

BRANCH LIAISON OFFICER

Irene Rabbitts, 34 Victory Park Road, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 2AZ

Telephone: 01932 855015

e-mail: liaison@rcts.org.uk

Officers' Newsletter 228

21 January 2024

New Edition of the Officers' Handbook

The new edition of the Officers' Handbook was officially launched at the Officers' Conference on 28 October 2023. Unfortunately, an important omission was spotted regarding the presentation of Branch Accounts at a Branch AGM so this had to be put right before the new Handbook could be uploaded onto the website. I am delighted to say it is now available by logging on to <https://members.rcts.org.uk/#guidance> where you should be able to gain access. You will need to be registered as an RCTS Officer. If you have any difficulty with this, please let our Digital Officer Matthew Shaw know so that you can be given the necessary access digital@rcts.org.uk.

Volunteering for the *Railway Observer* (RO) Editorial Team

**YOUR SOCIETY NEEDS YOU
RO Editorial Team Volunteers Required**

The Society's flagship monthly publication – *The Railway Observer* - is entirely dependent on members for everything that appears in the magazine. Whilst there is a healthy regular supply of photographic material, member reports of activity around the network vary significantly and need considerable editing to provide consistent professional-standard articles each month. We would like to continue to produce a varied and interesting magazine with a good variety of content.

This is where you come in.

The RO needs volunteers in all areas of the magazine whether area reporting, photographic processing, researching and writing articles or other aspects of what goes into YOUR magazine.

What is in it for you?

The satisfaction of having contributed to a well produced magazine that has already been going for nearly one hundred years.

Discounted membership for any volunteer who has carried out their role for at least six months – this is known as AVR or Active Volunteer Recognition. The rate for AVR at the moment is zero ie you get your membership free in return for your volunteer contribution.

If you would like to get involved and help with producing the RO going forward, please call the Managing Editor – Mike Robinson on 07717 637565 or email observer@rcts.org.uk when Mike will be happy to discuss the possibilities.

The information contained in this newsletter is for use of RCTS Officers and Members only and should not be communicated outside of the Society

Branch Returns

By the time you read this, some of you will already have received personal reminders about submitting outstanding Branch AGM reports, Branch Attendance Statistics for 2023, and Branch six monthly Accounts. Please do not ignore these as we need them to ensure a well run Society which is there for the benefit of all our members. It also makes the job much easier for those of us who have to collect these details if they are submitted on time and/or when requested. Any problems with any of these returns, please let the relevant person know so that we can sort out any difficulties that you may have. Thank you.

Financial reports at Branch AGMs

Accurate financial reporting is a key task of running any organisation whether voluntary, charity or a business. This is the item that was not originally explicitly included in the new edition of the Officers' Handbook and is a lesson for me not to assume that everyone else understands its importance although I am sure that most of you do.

Properly prepared accounts, whether at local or national level, help to ensure the financial probity of the organisation ie that members funds are being used prudently and properly accounted for. Accounts can highlight both good and bad aspects so that any best practices are shared, and any problems can be dealt with quickly.

It was raised because at least one Branch was found not to have properly presented the Branch accounts to their membership at their AGM in 2023. There was no suggestion of dishonesty but rather a health problem. It is important to share difficulties so that we can come up with solutions, so please ask for help if you need it.

Reclaimable Expenses

It seems that some members may be confused about what are and what are not reclaimable expenses – for example, the cost of travel for a member to attend the Society AGM is NOT reclaimable. For more information on Society Reimbursements, please see Treasurers' Guidance Note 4 which explains in more detail. If you are still not sure, please contact the Society Treasurer.

Financial help for Branches

There has been some discussion in 2023 about regular financial help for Branches and how this should be managed – a topic legitimately raised by a member. The overall result is that the Branches decided at the Regional Meetings that they would prefer the autonomy of managing their own finances without regular financial payments from the centre – partly to maintain their financial independence and partly because of administrative difficulties in coming up with an equitable system, and one that would not result in additional costs and volunteer effort.

However, if a Branch is struggling financially and efforts to set this right have not resolved the problems, please talk to the Society Treasurer to see what help is available from the centre to bring the Branch back onto a sound financial footing.

Publications – Branch Sales

It is some time since this was last publicised in an Officers' Newsletter (ON177 from August 2019) and there have been a few queries recently about the percentage of income from Branch sales of Society Publications that is retained by the Branch when book sellers can buy them at much lower trade prices and, therefore, retain more of the cover price or sell them more cheaply.

There are currently two options:

1 A Branch can hold stocks of RCTS publications that are still the property of the Society and retain 15% of the current sale price for the Branch, after applying any member discount. The Society takes the risk on books remaining unsold and the possible reduced sale value if the condition of the books should deteriorate.

2 Branches can buy RCTS publications from central Society stocks and store and sell those publications on their own terms meaning that they effectively become a book seller instead of selling them on behalf of the Society. Books can be bought by the Branch for 50% of the existing sale price. The ONLY CONDITION is that the Branch holds the selling price of new publications for the first year of each new book at the cover price, with the exception of sales to members who would qualify for a member discount. After the first year of sales of a new title, the Branch can sell at whatever price they choose.

Please contact David Bird on publications@rcts.org.uk if you would like further information or to discuss buying the books that your Branch currently holds to sell on behalf of the Society.

In Conclusion

Please take note of the contents of this newsletter and use it for reference as required. I hope it has the desired effect of encouraging more prompt returns – without the need for repeated reminders, more volunteers to join the *RO* editorial team, clarification on some financial matters and information on Branch sales of Society publications. Last but not least, there is the new edition of the Officers' Handbook – feedback welcomed.

Kind regards

Irene