

Minutes of the 17th Annual General Meeting
of the Poulton & Wyre Railway Society (PWRS)
held at Wyre Council Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde
on Wednesday 4th September 2024 at 7.00pm

1. Introduction.

Secretary Peter Banks opened the meeting by welcoming the members and then read the Chairman's Report.

Chairman's Report, written by David Evans.

Firstly and most importantly, my sincerest apologies for sadly being unable to be there in person, due to work commitments. I genuinely am upset at not being able to be there, but send you all my heartfelt good wishes for another successful AGM.

My very first report for the PWRS as interim Chairman will be quite brief, as I have only been that for part of the year and to be honest, our way forward seemed quite straightforward as we hoped that we were heading for our own little line to be rejoining the National network at some point. However, as you may know, that situation may have now changed.

I think to be optimistic for a moment, we could look at this as a bit of a "win/win" situation, as if it does still go ahead as both we and Lord McLoughlin would like it to, as a "Tram-Train Prototype" experiment and as once again, part of the rail network, then that's absolutely fine...a result!!

But if not, then we could be back where we might be re-opening purely as a heritage line, over which we would hopefully have more control, if not even ownership, if that was made possible, so again,...result!!

Remembering that we were not set up to do that and merely to safeguard its survival as a "mothballed" route to make it easier to be possibly re-opened, I feel we should be very proud of our achievements to date. I know I am.

We have achieved that and SO much more, ensuring "passive provision " at Poulton to ensure it should be easy to reconnect to the network. We have also done so much to make the lines appearance so much better and easier to be reopened, as well as preserving and very professionally restoring artefacts and rolling stock to a very high standard.

Plus as well as forging links with the communities along the route with our objectives and passion for this line to be saved, if not reconnected, to allow those communities to be regenerated too.

I have in my own small way, helped this to be achieved by representing us at either local model railway exhibitions or doing illustrated talks for many organisations and societies, drawing in new members along the way, as well as spreading the word of what we do and what we hope to achieve in the future.

Additionally, I and others, have made links with schools in the area too, as not only is them recognising and linking back to their roots now part of their educational remit, it engenders "ownership" which helps gain respect for what we are hoping to achieve and protect it too. This has only recently been reformed by another local school and I hope either I, or another member, or members, can help that be achieved again.

I also again played my part at our recent successful open day and enjoyed doing so.

Additionally, my close links with the now hugely successful Fleetwood Festival of Transport, or "Tram Sunday " event, ensures we maintain a good working relationship with them, once again gaining a good position at the event to help swell our coffers and promote our name along the way.

I am obviously disappointed that due to a family bereavement, our newly elected MP cannot now attend our AGM, as I was looking forward to hearing from her as to EXACTLY what position our line is now in for potential reconnection, especially as it was part of their party manifesto towards re-election.

But I can absolutely assure you that certainly as far as I am concerned, I will most definitely be taking up the task of ensuring that this question and others are still asked at the earliest convenience, which our MP has stated she will do, in abeyance of her being unable to be here tonight.

I do personally think we may have been a bit "softly, softly" over the years and maybe been a bit "dismissed or ignored" by some as such in the great scheme of things. But now we are at this "crossroads" I for one, feel we should be at least a little more vociferous at getting our voice heard and getting more of what we want and need for our project.

I am happy, unless someone more appropriate is wishing to do so, to stand as Chairman for the coming year to try to achieve that and whilst sincerely apologising for work commitments making me absent for the AGM, I can categorically assure you that despite being a founder member all those years ago, my passion for this line to not only be saved, but expanded, is not one bit subdued or diminished from where I stood way back then and I will do everything in my power to ensure that one way or another, Fleetwood, Burn Naze and Thornton, stay very firmly, "Back on Track".

Have an excellent, enjoyable, positive and optimistic AGM and let's all go forward together to ensure that this unique, historically important and much loved rail link still has a long and assured future for us and for future generations that will thank us for doing all we could to make sure it can once again do what Sir Peter Hesketh Fleetwood wanted it, so passionately, to do way back in 1840 and to always continue to do.

Thank you to everyone for your hard work and support, in whatever form that takes.

2. Attendees.

There were 21 members present, who were signed in and the names and membership numbers were recorded.

Apologies for absence.

There were six apologies received from members David Evans, Frank Atkinson, John Goodier, David Bibby, Jim Kay & Cherry Earle and also from the Blackpool North & Fleetwood M.P. Lorraine Beavers.

4. Acceptance of 2023 AGM Minutes.

This was proposed by Richard Rossall, seconded by James Thompson and accepted unanimously by the Members.

