



Inter City Railway Society

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FOR YEAR 2017

Held on Saturday 10th March 2018 at the Bury Transport Museum, East Lancashire Railway

The meeting started at 13.40

Members Present: 39 (33 + 6 officials)

Bruce Bayliss, Graham Bednall, Dave Benson, Kevin Blackall, Dave Blackburn, John Bushnell, Darren Challenger, Gordon Challenger, Linda Challenger, Richard Cowen, Claire Cowen, Neil Dix, Ronnie Dunn, Peter Flintham, Peter Gregory, Stephen Hill, Robert Hill, Mike Holland, Alan Knox, Brian Landamore, Lawrence McCormick, Keith Morey, Bill Moy, Alan Naylor, Gareth Oliver, Darren Pavitt, Rob Perry, Eddie Rathmill, Stuart Rees, Roger Thomas, Peter Turner, Aidan Turner, Harvey Turner, Peter Ventham, Michael Ventham, Albert Ward, Tony Whitehead, Richard Whitehead, Peter Wrexford

Apologies for Absence:

Martin Hall.

Matters Arising from the 2016/17 Minutes:

The minutes for last year's AGM were read and there were no matters arising. Approval of the minutes were proposed by Darren Pavitt and seconded by Ronnie Dunn.

Treasurers Report - Peter Britcliffe:

Also see attached Accounts.

Normally I am reporting on the society finances over the previous 12 months but with this "year" being one of 10 months I haven't included the last year's figures for comparison as I have done previously but these will return next year.

We had a deficit of £2,407.39 for 2017 which was the first time in four years that this has happened. This was expected as by aligning the society financial year with the calendar year the two most profitable months for sales, January and February, were not included in these figures. At the end of the accounts I've shown the total for the previous 12 months (2016/17) and the income for the 10 months of 2017 is over £7,000 lower.

If we look at the Assets, the Business Instant Account holds £6,680.71. This account was set up to hold the 5 year membership payments, which currently stand at £3,429.70, separate from the general account. The sum held in the Business account will continue to reduce and, each month, money will be moved to the Treasurer account.

Excluding the £3,429.70 of 5 year membership money, our assets stood at over £6,000, not including the value of unsold stock. With the cost of producing **TRACKS** also now fully covered (see **Editors Report**) and with the society in a very strong position financially, we intend to keep membership fees as they are whilst those factors remain so.

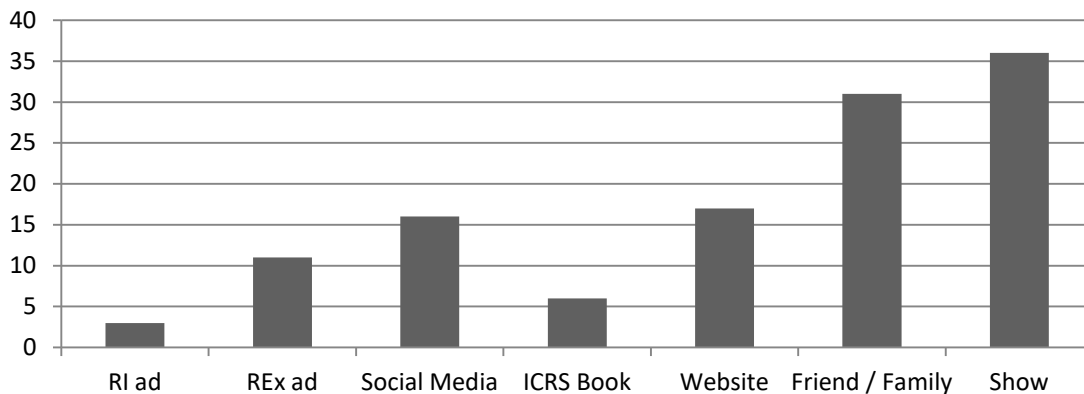
20/02/2018

Approval of Treasurers Report was proposed by Alan Knox and Seconded by Richard Cowen.

