

BRANCH LIAISON OFFICER

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Officers' Newsletter 238

7 May 2025

Dear All

Many of you will know by now that I stepped down as Branch Liaison Officer at the Society AGM in Wolverhampton in April. This is due largely to additional responsibilities that I have had to take on outside of RCTS activities. I will be ably succeeded by Jeremy Segrott who has kindly agreed to take on the role. I officially finish one month after the AGM ie 5 May 2025; which means that this will be the final Officers' Newsletter solely in my name.

I would like to welcome Jeremy to his new position and to thank all of you who have supported me since I took over from our late colleague and friend Alan Cooke on 1 January 2018, and ask that you support Jeremy as you have supported me.

I will be working with Jeremy to ensure a smooth transition and continuity, particularly with activities like the Regional Meetings that are scheduled to take place in May and June this year.

Regional Meetings

2024 Summary Document - the Regional Meetings Summary Document (with corrections) is attached as Appendix 1 to this newsletter. It includes the Trustee comments and Action Points highlighted in blue.

2025 Regional Meetings Locations

Attached as Appendix 2 to this newsletter. A quick reminder for all Regional Meeting organisers – please do not forget to circulate all necessary documents to delegates including venue details – where, how to get there, parking/public transport etc, and arrangements for the day – eg timings, lunch etc.

2025 Agenda and Notes

Attached as Appendix 3. You can, of course, add anything to the Agenda that is of particular relevance to your Regional Grouping or that you would like to share more widely within the Society and beyond.

2025 General information

If any Branches are unable to send a representative, please let me know, provide a short report on how the Branch is doing, and your comments on subjects on the Agenda and Notes. These will be shared with your Regional Group so that all Branches can be included in discussions.

Any queries re claiming reimbursement for attending, please ask.

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

Exhibitions – items available from East Midlands Branch

East Midlands has the following items available for any other Branch that might like them:

- i) Three heavy blue tablecloths suitable for using on an exhibition/sales table or stand;
- ii) A large selection of Alan Godfrey Replica Maps – predominantly for the East Midlands area. These have proved a valuable sales item for the Branch and attract a wider customer base than simply railway enthusiasts.

Please contact Rodney Allen by email rodney43allen@hotmail.co.uk if you are interested in the tablecloths or maps.

Railway 200

Terminal Tours

As part of the Railway 200 celebrations, Network Rail is offering guided tours of London Bridge, London Victoria and London Waterloo stations. Each tour lasts about two hours and costs £25. Tours are booked through the following link <https://railway200.co.uk/> - search events for each station, or scroll down the events page until you find the event that you are interested in.

Tours take place between May and November. Tours for London Waterloo are already sold out with no plans to add any further dates. There are still dates available for both London Bridge and London Victoria Stations at the time of writing although some dates for London Bridge are also sold out. Please do not leave it too late to book if you are interested.

There are a number of other events all around the country with links from the Railway 200 website - all relating to celebrating 200 years of passenger railways in the UK. Please have a look to find an event near you.

Publicity

We have been advised that we may be able to publicise Society events on the Railway 200 website such as Branch meetings etc. Please take this opportunity to widen public awareness of our activities wherever you can.

Finally

Although this Officers' Newsletter is primarily aimed at Branch Officers re Regional Meetings, please share the contents – particularly regarding Railway 200 events - with the wider membership, as appropriate, whether you are a Branch or National Officer.

If you would like to highlight particular subjects of interest for inclusion in one of these newsletters, please contact either Jeremy or me with the details using liaison@rcts.org.uk . Thank you.

Kind regards

Irene

Appendix 1 – 2024 Regional Meeting Summary Document

2024 Regional Meetings Summary

Introduction

All five Regional Meetings (RMs) took place this year and I am pleased that more Branches attended with only three unable to send a representative – an improvement on last year when six Branches did not attend. One of those not attending did, however, provide a report on their Branch activities for inclusion in the discussions.

1 Welcome by Chair and introduction of Delegates

All groups welcomed their Chairmen with delegates introducing themselves, including which Branch they represent.

2 Present and Apologies

Great Western: Branches represented: Bristol; Cheltenham; South Wales; Thames Valley. West of England Branch was not presented. Trustee Representative - David Bird.

London & South – all Branches represented: Chichester; Croydon & South London; Solent; Surrey; Windsor & Maidenhead. Trustee representative - Reg Wood.

