

# ***Railway Preservation Society of Ireland***

## **REPORT OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**The New Pavilion, Whitehead, Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1997**

Lord O'Neill presided and 52 members were present.

### ***Apologies***

H.Beaumont, P.Booth, W.Brazier, D.Carse, J.Darling, J.Durore, G.FitzGerald, R.Forsythe, S.Forsythe, T.Forsythe, D.Henderson, M.Hodge, C.Holliday, D.Lucas, C.McDonnell, R.Morton, E.Pamely.

### ***Minutes of the 1996 AGM***

The minutes, previously circulated, were adopted on the proposal of H.Boomer, seconded by P.Bowen-Walsh.

### ***Chairman's Report***

B.Gillen asked members not to be misled by the comment in the report that stated Cravens coaches may be available within a couple of years. It was his belief that it could be longer than that. S.Boomer replied that he only passed on what was intimated to him by senior Iarnród Éireann management at the time of writing.

The report was adopted on the proposal of J.McKeown, seconded by J.Fitzpatrick.

### ***Secretary's Report***

The report was adopted on the proposal H.Boomer, seconded by W.Coates.

### ***Treasurer's Report***

L.Gillen asked why the report showed that the catering operation was losing money when it was not. J.Beaumont replied that, while the Dublin catering operation had shown an improvement in profit performance, the overall figures were down because of the poorer performance of catering on the Whitehead based operations this year. He said it was the custom to show the combined figures in the annual report.

G.Reid said a more detailed breakdown of all the figures from the accounts should be given to the members.

The report was adopted on the proposal of J.McKeown, seconded by J.Fitzpatrick.

### ***Appointment Of Auditors***

J.Beaumont reported that the annual audit fee had risen from £600 to £700 due to ever more stringent regulations but it still represented good value. He proposed, seconded by

J.Fitzpatrick, that Dunne & Associates be re-appointed as auditors. The proposal was agreed by the meeting.

### ***Reports Of Operations Officers***

T.Gray asked what the current position was in regard to the restrictions on the operation of No.85 on NIR tracks. S.Boomer replied that the restrictions of 25mph working and the requirement for either one of crossing trains to be at a standstill still applied, and would be in operation for the Easter trains. However, a reply was currently awaited from NIR on the appointment of an independent assessor who would recommend suitable line speeds for Society vehicles. It was hoped to have a report by mid-April, following which it was anticipated that all operations would be run as planned. Obviously if the 25mph limit remained, there would have to be a major rethink of how the Society operates, especially as it was likely that IE will take account of any restrictions imposed by NIR.

The reports were adopted on the proposal of H.Ritchie, seconded by D.Mackie.

### ***Reports Of Locomotive And Carriage Officers***

The reports were adopted on the proposal of J.Fitzpatrick, seconded by D.McNamara.

### ***Reports Of Mullingar And Whitehead Site Officers***

D.McNamara, inquiring about the status of the Mullingar site lease, was informed by D.Humphries that negotiations with CIE were proceeding slowly and painfully.

J.Harcourt asked what compensation there would be for the arson damage to coaches on the Whitehead site. S.Boomer replied that a claim had been lodged with the NIO, and the matter was between them and the loss adjusters. It was anybody's guess as to when a claim might be settled, and for how much, if anything.

The reports were adopted on the proposal of C.Meredith, seconded by P.Bowen-Walsh.

### ***Election Of Council and Office Bearers For 1997***

All nominees for the 1997 Council were elected unopposed:

<b><i>Chairman:</i></b>	Sullivan Boomer
<b><i>Secretary:</i></b>	Paul McCann
<b><i>Treasurer:</i></b>	John Beaumont
<b><i>Assistant Treasurer:</i></b>	David Humphries
<b><i>Locomotive Officer:</i></b>	Peter Scott
<b><i>Carriage &amp; Wagon Officer (Southern):</i></b>	Brian Gillen
<b><i>Carriage &amp; Wagon Officer (Whitehead):</i></b>	Mark Kennedy
<b><i>Belfast Area Operations Officer:</i></b>	Heather Boomer
<b><i>Dublin Area Operations Officer:</i></b>	David Houston
<b><i>Mullingar Site Officer:</i></b>	Chas Meredith
<b><i>Whitehead Site Officer:</i></b>	Dermot Mackie

## ***Report Of Council Structure Steering Committee***

The chairman of the Committee, W.Coates, thanked the Committee and those members who made submissions. He stated that all submissions were given careful consideration. He went on to describe how the Committee proceeded to carry out its business.