Membership Report - Colin Pottle:

The last year from March to the end of December 2017 has seen the society take on 147 new members, comparable with 2016, of which 16 were **eMembers**. Membership has grown steadily over the year from 1044 in April, culminating at 1084 by the end of December 2017. There were only two months, June and November that the membership stayed static. Although we did get new members in both of these months, this was offset by the number of members not renewing, mostly due to not responding to requests to renew. We sadly lost 6 members over the above period.

The spread of where new members heard about us is still varied with the breakdown (where known) shown in the graph below:



Where New Member Heard About Us: Mar – Dec 2017

Clearly due to the quality of the publications and visits, membership continues to rise beyond what we believe was the highest it ever reached back in the early years of the Society in the mid 1970s. This is also, due in no small part to the advertising campaign launched in *Railways Illustrated*, *Railways Express* and on social media which has again pushed the membership up in the first two months of 2018 to 1144 members helped by the early availability of new 2018 editions of our books including new versions (see **Publications Report**). Visiting various diesel galas around the country also helps to spread the word, something I am keen to continue. If we don't sign up new members there and then, they often join several months later. Also it is only from talking to members and the public that new ideas are formed, like the new *Locos* book that we were asked for on more than one occasion.

Another way we have attracted new members is by introducing the new Family Adult (£10) and Family Child (age 10-16) (£5) memberships. In this way, members of family at the same address get all the benefits of being a member at a cheaper rate without the cost to the Society of sending out additional copies of **TRACKS**.

We have now, hopefully, settled into the routine of producing **TRACKS** bi-monthly, which has created the need for me to post out renewal forms on the months that **TRACKS** isn't issued. Email is still the most cost-effective way of sending reminders, but as not all members are computer literate, it seemed to be the only way forward. This was immensely successful at the beginning of January, with most members renewing by return post.

As you know, the five-year membership was withdrawn from September 2016 onwards. There were a few negative comments, but on the whole, this has been accepted as the way forward. If you don't want the hassle of renewing every year you can always set up a standing order. Currently we still have 151 five-year members (reducing every month) with the last one finishing in September 2021 when we may look again at membership rates.

With the need to re-order a new supply and the high membership total, I have come to the conclusion that providing Membership Cards annually on renewal is costly and no longer serves any practical purpose. An initial card will still be provided to new members as a proof of membership which will be sturdier than at present and show the annual renewal month. Every existing member will also get a new card on their next renewal which should be kept for the life of your membership. The postal costs saved will then offset sending renewal forms on alternate months. If members want proof of renewal, particularly by cheque / PO, I can easily confirm by either text or email, and on that note, can I please remind you all to keep your details up to date!

Discussion:

- Family membership - any combination and minimum age limit is 10.

Editors Report - Trevor Roots:

The dilemma of how to fit in the production of **TRACKS** was agonised over throughout 2017. Even dropping to 10 monthly deadlines it was proving impossible to maintain with all the workload of book production, marketing and sales. Therefore several experiments were tried with both 64 and 80 page issues involving further bi-monthly issues and a 32 page supplement **TRACKS extra**. The result was still 10 issues produced as follows: monthly - 5 x 64 page + 1 x 80 page, bi-monthly – 1 x 64 + 2 x 80 page + 1 x 32 page supplement. The idea behind the supplements was that they would contain non date sensitive articles so could be written as material was made available then sent to the printers a week before the accompanying issue of **TRACKS**. Therefore the format settled on for the start of 2018 was 6 x 80 page bi-monthly issues of

TRACKS plus 4 x 32 page quarterly **TRACKS extra** supplements giving 10 issues. The supplements would be posted out with **TRACKS** with Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter 'dates', the exact months to be released to be fluid depending on material and time. This should allow a few more months without deadlines, not necessarily releasing any more time but allowing me to perhaps spread work out. Unfortunately the one aspect I cannot spread out is answering the constant emails. Time will tell if this works.

