

BRANCH LIAISON OFFICER

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Officers' Newsletter 208

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Dear All

This newsletter is being sent to branch officers with a view to it being shared with others within your branch. There are five numbered requests which we would be very grateful for your assistance with. Some may take longer to answer than others, so please send your responses to each separately if necessary so that as many as possible are with Matthew as quickly as possible. You will see why as you read through this newsletter.

The information is being gathered by our webmaster, Matthew Shaw so please make sure you reply to webmaster@rcts.org.uk

Thank you in advance for your help and cooperation.

Website

On a normal day, 300 people use the Society's website - members use it to find out what is on and to register if there is a Zoom meeting they are interested in; prospective members are likely to look to get an impression of us; and various forum posts link to it.

Matthew became webmaster in early 2021 and has been preparing several changes, due to go live in mid-October. The aim is to freshen up the style of the site, use images more widely, and simplify how to find things. There is currently a lot of customised code running the existing site which will be replaced by off-the-shelf alternatives making it easier to manage the website into the future.

Some branches manage their own pages while others defer to our small central team and, as the changes will affect the branch pages, it is important that you respond whichever way your branch operates.

Request 1: Please will you identify one individual with whom we should liaise during the migration of your branch's pages? If you want to self-manage pages going forward, that person will be given editing privileges; if not, you will need to identify someone to review what we do on your behalf.

Once we have a reasonably complete list of people to liaise with, Matthew will run a Zoom demo of the upcoming website.

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Request 2: Each branch will need a featured image. Please have a discussion within your branch to choose an image that best represents your area that can be used as a visual cue, and/or a theme. It could be a distinctive piece of railway infrastructure, a historical company logo, a famous person etc. It must be one that we have the rights to use or that is rights-free.

Meeting programme

A new Events Calendar plug-in will appear on the website from mid-October, replacing the existing pages, and each event has a featured image intended to attract attention.

Request 3: When planning your programme for 2021-22, please look out for a suitable image for each event which must be one that we have the rights to use or that is rights-free. With the same restriction on image rights, you can use the image you would otherwise use for branch event flyers or posters. The branch featured image will be used as a fall-back if no specific image is made available.

Zoom

It seems likely that Zoom will continue in many branches, perhaps replacing some face-to-face meetings in the darker months, and a programme of monthly National Meetings starts towards the end of September. The Society can purchase Zoom licences at a special rate for charities (see the mention in Officers Newsletter 207). We are keen that branches should become self-sufficient in running meetings because the (over)reliance on David Jackman and Jeremy Harrison needs to be reduced - great job that they do nevertheless. The licences are being funded centrally and can be used for internal and external RCTS meetings although branches will be expected to contribute financially. Matthew is also co-ordinating the distribution of those licences.

Request 4: Please will you advise Matthew (if you have not already done so) whether or not your branch is considering having virtual meetings and might wish to take up a licence?

Mailjet emailer service

An experimental email sent to all members 10 days ago achieved better-than-expected results. The trustees have since approved continued use of the tool, and we expect to send a monthly email newsletter to coincide with publication of the Railway Observer online. This will go to all members and not just officers.

Mailjet will be available for branches to reach their own members if you wish to use it. It is straightforward to design more visual emails, they are sent with an @rcts.org.uk address, and it avoids the issues of being limited with the number of people you can send to at one time. The address list is managed in one place, and is always up to date.

Request 5: Please let Matthew know if Mailjet might be something you would consider for your branch. He will be doing a teach-in at the Officers' Conference on 24 October 2021 on using Mailjet. (There will be another Officers Newsletter fairly shortly with more information about this year's Officers Conference).

Deadlines

Please get your answers to Matthew as soon as you can. All the migration work must be completed in September to be ready for go-live in October.

Any queries please contact Matthew on webmaster@rcts.org.uk

I appreciate that you will only just have received Officers Newsletter 207 but it was important not to delay that any longer. This one is important too as a 'stand-alone' subject. I am sure you appreciate the work that goes on behind the scenes to keep aspects of our activities such as the website working well and being updated regularly to keep it fit for purpose, so we need to help Matthew by providing the information that he needs as soon as possible.

This is being sent to everyone on the Officers Newsletter circulation list, although it is intended for branch officers, so that they too are informed about what is going on.

Kind regards

Irene