Midland & North West – Branches represented: Furness, Lakes & Lune; Merseyside, Cheshire & North Wales; West Midlands. Lancs & North West gave apologies and provided a report from the Branch. Trustee Representative - Irene Rabbits; Society Chairman James Milne was also present.

Northern Home Counties – Branches represented: Cambridge; Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City; Ipswich; Peterborough; Milton Keynes, South Essex, Watford. Northampton Branch was not represented. Trustee Representative - David Goddard.

WREMNESSH – all Branches represented: East Midlands; Humberside; North East; Sheffield; West Riding. Trustee Representative - Richard Morris.

Trustee Comments/Action Points

It is still the intention that ALL Branches should be represented, if not in person, then by providing a report on their Branch activities. The option of reviewing the Regional Structure is still under consideration and there will be consultation with the Branches before any decision is made.

3 Minutes of the Previous Regional Meeting

Great Western – accepted.

London & South – appendices were missing from the minutes but circulated after the meeting. Otherwise accepted.

Midland & North West – the misspelling of Derek Huntriss's surname was corrected. Otherwise accepted.

Northern Home Counties – the spelling of Michael Smyth's surname was corrected. Otherwise accepted.

WREMNESSH – accepted.

4 Matters Arising from Local Minutes not covered by the Agenda

Great Western – None

London & South – None

Midlands & North West – Other Branch programmes not yet exchanged

Northern Home Counties – None

WREMNESSH

- The Officers' Handbook now includes Quick Checklists in Section 2 which was very useful and less daunting;
- Sheffield – banking issues were highlighted;
- Discussion re more than one person at the Branch, to sign on to the account and deal with banking issues, is required;
- Concerns re late arrival of the printed *RO*.

Trustee Comments/Action Points

[Any queries re Branch Finances/Banking, please contact Assistant Treasurer Branches.](#)

5 Regional Meeting Action Points from 2023

Great Western – these had been circulated prior to this year's Regional Meetings via Officers' Newsletter 231;

London & South – RO inconsistent delivery eg June edition received 22 June 2024 (DH), whereas July edition arrived 2 July 2024;

Midlands & North West – nothing to report;

Northern Home Counties – noted;

WREMNESSH – noted.

6 Matters Arising from National Action Points

Great Western – None;

London & South - CHR now back up to pre-Covid attendance leading to discussion on membership and name of the Society; articles put on the Facebook page but member concerned never attends meetings; BTL had a local magazine on the web; CSL membership distribution within Branch area; comments on RCTS ads – improvement required; discussion re length of time to publish photographs on the website and in the RO compared with other organisations; no Life Memberships this year; need to encourage more people to visit the Library at Leatherhead – suggestions: Celebrity Open Day, book signing?

Midlands & North West – None

Northern Home Counties – None

WREMNESSH – Items 5 & 6 on the Agenda were felt to be confusing although most items raised have been completed. The make-up of Regional Groups and allocation of Branches (possibly impacted by closer relationship with the SLS); and Life Memberships which requires a Rule change are still outstanding.

Trustee Comments/Action Points

[A review of RM groups/branches has not yet taken place but there will be consultation. Society advertising is currently under review.](#)

7 Branch Presentations – comparing how each Branch has been doing since the last Regional Meeting

Great Western

Bristol - Numbers slightly down but Branch in reasonably good health – attendance depends significantly upon subject with locally focused, steam era presentations being popular. Book sales provide significant contribution to Branch finances but sales down particularly re second hand books. A card reader has been acquired for electronic financial transactions.

Cheltenham – a good year with financial stability; primary income from door donations at meetings plus a little from RCTS book sales, second hand book sales negligible. Good relationship/personal contacts with the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway.

South Wales – good year with attendance close to pre-Covid levels. Committee works well with good engagement from Branch members. Financially healthy. Bookstall considered an important part of the meeting. Electronic Right Tracks newsletter circulated widely and well respected. Indoor programme varied with efforts made to appeal to both younger and established members. Initiatives during the year included a Summer Social, South Wales based photographic competition (including a prize donated by TfW). Branch links with local 'Railways in South Wales' Facebook group. Now have a card reader for financial transactions.

Thames Valley – small but enthusiastic core of regular attendees at meetings. Feedback re speakers has been good. Numbers still not returned to pre-Covid levels – ageing membership? Branch committee positions hard to fill.

West of England – not present

Costs of banking discussed between branches present as some face banking charges whilst others do not.

London & South

Chichester – problems recruiting to Committee but members willing to carry out other duties for the Branch. Attendance back up to pre-Covid levels. Branch 'upbeat and positive' attitude.

