

Railway Preservation Society of Ireland

REPORT OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Whitehead Community Centre, Saturday 7th July 2018

Dr Joan Smyth chaired the meeting and 38 members were present.

Introduction

John McKegney opened the meeting:

Today history is being made in the life of the RPSI - the first time ever that there has been a change of President.

Since its inception Lt-Col. Raymond Arthur Clanaboy O'Neill, 4th Baron O'Neill of Shane's Castle has been the RPSI President and a source of inspiration to all our members. It was good to see his name on the letter head.

Thankfully it will still be there for Lord O'Neill has graciously agreed to continue to be our Patron.

Lord O'Neill, we will have an opportunity properly to express our thanks for your years of service at a dinner on the 12th October but for now I simply want to say thank you for all you have done for the Society and for your advice and counsel to me as a new and very raw Chairman.

You have always taken a keen and active interest in the work of the RPSI, you have excellent contacts and you have railways in your blood; the late lamented Shanes Castle Railway being evidence of this. I wish you a long and happy 'retirement'.

I know you share my pleasure that the Board has appointed one of our Vice Presidents, Dr Joan Smyth CBE, as your successor.

Joan is an economist who brings with her a wealth of experience not least as a former Chair of Translink - she signed off the first CAF units!

Joan has had a richly varied career of public service - let me list a few of her commitments

- *President of the Red Cross, Northern Ireland.*
- *Independent Assessor for Public Appointments.*
- *Former Chair and Chief Executive of the Equal Opportunities Commission for NI*
- *Director of EirGrid plc since June 2009 - retirement party on the first 2018 S & J!*
- *She serves as Chairman of the Progressive Building Society for the past five years*
- *Director of Trinity Housing Association.*
- *She was elected to the Board of the British Council in September 1999 and has chaired its Northern Ireland Committee.*

And now the crowning glory - President of the RPSI.

It gives me great pleasure to ask Lord O'Neill formally to welcome Joan as his successor.

Lord O'Neill said he was not sure why he was invited all those years ago to be Patron, but he is very grateful that he was. He said there have been many changes over the years, from No.3BG "Guinness" and 861 right up to the modern Society we have today. He took great pleasure in welcoming Joan Smyth to become Society President.

Joan Smyth said she could not think of a greater privilege than to take over a post from someone who has held it for 54 years, and it is a bonus that Lord O'Neill will remain as Patron. She said she had many board positions over the years but she was quite emotional in being invited to take on this post. In her Translink job she saw how the company served everyone and the RPSI continued that tradition, and she hoped it could maintain access north and south. She let us all remember the past but embrace the future.

Apologies

B.Garrioch, C.Holliday, D.Humphries, G.Huxley, J.McKeown, C.McLeod, G.Mooney, P.Newell, C.Phillips, N.Poots, J.Teesdale, M.Walsh.

Minutes of the AGM on 13th May 2017

The minutes, previously circulated, were adopted on the proposal of S.Timmins, seconded by C.McDonnell.

Chairman's Report

The report as read was adopted on the proposal of R.Morton, seconded by E.Armstrong.

Secretary's Report

The report, previously circulated, was adopted on the proposal of D.Mackie, seconded by P.Rigney.

Treasurer's Report

The report, circulated at the meeting, was adopted on the proposal of C.McDonnell, seconded by P.Rigney.

Appointment Of Auditors

Guardian were re-appointed on the proposal by B.Carse, seconded by J.McBride.

Reports Of Operations Officers

P.Rigney said J.McKeown had asked him to report that Dublin Operations had run 29 trains, with approximately 10,000 passengers over 5,000 miles.

The reports were adopted on the proposal of W.Riddall, seconded by C.McDonnell.

Reports Of Locomotive And Carriage Officers

The reports were adopted on the proposal of J.Darling, seconded by F.Gallagher.

Election Of Board and Office Bearers

J.Smyth thanked the retirees, E.Friel, B.Garrioch, D.Houston and M.Walsh.

P McCann said that apart from the candidates already notified, one further nomination had been received, from M.Kennedy.

There being no further nominations from the meeting, the following were elected to serve on the Board on the proposal of J.Richardson, seconded by S.Timmins:

<i>Chairman:</i>	John McKegney	<i>Directors:</i>	Eileen	Joe McKeown
<i>Vice-Chairman:</i>	(vacant)		Armstrong	Phillip Newell
<i>Secretary:</i>	Paul McCann		Mervyn Darragh	Peter Rigney
<i>Treasurer:</i>	(vacant)		Mark Kennedy	Peter Scott
			Dermot Mackie	
			Fergus	
			McDonnell	

Any Other Business

J.Friel said it was sad that no one from among the membership had stood as Treasurer, as too was the retirement of younger members. He wished to explain that in his role on the Finance Committee he was often asked, sometimes quite angrily, why the Committee had not given adequate budgets. He explained that the Board set the budgets and the Committee implemented them. Among the Committee members there were some with no financial background, but who had nevertheless steered the Society through a major VAT crisis a year or so ago, whilst administering the major grant receipts and claims. He suggested there must surely be some member with a financial background who could step forward to help, even if not as Treasurer. J.Smyth endorsed this request and said it might be that seeking external help could not be ruled out.

P.Montgomery said he was keen to see the Society's financial situation satisfactorily addressed. J.McKegney said that the tentative steps to search for external directors had been taken.

R.Nugent said that as a local member she felt there were issues to be addressed at Whitehead, particularly the café being open only 3 days per week, the lack of fulltime leadership, and volunteers being ignored. J.Friel said that the income situation at Whitehead had improved since last year and hopefully that with proper professional marketing would improve further. S.Timmins suggested a deadline for improvement before shutting down.

M.Devlin suggested that photographic events, which were popular in Great Britain, could be successful, and he was willing to help organise them.

N.Close said that in his role as Train Manager for Whitehead he had recently had instances of aggressive approaches by passengers. He said that there should be a zero tolerance policy for such behaviour, and this drew widespread support. E.Armstrong said that more stewards are needed and they need to be trained in how to deal with such behaviour. J.McBride said that no doubt alcohol was a factor.

S.Timmins said it was raised at a previous AGM that volunteers should be provided with basic B&B when on the annual railtour.

J.McKegney advised that the Board had approved one annual free entry to the Museum on production of a valid membership card.

S.Dillon introduced herself as the Acting General Manager. She thanked the Board and volunteers for their help to her. She said the suggestion in a comment from a previous speaker in regard to closing the Museum was not feasible as commitments had been made with the funders in order to receive the grants. She agreed that the Museum was a challenge, but things were improving and she was working hard to make it the success it deserved.

J.Smyth noted that a lot of points had been raised and hoped that they would be addressed where possible. She asked members to note that the Museum was here to stay and to do what they could to publicise it, for instance with the new leaflets just recently printed.

J.McKegney closed the meeting by thanking those present for coming. He hoped that there would be a new era of communication, especially now that the website had a dedicated Members area.

Signed: _____ *Chairman* *Date:* _____