Factors in determining the production schedule other than my time was the printing limit of 80 pages and the cost of postage. To produce a 32 or 64 page mag costs 38p to post whereas 80 pages is 88p, but combining 32 + 80 pages is still only 88p. I also endeavoured to keep the total number of pages per annum as high as possible though we were never going to be able to match the zenith of 768 (12 x 64) which was actually the straw breaker. Good while it lasted but the compromise after streamlining content, of 612 pages is still pretty good. Then there is the issue of the polybag of which we use around 13,000, so by posting 2 mags together over 6 months instead of the 12 months will save not only nearly £800 but around 6,000 bags, a win-win for us and the environment. On the latter point we could improve our carbon footprint by going back to paper envelopes but I don't think we will get any volunteers to label, add postage then stuff 1100 envelopes 6 times a year. The last time we did that it was only 600 but 12 times a year, so actually more, but the problem is higher postage of £1.22 against the trade rate of 88p which adds £2.04 per member for a year's supply of **TRACKS**. Postal rates are planned to rise again at the end of March 2018.

One advantage of the new system is that on 2 months of the year when only **TRACKS** goes out, we have the ability to add something else to the envelope without increasing postage, so might be useful.

The cost of printing and delivery was variable in 2017 ranging from £14.53 to £20.90 with an average of £16.02 so under the average membership fee of £16.74. The cost will be £14.73 per member for 10 issues in 2018, a much more sustainable level requiring no subsidy from books as in the past.

With the membership now over the 1130 mark we printed 1150 copies for the Jan / Feb 2018 issue which covers 1050 standard members, plus IA copies to the two shops and caters for two months of new members. The extra quantity has further pushed the printing unit cost down.

The database of all photos featured in **TRACKS** since December 2006 still needs to be checked before it can be made available, but is kept up to date.

Discussion: Nothing

Publications Report - Trevor Roots:

Introduction: I have now had over a year under my belt improving the books, proposing new versions and titles (released in 2018) and more sundries. Book sales have soared as have the new sundries which were added to the website. A new edition of the **UK Name Directory** was released in July 2017. Unfortunately an error in the first **UK Pocket Book** was discovered after 160 had been sent out leading to an updated reprint being done and all those who bought the first one in the first month were sent a revised one if requested, which not all did. In fact only 52 had a replacement but all subsequent sales and those to IA shops were of the new edition. Whilst this full reprint kept our integrity and was applauded, it wiped out any profit from that book as the bulk (nearly 500) of the first batch was binned. Hopefully more proof readers as we had for the 2018 books will prevent this from happening again.

I have been able to better streamline the ordering of books from Minuteman so that we do not have stocks left. In fact if demand exceeds the initial order we have a 'print on demand' system which is proving very successful. The only problem, being 600 miles away, is getting them at the right time to have for events and a stock in hand at home to fulfil orders with sundries not kept by Minuteman. Courier costs are high and can damage the books, so to pick them up in person, creative route planning was needed !!

The following figs are based on sales in the calendar years which do not relate to the financial years. In future from 2018 these two will be the same.

Book Sales: (* not published, USFs not included)

	Members	Non-Members	Trade (Ian Allan)	Direct (Shows)	Total Sold	Total Printed
2016						
01 Pocket Book	205	133	160	73	571	650
02A Combine	268	113	95	27	503	600
02B Summer Combine	109	47	10	76	240	300
03 Wagons	196	80	76	34	386	450
04 Name Directory	3	8	0	2	13	n/a
09 Irish Railways *	3	7	0	3	13	n/a
Totals	788	388	341	213	1630	2000

2017 (# printed twice so 1300 actually printed)

01 Pocket Book #	211	132	116	96	555	650
02A Combine	349	123	106	23	601	600
02B Summer Combine	108	60	55	97	320	300
03 Wagons	199	82	52	47	380	450
04 Name Directory	33	13	20	14	80	150
09 Irish Railways *	3	0	0	2	5	n/a
Totals	903	410	349	279	1941	2150