Croydon & South London – attendance still down on pre-Covid levels so a smaller meeting room is now being used. Two long-standing committee members have stood down but a new volunteer has come forward.

Solent – concerns re meeting location with change of ownership but current bookings have been honoured. Some uncertainty going forward. Meetings are held jointly with the Mid Hants Railway whose new CEO Rebecca Dalley attended the April meeting to introduce herself. Two exhibitions attended in the last year.

Surrey – Downside is the loss of Fixtures Officer Tom Kolisch. Difficult to recruit new active committee members. Difficulties in getting speakers to confirm presentations promptly, consequently difficult to get full information into magazines for Press Date. Cost of running meetings has increased and attendance at meetings is still down on pre-Covid levels. This and losing two of four exhibitions, including the most lucrative, puts pressure on Branch day to day finances. Previous attempts at hybrid meetings unsuccessful in spite of pre-meeting testing but there are plans to try again in future.

Upside – several members willing to assist with meetings.

Windsor & Maidenhead – hybrid meetings have taken place during the year with only one 'face to face' only. Seasonal average for hybrid meetings – 20 in person and 32 on zoom. After a poor experience, the importance of finding out about a speaker and their equipment in advance of making a booking, was highlighted. Three exhibitions attended – an increase. Branch finances in surplus this year from hybrid meetings and increase in exhibitions attendance.

Midlands & North West

Furness, Lakes & Lune – meetings moved to Wednesday evenings has saved the Branch money and has not been detrimental to attendances. Attendances have not yet returned to pre-Covid levels and, with meetings running at a loss, requested door donations have been increased. There is a good indoor meetings programme with excellent speakers. The Branch Treasurer has some personal issues but Will Gibson will step in if necessary. Slightly reduced attendance is a concern but improved towards the end of the season; tight financial management, good committee skills, and a great venue are all pluses. Meeting reminders are posted on railway interest groups on Facebook etc. There will be a Branch visit to DRS Open Day, Carlisle.

Lancs & North West – downside of losing long-standing Branch Treasurer, new one appointed but other Branch committee members are also facing health problems. Branch attendances are down and not returning to pre-Covid levels. Harder to investigate and find good new speakers. Former Facebook page did not seem to attract greater attendances/interest so has been discontinued. Getting local railway enthusiasts to meetings, in spite of good speakers, has not yet been successful. Branch funds are being carefully managed with meetings moving to a cheaper venue. Ageing members is a problem. (Branch webpages have been recently greatly improved – ILR)

Merseyside, Cheshire & North Wales – the Branch has had a difficult time recently but now has a new venue for evening meetings (increased costs and parking issues at the previous venue in Chester). The Liverpool venue for afternoon meetings is unchanged. Recent committee changes have meant upheaval but the situation is now settling. Good outdoor visits continue.

West Midlands – former Branch Chairman stood down due to health problems and a new volunteer has not yet been found. However, there is a good and varied programme of indoor meetings with reasonable attendance.

Northern Home Counties

Cambridge – A successful year with meeting attendances averaging 25-30 with a full programme and a good atmosphere at meetings. The Branch has a good committee, is financially sound with no door donations requested as the income comes from book sales. The Branch has the technology for hybrid meetings.

Ipswich – A full programme of speakers for 2024 but the Branch is struggling to attract essential committee members. Help is provided by members at meetings but there is a threat to the Branch if new committee members do not come forward.

South Essex – Have a good working committee; meetings once a month all year round, most of which are now hybrid. The Branch is financially sound averaging a meeting attendance of 20.

Milton Keynes – moved to new venue in March 2023 with no hire charge. January/ February meetings are Zoom and a joint meeting with Northampton is held once a year. Attendances are good with around 60 for Zoom and 50 in person. (There is a discrepancy with meeting attendance stats provided to date - ILR) The Branch has a monthly newsletter.

Watford – there is a full meeting programme for 2024 with Zoom-only meetings in January and February. Average attendance between 20 and 24. Outdoor visits tend to be poorly supported.

Peterborough – the Branch has low meeting attendances leading to concern over finances. Problems include a need for new committee members and a widely dispersed membership.

Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City – the Branch continues to provide two live meetings per month, one at each venue, excluding August. Although Branch membership is around 106, attendances for both afternoon (Welwyn) and evening (Hitchin) meetings remain in the 20s. New lanyard name badges have

been introduced for everyone attending, to promote socialising between members which has led to longer intervals. There is a monthly newsletter. The committee comprises 4 people, with member assistance at meetings. Finances are satisfactory after increasing requested door donations.