Matters arising from 2023 Minutes.

There were no matters arising.

5. Annual Report & Review of the past year by Geoff Ogden.

Geoff Ogden gave the report together with a comprehensive slide show of photographs, to illustrate the progress over the last 12 months of the restoration work being carried out on our assets.

Firstly, the Gresley Teak Pigeon Carriage.

With the stored materials and equipment having been removed from the interior, we then commenced the interior restoration work. The interior paintwork has been stripped back, the woodwork repaired or replaced, cleaned and re-painted with primer, undercoat and top coat or re-varnished. The doors have been inspected and are presently in the process of being restored in the same fashion. The carriage has been rewired with new sockets and lighting installed. The extensive work undertaken is to an exceptional standard, as was demonstrated in the photographs.

Next, to our acquisition from Leyland Motors, the Fowler Diesel shunter.

It has now had the axle boxes re-fitted after repair and also had the wheels replaced and is sitting on a short length of track. The track length has been extended, which will enable us in the future to run up and down to test the workings and brakes. A buffer stop which was recovered from Blackpool North station has been installed at the end of the track.

The Lancashire and Yorkshire Victorian 1890 carriage body.

Recovered from a farmer's field in Stanah, it is the oldest of only two rare first class, four compartment carriages and also is unique in having a length of 32 feet. It is now being restored under cover to a high standard by saving and refurbishing as much as possible and using quality timber as replacements where necessary despite the cost. The sides and ends have been removed and a new underframe purchased which are all under cover. The restoration is presently on hold whilst we seek further funding and we are concentrating on the DMU refurbishment.

The two carriage DMU.

They have had extensive work done with many parts being removed, cleaned or replaced. We are now in the process of refitting these and also proceeding with the intricate work of repairing the window and door mechanisms. We have also incorporated improvements as we progressed. The outside has had the roof painted and two coats of undercoat to the front and sides. The first top coat is being applied by brush, which was decided upon after trials of various methods of application as producing the best finish. The work is ongoing, with an army of carpenters, electricians, painters, mechanics and others working on the project, but we now have an end in site.

At the time when we believed that the railway line to Fleetwood would be restored, we decided to cut back our clearance of Network Rail property in order to conserve our expenditure. Due to the ravages of nature and vandalism following Covid, Thornton and Burn Naze have seen severe deterioration. We have however a team at Jameson road who have continued to maintain the site and wooden cabins located there.

Every day's a school day at *PWRS*, and a chance to help out. Next time your train is cancelled due to a signalling problem, spare a thought for Network Rail. It may not be their fault. Criminals target expensive copper used on the network in the cables for the signalling. The train system grinds to a halt for you and me and the copper is cashed in at metal scrap yards, lining the pockets of the criminals. Network Rail are hitting back by treating their cables with a forensic marker with a DNA

code manufactured by *SelectaDNA*TM. Mick Swindells of *Search Dogs UK* had a task in hand, being local and knowing of the PWRs he asked if he could use us for some training he had scheduled. This was at late notice due to another venue being unavailable and we were happy to help. A few conversations later and a quick recce of Burn Naze and NPL and the answer was a yes thank you from Mick and a yes please from the PWRs. We can't resist helping people if we can and we were quite nosey as to what would be happening too! A report in greater detail is on our website.

We attended Fleetwood Festival of Transport in July, where we had a stall with a presentation of the Society's restoration work and also held a very successful open day in August when we again presented our achievements in restoring our assets to our members and guests, who were given guided tours and demonstrations. We additionally raised some money by selling books and souvenirs and received several donations at both events. We also invited local Community organisations to our site to have an experience day, in order to show them our work, promote the Society and explain our benefit to the general public.

Finally, we have also established a scrap metal pile for members use, which also brings in cash to fund our projects when taken to the local scrapyards.

6. Secretary's Report, by Peter Banks.

I have been very busy carrying out my administrative duties for the Society and also keeping the members informed during the past 12 months.

During the year I dealt with the applications, invitations and arrangements for our attendance at several promotional events in the community for the Society including our main event at Fleetwood Festival of Transport (Tram Sunday).

Our insurance renewal quotation was greatly increased and the Committee considered the existing policy to be unaffordable with our reduced income. I therefore made several enquiries for quotations. The conclusion I reached was that Heritage railways are only covered by a very few specialist brokers and underwriters; and our present brokers Ernest R Shaw with Aviva gave us the best and cheapest available policy.

As we are presently based on a site with 24hr Security and its own fire service. it was therefore decided that we could take the risk of not insuring our assets and only taking out Public and Employees liability, which were essential for us to continue with our operations. Therefore the quote was able to be reduced from £2477 to £1120 and this was accepted and paid just before the policy was allowed to lapse.