I developed a very sophisticated sales database during 2017 which will reap benefits in future years as we can now analyse ordering patterns, sales and costs. With money being spent on advertising, no data was available to see what the cost benefits were, but this has now been developed and will show in the 2018 figs. Clearly the cost of advertising in other proprietary magazines, though high is paying off with both membership and then book orders which will fully show up in 2018 figs. A fact not known before is that only 41% of members buy at least one book and that of the new members who join, only a similar 42% then go on to buy a book, so clearly that is not the only draw. Some of the data is shown below though no comparison for all with 2016. The 2017 v 2018 data will be very revealing.

Ordering Profile:

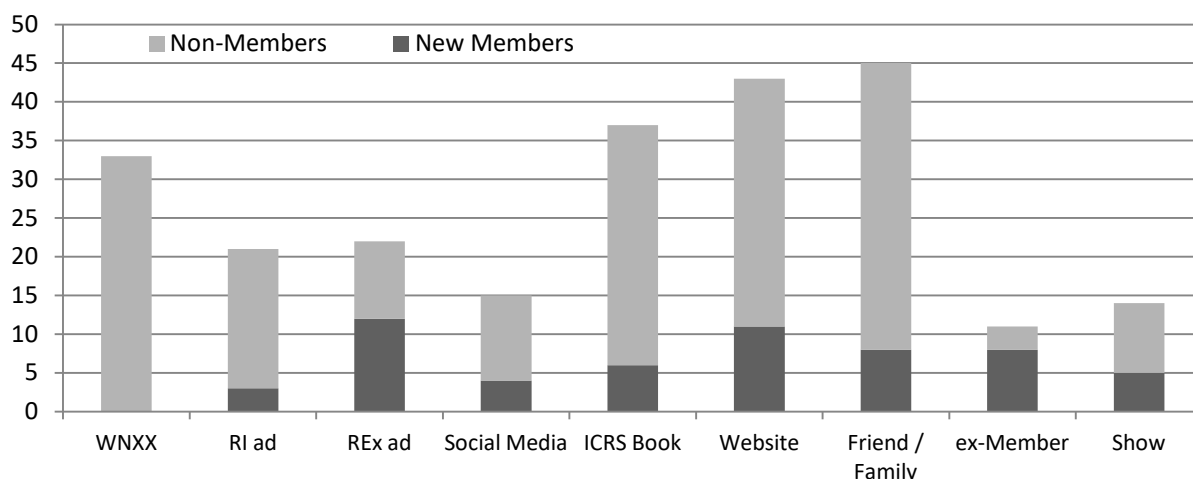
	All Orders			Unique Orders			Membership end of financial year	% Members buying	
	Total	Members	Non Members	Existing	New	Non Members		All	New
2016	879	560	319	nk	nk	nk	1044	nk	nk
2017	997	646	351	422	63	325	1084	41%	42%

Following an opinion gathering exercise during the year which yielded positive feedback it was decided to release the **UK Pocket Book** as a wire bound version in 2018 alongside the original (with spine). After requests during the year we decided to re-release **UK Locomotives** in 2018 but as an A6 pocket sized wire bound version. Both books were to be released simultaneously with the updated **UK Combine** then followed by **UK Wagons** a month later. The new **USFs** are to be released in the summer of 2018 probably at the DRS Open Day alongside the **UK Combine Summer Edition**.

With 80 sold by the end of 2017 out of 150 ordered of the **UK Name Directory** it was anticipated that it would run as planned until mid 2019 before a new edition was to be released. However with 47 still to print the pre-printed covers were disposed of by Minuteman in January 2018. So with only 15 copies now remaining in stock plus several at Ian Allan shops, a decision on the release of the next edition will depend on how soon they sell out, which may yet not be until the end of 2018.

