



# The Railwaymen Supporters Society

Scott Kynnersley (secretary) - 07921 924483

1 Lynbrook Road, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 6HW

Email – [info@railwaymen.co.uk](mailto:info@railwaymen.co.uk)

## The Railwaymen Supporters Society AGM Minutes

on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021 at Railwaymen Bar & Lounge, Mornflake Stadium, Gresty Road, Crewe, Cheshire, CW2 6EB.

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### Attendance

- Board Members – Mark Beavan (MB), Scott Kynnersley (SK), Matthew Owen (MO), Richard Benson (RB), Colin Higginson (CH), Tim Tantrum (TT), Dave Slack (DS)
- David Kynnersley, David Pratt, Michael Vernon, Rob Kelsall, Neil Hassell, Hilary Robinson, Chris Baker, Paul Barrow, Robert Dutton, Stephen Davies, Maddie Richardson, Mike Basford, Adam Brazendale, Richard Wielding, Andrew Connolly, Liam Connolly, Wendy Cosby, Garf Kent, Martin Caldwell, John Bird, Rosemary Bird, Nicholas Crick and John Ferguson

### 1. Welcome and Introduction

MB welcomed all members to the first ever 'in person' RSS (Railwaymen Supporters Society) AGM and commenced the AGM at 19:35.

MB commenced the meeting by paying tribute to Linda Flevill who sadly passed away in May. MB said that Linda had been pivotal in us raising the £250,000 in order to buy into the football club with her tireless work. She will be sadly missed from the board for her inciteful input and positive personality.

MB asked those present to be silent for a few moments to remember Linda and Andrew McIntyre, Chris Lawson and Andy Scoffin who were members of the RSS who sadly passed away since our last AGM.

### 2. Apologies

SK received apologise from 25 RSS members prior to the AGM, these were David Hodgkinson, Andrew Preece, Malcolm Edge, Lynn Davies, Les Platt, Linda Morgan, Ed Whitby, Clive Heathcock, Mike Baddeley, David Tomlinson, Alan Greene, Julie Warren, Graham Warren, Harold Pinkley, Roger Allenby, Andrew Brown, Paul Harding, Craig Buckley, Steve Welch, Derek Seymour, Dave Bunting, Rob Sproston, Mick Glass, Simon Lewis and Nick Jones.

### 3. Minutes from Previous AGM

The minutes were accepted as a true and fair record.

### 4. CAGL Report - MB

MB said he would try to keep his report brief.

The club had endured a lot of change both on and off the field in the past year. Last year's AGM took place in lockdown and we had a brief period where limited fans returned to the ground but it was not until the current season where fans were properly able to watch football. There was a lot of work done planning for the games last season but these games were largely successful.

The board of the football club had been worried at the end of last season that season ticket holders would request refunds in their droves but this did not materialise. The club tried to be fair in dealing with the season ticket holders and the club are thankful to all fans for their support.

The football club ended the season in 12<sup>th</sup> place which was decent and then had to plan for the current season with the loss of key players. There were no surprises in the players who left and the board backed the manager with a better budget for the 2021/22 season.

On the commercial side the addition of James Beckett has been excellent, which has increased the income it is bringing into the football club. The shop is much improved with a better range of products, better website and has seen a considerable increase in activity.

The facilities have been improved and are being better utilised, particularly the Wrights Lounge but the club recognise there are still improvements to be made.

The Sheldon Report led to board changes and there has been some bitterness around these matters with the Bowler family feeling they had been unfairly treated. MB placed on record that we should not forget that John Bowler gave the club many years of good service. MB expressed that it is vital that the new board reach out to the survivors and was pleased with the way this has been dealt with.

MB is championing the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion within the club. MB his also looking at the Fair Game manifesto and will continue to evaluate whether the club should add its name to it.

Tonight at 10.00pm the Tracey Crouch review of football will be published, and MB said that fans should watch how this develops over the coming weeks. The ownership structure of Crewe Alex and make up of its board with the inclusion of RSS is recognised as a model for how football clubs should be structured, parts of which may be recommended in her review.

MB has had regular meetings with James Beckett on how the club can innovate financially. The club has spent heavily on the ground and at the Reaseheath training ground as it has lacked investment for several years due to the situation with the outgoing shareholder, Norman Hassall.

The Society has been encouraging the club to work more closely with the soccer centre at Shavington and this is now taking place. Recently it changed its name to Crewe Alexandra in the Community.

The club has also been working much closer with the women's football team and he looks forward to seeing this relationship grow over the coming seasons.

MB finished by saying that the aim of RSS is for us all to be proud of the football club and its role in the community.

## 5. Society Performance 2020-2021

Richard Benson produced his report and is as follows:

The last AGM took place on Zoom during a lockdown. The society's activities were also curtailed by further lockdowns and restrictions. (January through to May/June).

When I sat down to start this process and I was worried we hadn't done that much in the past year. However so much goes on quietly in the background. Mostly it's discussions, consultations and liaison with the club, members and fans.

RB went on to explain that numerous topics have been discussed with the football club throughout the last 12 months. The commercial group at the football club have done a wonderful job with the hospitality side which we had an input with via MB who sits on the commercial group.