The clearance licences for working on the railway line required renewing during the year. The Jameson Road section at Fleetwood was renewed with Highways England. As we have had a number of complaints over the years from the public regarding flooding, trees and fences on the section from Poulton to Thornton, we decided that we would hand it back to Network Rail and keep our licence with them to the section from Thornton towards Fleetwood only.

I signed up the Society with Easyfundraising, a company that organises for a donation being given to a cause of a percentage of the cost of any purchases made online through their app. There are thousands of suppliers and shops which are part of the scheme and it costs you or the Society nothing and helps to provide us with extra funding. Please look it up and register us as your cause.

We have accepted donations of railway books for some time and have now amassed a collection of nearly 1,000 in the library, which we keep in a container at our site. We are still accepting donations of good quality books and are selling them to raise funds. Please ask if you are interested in purchasing any and wish to arrange to view them or require any information.

I produced and sent out three editions of the Society “On Track” magazine in the past year, Winter in December 2023, Spring in April 2024 and Summer in August 2024, while acting temporarily as Editor. Although I had no past experience, I took on the task and managed to produce some 24 pages per issue, but I am now giving up this role. We have still been unable to find an Editor and I would welcome any offers, particularly from someone with any experience of IT. and publishing, to take on this volunteer role.

We welcomed a new Committee member, Maria Prescott, who is now looking after the input into the Website and is currently in the process of updating and improving it, so please keep looking at it for additional articles and information there.

Sadly, we have lost three members of the Committee, who have resigned and do not wish to be re-elected. They are Rick Rossall, Bill Eccles and David Wright, who we wish to give thanks for their service over the years.

Finally, I would like to convey our thanks for all the support given by members to allow us to continue with our work, and to all the volunteers who freely give up their time to work on our projects and further our objectives.

7. Annual Financial Report, by Susan Cox.

POULTON & WYRE RAILWAY SOCIETY BALANCE SHEET APRIL 2023 – MARCH 2024

INCOME	2022/23	2023/24
Membership	2015.00	1810.00
Donations	1636.15	1044.91
Sales	1127.62	1110.97
DMU income	98.52	103.14
Fundraising inc Lottery	1365.50	851.00
Pigeon Carriage	0.00	286.12
L&Y Carriage	10078.41	2590.00
VAT	139.00	70.62
TOTAL	16460.20	7866.76
 EXPENDITURE		
Machinery	383.32	0.00
Thornton	62.14	0.00
NPL	1303.78	708.56
Jameson Road	0.00	0.00
DMU	1350.55	1366.34
Fowler	484.36	85.00
L&Y carriage	7891.09	4958.52

Pigeon Carr	23.19	925.01
ON TRACK magazine	481.08	0.00
General expenditure	276.41	496.14
Insurance	1860.52	2251.91
Admin	332.05	350.29
TOTAL	14448.49	11141.77

**STATEMENT OF
ACCOUNTS FOR THE
PERIOD 1 APRIL 2023
TO 31 MARCH 2024**

	01-Apr-23	Current period to 31st March 2024
Bank Santander	30781.67	27491.28
Cash	261.52	276.90
Floats	150.00	150.00
	£31,193.19	£27,918.18
Represented by	31193.19 Opening balance	Bank 27491.28
	7866.76 Income 2023/24	Cash 276.90
	39059.95	Floats 150.00
	11141.77 Less expenditure	
	£27,918.18	£27,918.18

I confirm this is an accurate record of transactions during this period. Susan Cox, Treasurer
Checked by Peter Banks, Secretary

The accounts were previously circulated to the membership and their acceptance was proposed by Richard Rossall, seconded by Gerry Fenner and unanimously approved by the members.

8. Membership Report, by Nick McCrudden.

Thank you all for taking the time to come along to this year's A.G.M. But most of all a very big thank you for continuing to support the Poulton & Wyre Railway in these difficult financial times, with your membership fees and generous donations. Without your support we could not carry on.

Incidentally we still have 19 members that have supported the PWRS for 18 years, having joined on the very first day 27/04/2006, in this very building.

We thank you all for the dedication, with the major aim to reopen the railway line to Fleetwood.

We ended this year on August 1st with 132 members. So far this year we have 100 paid up members.

The year before last was quite a good year for us all as we got nearer to our goal of opening the line to provide services from Fleetwood to Poulton and onward to Preston. With the big announcement of the Government passing our project to the final stage, I was a bit fearful that our members would say: - "Well, we have done what we wanted for all these years what is the point of going on?" I need not have worried because 132 of you did carry on and renew. Thank you. Unfortunately there is now an uncertainty with regard to our goal being achieved, but we are still hopeful.

