b) Officer Training Needs

The proposed training for branch treasurers was welcomed. Further training on updating branch web pages would be welcome to go with the training videos and previous training sessions on this subject. It was also noted that the Digital Officer has been very amenable to providing individual help as required. A previously suggested 'buddying' or mentoring system where more experienced officers help less experienced ones regarding updating web pages and other committee roles, would be welcome.

8 The use of Mailjet

Using Mailjet to circulate Officers' Newsletters, Society News and advising all when the digital RO has been uploaded onto the website was generally welcomed. Some have struggled to print off forms from Newsletters but this was generally seen as a training issue, as well as some not realising that quite a few forms are available in word format.

9 Branch Finances

Reimbursements from the centre – better communications would be welcome and all welcomed that the finance team are seeking to improve this. What is required is better information about amounts, what these are for and for which period. This includes things like VAT refunds but especially PayPal donations.

Financial incentives for branches to recruit were not supported, felt to be too bureaucratic and difficult to ensure equitable outcomes.

Regular financial support to branches was not supported. The preference was for branches to remain financially independent but with the freedom to apply to the centre for financial help if required with each application being taken on its merits.

10 Life Memberships

Continuing to offer Life Memberships was generally not supported with two groups divided in opinion on this, and the other three not in support of this continuing.

11 Trustee Presentations

These included the Archive & Library, Photographic Archive Project, Publications and Digital updates. There was good support for establishing and maintaining links with other groups and organisations outside of the RCTS – as mutually beneficial. There was discussion on the RO in some groups but no firm conclusions were reached. Motivating new volunteers was also raised.

12 2024 Chairman & Secretary

All Regional Groups confirmed their Chairmen and Secretaries for 2024.

13 Any Other Business

A number of items were briefly discussed including the Officers' Conference – a one day event at Danum in Doncaster this year as there is no Members' Weekend. There was a query about individual and bulk printed ROs not arriving at the same time. At the meetings where it was discussed, there was a wish to resume Members' Weekends if a group of volunteers was prepared to take this up.

14 Date, time and place for 2024

All groups agreed a provisional date, time and place for the meetings in 2024 with details to be confirmed to group members in due course.