So by the middle of 2018 we will again have seven books in print (eight versions).

Following a chance meeting with the owner of ST Publications (STP) at the Warley Model Show in November 2017 all the former Sighting Files are coming back under the ICRS banner after 9 years. They were previously first released in 2006-07 and kept by HB Publications when we parted company in 2009 and they all then passed on to the new owner now trading as the STP. Rightly belonging to ICRS, these books under the series headings of BR Wagons – A Numerical History, Non Passenger Carrying Coaching Stock, Passenger Carrying Coaching Stock – A Numerical History and Steam Loco History are all to be released again as part of the ICRS portfolio. Clearly a bit of work will be needed on bringing them up to the production standard of our existing books with new covers and they will be incorporated into the USF series.



Total Unique Orders from Non-Members & New Members Jan-Dec 2017

Advertising: As mentioned above advertising was taken in both Railways Illustrated (March & August) and Railway Express (May) with full page adverts. These have been successful as we can now see from analysis with the costs recovered through new members and orders. We also got our books advertised on WNXX for the first time, which can be seen when you scroll to the bottom of the Latest News page under Members Marketing. In addition Gareth has been pushing us on social media particularly through Facebook. Whether you use it or not or have any clue about the site, it is clearly having benefits with new members and orders being generated and the word is spreading on what we have to offer. The above graph shows the unique orders from non-members, where they have indicated how they heard of us (191 out of 325). I have used the whole year as the first adverts were in the end of the 2016-17 financial year. For the future from 2018 I also will have additional analysis on orders generated by non-members showing if they ordered with us before or were ex-members still buying the books.

Sundries:

In May I designed a new ICRS pin badge with a pin clasp rather than the stud and this has sold steadily for £2.50 at both the few events we have attended and via our Order Form / website.

The new batch of printed pens has continued to sell and I thought it about time we did our own notebooks so a well heeled spotter would have everything they needed to pursue the hobby, ICRS book, pen and notebook. So with an eye on a future refresh of the ICRS book covers, I designed a notebook cover that would eventually match the 2018 books and prior to our attendance at the Warley Model Show in November 2017 we ordered 200 ea of printed A6 notebooks from Minuteman branded with the ICRS logo and a loco photo. These were produced with 50 sheets (red cover / 100 pages) and 75 sheets (blue cover / 150 pages) at £2.00 and £2.50 respectively. Both have sold well though not surprisingly the bigger one has sold more, requiring a further run to be printed.

Having come up with the new badge design I thought it right we now produced another batch of polo shirts using a similar design of the name surrounding the logo. I had used that similar design on a sample shirt for a few years at shows but was still unhappy on the quality so whilst the new shirts were advertised, based on that design, investigations continued to find the right supplier. It was finally decided in February 2018 to go with **clothes2order.com** who originally supplied our shirts as they have no minimum order quantity and sizes / colours can be mixed and matched. We can therefore basically order on demand, though in practise it will be a few at a time to keep the costs as low as possible. We will not hold huge stocks as we did previously as we still have a stock of small size polo shirts, with logo only, which we will now discount heavily to sell via our sales stand only.

We now have sufficient pocket book covers to last a few years with the reduction in numbers printed of the original Pocket Book with spine.

Additional year stickers were obtained from the supplier of our **TRACKS** binders for 2018-22 and these are going out with new binders ordered.

Discussion:

- Notebooks - once the 50 page book has sold out we will just continue with the 75 page one.

Website Report - Trevor Roots:

The website has been constantly updated and tweaked to add the new books and sundries with more user friendly guidance.

Gareth Patterson is doing an excellent job with Social Media, see his report below and these new advertising platforms are generating new members and book sales.

The **TRACKS** photo database has still yet to be put on the website as no time to fully check it but it is kept up to date as each issue is released. Hopefully it will not be too much longer.

Discussion:

- Some members do not have internet so rely on the magazine and adverts to know what is going on - same applies for events.