We are aware that the picture quality on TVs around the group are not the best currently and this is being investigated by the club. .

Members of the RSS met with the CAFC ladies set up just prior to lockdown 1 and we asked MB to raise some concerns in the board room. We are delighted to say the club are now working much closer to Crewe Alex ladies.

In the summer, the football club built a new concourse bar in the main stand and this was named the Bakers Bar. The aim was to try and get fans served quicker pre match and at half time. The variety of drinks on the concourse at the wet bars has improved and we were delighted to run a competition on behalf of the club to name the old concourse bar.

We had good amount of input into Season Ticket refunds which was obviously a tricky situation. The RSS ran a survey back in the summer and the results shows members of the society were generally pleased overall with the refund policy.

We sent MB to the club with a list of issues we had received from fans following the first home game(s) of the new season. This was a trend from a lot of clubs throughout the country but in all fairness to the football club they quickly sorted many issues out over the next 2/3 games and were very proactive.

### Items that took up more time during discussions included:

Home bar (Railwaymen Bar & Lounge) – We feel still work in progress and continue to liaise with football club regarding this subject. We are aware members/fans still feel the beer prices are too high and we are speaking to the football club about offering food in the bar for fans. The football club have ordered a new projected screen for The Railwaymen Bar & Lounge and we hope to have two new TV screens along the side wall soon.

The Scoreboard – This looks brilliant and fantastic addition to the Mornflake stadium and something the fans have often spoken about in the past. It also gives the football club good marketing opportunities on the sponsorship front going forward which will generate extra income.

A Railwaymen Lottery which became the Red Lion Lottery – The response from the fanbase for this project has been brilliant and we know the football club are very grateful.

As a board we have also worked on:

Finances (CASC funds) - a laborious and time-consuming process and still ongoing. Great credit must be given to DS and the old CASC committee for their help in this.

Membership benefits – We have been working hard on getting the new annual RSS membership and our new Junior membership packages right and affordable for supporters. Details on these will be announced shortly.

Zoom meetings and advice given to other fan groups – We are immensely proud that The FSA (Football Supporters Association) have asked The RSS to assist other club's trust/societies in getting set up as organisations. It's an honour that the FSA have used the organisation structure of The RSS as a template for new groups.

MO has been working on Diversity with The FSA and been working with MB who is the club champion on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

We have appeared on various podcasts/radio to publicise the football club, RSS members and the society.

Prior to the Sheldon Report we held meetings with Survivor Groups members. Once the report was published we represented the views of members and fans who contacted us and worked hard to ensure John Bowler took the best course of action (including issuing public statements etc)

We were consulted about the new Monthly Magazine and put forward various opinions (including keep a programme). We also accepted the chance to contribute two pages per edition.

We have also held our first proper face to face with The RSS members in September. We are committed to holding 4 meetings a year.

6. Society Plan of Action 2021-2022

The RSS were due to release a 12-month Business Plan in the summer but held off due to concerns around covid. We are now currently working on an 18-month business plan which will be shared with RSS members and available on our website for all fans to read. We hope to have this finalised and in the public domain at the start of 2022.

The RSS will shortly be announcing the society's annual membership and a special membership for juniors called Junior Railwaymen. Both memberships will run from July 01<sup>st</sup> to June 30 annually but any supporter who joins the membership when they are announced next month (December 2021) will get the remainder of the 2021/22 season FREE and all membership benefits will start from 01<sup>st</sup> February.

SK reminded all T1 members of the society that they must enrol in the annual membership to keep their shares which were purchased during #Project250. SK also said this is an ideal opportunity for all fans to get involved in the society and the membership makes the society inclusive for all fans.

SK then informed members of the Junior Membership which was described as exciting. A small sub-committee was set up to work on this membership which includes Robert Dutton (who mentioned the idea in the 2020 AGM) along with Andy Newton, John Rodgers, David Tomlinson and myself (SK). This membership is designed to encourage as many younger people as possible from the local community to come and support their local team rather than supporting premier league teams with the long-term aim of becoming avid Alex fans and increasing the attendances at The Mornflake Stadium over many years. SK added we would like to thank the football club and in particular James Beckett for all his help in assisting us with some of the membership benefits, it's easy to take certain things at the club for granted but we really do thank the club for the help they have given us over the last 2 years as a society.

We also have restarted our foodbanks and these will now continue throughout the season (normally the first Saturday home fixture of the calendar month) and again we thank everyone who donates and shares the information – this makes a huge difference to our local community.

SK acknowledged communication can always improve but stressed it's been tough during the pandemic to hit targets. SK assures everyone the society is progressing and members/fans of the club will see this over the next few weeks with the society memberships.

SK informed everyone that the society planned on hosting 3/4 members meetings a year, an exile members meeting via zoom and a exile members face to face meeting once a year at a selected away game.

Finally, SK informed people that The Ex-Player Association will soon be advertising a few events for 2022.

#### 7. Financial Report – CH

Members had been furnished with a copy of the accounts.

