

BRANCH LIAISON OFFICER

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Officers' Newsletter 231

9 May 2024

Dear All

Welcome to Officers' Newsletter 231 which is mainly concerned with Regional Meetings. You will find the following as appendices - you can copy or print off the relevant pages as appropriate:

Regional Meeting Agenda and notes as Appendix 1;

Regional Meeting Locations showing date, time, location, Trustee representative, Chair and Secretary for each Regional Group as **Appendix 2;**

Regional Meeting Trustee Comments and Actions Points from 2023 - extracted from the summary document – as **Appendix 3**

Please note that the respective Regional Groups are responsible for getting in touch with their Trustee and providing a copy of the minutes for their group from 2023. I have copies of them all if you have any difficulties with this. Do not forget to provide the Branch delegates attending and the Trustee representative for your group with details of the arrangements for the day including timings, the venue and how to find it, and any specific travel/parking arrangements. Copies of the Agenda can be taken from this Newsletter as required, as can Appendix 3 which is referred to on the Agenda. This caused some confusion last year so I have extracted the information from last year's Summary into a separate document for ease of reference.

Any queries about any of the arrangements, please ask your Group Chairman or Secretary or me as Branch Liaison Officer.

Email Addresses

This is a message about good practice, necessary security and GDPR responsibilities that I have been asked to raise. With approximately 85% of Society members providing an email address, it is important to be aware of the security risks and ensure that we **ALL** take reasonable precautions to protect this information at all levels throughout the Society - not just good practice but part of our responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). There are some obvious precautions such as good security software and only using bcc when circulating an email to a group. **ALL** Society Officer contact details appearing on the website should have an official RCTS email address to ensure that their private email address does not appear on the public part of the website; and please notify the relevant people if your contact details change so that records can be updated accordingly.

Thank you.

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

Appendix 1

REGIONAL MEETINGS 2024 – AGENDA

Branch Liaison

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Telephone: 01932 855015 email: liaison@rcts.org.uk

- 1 Welcome by Chair and introduction of Delegates
- 2 Apologies for absence
- 3 Minutes of previous Local Regional Meeting
- 4 Matters arising from Local Minutes not covered by the Agenda
- 5 2023 Regional Meetings National Action Points
- 6 Matters arising from 2023 National Action Points
- 7 Branch Presentations – comparing how each branch has been doing since the last Regional Meeting – see note (i)
- 8 Trustee Presentation
- 9 Branch Activities
 - a) Updating Branch pages on the website (ii)
 - b) Formalising links between Branches and local heritage railways as well as other local rail/transport groups (iii)
 - c) Expenses for attending Regional Meetings (iv)
 - d) Risk Assessments (and other H&S requirements) – how to include these as part of regular Branch activities (v)
 - e) Branch indoor meetings (vi)
- 10 What do you want from the centre; what can you do in return (vii)
- 11 RCTS 100th Anniversary in 2028 – ideas for celebrating the occasion (viii)
- 12 Railway 200 – Network Rail are organising an exhibition train and they would like the RCTS to be involved in its operation (ix)
- 13 Confirmation of Chairman and Secretary for next year for those Regional Meetings where this is to change either by rotation between the branches or because of retirement
- 14 Any Other Business
- 15 Date, time and place of next meeting

Notes to go with Regional Meetings Agenda

(i) This provides useful feedback for me as Branch Liaison Officer on how Branches are doing, what works, what does not work, what support might be helpful.

(ii) Although most Branches have greatly improved their Branch web pages, there are still a few which leave a lot to be desired eg:

- a) No welcome message
- b) No Branch home page photograph to add colour and attract attention
- c) No or limited details on the indoor meetings venue
- d) No fixtures details
- e) Limited contact details for Branch Officers
- f) No reports or no recent reports on Branch activities

This is our 'shop window' to attract new members and guests and potential new committee members. If there is nothing interesting to see, then visitors to the Branch web pages, may think we are doing nothing and will see no reason to become involved.

(iii) Many Branches have informal links with local heritage railways and other local organisations. Could these relationships be formalised to the greater mutual advantage of both the RCTS and those other organisations and if so, how? Please see Officers' Newsletter 229 and the message from Society Chairman James Milne about a missed opportunity. Please discuss.

