PUBLICATION GUIDELINES

Producing a Professional Publication

Initial version by Jerry Alderson
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Railfuture produces a variety of newsletters, e-zines, reports, responses to consultations, leaflets and fliers etc. Whilst not mandating a strict corporate style for all to follow it is important that everything *Railfuture* produces looks as professional as possible. This document is a follow-up to the Corporate Standards document issued in 2008 and provides some tips for both *editors* and *proof-readers*.

It is strongly recommended that publications are proof-read before being released externally. Generally authors are poor at proof-reading their own work because the brain tends to see what it thinks is there (i.e. what the author meant to write) rather than what is actually there.

This document also lists some 'must haves' that all *Railfuture* publications should include.

1. Content

1.1 Accuracy

1.1.1 Web-site Addresses

Make sure that all web-site addresses, Twitter accounts, Facebook accounts etc. are correctly spelt i.e. try clicking the link in the document to make sure it is correct.

1.1.2 Personal and Organisation Names

Make sure that people's names are correctly spelt, especially names with multiple spellings (e.g. Diane/Dyan, Carol/Carole, Lillian/Lilian, Green/Greene) and foreign names especially those that are not spelt as they are pronounced (e.g. Djanogly).

For organisations ensure that the correct - and current – name is used. For example, it is Chiltern Railways and not Chiltern Trains, Department for Transport and no longer Department of Transport. Conform to the style that the organisation uses, such as DfT not DFT and TfL not TFL.

1.1.3 Time-Sensitive Data

Unlike printed newsletters which are usually discarded or filed after reading, publications uploaded to the web-site will remain there for several years and will still be read. It is important that their 'currency' is understood.

When quoting facts and figures in a document ensure that the time period covered (e.g. financial year) is stated. Also name the source of the data (e.g. ORR).

1.2 Consistency

Inconsistency within a publication can look quite unprofessional and suggests a lack of editorial control.

1.2.1 House-Style

Most magazines have a 'house style' i.e. they choose a preferred way of doing something and then use it consistently throughout.

For example, dates may be written as 25th September, 25 September, September 25th or September 25. A style should be chosen and used throughout the document. This would mean changing contributions written by others (e.g. in a branch newsletter) to conform to the house style.

Note: it is generally felt that 25 September is modern whilst September 25th is quite old fashioned (and American).

Times should be consistent on use of the 24-hour clock (preferred as it matches train times) or 12-hour. The 12-hour clock should never be used for train times though. Where the 24-hour is used the punctuation should be consistent e.g. comma, dot or no delimiter.

If using the format "14.00hrs" or "14.00 hrs" be consistent about whether there is a space before 'hrs'.

Numbers of a thousand or more normally have a comma before the thousandth digit. These days it is becoming less common to do so, but the publication should be consistent on how these numbers are expressed. Likewise when referring to £nnnK or £nnnk the case of the 'k or 'K' should be consistent.

Another example might be the use of imperial or metric units. Metric is preferred to because all design and construction work is done in metric. Showing both values such as "100 mph (160 km/h)" or "16km (10 miles)" is a good approach.

1.2.2 Spellings

There are multiple ways of spelling certain words with the same meaning (e.g. flier and flyer); however, a consistent spelling should be used throughout.

In some place names an apostrophe is not used consistently within the rail industry. For example, King's Cross. A publication should choose whether to use the apostrophe or not and use that convention throughout.

1.3 Readability / Legibility

1.3.1 Avoid Jargon

Writing "Great Eastern ML" in text may confuse those who do not realise "ML" means Mainline.

1.3.2 Explain Abbreviations

Abbreviations should only be used once they have already been explained.

It is important that contributors are given credit (e.g. where someone has written a piece for a branch newsletter). Where just the initials of a contributor are used this will be meaningless to anyone not familiar with the usual contributors, so do not follow a contribution with, say, "JS" unless John Smith has been mentioned in the item.

1.3.3 Typeface and Colours

Choose a typeface (font) that will be readable both in printed and electronic versions, and use it consistently throughout the publication (other than for titles, break-out boxes etc.).

Choose combinations of text and background colours with sufficient contrast that will be easy to read.

Avoid using light colours (such as light grey or silver) where the text will eventually disappear once a printout has been photocopied a couple of times.

1.3.4 Quotations

Quotes need to be reopened on every successive paragraph, otherwise the reader might assume that the quotation had ended, and they were reading *Railfuture*-originated content when they are not.

1.3.5 Avoid phrases that jar

Barry Doe is not the only person who is annoyed by on-board announcements to take your "personal belongings" with you. What should you do with your other belongings?

Look out for colloquial phrases that make no sense, such as a "real person" when "person" will do (unless you are questioning whether it really is a real person).

1.4 Editing External Contributions

1.4.1 Avoid confusing Railfuture with other organisations

Where someone is writing on behalf of another organisation this must be made clear. An example might be a rail user group writing in a *Railfuture* branch newsletter.

Contributions from external organisations do need to be edited carefully. For example, they might write "we did something", but if this is included in our newsletter then it should be changed to "they did something" unless it is reproduced as a direct quotation.