WREMNESSH

Each Branch gave a presentation and a range of interesting points were made as to the issues faced by the Branches.

West Riding – facing an uncertain future as the secretary and treasurer have both given 12 months notice to step down but no volunteers came forward at the most recent AGM so the Branch will cease to function in September if nothing changes. The Branch Liaison Officer is aware of the situation.

Scottish - has found a new venue due to increasing charges at the previous one. All future meetings are planned for afternoon rather than a mix of afternoon and evening.

North East - has been successful in attracting members from other local groups whose own meeting programmes seem to have stopped. There are no immediate plans to restart meetings in Newcastle due to insufficient volunteer support.

Sheffield - committee is working on improving attendances as these have not increased in spite of moving to a well located new venue with better facilities and parking than before. This affects Branch finances.

Humberside – apologies received for non-attendance.

There was general discussion on meeting times (afternoon/evening). The possibility of Saturday meetings was raised which may suit some Branch memberships.

Trustee Comments/Action Points

It is clear from the discussions under Item 7 on the Agenda that Branches are very varied with regards to attendance at meetings post-Covid and finances. The availability of exhibitions to attend to publicise the Society and raise funds has reduced which, together with reduced attendances, is affecting Branch finances in some cases. There are clear difficulties in attracting new Branch committee members. Financial help is available if required to keep a Branch 'afloat'. In spite of difficulties, the overall feeling was positive going forward. What can we learn from the successes?

(**Note – good news** - West Riding Branch now has new volunteers to take over as Secretary/Fixtures and Treasurer on the Branch committee – ILR)

8 Trustee Presentation

Great Western

Trustee representative David Bird gave an informative presentation on behalf of the Board of Trustees covering the following points:

Branch Attendance statistics – all Branches within the group have provided these;

Health & Safety (H&S) – essential that each Branch understands the Society's H&S Policy especially with regards to the meeting venue, including providing information on emergency evacuation at the start of meetings;

Branch web pages – all Branches present have up-to-date web pages – the Society's shop window. Help is available from the centre and on-going feedback is requested from Branches on how the Society might be able to improve its web presence;

Information about the relationship with the SLS was updated noting the good geographical synergy between the two societies. Concerns about possibly insufficient consultation were addressed and reassurances provided.

London & South

Trustee representative Reg Wood concentrated on Society finances and an expected deficit for the current financial year, largely due to the increase in postage costs for the printed *RO*. Unfortunately, there was no Members' Weekend in 2023 due to no volunteers to organise it. The one day Officers' Conference in Doncaster was, of necessity, a more expensive event. There have been three new Society publications over the last few months and Gift Aid is going well. The lease for Leatherhead is still to be signed by all parties at this time and payment of utilities is still to be resolved but the Business Rates have now been sorted with a substantial discount as a Registered Charity. The situation and processes for Bequests and Society insurance were outlined. The proposed closer working with the SLS was discussed including the potential benefits to both organisations. There was a query about having a Society credit card –something to look at in the future.

Midlands & North West

Trustee representative Irene Rabbitts raised concerns about late returns for Branch attendance statistics and Branch financial returns; all Branches were asked to get these in on time and to ask for help if this was likely to be an issue. Branch attendance figures should be sent in after every meeting becoming part of the regular post-meeting routine which, it is hoped, would be easier for Branches to manage. It was agreed that it would be helpful for Branches to share their meetings programmes with each other, other railway/transport societies, and any SLS Centres in their areas. Branches were asked to consider if their present meeting locations were still appropriate given where the membership lived. This discussion was aided by member location maps available at the meeting. These were given to the Branch representatives for sharing with their committees. Generally most Branches felt that the locations were appropriate. Other subjects appropriate for the Trustee briefing were covered in discussions elsewhere on the Agenda.

Northern Home Counties

Trustee representative David Goddard took the meeting through the points raised for discussion indicating that Society Chairman James Milne would like to see attendance statistics sent in immediately following Branch meetings. Also raised was the issue of the distance some members have to travel to meetings with increasing difficulties if using public transport. There was a reminder to submit Branch AGM minutes to the Branch Liaison Officer promptly, and Financial returns to be sent to the new Assistant Treasurer Branches Chris Basford. An update on working more closely with the SLS was given. There was discussion re meeting venues and the geographical location of Branch members.

