

RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY LIMITED
Unapproved Minutes of
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Held at the *STEAM* Museum, Swindon, Saturday 6th May 2006

PRESENT: 67 members were recorded as in attendance

PART 1 – Morning Session

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The National Chairman, Mike Crowhurst, welcomed members and guests.

2. WELCOME BY THE MAYOR OF SWINDON

The Right Worshipful The Mayor of Swindon, Councillor Ray Fisher, welcomed delegates to Swindon; he and the Lady Mayoress stayed for the morning session.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

96 Members had sent their apologies.

4. GUEST SPEAKERS

Chris Irwin, Chair South West Public Transport Users' Forum / member European Rail Agency

'Fighting the Passenger's Corner'

Chris Irwin presented an interesting and informative talk, commencing with an amusing story of Worzelstan – remarkably like the South West of England! He provided facts and figures of past investment and commitment, the present transport situation and future prognosis for the South West. Mounting road congestion and growth of regional airport usage show clearly that the opportunity to increase and improve rail travel must be taken. Regional Spatial and Transport Strategies could and should seriously consider raising the profile of rail travel. The public feeling is that rail services are not even static but are regressing; the Government needs to provide sustainable transport systems in which rail plays a vital role. To ensure that we all have appropriate, reliable and accessible rail services Passenger Transport Users' Forums (Travel Watch) have been or are being established across most English areas. These will allow public transport users to become involved in consultation and planning, and when needed, campaigning, and to work in partnership with other agencies to obtain good local transport services.

Glenda Lamont Commercial Director, First Great Western

Glenda Lamont stated that the new Franchise's key objectives were: to introduce a new integrated timetable across the franchise by December 2006; work closely with Network Rail to improve line speed, performance and reliability; improve customer service delivery by providing relevant and accessible communication with a community focus. Investment in stations will ensure that all will eventually have ticket machines, CIS or help points, improved signage/shelter/waiting rooms/ticket offices. FGW are looking into safety and security issues starting with more CCTV provision, extra community policing and updating car park security. To help transport integration cycle and car parking facilities will be increased and more PlusBus services will be established. Onboard catering is also to be greatly improved with more choices for

customers. Investment in the fleet means that it will be totally redesigned to provide better passenger comfort, increased capacity and improved efficiency.

Thamesdown buses were thanked for providing a shuttle service between the rail station and AGM venue.

JERRY ALDERSON – *The Railfuture Business Plan*

The decision was taken in 2002 to write a Business Plan; various drafts were drawn up and finally in 2005 Branch consultation took place. After major revision the Plan was accepted by the Board of Directors; a little modification is needed then copies of the final document will be sent to all Branches. A Business Plan explains the aims and targets of the organisation, working relationships and responsibilities – in this case focusing on championing rail users and ensuring their voice is heard.

PART 2 – Afternoon Session

1. MINUTES OF THE 2005 AGM (PETERBOROUGH)

These were approved unanimously. There were no matters arising.

2. PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Peter Lawrence stated that there had been a 2.5% increase in rail usage since 2002 but passengers expect better value for their fares. There are concerns around climate change and an increase in road congestion yet only one new station had been opened recently [in England], many smaller local stations are under threat of closure and overcrowded trains are a common occurrence. The rail fare structure needs updating and simplifying and a National Railcard for use on any TOC's services would be beneficial for passengers and financially viable. Railfuture needs to have good representation on local forums, partnership boards and council policy groups enabling them to lobby councillors and campaign at grassroots level.

3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mike Crowhurst touched on issues around Government reshuffles, the demise of the RPC and Derek Twigg's statement denying any programme of closures. The Government's past record shows an ignorance of the practicality of rail travel; Passenger Focus and local grass roots groups need extra resources to enable them to voice the concerns and views of public transport users.

Railfuture's internal structure had now been improved, with some committees meeting quarterly and a reduced number of Board meetings. Scottish representative, Mike Harrison, who was due to join the Board, had been badly injured in an accident and the meeting sent him their best wishes for a speedy recovery. Outgoing admin office John Lee was thanked for all his hard work over six years. David Harby had been keeping an eye on finances after three false starts to find a treasurer. Responsibilities were delegated wherever possible to branches and committees who needed to be reliable and collaborate with other appropriate groups at all levels.

4. ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2005

David Harby presented this report and thanked Tony Sheward for his help, even though he had not sought re-election in 2005. The Annual Report and Financial Statements had been circulated which showed the Society's improved financial situation at the end of 2005. Both Jerry Alderson and John Lee were thanked for their involvement. David explained that a 'virtual office' would save on time and postage and that this was now being investigated. The Business Plan had been accepted in

November 2005. It was still the intention in due course to employ an administrator/manager, who would work from home on a part-time basis. However, in the meantime some admin would be outsourced to Peterborough Council for Voluntary Services, with a named officer dealing with the Society's work. Other voluntary posts needing to be filled were Campaigns Officer, Membership Promotion and Sales Officer.

- This report was accepted unanimously.