2. Presentation

2.1 Text

2.1.1 Watch-out for sloppiness in text

Avoid the following:
- Paragraphs without a full stop at the end
- Multiple spaces in text (two spaces are acceptable after a full stop if used consistently)
- Rogue spaces (e.g. between start/end quote and the text it quotes or around hyphens in a *single word* e.g. "re – franchise"
- Spaces missed out (e.g. before or after brackets or in place names such as "King'sLynn")
- Rogue punctuation such as "Norwich (NR2 1SD.)"
- Inconsistent use of apostrophes e.g. Sep '03, May 04
- Inconsistent writing of years, e.g. May 1994 to May 95
- List of bullet points with 'random' use of full stops – either after each line or last line only.

Microsoft Word, in particular, has a very annoying habit of changing hyphens to stretched hyphens but only sometimes. It also automatically converts dates to have superscript (e.g. 25th). These changes are fine but inconsistency can look unprofessional. Either disable this functionality or proof-read carefully and make them consistent.

2.2 Layout

2.2.1 Indentation and Justification

Be consistent with indentation – do not have some paragraphs that are indented when others are not

If text justification is used then it should be consistent throughout the publication (apart from, for example, 'break-out' boxes where gaps would look strange).

3.   Additional Information to Include

3.1   Legal

The company 'legal blurb' is typically included at the end of publications, although sometimes on the inside page, for example. It is vital that it is kept up-to-date, i.e. caters for changes to the registered office.

Railfuture copyright statements (in documents or photos) can be included if felt necessary (but *Railfuture* does not take a strong line on this as our copyright is not as valuable as a commercial business).

For newsletters, particularly where editorial responsibility is given to an individual and especially where readers' letters are included, a statement such as "The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of Railfuture" should be included.

Where a *Railfuture* publication mentions commercial offers by other organisations (e.g. charter train trips, shares in a heritage railway) there is a risk that we could financially liable if seen to be endorsing something that subsequently fails to deliver. There should be a disclaimer that it is independent of *Railfuture* and this is not an endorsement. Disclaimers can be written in a smaller typeface.

3.2   Publication Date, Identification and Version Numbering

It is surprising how many publications do not include the publication or production date. Readers will often want to know how recent it is. Sometimes the date is not important to readers but we need a way of uniquely identifying it. For example, a membership leaflet might have 13/09 (for Sept 2013) hidden in a corner of a page.

Where a document is updated it is important to know the version of it. If it is an internal draft then this should be clearly stated.

It is recommended that internal drafts include a large watermark stating "Draft" on every page. This is usually placed diagonally. All word processors are capable of doing this.

3.3   Contact Details

A publication often triggers feedback. The reader needs to know how to send feedback. Because a postal address or telephone number may become out of date we recommend that e-mail addresses are shown as the primary method of making contact. This must always use a @railfuture.org.uk (or @railfuturescotland.org.uk or @railfuturewales.org.uk) address, not a personal one [1]. Ideally these should be generic addresses such as the name of the *Railfuture* branch or national group as this allows the redirection to be changed if a volunteer is replaced. An e-mail address for a specific campaign or activity can soon be set-up.

[1] When referring to an external organisation (such as a user group) we obviously use the e-mail address they supply. Note: for data protection reasons only members of *Railfuture* can be set-up as recipients of mail to *Railfuture*-branded e-mail domains.

3.4   Branding / Marketing

3.4.1 What to include

Every publication that *Railfuture* produces must contain details of our web-sites and social media.

Our web-sites:
www.railfuture.org.uk
www.railfuturescotland.org.uk
www.railfuturewales.org.uk
www.railwatch.org.uk

National Twitter accounts:
@Railfuture
@Railwatch

Branches should include their e-mail and Twitter account i.e. the relevant <u>one</u> from the following:

Devon and Cornwall Branch	@RailfutureDC	devon-cornwall@railfuture.org.uk
East Anglia Branch	@RailfutureEA	eastanglia@railfuture.org.uk
East Midlands Branch	@RailfutureEMids	eastmidlands@railfuture.org.uk
Lincolnshire Branch	@RailfutureLincs	lincolnshire@railfuture.org.uk
London and South East	@RailfutureLSE	londonsoutheast@railfuture.org.uk
North East Branch	@RailfutureNEast	northeast@railfuture.org.uk
North West Branch	@RailfutureNWest	northwest@railfuture.org.uk
Severnside Branch	@RailfutureSSide	severnside@railfuture.org.uk
Thames Valley Branch	@RailfutureTV	thamesvalley@railfuture.org.uk
Wessex Branch	@RailfutureWessx	wessex@railfuture.org.uk
West Midlands Branch	@RailfutureWMids	westmidlands@railfuture.org.uk
Yorkshire Branch	@RailfutureYorks	yorkshire@railfuture.org.uk
Railfuture Scotland	@RailfutureScot	scotland@railfuturescotland.org.uk
Railfuture Wales	@RailfutureWales	wales@railfuturewales.org.uk

3.4.2 Where to include branding

Individual pages of publications may be printed out, photocopied, put onto notice boards etc. It is important that every page has something to identify it with Railfuture. For example, the name Railfuture or the web-site URL (www.railfuture.org.uk) should be on every page, perhaps, in the header of the footer.