The main aim was to introduce a more business-like structure to the Society's proceedings. Modern management principals were considered but it was felt that, by its very nature, a voluntary body did not lend itself to a structure where extra layers of management would be introduced between the ordinary working member and the Council and thus lessening the perceived accountability of that Council. Most members have day jobs and the lengthening of lines of communication was not a valid option. The workings of other similar societies were considered and those practices felt to be beneficial were taken on board.

J.Beaumont explained to B.Gillen that the posts with a time limit on them could be contested every year as the limits were suggested as maximum terms only.

W.Coates told P.McCann that the post of Vice-Chairman was usual in similar societies. He said the incumbent would help to promote the public image of the Society.

P.Scott asked why it should be that Operations Officers lose their Council status. C.Meredith replied that the thrust of the argument was that Council is composed of people who happen to do a hands on job, which does not necessarily qualify them to sit on a management body.

P.McCann said it was wrong to have only spending departments represented on Council.

I.Pryce said he had grave misgivings that the two core Operations posts should be replaced by non-defined posts thus reducing their status and effectiveness.

D.Humphries said the current Council structure was not working as meetings tend to get bogged down with minor concerns to the detriment of policy decisions. B.Hill said Council was not working because its members do not discipline themselves to focus on business matters, and the proposed change in structure will not make the slightest difference to that problem. He believed that Operations was a business matter as much as Locomotives or Carriages. P.Bowen-Walsh noted a crisis of confidence and a stagnation of ideas which he believed aspects of the proposed structure might help to cure, witness the lack of contests for Council every year. He pointed out that the report does not have to be accepted as a whole.

S.Boomer said that logic dictated that all the major departments be represented on Council, or none at all. C.Meredith replied that the removal of all hands-on members from Council was the initial proposal but would not have prevented any of those members from being elected in their own right. P.McCann agreed with the latter view as being a preferred solution but he was sceptical that it would work in the Society's voluntary set up. H.Boomer suggested that consideration be given to restoring the posts of Operations Officers to the proposed structure.

Lord O'Neill remarked that it was becoming apparent that the feeling of meeting was converging to a compromise position. J.Fitzpatrick proposed and J.McKeown seconded a motion that the report be accepted for implementation in its entirety with the one exception that the posts of Operations Officers remain as Council posts.

The motion was put to a vote and was carried, with 2 members against.

Following a proposal by B.Gillen, seconded by J.Fitzpatrick, those present endorsed a vote of thanks to the Steering Committee for the work undertaken in preparing the report.

### ***Any Other Business***

M.Halliday criticised the quality of the Society videos being sold to members as not being up to the standard of examples from other sources. A.McRobert replied that he produced the videos as a hobby and at no cost to the Society. He could not afford to invest in professional equipment nor pay the copyright fees for music or vintage footage. He was willing to cease if somebody with better equipment could be found to take his place. J.Beaumont stated that the 3 videos produced so far have been among the most successful fund-raising tools of recent years and he saw no reason not to produce further titles for as long as they continue to sell.

P.Bowen-Walsh reported that he had noticed there was no credit given to the Society in the recent film “Michael Collins” and perhaps this should be insisted upon in future. J.Beaumont replied that the standard contract for such films was to be updated shortly.

G.Reid suggested that the next northern AGM should be held in Belfast.

B.Mullally asked that tickets for the annual railtour be dispatched well in advance to allow for delays he had experienced with postal services to certain parts of the country.

D.Dillon asked for a progress update on the Locomotive Workshop. P.Scott said it was vital that this project go ahead due to increasingly onerous health & safety demands and the need for the Society to take on an increasing amount of work in-house. He hoped that every member would respond generously to the appeal which is to be made shortly.

E.Gilmore thanked P.Scott for the effort he expended in gaining the contract to overhaul the Downpatrick Society’s locomotive. Work such as this made the need for the Locomotive Workshop all the more necessary.

S.Boomer told C.Meredith that Council had agreed that there was no objection to the annual attendance records of Council nominees being published.

***Signed:*** \_\_\_\_\_ ***Chairman***      ***Date:*** \_\_\_\_\_