WREMNESSH

Trustee representative Richard Morris spoke of the need for more volunteers to become involved in digitising the Society's image collection. The meeting secretary (as an author of railway books) queried the cost of images intended publication as no details currently appear on the site. RM will investigate. There was an update on the discussions with the SLS with a possible first step being the RCTS taking on SLS membership administration, and the possibility of combining the *RO* and the *SLS Journal*. It might be difficult to merge the two libraries although any duplication could help save space. A reminder was

given that Branches with limited financial resources can apply for central funding for a specific purpose and there was another reminder that six monthly financial returns must be submitted in a timely manner.

Trustee Comments/Action Points

The query re costs of photographs will be looked into and report back to the meeting.

9 Branch Activities

Great Western –Those present are generally good at keeping Branch pages on the website up to date. Younger members or younger attendees who are potential members could be approached to help with this thus enhancing a sense of belonging to the Society and greater awareness of the Society on to social media. There are many younger enthusiasts so there is a ‘market to be tapped’.

All the Branches present have informal links with local preservation groups; these were shared and discussed.

Expenses for attending Regional Meetings – the process was noted and understood by all those present.

Risk Assessments (and other H&S requirements) – there was some uncertainty around the table as to what was required and guidance is being compiled to help with this. It is important for all Branch committees to be familiar with what is required.

Branch Indoor Meetings – there were no known significant issues in relation to any of the Branches present. Whilst the value of having a mid-meeting break for socialising was fully recognised, this has to be balanced where the venue is hired at an hourly rate, as is the importance of agreeing timings in advance with the speaker.

London & South

Unfortunately, there had been problems at the website training session at Doncaster last October because of unreliable WiFi. There should be talks about what is missing re the website. The Trustee representative would take these concerns back to the Board of Trustees (BoT). Some Branches already have good links with local heritage railways, others have more informal links. One Branch had three representatives attending and raised the question that expenses can only be covered for up to two delegates per Branch. It was for the meeting to discuss. Risk Assessments – the meeting felt that these are largely common sense. Laminated signage would be welcomed.

Midlands & North West

There were several comments about Branch web pages already showing much improvement but there is a need to update venue details and update meetings and activities programmes. Only official RCTS email addresses should be used rather than private ones. There are only informal links with other heritage railway societies. We should share programmes and meeting information with the SLS and vice versa and with other railway societies to work more closely together. How and what can be claimed by way of Regional Meeting expenses was explained. Branches have started doing Risk Assessments and the need to do so is beginning to be understood; Branches must be aware of emergency evacuation at their meeting venues. The value of having a mid meeting break for socialising and to give the presenter a break was recognised. Displaying RCTS signage to reinforce branding messages and so that visitors can

be sure they are at the right venue for a meeting was agreed. It was agreed that speakers need a clear briefing on what is expected prior to giving a presentation and it would be useful to have feedback from other Branches on speakers worth inviting, value for money, level of expenses requested.

Northern Home Counties

The importance of the Branch's welcome message and homepage photographs to attract attention was agreed. There was discussion on how to build relationships with local railway organisations eg offering a discount for attending our meetings and possibly a discount on RCTS publications although it was felt that this last idea should be considered at Society rather than Branch level. The process for claiming expenses for this Regional meeting was well understood. Branches should be aware of individual venue requirements for emergency evacuation and, if possible, have emergency contact numbers. Risk Assessments were felt to be common sense. RCTS signage should be displayed at meetings and events. Laminated signs can be requested from the Branch Liaison Officer.

WREMNESSH

Trustee Richard Morris offered help to those Branches in the group who may need it to update their Branch web pages. Discussions on links with other heritage railway operations confirmed that these are informal and led on to discussion on the whereabouts of Society headboards. Reimbursement for attending Regional Meetings was well understood and uncontroversial. The meeting felt that a Risk Assessment template would be useful. One member objected to the use of 'moral responsibility' in relations to members' duties which appears in the H&S Policy – moral being considered subjective. There was discussion on having a free standing banner. Further discussion followed about time to socialise at Branch meetings, leading on to ensuring careful timings at meetings.

Trustee Comments/Action Points

It might be positive to build on currently informal links with heritage railways and similar. Laminated signage is available on request from the Branch Liaison Officer. A sample Risk Assessment form is now available as is Guidance. The Digital Officer has started consulting about updating the current website.