Social Media Report - Gareth Patterson:

The 2017-18 year has yet again been another successful one for our Social Networking Sites. Our Facebook page being the main interest out of the two on which we have gained an incredible 1,082 LIKES/ Followers, up 466 from last year when we only had 616 Followers. As for Twitter we have steadily gained another 61 followers which takes our total for Twitter up to 276 compared to last year when we only had 215 followers.

We have also been advertising our membership package, **TRACKS**, events and of course our Books non-stop throughout the year. We have also had a few LIVE videos as well being streamed online (Carlisle Kingmoor DRS Open Day) which proved to be very popular.

Both sites are now proving very active with the public with daily posting and news updates and requests to join and buy books. Our Facebook page has a 95% response rate meaning we always reply within 30

minutes. When not promoting the ICRS we have also been giving a few heritage railways some PR via our pages and of course any major news from various TOCs

Our Facebook page has been linked to our official website so anyone wishing to order an item or join the society only has to click on the SIGN UP button highlighted at the top of the page. This directs you away from Facebook and on to our website, so no need to go looking or Googling the website address.

Discussion:

- Railway companies like GBRF, DBS and Network Rail keep an eye on our sight - this is because of trespass and terrorism issues. If anyone sees an incident to take a picture of the people involved and pass it on to the Railway Police who will follow it up.

Events Report - Trevor Roots / Christine Field:

Sadly our attempt to encourage a separate Visits Organiser failed as Mark Hall who took on the position was unable to fulfil the role. Neither proposals nor attendance at events were forthcoming and ultimately domestic issues prevented him being able to continue. With events already planned throughout 2017 the role of the Visits Organiser was to plan ahead for 2018 but in the end this was taken on out of necessity by Trevor with help from Chris.

The first event was a visit to Crewe Basford Hall on the 8th April attended by 44 members. With excellent weather this was a good precursor to the following AGM at the Crewe Arms Hotel.

We attended the Severn Valley Spring (SVR) Diesel Gala over the weekend of the 19-20th May, with our stand, the only one, based in the Diesel Shed at Kidderminster Town between two model railway layouts. This was a switch from the Swanage Railway which we had attended for the previous 4 years and was considerably cheaper and shorter in duration to attend.

Our first visit to Long Marston then took place on the 6th June, attended by over 80 members and again we were blessed with good weather.

The DRS Open Day was held at Carlisle Kingmoor on the 22nd July and was marred by persistent rain, only holding off for a brief period mid-day.

Harking back to the good old days we had the chance to attend the Old Oak Common Open Day on the 2nd September which was to mark the forthcoming closure of the Depot as it made way for Crossrail. It also was a celebration of former GWR traction over the past 111 years under the banner 'Legends of the Great Western'. The weather was again glorious.

Our annual members only bash at Eastleigh Works was held on the 9th September, the first time we held it outside of June and was attended by 83 members. The day was marred by two bouts of torrential rain but if you were lucky that coincided with being inside and not at the bottom of the yard !! It was again successful with two shunters used for cab rides and 47818 employed for 'driver for a fiver'.

We broke new ground again for our sales stand when we attended the Nene Valley Railway (NVR) Cl.31 60th Anniversary Gala from the 13-15th October. Attended by 8 Cl.31s it was a worthwhile event. The weather was fair though at this time of year light was failing by late afternoon and there was always that autumnal feel in the air

The last event of the year was our attendance at the Warley Model Railway Show at the NEC Birmingham. As a Society we are able to get a free stand so it was worth going if nothing more than for free advertising. It is not a good event for sales but as already outlined in **TRACKS** I was able to compare us with our 'opposition'. We did however launch our new range of branded notebooks which proved to be a success.

In terms of sales (as seen in the Treasurers Report) and new members, the most successful event was the DRS Open Day closely followed by OOC111. These one day events are always better for us as they attract the hardcore rail enthusiasts. As shown in the Membership Report, shows are the biggest single way to gain new members so the more we can do the better, but they need to be targeted to those with good footfall.

