

# POULTON & WYRE

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## Minutes of the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Poulton & Wyre Railway Society (PWRS) held at Moorland Tennis Club, Poulton-le-Fylde on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2021 at 7.00pm

### **1. Introduction.**

Bill Eccles opened the meeting by introducing himself as the temporary Chairman. He took over following the resignation of the previous incumbent, Brian Crawford, whom he thanked for his work on behalf of the Society during his time as both Chairman and Secretary.

### **2. Attendees.**

There were 23 members present, who were signed in and the names and membership numbers were recorded.

### **3. Apologies for absence.**

Ten apologies were received, from Tony Ford, Pat Rand, Cat Smith, Don Alsop, Cherry Yates, Stan Hughes, Celia Clarke, John Clarke, Jim Thompson & William Wright.

### **4. Statement regarding previous Minutes.**

The acting Secretary, Peter Banks, stated that at this point in the AGM we would normally ask for acceptance of the last years meeting Minutes and then discuss any matters arising. He went on to explain that this was however not possible, because, following the 2019 AGM held on 18<sup>th</sup> September, no minutes were presented to the Committee by the Secretary in post at the time.

Also, we were unable to hold an AGM in 2020 due to covid restrictions.  
Consequently there were no matters to discuss.

### **5. Annual Report.**

Executive Committee member, Geoff Ogden, then gave a report and review of the past two years, explaining that although the lockdown due to covid had affected us, a good deal of progress had been made. His report covered four items.

#### a) Restoration of the DMU.

A slide show to illustrate the story of the restoration to date was given, commencing with photos of the DMU parked up at Butterley, previous to the restoration being started.

Initial restoration work was done by Butterley, but the cost was expensive and it was considered that we would be able to do much of the work ourselves. The decision was therefore made to move the units to our NPL, Hillhouse base, in order to carry out restoration there. In March 2020 it was transported to Thornton, just before lockdown.

It was decided to commence by completely stripping the inside of both units, cleaning the windows and making them secure.

Work then commenced on the Power car mechanics, engine, cab and exhaust pipes.

At the same time work started with the cleaning and painting of the underframe of the Trailer car.

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In order to provide safe and easy access, scaffold was erected alongside the Trailer car.

It was discovered that there were water leaks, from the water tanks that supplied the toilet, from the roof vents and in the cab area, which were all repaired. The inside woodwork and the ceilings were painted, lights refurbished and re-installed, new floor covering laid, the seat frames powder coated and the seats cleaned and refitted. The cab's instruments and controls have been removed and cleaned but require re-fixing. Outside, the roof was painted with primer and undercoat and the sides and front were also painted with a green undercoat. There will be a finished livery of green with yellow whiskers, as voted for by the members.

We have now moved on to the interior of the Power car, which has fewer seats but with a guards compartment requiring much refurbishment.

Although there is still plenty of work remaining, the results of the restoration so far are outstanding and we can be proud of our achievements.

## b) Feasibility Study.

Following the surprise visit of Boris Johnson in November 2019 to Thornton station, in order to publicise the Government policy of "Restoring your Railways" prior to the general election, he promised PWRS £100k to fund a Feasibility Study into re-opening the Fleetwood line. LCC engaged consultants to carry this out and the PWRS were invited, as a stakeholder, to put forward a synopsis of objectives. We submitted a fully comprehensive document of information and recommendations with six main objectives:-

- i. The line must be reconnected physically to the main line at Poulton.
  - ii. The line must be reopened fully from Poulton to Fleetwood.
  - iii. The line must run as far into the centre of Fleetwood as is practically possible.
  - iv. The new trains must support the green agenda.
  - v. Infrastructure development must allow for additional services and improved connectivity to Preston and beyond.
  - vi. The reopened railway must allow for the retention of some heritage elements and support the development of the Preston & Wyre Railway museum, heritage centre and test track.
- We were pleased to be acknowledged by the following statement which was included in the Feasibility Study:-