We still have exciting projects going on. We have a collection of rolling stock that we are refurbishing. The Nigel Gresley Pigeon Carriage. The D.M.U 108. The Fowler Shunter. And our 140 year old L. & Y carriage. All of which we hope one day to put on our short test track. So, the future is looking good. We just hope that the new Labour Government honours the promise made by the last Conservative government in the levelling up. Thank you all once again for your support, you are all very much appreciated.

9. Update on re-opening of Poulton to Fleetwood line, by President Eddie Fisher.

We have just received the disappointing news that the present Government have cancelled the “Restoring your Railways” scheme in which the Fleetwood line was included. All is not lost, however, as Lancashire County Council, as the transport authority, have not yet had any official confirmation. They are still optimistic and believe that some schemes will be carried forward and are looking into other funding opportunities that might be available. They are also looking at the possibility of tweaking the plan if necessary and they are also promoting the Tram Train option as a test case experiment for the North West.

We have good contacts with Transport for the North who are very keen to see the scheme progress and are working closely with L.C.C.

The proposals for re-organisation of the railways and re-nationalisation with the formation of Great British Railways may also provide the means to progress the scheme.

As unfortunately Lorraine Beavers M.P. could not be with us tonight, a meeting will be sought as soon as possible to confirm her support and discuss a way forward.

10. Report of the Future Heritage Centre plans.

Unfortunately I have little to report on progress with our future plans since the last AGM, because we are being held up by two projects that are completely out of our control.

Firstly. As we have heard, the re-opening of the railway to Fleetwood is by no means certain. The railway corridor is however protected until 2031, so there is a chance left for a few years yet for decisions to be made.

The Feasibility Study stated that “there are definite opportunities for the reinstated railway to accommodate heritage facilities, as 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.” These are to be able to create a Heritage railway line alongside the existing railway line running towards Thornton from our new site.

But until matters are resolved, we cannot negotiate with other parties or create any plans in this respect.

Secondly. NPL Estates need to construct a new Northern access road onto the Hillhouse Enterprise Zone. They are now looking at access from Jameson Road, as the new bridge originally proposed over the railway is proving very expensive. Until this access is established, the Zone cannot be fully developed. Presently, therefore, the tenancy on our present site within the Security cordon, is secure for the foreseeable future, until they require use of the land.

In the long term, we have been assured that we are definitely included within NPL’s plans for the non-Security controlled part of the Zone and have been allocated an equivalent sized area of land, adjacent to the railway line, at nil cost, for our new site.

There is also a possibility to acquire a strip of land running South towards Burn Naze, along the railway boundary, if we are unable to secure any Network Rail land.

Although we are unable to produce a definite Business Plan at this time, we are working on the various elements necessary and considering all the alternatives, in order to publish the plan as soon as possible, when the two main issues are resolved. Then we can start to establish our future Heritage Railway Site, which will be accessible to the public and eventually feature a workshop, loco and carriage sheds, sidings, a length of line and a Museum.

To sum up, we can now therefore look forward with confidence to our future, however uncertain, but we have a vision and the enthusiasm to carry on, although progress may be slow and it may take a long time to fully realise our ambitions.

11. Election of Trustee Executive Committee Principal Officers and Committee Officers.

Presently in position:- Chairman: William Eccles. Secretary: Peter Banks.
Membership Secretary: Nicholas McCrudden. Treasurer: Susan Cox.
Other Trustees: (Up to 11 other members). Nigel Kirkpatrick (D.M.U.); Richard Rossall (Carriages); David Wright (Burn Naze); David Mills (Fundraising); Geoff Ogden (Hillhouse Site & Diesel Shunter); David Evans (Promotion Events).

William Eccles, Richard Rossall and David Wright have resigned.
The role of Chairman will be taken over by David Evans.

As set out in the PWRS Constitution, one third of the Trustees will retire at the meeting and will seek re-appointment en masse by the members. Nigel Kirkpatrick seeks re-appointment and Maria Prescott (Website), who was nominated and seconded in May as a Trustee, seeks formal approval by the Committee.

There have been no further nominations and this will leave eight vacancies on the PWRS Executive Committee.

12. Vote by members to re-appoint the retiring Committee members.

The members voted unanimously to approve the changes as outlined in Item 11.

14. 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.

Note – The 2025 AGM will be held on Wednesday 3rd September.

Peter Banks, Secretary