A big programme of events has been planned for 2018 with firstly this AGM and members tour of the East Lancs Railway, then Crewe Basford Hall on the 21st April, our second visit to Long Marston and the Eastleigh Works bash on the 8th September. We are also planning to be at several Preservation Galas, NVR on the 6-8th April, SVR on the 21st/22nd May and possibly NVR again in the autumn unless we find an alternative. The annual DRS Open Day is to be held at Crewe Gresty Bridge on the 21st July.

Discussion:

- Visit to Carnforth was requested if possible - contact to be made by Tony Whitehead who recently went on a trip with Phoenix Railtours.
- Another idea for a trip was Hitachi.
- What attracted a new member was visits to various sites. However, security issues are a problem and some visits are not possible because of this.

Election of Officials:

The election of the committee en block was proposed by Darren Pavitt and seconded by Bill Moy.

AOB:

- Request for a list of everything seen at ELR on our visit in the morning.
- Options for future AGMs and associated visits.

Presidents Closing Comments - Simon Mutten:

Having listened to this afternoon's reports, I am struck by how pleased a commercial business would be, in % terms at least, with the growth and success we have achieved this year. Such success does of course bring its own challenges – not least the workload (all voluntary remember) for the officials – as Trevor so eloquently and entertainingly reminds us in his editorials.

This year it is perhaps worth reminding members that, despite the voluntary nature of ICRS, we do have to be business like in our thoughts and actions in order to ensure the continued success of the society going forward. So what sort of things do we need to take account of?

Be prepared

Have a plan in place. Organisations that survive are those which plan in advance. Whether that's managing the growth of the society, ensuring financial stability or developing the magazine and publications. ICRS officials are in regular contact through meetings and conference calls, enabling timely discussion and decision making to take place.

Be realistic

Such discussion has, certainly in my experience of the current team of officials, resulted in practical and workable solutions on how we develop which have worked for the benefit of the society as a whole. I remember reading of a charity where the leader insisted on leading the organisation down a blind alley by pursuing an alternative vision that was based on false premises. There was a time in the society's past (and I am talking of quite a few years ago) where that almost happened to ICRS. The inclusive and mutually supportive team approach we have today ensures that is unlikely to happen again.

Keeping a grip on the finances

Robust financial information and strong budgeting processes are key to avoiding insolvency. The officials understand the cost of running ICRS. Successful organisations, whether commercial or voluntary like ours also have proper governance in place to ensure what we do is always aimed at achieving our agreed objectives. ICRS' own Constitution underpins such governance.

Keep the right mindset

Whilst we need to be commercially aware in the sense of ensuring the society remains financially viable, we always keep in mind this is not a business – it is a society, run by volunteers within that society for the benefit of all members and indeed anyone who enjoys and follows an interest in railways. We are fortunate in having officials who are flexible and understand the economic realities while maintaining the inclusive approach can make all the difference to success or failure.

But strike the right balance

Organisations such as ours exist for social or benevolent goals and the wholesale adoption of private sector values is simply not appropriate. As a comparison successful charities have a strong awareness of the commercial environment but also manage to maintain a clear focus on the service they want to supply.

Leadership is key

Successful organisations inevitably have good leaders, whether an individual or a grouping of officials as in our case. Our leadership team, and in particular here I must mention Trevor, has a clear vision, can communicate that vision and achieve a consensus. Because of that ICRS has a clear focus on the way ahead. They are aware of the commercial environment, and understand the need to be financially sustainable, but ensure that financial stability is used entirely for the benefit of the Members to enjoy and follow their pastime – i.e. you and me.

But remember, all our officials are volunteers. There's a quote that says "*Volunteers are not paid not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless.*" And once again this year we owe them all a huge debt of gratitude.

Meeting closed at 15.25.