10 What do you want from the centre; what can you do in return?

Great Western

Personal contact between Branch Officers and Trustees/Society Officers is seen as very important in building relationships and facilitating interactions between Branches and the Centre. Mutual respect and a helpful attitude in both directions are vital as we are all volunteers and need to encourage one another in our roles. Having Trustee representatives at Regional Meetings is very helpful and Branches should likewise be encouraged to send representatives to national meetings.

London & South

Trustees attending Branch AGMs – this was stopped some years ago. Branches to invite a Trustee to their Branch AGM.

Midlands & North West

The Society is now run by a Board of Trustees mostly with specific roles. Channel any Branch issues through Irene Rabbitts (Branch Liaison Officer)

Northern Home Counties

This subject was not raised in the minutes – ILR

WREMNESSH

It was not clear what issues were behind this item. No issues raised by the WREMNESSH Branches.

Trustee Comments/Action Points

[This is about the two way relationship and engagement between Society volunteers at all levels.](#)

11 RCTS 100th Anniversary in 2028 – ideas for celebrating the occasion

Great Western

It is hoped that the centenary commemoration will be held in Cheltenham possibly involving representatives from the families of the founders. Significant anniversaries based in Cheltenham have been greatly enjoyed. As a near neighbour, Bristol Branch has offered assistance to Cheltenham Branch. All Branches in the group affirmed their support for the Society with any national initiatives. The possibility of a centenary rail tour was discussed possibly in collaboration with Pathfinder or Tyseley; there is potential for events at local preservation sites.

London & South

The Strategy Group (SG) are thinking of an event at Cheltenham. Ideas to be forwarded to the SG.

Midlands & North West

Ideas included: commemorative postage stamps issues by Royal Mail; 100 railway stations; 100 members' photographs; any 100 year old members; 1st 100 members; Loco 100; RCTS rail tour – utilising a steam loco built in 1928 if possible with photo stops/run pasts if the 'special' ventures onto a preserved railway. RO article on the state of the railways in 1928.

Northern Home Counties

A special train which could be run in conjunction with another group/groups; events happening for the Society in Cheltenham – the birthplace of the RCTS; a large block-booking on a rail-tour with someone like UK Rail Tours.

WREMNESSH

No suggestions forthcoming but believed that it is already proposed to have the 2028 Members' Weekend in Cheltenham. It would be useful to know what is within scope.

Trustee Comments/Action Points

Some good ideas to celebrate the RCTS 100th Anniversary. These will be passed to the Strategy Group.

12 Railway 200

Great Western

Network Rail are organising an exhibition train and would like the RCTS to be involved in its operation. Few details were available although Brian Arman has been approached as a potential speaker in connection with this tour. Transport for Wales (TfW) is proposing a series of events in connection with Railway 200 and a representative from TfW is due to speak at the next South Wales Branch meeting in July. (Post meeting – Dr Louise Moon of TfW spoke at the Branch Summer Social on 10 July 2024).

London & South

The Members' Weekend would take place in Darlington in 2024 to celebrate the S&D 200.

Midlands & North West

Briefing about the Network Rail train suggests the originally proposed 7 carriages is now likely to be reduced to 3. It is doubtful that there will be any benefit to the RCTS on current limited information.

Northern Home Counties

Involvement if possible, with the Network Rail exhibition train although Network Rail has yet to publish a plan for this train's operation.

WREMNESSH

There was interest from Branches but further details would be useful. It was asked whether Network Rail had approached other similar organisations.

Trustee Comments/Action Points

There is a lack of information from Railway 200 so it is fully understood that Branches are unable to commit to helping unless sufficient detail and notice is provided. Any information forthcoming will be shared with the Branches and membership.

13 Confirmation of Chairman and Secretary for 2025 Regional Meetings

Great Western

Chairman: Brian Arman. Secretary: Paul Udey or Stewart Jolly. Both Bristol Branch.

London & South

Chairman: John Godfrey – Solent Branch. Secretary: to be taken on by Surrey Branch for 2025/6.

Midlands & North West

Chairman: Nigel Bowker – Merseyside, Cheshire & North Wales Branch. Secretary: Will Gibson – Furness, Lakes & Lune Branch.

Northern Home Counties

Chairman: Michael Smyth – Cambridge Branch. Secretary: David Elsdon – Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch.

WREMNESSH

Chairman: Derek Stuckey – Sheffield Branch; Robin Gibbons – East Midlands Branch.

14 Any Other Business

Great Western

All present expressed their appreciation for the hospitality kindly provided by Terri and Brian.

