

FRIENDS OF THE WEST HIGHLAND LINES
MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
COMMODORE HOTEL , HELENSBURGH
Saturday 18th May 2019

Opening Remarks:- The chairman, Doug Carmichael, opened the meeting by welcoming everybody to the Commodore Hotel, Helensburgh

Attended:- Colin Alston, Graham Atkins, Graham Attrill, John Barnes, Doug Carmichael, Jim Clark, Jean Crawford, Paul Cross, David Crossley, Tony Dance, Viv Dance, Mark Fielding, David Gallant, Iain Henshaw, Glenys Henshaw, Bill Hewitt, Michael Jones, Nick Jones, Joe Kirk, Tony Lennon, Duncan Martin, John McCormick, Hazel McCorrisher, John McGregor, Norman McNab, Willie Moffat, Duncan Peet, Graham Philips, Colin Rodden, John Savery, David Scott, Ian Sommerville, Robert Talbot, Peter Tomlinson, Barry Townend, Gordon Webster, Duncan Wilson, Ken Thomson, John Yellowlees (39)

Apologies:- John Bellamy, Allison Cosgrove, Nick Davies, Trevor Davies, Roger Dye, Brian Edwards, Edward Evans, Catherine Huber, George Huxley, Mark Lyons, Nigel Hardwick, Douglas Hodgins, Barry Martin, Iain Macniven, Fraser McDonald, Ruth Savery, David Simpson, Bryan Stone, Robert Sugden, John Twort, James Wilkin

Minutes:- The minutes of last year's AGM held in the Great Western Hotel, Oban, on 11th May 2018 were circulated. Adoption was proposed by Paul Cross, seconded by David Crossley. Motion carried unanimously.

Business arising from the Minutes:- None

Treasurer's report:- Treasurer, Barry Townend circulated his report for the financial year ended 31st March 2019. He regarded our present financial situation as very satisfactory with a surplus for the year of £2,156. This was £641 up on the previous year, primarily due to additional memberships.

There was a question about the Special Fund of £10,000 which had been donated to help fight any line closure (£5000) and towards the provision of a turntable at Mallaig (£5000). The Committee was asked to go back to the executors to see if the restrictions on the use of these monies could be lifted.

Barry expressed thanks to the committee and to the auditor Michael Cockburn, who this year completed the audit within one week.

Adoption of the report was proposed by Duncan Martin and seconded by Norman McNab. Motion carried unanimously.

Subscriptions for 2019/20:- The Treasurer suggested that subscription rates remain unchanged. This was proposed by David Crossley and seconded by John Savery. Motion carried unanimously.

Election of Auditor for 2019/20:- Michael Cockburn was proposed by Paul Cross and seconded by Iain Somerville. Motion carried unanimously. The Auditor was thanked by the Chairman and received a round of applause.

Membership Report:- Duncan Wilson gave his report. There are 442 members. Magazine advertising at the North Yorkshire Moors Railway had failed to generate much increased membership but had done so with the Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line.

Future membership subscriptions will be due on 1st January which the Treasurer advised would not have an impact on funds. Questions were asked about electronic payment. Duncan advised that the Society was not big enough to justify a direct debit scheme but payment by bank transfer or by standing order was possible. In view of the change of subscription date it was suggested that this might make a good Christmas present.

On behalf of the Society the Chairman expressed his thanks to Duncan for his work.

Business Report:- In the absence of the Secretary, the report on the Society's activities for the past year (prepared by Fraser McDonald) was given by the Chairman.

Salient points were:

- Unreliability due to staff shortages had been less of an issue during the year
- The promised Class 158's had not materialised.
- The West Highland Lines Review Group had been established of which John McCormick is a member. Provision of tourist trains and improvements to the timetable were being considered.
- Conversion of Class 153 coaches to carry bicycles and luggage had been delayed due to unforeseen serious rust problems and other priorities at Brodies
- The Society's West Highland News Plus magazine goes out 3 times a year and continues to be of a very high standard. Caledonian Sleeper gets 20 copies for onboard reading on the Fort William Sleeper. The magazine had been nominated by member Robin White for Scottish Member Magazine of the Year from the Professional Publishers' Association. Although it did not win it was highly commended.
- The Friends' Twitter account had been active for almost a year and had attracted around 400 followers including Alex Hynes of ScotRail Alliance and Sir Peter Hendy, Chairman of Network Rail
- John Savery was the Society's main contact with Caledonian Sleeper although he had found this difficult with staff changes and been advised to use the Call Centre
- The new Highland Caledonian Sleeper rolling stock was due to begin early June
- Thanks were given to Norman McNab and Gordon Webster for their work on the Society's website
- The West Highland Line had come second in RAIL magazine's "Seven Railway Wonders of the World"
- The possibility of the Fort William to Mallaig line/Glenfinnan Viaduct becoming a UNESCO World Heritage Site was being pursued by Graham Atkins and John Barnes

- The only Community Rail Partnership so far is that for Crianlarich to Mallaig.
- Preparations for the 125-year anniversary of the opening of the Craigendoran to Fort William line were underway
- The Secretary sent his thanks to the Committee for their support

Events for 125th Anniversary of the opening of West Highland Line:-

John Barnes summarised the plans:

- Proposal for a special Inter7City train to run on the 11 August anniversary had received support in principal from the ScotRail Alliance but because of engineering works that weekend would not be possible.
- Competition for schoolchildren (Capture the Spirit of the West Highland Line)
- WJB Anderson photo collection would be launched and available for sale
- Refurbishment of the Monessie Gorge sign
- Iron Road Productions of “Benighted on the Moor”
- Special whisky being produced by Ben Nevis Distillery
- A Fort William heritage walk of 2.5km would be arranged by Nick Jones and John MacGregor

Election of Office bearers:- Paul Barnes and Phil Chinnery had resigned from the Committee due to other commitments/relocation. The remainder of the existing committee was re-elected to serve for a further year, proposed by Tony Dance and seconded by Nick Jones.

David Crossley and Robert Gardner were elected to the committee proposed by Paul Cross and seconded by Norman McNab.

LUNCH

Because of a family bereavement, David Simpson, Operations Director, ScotRail was unable to attend and his presentation was given by John Yellowlees, Scotrail Ambassador.

Mark Fielding showed some of his magnificent photographs of the West Highland Lines.

Both presenters were thanked by the Chairman and received a warm round of applause

A.O.B.

There will be a further auction of blue Scottish Region station signs including some from the West Highland Lines at Great Northern Railwayana Auctions, Poynton Leisure Centre, Cheshire, 5th October.

It was noted that the restaurant at Spean Bridge station had changed hands.

There being no further business the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and brought the meeting to a close at 4.30pm