

Railway Preservation Society of Ireland

REPORT OF THE EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

Belfast Boat Club, Friday 24th April 1987

Sullivan Boomer chaired the meeting, and 30 members attended.

Apologies were received from the Lord O'Neill, the Lord Dunleath, John Friel, Henry Jack, Robert Edwards, Paddy O'Brien, and Douglas Ferguson.

S.Boomer opened the meeting by reading a letter from Mr Brian Ham, the RPSI solicitor, setting out the position on proxy votes. Mr Ham wrote that at the time the Society was incorporated, it had been sought to achieve maximum flexibility and various provisions had been included in the Memorandum and Articles which had not so far proved to be necessary. The provisions in relation to the Society ever becoming a shareholding company fell into this category, and this had caused some confusion.

It was clear from the Articles that proxy votes would only come into play if the Society changed from its present status of a company limited by guarantee to one of a company limited by the issue of shares. Hence, as presently constituted, members of the RPSI were not able to vote by proxy.

Mr Ham said that to permit proxy voting the Articles of Association would require substantial amendment which would have to be approved both by the Society in General Meeting and by the relevant Government department. Mr Ham pointed out that if proxy voting was to be permitted it would add considerably to the administrative burden of the Society and would obviously involve considerable additional expense.

There were no questions arising from Mr Ham's letter.

S.Boomer then presented a policy statement on behalf of the RPSI Council.

A general discussion was then opened by Nigel Greeves who asked about the costs involved in purchasing and maintaining the E class and Sulzer diesel locomotives. S.Boomer said the costs given to the Society were IR£250 for each of two E class locomotives and IR£750 for a Sulzer. He had no figure for maintenance costs. S.Boomer said that he understood the scrap value of the Sulzer was IR£2,500, while an A class diesel would cost IR£50,000.

P.Scott spoke of the problems involved in providing replacement parts for diesel locomotives and he said diesels needed specialised attention to keep them running. He said an E class would be an asset at Whitehead as long as it continued to operate but warned that if something went wrong which was very expensive to repair that would be the end of the engine. He said he doubted if the RPSI could contemplate the funding involved in the restoration of a Sulzer. P.Scott urged that the forthcoming questionnaire to members should inquire how much time and money individual members were prepared to put into diesels.

Sam Somerville, a committee member of the Modern Irish Railways Society, warned of the costs involved in upkeep and maintenance of diesel locomotives; he said he was not convinced there was a market for such locomotives to bring money in year after year.

S.Boomer told John Pinkerton there was nothing in the RPSI Articles of Association which prevented the Society embarking on diesel preservation. Jimmy McBride said the RPSI had been operating a diesel shunter at Whitehead for the past 10 years. He urged the Council to consider the purchase of an E class at least as it would be useful for hauling the tour train out of the siding and for brake testing. He said he accepted that the question of a mainline diesel was different because it would have to earn its keep.

Colin Holliday, a committee member of the Downpatrick Ardglass Railway Society, said they had two E class locomotives on site, one of which was operating and the other in store. He said that when the remaining E class spare parts had come up for sale by CIÉ, the DARS had acquired them. He said that when the E class was operating it was fine, but he warned that the proper procedure for starting an E class from cold took three hours and relied upon a mains supply of electricity.

Nevin Hamilton pointed out that no efforts had been made to restore either the railbus at Belfast Transport Museum or the railcar No.1 at Whitehead, both of which were the property of the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. Johnny Glendinning said it was incumbent on the RPSI to preserve something of the diesel age, and suggested both railbus and railcar would be suitable exhibits for the Whitehead interpretive centre if it got off the ground.

Ernie Gilmore said he supported the idea of preserving a diesel and he suggested there would be money to be made out of operating diesel trips. Widening the discussion to the question of preserved coaches, E.Gilmore said the present vintage train was a major attraction for English enthusiasts. He said a train of Mark I or II coaches, albeit hauled by a steam locomotive, would not be as big an attraction. He said it would be a sad day when, to continue running on the main line, the Society had to look at more modern coaches.

Alan Love, a former Portrush Flyer officer, said he could endorse what E.Gilmore said about the attraction of historic coaches.

S.Boomer explained that the ban, which had been imposed by CIÉ rather than the Railway Inspectorate, applied to all wooden-bodied coaches between Dublin and Mallow. By perhaps 1992 it would extend to Dublin-Belfast. At present the RPSI train was permitted to travel empty stock over the Dublin-Mallow section, but he agreed with Bob Hunter that the economics of running empty trains would need to be investigated.

S.Boomer said the best bet might be to look for an ex-CIÉ Cravens set of steel-bodied coaches as soon as they became available, which might be 1991/92, if such a set was economical to maintain. S.Boomer also warned of the problems caused by the braking systems.

E.Gilmore confirmed that it was the Council's intention to continue to run a two-day tour on CIÉ each May based on the following options in the medium term:

- a) Using existing tour train on routes avoiding Dublin-Mallow, i.e. Sligo, Westport, Galway and Limerick, and also the Dublin South Eastern once No.461 was available.
- b) Hiring steel-bodied coaches from CIÉ.
- c) Running RPSI stock empty to Mallow and starting tour from there.

Nevin Hamilton pointed out that operating without the RPSI tour train would mean the loss of the dining car, a valuable source of revenue.

Mervyn Darragh then asked for details of the proposed coach storage shed at Whitehead. J.Glendinning explained that the plan was for a £75,000 hay-shed style building which would provide covered accommodation for two nine-coach rakes on parallel storage roads. He said it would be a modular construction which could be extended as finance permitted. Approaches had been made to the International Fund for Ireland and Co-operation North for grant aid. £1,000 had been promised by the Carrickfergus Scientific Trust. J.Glendinning told Paul McCann that, even if the ban on wooden bodied stock persisted, it would still be worth having the storage shed as a steel-bodied rake would need storage. In addition, it was hoped that Portrush Flyer could continue to be a wooden-bodied stock operation.

Nevin Hamilton asked about the proposal to restore Whitehead station building. J.Glendinning said the Council's view was that a project to preserve the building could only go ahead on a self-financing basis. He said investigations were continuing, but no commitments had been entered into. The Council was conscious that if the building was demolished, the RPSI might be criticised for not having done more. He agreed to investigate a suggestion from John Harcourt that the National Trust might be able to help.

J.Glendinning said the fence at the excursion platform was an eyesore but this was because of vandalism and it was not proposed to do anything about it.

P.Scott appealed for more assistance from the membership, particularly with a view to continuing the clean-up operation at Whitehead.

Colin Holliday asked what would happen at Mullingar if No.184 was withdrawn. P.Scott said that the locomotive would next year require a new tube plate if it was to continue in traffic. He said there were no proposals to send one of the larger engines from Whitehead to Mullingar. J.Glendinning said that if there was sufficient traffic being offered at Mullingar, the Council would find a means of accommodating it.

Nevin Hamilton said there was an urgent need for a new generation of members, particularly on the active volunteer front. P.Scott said that to supply full-time staff cost £130 per week, compared with £20 per person on the ACE scheme. E.Gilmore suggested a professional fundraiser was required by the Society, on a payment by results basis.

The motion:

that this meeting approves of the policies being followed by the Council

was then proposed by J.McBride, seconded by A.Love. It was passed with no votes against and three abstentions.

Signed: _____ **Chairman** **Date:** _____