5. ACCOUNTANT'S REPORT

Being a small organisation a full audit is not necessary.

- The accountant's report was accepted unanimously

Due to pressure of work David Harrison had indicated that he did not wish to be re-appointed as Reporting Accountant.

A F Sheward FCCA had agreed to be the new Reporting Accountant; this was proposed by David Harby and accepted unanimously.

6. RESULT OF BALLOT FOR PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Returning Officer Chris Precey reported that there were insufficient nominations to require any elections for officers of RDS Ltd. There was one nomination each for Chairman, Vice Chairman and Membership Secretary. There were no nominations for Treasurer or Sales Officer. A search was made and a suitable candidate for Treasurer had been found. Should his nomination be forthcoming the Board agreed it would be accepted as valid. There were 11 nominations (one then subsequently withdrew) for Board Directors.

As a result the following are elected:

Chairman	Michael Gerald Crowhurst
Vice Chairman	Jeremy Carl Alderson
Treasurer	Bob Imrie [nomination to be confirmed]
Membership Secretary	David Harby
Directors	Philip Bisatt Trevor John Garrod Michael A Harrison H Trevor Jones Ray King Ian F. S. McDonald Andrew MacFarlane David Redgewell Rowland Leslie Pittard Clara Zilahi

7. ELECTION OF PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENTS

The following officers were proposed from the Chair and elected unopposed after clarification of the role of vice-presidents:

President:	Peter Lawrence
Vice Presidents	Lew Adams*, Jim Beale OBE, Lord Berkeley OBE MICE, David Bertram, George Boyle, Dr Michael Caton, Rt Rev Alan Chesters, Rhodri Clarke, Ron Cotton, Ann Cryer MP*, Cynog Dafis, Dr Winifred Ewing,

Lord (Ronnie) Fearn, Stanley Hall, Peter Rayner, Patricia Routledge OBE, Brian Simpson, Lord (Peter) Snape, Tony Speller, Wendy Toms, Paul Tyler, Steve Wilkinson MInst TA.
(*New appointment)

8. MOTIONS

8.1 VOTING ETC ARRANGEMENTS FOR RAILFUTURE BOARD

Making the Board 'Fit for Purpose'

JA presented a PowerPoint summary of the Board motion as:

- Trying to ensure that meetings are more manageable
- Ensure that officers (e.g. treasurer) are suitable
- Ensure wider representation
- Continuity from one year to the next
- Help to cut down on directors' expenses
- Requires change of Articles – cannot be effective until 2008 election.

The motion discussed was as follows:

This AGM endorses the proposals outlined below and directs the Board to present special resolutions to implement these changes to the 2007 Annual General Meeting.

i. Chair. The chair will be elected by an annual ballot of members as at present.

ii. Vice Chair. The Vice Chair will be elected annually from amongst members of the Board. The post will therefore not be directly elected by members as now.

- Carried by a clear majority; 3 against, 5 abstentions.

iii. Treasurer, Membership Officer & Sales Officer. These three posts will be *appointed* annually by the Board, not elected as now. They need not be (but may be) Board members or Directors but will have the right to attend and speak at Board meetings but not to vote (unless also Directors). If they do not attend Board meetings they will be required to submit written reports on their area of activity.

- Carried by a clear majority; 1 against, 3 abstentions.

iv. Secretary to the Board. The Secretary to the Board will also be appointed by the Board as now and will service Board meetings, the Annual general Meeting and such other duties as the Board may decide. The Secretary will not be a Board member or Director but will need to attend Board meetings and will be able to speak but not vote. The board will have the option of paying an honorarium for this post.

The post of secretary to the Board is distinct from that of **Company Secretary**, who will be appointed by the Board in order to comply with statutory legal duties.

v. Directors. Nine directors (i.e. two fewer than now including vice Chair) will be elected and serve three years. In the first year of operation the three directors with the highest number of votes will serve for three years, the next highest three for two years and the remaining three one year. In subsequent years three directors will be elected by the membership each year. Retiring directors will be eligible for re-election.

- Carried by a clear majority; 1 against, 5 abstentions.

vi. Co-opted members. The Board will have the discretion to co-opt up to two directors above the nine elected above. Co-opted members will have voting rights and serve until the next AGM when they will be eligible to stand for election. This will enable the Board to ensure that so far as possible all parts of the country are represented on the Board. With responsibility for the Scottish and Welsh rail systems devolved to the respective legislatures, there will be a need to ensure in particular that the Board has Scottish and Welsh members, in order for Railfuture to gain recognition by the respective Assembly as a representative body in that country.

- Co-opting two members – Carried by a clear majority; 1 against, 2 abstentions.
- Allowing co-opted members to have voting rights – Carried by a clear majority; 13 against, 8 abstentions.

vii. President. The President will continue to be appointed by the AGM on the recommendation of the Board. The President will not be a director, but will have the right to attend and speak but not vote at Board meetings.

viii. Vice-Presidents. A number of honorary Vice Presidents will continue as now to be appointed by the AGM on the recommendation of the Board. They have no formal constitutional role and no *right* to attend Board meetings but can do so by invitation or arrangement.