(iv) There are already Guidance Notes about reclaimable expenses relating to Regional Meetings. A question has been raised about whether or not the Chair and Secretary for each Regional Group should be paid for centrally or treated as Branch representatives. Note – lunches are paid for up to 2 representatives per Branch and reasonable travel expenses can be reclaimed for up to 2 Branch representatives where the Branch has less than £2000 in uncommitted funds.

(v) This should not be onerous but it is not obvious that it has been done by any Branch. Any risk assessment should be kept with the Branch records and one way of showing that it has been done is to review it each year and note this explicitly in the Branch Annual Report or the Branch AGM minutes. Please discuss how to make this work.

(vi) I have visited a number of Branches over the years and had feedback from others who have visited Branches where I have yet to attend. Whilst some are very good at making it obvious that there is an RCTS Branch meeting going on, others leave a lot to be desired eg no RCTS signage, a locked door, no-one to welcome newcomers. The answer that "we all know" is not acceptable - a new member or stranger turning up for the first time does not know, making the whole affair appear to be very much a 'closed shop' and not at all welcoming. If even the Branch Liaison Officer can experience this when visiting a Branch, it is going to be worse for a stranger or new member. Please share good practice, let's improve what we do and ensure that we all match the best. It may not be easy but it is essential.

Related to this, does your Branch have a long enough break mid-meeting to allow for socialising and good informal discussions? This is a good opportunity to get to know new members and guests. Please discuss.

(vii) There are still occasional complaints about the quality of the relationship between the centre and the Branches so how can this be improved? What can you do to help?

(viii) The Strategy Group is already considering ideas for celebrating 100 years of the RCTS – Britain's Leading Railway Society. Further ideas are welcome. Please discuss and pass any ideas to the Branch Liaison Officer to share with the Strategy Group.

(ix) Although this has been included in Officers' Newsletter 229, please indicate if your Branch or Regional Group would like to participate. So far information is limited but we are expected to have some exhibition space on the train with members helping both with this and with non-safety stewarding activities.

Appendix 2

LOCATION	59 Kenmore Crescent Filton Park BRISTOL BS7 0TP	Maybury Centre 27 Board School Road WOKING GU21 5HD	Digswell Village Church Warren Way DIGSWELL AL6 0DH	Waverley Hotel 9 Pedley Street CREWE CW2 7AA	Edmondson Room National Railway Museum, YORK
DATE	Saturday 15 June 2024	Saturday 22 June 2024	Saturday 08 June 2024	Thursday 30 May 2024	Wednesday 22 May 2024
TIME	11am	11am	11am	11am	11am
TRUSTEE	David Bird	Reg Wood	David Goddard	Irene Rabbitts	Richard Morris
CHAIRMAN	Brian Arman (secretary Paul Udey)	Steve Ollive (secretary Denis Horsman)	David Smyth (secretary David Elsdon)	Nigel Bowker (secretary Alan Sattenstall)	Derek Stuckey (secretary tbc due to illness)
	Great Western:	Bristol; Cheltenham; Thames Valley; South Wales; West of England			
	London & South:	Chichester; Croydon & South London; Solent; Surrey; Windsor & Maidenhead			
	Northern Home Counties:	Cambridge; Hitchin; Ipswich; Milton Keynes; Northampton; Peterborough; South Essex; Watford			
	Midland & North Western:	Furness, Lakes & Lune; Lancashire & North West; Merseyside, Cheshire & North Wales; West Midlands			
	WREMNESH:	East Midlands; Humberside; North East; Scottish; Sheffield; West Riding			

Appendix 3

Trustee Comments/Actions Points from 2023 Regional Meetings Summary Document

1 Present and Apologies

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.

To be kept under review

3 Matters Arising from Local Minutes not covered by the Agenda

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.

Completed

4 2022 Regional Meeting 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.

Completed

5 Matters Arising from 2022 National Action Points

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).

Completed

6 Branch Presentations

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.

Completed

7a) Officers' Handbook – short form Officer Checklists

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.

Completed

7b) Branch Officer Training Needs

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.

Completed

7c) Updating Branch Pages on the Website

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.

Completed

8 Officers' Newsletters – feedback on Mailjet

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.

Completed

9 Branch Finances

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.

Completed

10 Life Memberships

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.

Not yet completed as this will require a Rule change

11 Trustee Presentation

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.

Completed

12 Confirmation of Chairman & Secretary for next year

Trustee comments/Action Points

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

Completed

13 Any Other Business

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.

Completed

14 Date, time and place of next meeting

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.

Completed