

**MINUTES OF THE 2021 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE STRATHSPEY RAILWAY ASSOCIATION HELD ON SATURDAY 6 NOVEMBER 2021 AT 13.30hrs IN CAIRNGORM HOTEL, AVIEMORE.**

**1. Present**

Ian Stanworth (Chair), Dickon Sandbach, Neil McQueen, Brian Burgess, David Green, Robert Walters (Directors), Bill Johnson (Membership Secretary), and 60 members (a full list of members present is available from the Association Secretary).

**2. Apologies**

Apologies for absence had been received from a number of members, Douglas Norris, Colin Stirling, Stephen Muirhead, Bob Faulkner, Alan Riley, and Irene Wade.

**3. Minutes of the 2020 AGM**

The Minutes of that meeting, which had been delayed by COVID, and which was held virtually on 20 March 2021 were approved unanimously as an accurate record of the meeting. Proposed by John Wood, Seconded by Gordon Roger.

**4. Report of the Directors and Financial Statements for year ending 31st March 2021**

The full accounts and accompanying statements had been included with the AGM Papers, as was a one page commentary by Dickon Sandbach, our Finance Director. Dickon reminded the meeting how the year had been dominated by uncertainty over the duration and impact of the various lockdowns, with virtually no income for Spey Lodge. He drew attention to the generous financial support of some of the regular users in spite of its temporary closure, and a Government grant of £16k had been secured.

The Board exercised restraint in 2020 in order to be able to support SRC if circumstances so required, but the Company had, with Government support, weathered the first year of the pandemic well, allowing SRA to resume supporting projects to the tune of £78k by the end of the year. SRA ended the year with £125k in the bank, with Reserves of £60k maintained.

Acceptance of the Report was proposed by Grant Ritchie and seconded by Steve Robinson. Carried unanimously.

**5. Membership Report**

Membership Secretary, Bill Johnson, presented his annual update on membership matters, commencing with the sad passing of a number of long standing members, some of whom had been stricken as a result of the pandemic. These wonderful pioneers of our Association had also made generous bequests to the Association. The meeting stood in silence to remember them and their contributions over the years.

Membership had held steady in 2020 after a period of uncertainty regarding subscription renewals. It was noteworthy how strong membership renewal had been in 2021, and Bill hoped that the planned increase in subscription rates in 2022 would be understood by Members. Membership currently stands at 823.

Bill also indicated that, with the winding down of the pandemic Emergency Fund, the SRA planned to create a specific Signal and Telegraph Fund which would hopefully appeal to members with an interest in the preservation and restoration of our many artefacts related to that branch of the Railway Industry.

The Chairman thanked Bill for his report and his invaluable ongoing work managing the membership portfolio.

#### **6. Election of Grant Ritchie as Director**

Grant Ritchie had been co-opted to the SRA Board during the year following the retirement of Mike Tough, and was now putting himself forward for election, with an election statement published in the AGM papers. Proposed by Graham Maxtone, seconded by David Scott. Carried unanimously.

#### **7. Re-election of Robert Walters as Director**

The Chairman welcomed the willingness of the Association Secretary to stand again for election as a Director. Proposed by Roderick McLeod and seconded by Ray Kenyon. Carried unanimously.

#### **8. Re-election of Officers**

a) The EXPRESS continued to be published throughout the pandemic for which the Chairman expressed his gratitude to the joint Editors, Andrew McCracken and Ian Rattray. The additional material in the electronic version was much appreciated. The story of the return to service of 5025 had been superbly recorded both in text and photographically. Their re-election, proposed by David Scott and seconded by Linda Coe was carried unanimously.

b) The Chairman expressed his delight at the 28 year record of the Membership Secretary, Bill Johnson. His re-election, proposed by Andrew McCracken and seconded by Robert Law, was carried unanimously.

#### **9. Re-appointment of Gareth Jones as Association Accountant**

Dickon Sandbach, Finance Director, spoke of his satisfaction with the work of our Accountant, Gareth Jones, who had also been able to reduce his fee as a consequence of new processes adopted by our Finance Director. He recommended the re-appointment of Gareth Jones. Proposed by Dickon Sandbach and seconded by Roderick McLeod. Carried with clear majority.

#### **10. Reports from around the Railway**

The Chairman reported that 5 of our Affiliates had submitted reports and hoped that members present had picked up copies. He drew attention to their work as follows:-

a) Watkinson Trust who triumphed this year with the relaunch into service of LMS Black Five 5025; and who generously enhanced the Railway's Covid security by providing the LMS Directors Saloon free of charge throughout the season. Tributes were paid in respect of 5025 to Paul Blount, Shed Foreman Nathan Lightowler and Engineering Director, Tommy McDonald.

b) 828 Trust - credit to Doug Scott and the Shed team who had ensured the first 10 weeks of the running season was maintained albeit with only the one serviceable steam engine, the veteran 0-6-0 Caley 828.

c) Rails to Grantown (SRCT) who continue to persevere and make progress with the project under the leadership of Linda Coe.

d) Blue Square Heritage Group who, unable to operate since the start of the pandemic, had enabled us to travel to Morley's Shed this morning to observe the activities of our greatly enhanced Plant Maintenance facility.

e) Strathspey Railway Company - The Chairman stated that he had received a report from Douglas Norris which he had been asked to read out in his absence. SRC wished to convey their appreciation of both the vital contribution of Volunteers to the Railway and the generous and enduring support of SRA Members. The past 18 months had been a huge challenge to the Railway, nobody ever having anticipated a lockdown of such scale and duration as that occasioned but the COVID pandemic. However, when services had been able to resume, albeit with restrictions, income had exceeded expectations, and with the assistance of government grants and the furlough scheme, the Railway had pulled through, fit and able to go forward to the future.

### **11. Membership Subscription Rates**

The Chairman reminded Members of the many years during which subscription rates had not been amended, and hoped that the proposal, as set out in the AGM papers would be carried. The Board had expected a small number of objections, but none had been persuasive in terms of altering the Board's recommendation. The new rates, which the Board undertook to maintain for as long as possible, were still cheaper than many other heritage railways. The motion was proposed by Mike Inch, seconded by Grant Ritchie, and carried with 2 votes Against.

### **12. Any Other Competent Business**

Questions were raised and discussion held regarding the distillery under construction at Gaich, possible freight facility there, dialogue with Gordon & McPhail, errors in road connection with A95; also the relaunch of HOPS on Strathspey Railway. None of the above can be considered competent business for the purposes of these Minutes.

**The Chairman closed the Meeting at 14.40hrs before formally opening the EGM**