Board motion. Proposed by Jerry Alderson; seconded by Chris Precey

- Motion was carried 42 to 2, 5 abstentions. Actions: Board.

8.2 PUBLIC INQUIRIES

Railfuture notes with concern that during some public inquiries on controversial transport schemes, ethically improper behaviour has been used to badger, browbeat and influence bona-fide objectors to withdraw their objections to all or some part of the proposed project, when changes to the scheme might be to the wider good and offer greater economic, social or environmental benefits.

Proposed by Richard Pout and seconded by Howard Thomas and John Barfield, London Branch advisory motion.

- Motion was carried by 35 to 1, 7 abstentions. Action: London branch.

8.3 MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Railfuture recognises the importance and significance of major rail projects, which either provide entirely new infrastructure such as Crossrail, or a new route or local network, or major upgrades for an existing route such as the Thameslink Project, or schemes based on Route utilisation Strategies such as upgrade programmes for the East coast or South Western main lines.

We call on all arms of Government to provide adequate funding for such projects as part of a long-term strategy of national and regional schemes to enhance rail and help meet its targets for sustainability and emissions.

Whilst supporting many of the fundamental principles of these schemes, Railfuture recognises that debate is crucial to review their scope and propose regional changes to infrastructure and service development that might improve their delivery or provide more effective services, particularly where such changes would meet short or

medium term demand or generate other long-term economic, social and/or environmental benefits.

Proposed by Richard Pout and seconded by Howard Thomas (London Branch)

- Motion was carried by a clear majority; 1 against and 2 abstentions. Action: London branch and Network Development Committee.

8.4 PENSIONERS' FARES

Whilst welcoming the introduction of free public transport for pensioners and the disabled this AGM notes with concern the exclusion of local rail travel from the scheme, which could handicap the ability of rail services to reduce road congestion, and urges study of how these might be included.

Proposed by Norman Bradbury and seconded by Howard Thomas (Passenger Committee)

- Motion carried overwhelmingly. Action: Passenger Committee.

8.5 ROUTE PROTECTION

This AGM urges the Government to commission an independent study of disused trackbeds with full consultation with all stakeholders, to ascertain which lines have potential for reopening, and then to issue a definitive list of those which should be protected from development.

Proposed by Andrew Macfarlane and seconded by Brian Grey (North West Branch)

- Motion was carried unanimously. Action: Network Development Committee.

8.6 HIGH SPEED RAIL

The AGM:

- welcomes the renewed interest in a High Speed Line in the UK
- supports "Greengauge 21", and
- reiterates our firm belief in the proven technology of a conventional electrified railway, as universally applied elsewhere in Europe, in preference to either Maglev, jet propulsion or other unproven technologies.

Proposed by Graham Nalty and seconded by Roger Skilton (East Midlands Branch)

- Motion was carried overwhelmingly; 4 against and 1 abstention. Action: Network Development Committee.

8.7 FUNCTIONS OF THE BOARD

This AGM, whilst acknowledging that the Board, as that of any Company Limited by Guarantee, has legal responsibility for administration, reminds it that the primary function of Railfuture is campaigning. Therefore:

- i. in electing the Board, which to the outside world (Government, Rail industry and Media) is the public face of Railfuture, members are choosing people to campaign for

its traditional aims – to promote greater use and improvement of the rail system for both passengers and freight and to represent the interests of rail users.

ii. the Board should delegate most administrative tasks to paid officials and the Internal Affairs Committee, with Board members not normally needing to spend much time and energy on administrative details but remaining free to devote themselves to active campaigning.

Proposed by Clara Zilahi and seconded by Malcolm Goodall

- This Motion was remitted to the Board for consideration and action.

8.8 REGIONAL AND ELECTRONIC MEMBERSHIP

This AGM proposes that a new class of cheaper membership be introduced. The new category to entitle members to receive only publications from their Branch and to confer voting rights at branch elections only.

This new cheaper membership to be called Regional Membership and be available in two forms – electronic and postal. Electronic membership would involve only electronic communication whereas postal membership would rely on traditional methods; both at subscription rates that reflect their costs and include a contribution to overall branch expenses.

This new form of membership to be trialled initially across the three Welsh branches for a 2-year period after which the results can be evaluated. [Wales is a low-wage area of the UK and membership numbers have been badly hit by subscription increases.]

Motion agreed at a meeting of all Wales Branches.

Proposed by Guy Hardy and seconded by Ian Murray (South Wales Branch)

- Motion remitted to the Board for consideration and action.

[This motion has been discussed by the Board in July 2006. The consensus was that it would be hard to accommodate lower subscriptions. It was also not possible to do everything for members by email as there is some material that we are required by law to send in printed format. However, it was agreed that a scheme of ‘supporters’ could be trialled in Wales. Supporters would not be members and would therefore not have voting rights, nor would they receive Railwatch. Branches to decide on minimum donation. Any further decisions will be taken after this trial is evaluated.]

9 CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 1700.