"The PWRS, as well as having led the work that has resulted in the majority of the disused rail corridor being cleared and the station at Thornton being restored, has ambitions for the line to be re-opened and to showcase its heritage. PWRS is keen to retain some heritage elements within the proposals. PWRS has amassed a collection of heritage rolling stock and equipment that it wishes to display in a permanent museum on or adjacent to the railway, including some form of test track. There are definite opportunities for the reinstated railway to accommodate heritage facilities. For example, not all options require the entirety of Thornton Station to be used to operate the railway, and so there is definite potential for the station to continue as the "shop window" for the heritage aspects of the railway. There are several kilometres of single track railway required to operate each mode and service option, but the rail corridor is wide enough for twin-track railway for the majority of its length. It is therefore reasonable to consider that PWRS's aspirations can be accommodated.

## c) Railway station and line maintenance.

Although we are unlikely to be using the line for our benefit, it is still considered that we should carry on maintaining the line, under our clearance licence, so as to keep a high profile and maintain

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our reputation for all the good work we have put in over many years and not waste the improvements we have achieved.

## d) PWRs Open day.

We held our first open day at our NPL Hillhouse base on August Bank Holiday Monday which proved to be a success. The efforts of many who got stuck into strimming, grass cutting and clearing the site of rubbish paid off. The site looked positively picturesque.

There was a lot to do with tours around the DMU, regular start-ups of the Fowler, trips to Burn Naze and Thornton, a quiz designed to encourage a closer look at the rolling stock, information boards and refreshments provided when they were most needed. Reception co-ordinated the event, explaining what was on offer and managed to recruit 6 new members.

Dave Evans provided an excellent taxi service to Jameson road where members were able to enjoy a ride on the Geismar trolley. Some of our junior members are now quite proficient in the art of driving this unit.

All were very interested in what we were doing, often remarking how they could now relate the information read in the magazine and website with the stock on site. There is a wealth of information out there with a lot of anecdotes from former drivers and passengers of the Poulton to Fleetwood rail link. We need to capture it.

What made it for me was the relaxed, mellow atmosphere and the eagerness of the volunteers running the day to engage with our visitors in a professional manner. Let's do it again next year!

The Quiz was won by member no.548 Ray Hollybone. The Committee decided that he should receive a prize of free membership for next year.

## 6. Annual Financial Report.

The report was presented by the Treasurer, Susan Cox.

There are two separate account years being presented at this AGM, April 2019 to March 2020 and April 2020 to March 2021. Both sets of accounts have been checked by another Executive Committee member.

**2019/2020** membership was slightly down, but donations had increased, including specific DMU donations, and log sales were steady. Your committee thanks you all for the regular donations included with membership fees.

The biggest expenditure during the year was transportation of the two DMU units from Derbyshire to the NPL site so that work could carry on locally.

Two issues of the On Track magazine were produced.

The end of year balance showed a drop of almost £4 thousand in the kitty.

**2020/2021** was a lockdown year but this gave some time to review procedures. A big change in working was from that of initial line clearing and maintenance to that of more engineering work on the DMU. I therefore talked with both the Executive Committee and our insurers which threw up the fact that little or no cover was in place whilst working on rolling stock. A decision was taken, in discussion with the Heritage Rail Association insurance adviser, to not only change insurers but to greatly increase cover for members. I am pleased to report that no claims have been made to date.

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I also looked at our electricity outgoings. We pay for one light on Thornton Station and standing charges were hefty. I shopped around and changed supplier to EDF energy, at a reduced rate, payable by monthly direct debit.

Since both the PMs visit and lockdown led to decreased working hours, this has had a knock-on effect to the Society expenditure. The bank balance at year end of March 2021 is therefore in a healthy state.

Two issues of ON TRACK magazine were again produced, which is an amazing feat during little or no working.

During the past 2 years, payment to both suppliers and workers have been made by BACS transfers wherever possible. This is good working practice which has been led by distant personal contact.

It was proposed to accept the 2019/20 accounts and the 2020/21 accounts and this was passed unanimously by the members.