London & South

JH is interested in any RCTS Rail Tour to the Blue Bell Railway behind Beachy head. The new document templates on the website should be used. The publications order form needs to be updated.

Midlands & North West

Door donations discussed – most around £3 for members, £4 for non-members. Brief discussion re pros & cons of afternoon meetings but no clear consensus was reached.

Northern Home Counties

Amend the form for photographs and books being left to the Society. Books are more difficult to handle and sell at Branch/Exhibition level. What can we use and sell eg DVDs and/or videos? In the Wills & Bequests, are members encouraged to leave items to the Society?

Trustee Comments/Action Points

Good hospitality and welcome are always valued. RCTS outside visits are of interest and opportunities are being developed by the Strategy Group. The Wills & Bequests leaflet has been updated and is available on the website. The Publications list has been updated.

15 Date, time and place of next meeting

Great Western - Saturday 14 June 2025, 12 noon, at 59 Kenmore Crescent, Filton park, Bristol

London & South - The equivalent date next year ie Saturday 21 June 2025, same time, same venue. Surrey Branch to organise.

Midlands & North West - Thursday 29 May 2025 at the Waverley Hotel, Crewe.

Northern Home Counties - TBC

Footnote to the Minutes from Michael Smyth – Cambridge Branch – *“Thank you for taking time to attend the Regional Meeting on 8th June. A particular thanks to Dave Elsdon for being Secretary and arranging a pleasant meal for us, and also to David Goddard for acting on behalf of the RCTS and his feedback on national matters. Perhaps the most important benefit from such a meeting is to make or renew contacts.”*

WREMNESSH - Venue agreed as the NRM again next year, date to be confirmed. NRM contact details passed to new RM secretary Robin Gibbons.

Trustee Comments/Action Points

My thanks as Branch Liaison Officer, to everyone who has taken part and made the Regional Meetings happen. It is a valuable way for all Society Officers to get together and exchange views as per the comment from Michael Smyth – see above. We can learn from each other and work together for the good of everyone.

Appendix 2 – Regional Meeting Locations

 RCTS	GREAT WESTERN	LONDON & SOUTH	NORTHERN HOME COUNTIES	MIDLAND & NORTH WESTERN	WREMNESSH
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	Bonnie Moorman Room* National Railway Museum, YORK
DATE	Saturday 14 June 2025	Saturday 21 June 2025	Saturday 07 June 2025	Thursday 05 June 2025	Wednesday 21 May 2025
TIME	11am	11am	11am	11am	11am
TRUSTEE	Andy Davies (Irene Rabbits)	Jeremy Segrott	David Bird	Reg Wood	David Goddard
CHAIRMAN	Brian Arman (secretary Paul Udey or Stewart Jolly)	John Godfrey (secretary tbc SRY Branch)	Michael Smyth (secretary David Elsdon)	Nigel Bowker (secretary Alan Sattenstall)	Derek Stuckey (secretary Robin Gibbons)
	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			
	WREMNESSH:	East Midlands; Humberside; North East; Scottish; Sheffield; West Riding			*formerly Edmondson Room

Appendix 3 – Agenda & Notes



REGIONAL MEETINGS 2025 – AGENDA

Branch Liaison

Irene Rabbitts, 34 Victory Park Road, Addlestone KT15 2AZ
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 2024 Regional Meetings National Action Points
- 6 Matters arising from 2024 National Action Points not covered by the Agenda
- 7 Branch Presentations – comparing how each branch has been doing since the last Regional Meeting – see note (i)
- 8 Succession planning to replace Branch Committee members – see note (ii)
- 9 Trustee Presentation
- 10 Branch Activities
 - a) Running a Branch – is this becoming more of a chore, less fun, too much bureaucracy? see note (iii)
 - b) What do you think about Branch attendance statistics? see note (iv)
 - c) Running Branch meetings – see note (v)
 - d) Branch publicity see note (vi)
 - e) Recruitment of new members at Branch meetings – turning regular non-members into members – see note (vii)
- 11 What would make the Regional Meetings and the Officers' Conference more useful and interesting for everyone? What would you like to take to the Officers' Conference from this Regional Meeting? See note (viii)
- 12 Inviting Trustees to attend Branch AGMs/meetings and encouraging Trustees not already on a Branch committee to become more involved in their Branches; looking outside your own Branch to broaden the outlook – see note (ix)