There was very little activity due to lockdown so there was no income (bar £1 in interest received!) and a total of £1,412 spent.

The RSS has £13,822 in its General Reserve and £24,072 held in the bank. There are less in reserves than in the bank because the excess of £9,519 raised on Project 250 cannot be spent by the RSS without an Extraordinary Resolution.

These were accepted and passed by the members present.

#### 8. Appointment of the Society's Independent Examiner – SK

SK asked for this to be deferred. The Independent Examiner had helped with our elections but the voting had been low so SK requested that he reviewed this so as to make voting easier.

This was accepted by RSS members present.

#### 9. Members Resolutions

One Members resolution was received and this was by Scott Kynnersley.

In the Side Policy called Board Members & Conduct Policy, heading 7.3 read

*At the second annual general meeting of the Society a third of the members of the Board first elected by the members (to be chosen by lot) will resign from office. Thereafter the third of the members of the Board elected by the members who have served the longest at the date of the annual general meeting each year will resign. If at any time there is an uneven number of elected directors, the Board shall decide the number of elected directors to resign in accordance with this paragraph, which shall be approximately A third of the total number.*

SK would like to change this to read

*At the second annual general meeting of the Society a third of the board positions will be available for election to members of The RSS. If nobody on The RSS board volunteers to resign then members of the Board first elected by the members (to be chosen by lot) will resign from office. This process will be repeated at the third AGM but if board members are chosen by lot then only board members originally elected will be in the draw. Thereafter a third of the board positions will be available annually for RSS members to apply for election to and unless any RSS board members volunteer to resign then a third of the Board elected by the members who have served the longest at the date of the annual general meeting each year will resign.*

*If at any time there is an uneven number of elected directors, the Board shall decide the number of elected directors to resign in accordance with this paragraph, which shall be approximately A third of the total number.*

This was passed by the members present.

#### 10. Election of Board Members Results

Four RSS members applied for election, these were Jonathan Manning, Robert Dutton, David Tomlinson and Liam Connolly.

The below result means that David Tomlinson, Robert Dutton and Liam Connolly are elected to the Board subject to an affirmative vote.

<b>David Tomlinson</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Rob Dutton</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Liam Connolly</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Jonathan Manning</b>	<b>13</b>

MB thanked TT for his service to the board. He will be missed, always very timely with his social media updates and he was a massive addition to the board with skill sets way above other board members. This was agreed by all board members – fully understand why he has stepped down so many thanks for his commitment.

MB went onto thank Jonathan Manning for standing for election.

MB went onto add - On 19th November the Election Management Independent Scrutineer Neil Le Milliere announced the results of the election, do RSS members present approve the results as voted by the society membership ?

This was accepted by RSS members present.

#### 11. AOB

First question was are the club still in touch with Dario Gradi?

MB answered and confirmed that yes, they are and some directors and club staff visit him and are in touch by phone.

Could the football club have better (or some) signage from A500?

Club have spoken to Town Council in the past and may pursue again as it can be costly.

A question was asked regarding members having a voice (and indeed non-members)

The answer to this is that as membership opens up there will be more ways to have an input but also that RSS strives to represent all fans and the community at large. It should be noted that this is not always possible on an individual basis.

It was also mentioned that football club supporter's clubs/groups represent fanbases but trust/societies represent their members. However, we are always open to all fans who can contact us via email, via our website or simply by approaching any RSS members in and around the ground bars before and after every fixture. We will shortly be announcing our annual membership which means ALL fans will have the opportunity to become members of the society for an annual nominal fee.

A question was asked regarding people watching EFL games illegally on iFollow

MB explained that this is an iFollow issue, not EFL but is sure they do all they can to stop it happening.

Members were advised that the RSS founder members board is still being discussed and looked in to, particularly trying to decide on the most suitable location.

There then followed a discussion on inclusion following a question.

MB explained that he deals with this and is open to approach from various sectors and has met in the past with many groups. This is ongoing and the club are always looking for ways to improve. Unfortunately, individuals can let themselves down with comments in the ground but unfortunately this is just a cross section of society.

The board were asked about the financing of the Junior Railwaymen project –

SK and CH explained that this is no risk to the society's current funds. The membership will largely be self-funding but we are also happy to cover any minimal shortfall from the annual

membership. SK went onto add how he would like to thank the football club and James Beckett for all the help in setting up the junior membership proposals.

#### Question regarding the Soccer Centre and Academy Model

MB explained that the club are looking to improve the Soccer Centre as it has come into disrepair so watch this space. The academy model is always being reviewed and the new board are learning about issues around contracts etc.

The EFL Trophy was raised by RSS member Garf Kent. GK asked why did the club vote in favour of the format with Premier League Academy teams?

Clubs voted in favour as it was obvious it was going to go through due to the money on the table. Member explained there is a bigger picture whereby Premier League teams are going to want their junior teams to have a team in the EFL. MB said he would raise concerns on this to the CAGL board and feedback to GK in due course. MB also added that it would be interesting to see if the cups format was mentioned in the Crouch review.

#### 12. Provisional date of next AGM

SK informed members that the provisional AGM date for Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2022.

Meeting closed at 21:15