## **7. Report of the future plans.**

The President of the Society, Eddie Fisher, reported on the progress in re-opening the railway line from Poulton to Fleetwood following the Feasibility Study. Since the completion of the study there seems to have been very little progress in the last six months. However, Eddie has been in regular contact with local M.P. and Cabinet Minister, Ben Wallace to make enquiries. He has recently been invited to a meeting in November at Westminster with him and Chris Heaton-Harris, Minister for State for Transport, and hopefully will be able to enquire of progress and put our views of the re-opening to them, on our behalf.

At the same time Eddie has learnt that Network Rail have had communication from the P.M.'s private secretary urging them to make progress. They, in turn, asked for a large sum of money in order to undertake a detailed outline business case and this should be made available in eight weeks time. This would normally be a nine month project, but some work has already been done and the timescale could be reduced to six months.

It is understood that the Dept. for Transport are arranging a meeting with Network Rail and all other interested parties and Eddie is hoping to also be invited to attend, to be able to have an input on behalf of the PWRS.

At this stage the three proposals outlined in the Feasibility Study, for heavy rail, tram and tram/train, are still on the table for consideration, but with the issue of connectivity being a priority for the levelling up policy of the Government, and with political pressure for an early completion, it is considered that heavy rail is the likely outcome.

## **8. Election of Executive Committee Officers.**

The present executive Committee members all indicated, by the nomination procedure, their wish to continue to serve.

- a. Chairman: Bill Eccles
- b. Secretary: Peter Banks
- c. Membership Secretary: Nick McCrudden
- d. Treasurer: Susan Cox
- e. Other Executive Committee: Nigel Kirkpatrick, Stephen Hornby, Richard Rossall, David Wright, Chris Griffin, David Mills, Geoff Ogden and David Evans.



As there were no further nominations, it was proposed that the existing twelve Committee members should be re-appointed en block, as per the existing Constitution rules. The members then voted unanimously in favour.

### **9. New C.I.O. Constitution.**

The Secretary, Peter Banks, outlined the reasons for the requirement to establish a new Constitution.

The main reason is that we are proposing to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation so that it will allow us to apply for registration as a charity with the Charity Commissioners and the new status will open up opportunities for us to obtain grants and funding in the future. We will also be able to apply to HMRC to claim Gift Aid on all donations and membership fees.

Our objectives have had to be modified, as our ambitions to operate train services on the railway line to Fleetwood have been curtailed by the prospect of the line being re-opened under the Government proposals for restoring out of use railways. Even if the re-opening does not occur, it is known that the railway corridor will not be protected in the future. Land has already been earmarked at Fleetwood for development by Fishermans Friend; and also at Burn Naze an extension to the Hillhouse Industrial site has been planned, along with a new access road into the site to be constructed. Therefore all references to an operating Company have been removed from the Constitution and the Poulton & Wyre Railway Operating Company (PWROC) will no longer be required.

In July this year, the PWR Society and the PWR Trust Committees agreed to merge together, as under the new CIO, all the Committee members will become the new Trustees. This has been recognised by removing all references to the former PWRT from the Constitution, as the PWRT will no longer exist.

The new Constitution will also allow us to have postal or electronic (e mail) voting if holding a General Meeting is not possible or practical.

### **10. Proposal to accept a new C.I.O. Constitution.**

The proposal to accept the new C.I.O. was passed unanimously by a vote of the members. All the twelve current members of the PWRS Executive Committee are now the Trustees of the charity.

### **11. Proposal to dissolve the PWROC.**

The proposal to dissolve the PWROC was passed unanimously by a vote of the members.

### **12. Proposal to formally ratify the dissolution of the PWRT.**

The proposal to dissolve the PWRT was passed unanimously by a vote of the members.

### **13. Any Other Business.**

As there was no other business previously notified to the Secretary, the Chairman praised and thanked the work of the volunteers and the meeting was then closed.

Peter Banks, Secretary