

EDITORIAL

At the risk of covering old ground I feel that in light of recent comments it is important to understand what Nene Valley Railway is all about.

The organisation is a registered charity, a registered museum and has a separate trading arm of NVR Enterprises. In accordance with charity law it has a board of trustees and in accordance with museum laws it has a curatorial advisor. It also has a finance committee to look into and manage the organisations accounts. It is also made up of several departments for which there are various heads who are responsibility of the general manager, who in turn is answerable to the board of trustees.

You may wonder what all this is leading to and why? Since the annual general meeting and the election of officers, tongues have been wagging around the railway and it is something of an akin to the goings on in parliament! I am not going to enter into a discussion about the various personalities but what I do intend to do is to correct a few misconceptions.

Board Members are not union representatives, they are not appointed to represent the members. They are put in place to manage the charity and the museum. Ideally they should NOT be appointed for their railway expertise but for their business acumen, civic standing, financial knowledge and understanding of a legal process, not to mention a host of other appropriate special areas of expertise. However and somewhat curiously the Railway's Memorandum and Articles of Association do not allow for such individuals to be appointed other than by a ballot of members. As a result and not un-naturally the members appoint people that they know and get on with,

They ought to be there to decide what is best for the Railway and not what is best for them and their cronies.

That is not always easy and of course it is perfectly natural for someone to be biased towards their own areas of interest. To that end since every board member is involved with running the operating railway logic dictates that they do what they think is for the best. They work very hard with roles in other parts of the organisation. However, I feel confident that they would be able to perform better if they were at least halved in number and an equal number of professional folk put in place.

Being a trustee is not a question of status or power – it is an important one. At the same time it is no more important than any other job on the railway, it is just another task that has to be done. At another level there ought to be a gathering of managers or heads of department. It is the managers that the members should be dealing with and talking to and these heads of department ought to be controlling their own groups.

Principally the board should concern itself with the financial affairs of the railway leaving it free to make informed business like decisions about other issues. It might make sense to have Board and managers meetings on alternate months, thus reducing stress on both parties.

There are beliefs that lead to confusion. The chairman of the board of trustees is exactly that – the chairman. He or she is there to see that the meeting is run correctly and fairly – nothing more than that. The chairman might speak for the board on decisions made by that body. As with any other organised body if the chairman does not act responsibly then it is up to his or her peers to appoint

in place then the trick is to have every angle covered. That is the hallmark of a good organisation – just look at some of the massive organisations that have endured for many years because they had well structured systems.

You may well ask what has provoked me to write this diatribe. I have come to learn that there is still too much to learn about the heritage railway movement. Looking at the organisation of other heritage railways similar to own is not always helpful. ▲ good many are not registered charities and even more do not have museum status. We are very fortunate being as organised as we are compared with some of the dreadful set-ups in the heritage railway movement. Neither should we be complacent and think all is well – it is not. Some heritage railways are extremely well run and it is these that we are looking to as role models.

So far it has been a very successful season and this is thanks to a great many people. We are all human beings with the strengths and weaknesses being a common enough trait. I like to think that being members of the railway means we each and every one has something in common – the desire to make Nene Valley Railway bigger and better in the years ahead. To achieve this we must support each other, remember all the efforts of those in previous years and above all stop carping and criticising.

I would personally like to thank EVERYONE for their positive efforts and contribution to the NVR. To reach this state we need a structured system. One which everyone is involved and forget about the too many chiefs and no Indians. Let's have lots and lots of Indians; Chiefs are two a penny.

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