4. Miscellaneous

4.1 Text

4.1.1 Spell-checkers

The spell-checker should be enabled, but preferably in 'advisory' more rather than automatically correcting what it thinks are mistakes. Ensure that the language is set to UK English.

Spell checkers are not perfect and sometimes they will complain about the spellings and grammar that are, in fact, quite legitimate. Therefore do not always accept its recommendation.

4.1.2 Proof-Readers

Ideally find two proof-readers with different skills:
- Someone with <u>no</u> knowledge of the subject matter – they will spot jargon and highlight things that are not explained

- Someone with <u>detailed</u> knowledge of the subject matter – e.g. avoid 'howlers' such as 'amber' signals on the railway.

4.1.3 Page and Section Numbers

Page numbers should always be included except in publications where it would look strange, such as leaflets and fliers. This aids reviewing, reference and in case someone drops an unstapled printed document on the floor!

Section numbers should be used on larger documents, and particularly where text in one part of the document references something else in it. Section numbers are, obviously, essential where a table of contents is provided.

4.1.4 Index and Tables of Contents

Word processors can produce tables of contents and an index. This is useful functionality but they do not get automatically refreshed when the document is edited. If they are used then ensure that a manual refresh is done before issuing a document.

4.2 Images

4.2.1 Copyright

It is vital to ensure that we do not infringe any copyright by including images (e.g. photos and graphics) in our publications, and we do give credit where it is required. Note: a licence may only cover one medium (e.g. printed format or online).

4.2.2 Quality

A low-quality image that is quite small on an A5-printed newsletter may be acceptable; however, on a PDF version when zooming in it may look unacceptable. Imagine quality should be evaluated when enlarged.

If capturing a screen image on a computer it is advisable to maximise the image size (e.g. use the zoom facility in a browser) before capturing the image (e.g. using the Windows 'Snipping Tool'). This will produce a higher resolution image.

4.3 Hidden Information

4.3.1 File Properties

When creating one document from another be careful of any file properties such as author and organisation that may still be in the document. When creating a new document from scratch ensure that it does not contain details of the organisation that owns the computer (e.g. author's employer).

4.3.2 Redactions

If redacting confidential information in a document ensure that the redacted content cannot still be read. Many organisations fail to redact using a safe method and often the text underneath a black mask can still be read just by copying the text and pasting it into a document. Seek advice if needed.

4.4 Document Management and Use

4.4.1 Approval for Publication

An approval hierarchy needs to be agreed for everything we publish. Generally branches and groups have responsibility for deciding when the publication is in a fit state to be published, although the Board of Directors reserves the right to insist on changes and give final approval.

Within branches, for example, the committee members would provide contributions for the newsletter and the editor would produce a draft newsletter that the branch chairman would review. For branch submissions to consultations the chairman (vice chairman or secretary in his absence) would normally have the final say.

The Board approves responses to national consultations or those affecting multiple branches.

4.4.2 Document Management System / Business Continuity

Railfuture will be introducing a Document Management System (DMS) to hold copies of all its documents produced over the years. This will act as both an archive and known location for master copies.

Both the public (PDF) and master copy (e.g. Word, Open Office) formats of the publication will need to be stored in the DMS. This should be done as soon as the final version is approved.

4.4.3 Publication on Web-Sites

Railfuture needs as many people to see its publications as possible. Even though a response to a consultation is produced for a single recipient (e.g. DfT, Network Rail, ORR, TfL, Transport Scotland, Welsh Assembly Government) it is vital that our current and prospective members are aware of the work that we do, as are the media and other organisations.

All such documents must be uploaded to the national web-site (in PDF format – never an editable format such as Word or PowerPoint) and referenced on relevant pages.

When a document is updated thought needs to be given as to whether the previous version should still be available from the web-site. If it should not then the file should be replaced i.e. the same Tiki file id should be used (with the existing file being 'replaced'). If the file is not stored within Tiki (i.e. it will be linked by its filename rather than a file id – the case on any non-Tiki web-sites) then the same filename should be used if it is being replaced or a slightly different filename (e.g. including a version number or date) if the previous version is to remain available.

Filenames should be meaningful – including Railfuture in the filename and a brief description and date where relevant e.g. "Railfuture-ECML-franchise-response-2013.pdf".

The version uploaded to the web-site should not be exceptionally large. Ideally it should not exceed 5MB (and never exceed 10MB). The file size can be reduced using a variety of techniques (such as instructing the PDF creator to downgrade images). Appendices could also be provided in a separate PDF document. It is not uncommon to provide the 'executive summary' as a separate document.

Note: the document will usually be provided to the printer in PDF format. However, for maximum resolution it should not be downgraded.

When the document has been uploaded to the web-site it should be mentioned on our Twitter and Facebook accounts with a link to the document. E-mails can be sent to relevant members and contacts giving them a link to the document. Following good etiquette, documents should only be sent as an attachment if the recipients are likely to want to read the document.