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- 13 Legacy funds – ideas for using the money from the late John Worby bequest to further the Society's objects as per the Constitution – see note (x)
 - 14 Hastings Unit and Rail Tour to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the RCTS; additional ideas to celebrate and publicise our 100th Anniversary – see note (xi)
 - 15 Feature article 'Round and About in the Branch area' – text and photographs; articles for publication in the *RO* – see note (xii)
 - 16 Meeting Centres – see note (xiii)
 - 17 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
 - 18 Any Other Business
 - 19 Date, time and place of next meeting

Notes to go with Regional Meetings Agenda

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

(ii) Many Branches face the problem of recruiting new members to their committees. How can we introduce and encourage succession planning – what works, what doesn't, best practice. The idea is to plan for the retirement of current committee members rather than wait until the Branch is threatened with closure. This is a hard topic and could usefully be taken to the Officers' Conference to share good practice and good ideas. Please discuss.

(iii) If running a Branch feels more of a chore and less fun with too much bureaucracy, how can we fix this without compromising essential returns or reducing standards? Is there a way to simplify what we need to do?

(iv) Do you keep Branch attendance statistics for you own Branch benefit and does it help to review attendances? Do these figures show any patterns about which meetings attract better audiences/attendances than others?

(v) Timings at Branch meetings. These can be variable, with some Branches having a good balance between presentation and sufficient time for refreshments and socialising, while others seem to struggle. Are the presenters briefed properly about how long they will speak before a break, will there be time for questions and answers, do they have the optimum number of slides/photographs/other visual material? Should the time spent on a presentation be reduced while the time spent socialising be increased? Please discuss the pros and cons of each possibility.

(vi) Is your Branch making the most of its shop window – Branch pages on the website as well as other publicity locally/nationally. We have been advised that Railway 200 offers the opportunity to advertise our meetings on their website. If you have a heritage railway site or other suitable transport site locally, do you already advertise there or would you like to? Some Branches already take advantage of this sort of opportunity. Please discuss.

(vii) Quite a number of Branches have regular attendees at meetings who are not members of the Society. How can we encourage them to join the RCTS? A good answer to this would greatly help the Society as a whole. Please discuss.

(viii) What would make the Regional Meetings and Officers' Conference more relevant and interesting for everyone? We would like to ensure that issues relevant to Branches and other Society Officers are taken seriously; what would you like to take to the Officers' Conference from this Regional Meeting? Please discuss and delegate one person/Branch to present a short item at this year's Officers' Conference at Darlington in October.

NB the Officers' Conference is open to **ALL** Society Officers and not just Branch Officers.

(ix) With the aim of building on the relationship between the members of the Board of Trustees and the Branches, think about inviting one or more Trustees to your Branch AGM and encourage any Trustee who is a member of your Branch to become more involved. One of the Regional Groups agreed to invite a Trustee to their Branch AGMs last year, however, this does not seem to have happened consistently within the Group. How can Branches be encouraged to think outside of their own area promoting greater appreciation of matters both regionally and nationally as well as involving Branch members; it would benefit all members if we look to build relationships and pursue publicity outside of the Society. Please discuss and put together a short item to take to the Officers' Conference later this year.

(x) The Society received a substantial legacy from the late John Worby which is intended to help us meet our Objects – as per the Constitution. We are already investigating ideas at national level to use these funds; ideas from the Branches that would benefit the Society as a whole and help us to achieve our shared Objects would be welcomed. Please discuss.

(xi) The Strategy Governance Group has come up with the idea of running a Rail Tour using the Hastings Unit as part of the celebration of the Society's 100th Anniversary in 2028. The Society used to be well known for running rail tours and the idea is to celebrate this activity. Would you be interested in taking part? Where should such a tour start/finish? Would an early start from a remote location be a 'turn-off'? We are looking for suggestions to make the idea a success with as many members as possible taking part. What other ways to celebrate and publicise 100 years of the RCTS would you like to see? Please discuss.

Ideas raised at last year's Regional Meetings were passed to the Strategy Group.

(xii) The RO is always looking for interesting articles for publication. One suggestion is for each Branch to write a feature article on their local area to include up to date text and photographs. Please also encourage Branch members to consider writing a feature article on their particular field of interest/expertise.

(xiii) As you are already aware, the RCTS is working towards a much closer relationship with the SLS with the SLS voting on whether or not to merge with the RCTS at their AGM this month. If there is to be a merger, we are likely to need volunteers to make up a small working group to set out how best to do this. The SLS has Meeting Centres which have a number of things in common with RCTS Branches. It would be helpful to take ideas on how we can work together as one, to incorporate the best of both. Please discuss.