

Agenda Item 5 – Director and Candidate Biographies

Andrew Barnes

Managing Director, Bure Valley Railway

Born in Reigate in Surrey in September 1968.

My father was a career railwayman and so railways were an integral part of my life from a very early age.

As a Civil Engineer my father joined the Ffestiniog Railway Society in 1959 and did drawings for the Ffestiniog Railway deviation and I was a regular visitor and volunteer on the FR with him from a very early age. I got to know many of the early stalwarts of the FR, many of whom are sadly no longer with us. My involvement with the FR was to influence and inspire much of what I later sought to achieve with the Bure Valley Railway.

I did not follow my father into the railways but went into banking. I joined Royal Bank of Scotland in 1988, where a colleague was the late Dick Riley.

Working in the investment side of the bank for 12 years as relationship manager for Corporate Pension Funds, in 2000 I moved to the Royal Bank of Canada where I spent 14 years in their investment arm as a Relationship Manager for two major Global Structured Reinsurance clients.

In 1997 I became a director of The Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway after supporting the purchase of Sandy River No.24 from Mike Hart, based at the Bure Valley Railway. At the same time I became a volunteer at the Bure Valley Railway undertaking driving, workshop and administration roles. I quickly became drawn into resolving the financial issues the railway faced.

In 2000 I acquired the majority shareholding in The Bure Valley Railway including the £987k of debt it then carried. I set about making the railway debt free and self-financing. In 2009 I moved from Bedfordshire to Norfolk and my wife, an accountant, started working for the railway full time. I continued to work in London commuting each day.

In 2014 the railway became debt free and I resigned my bank role and became full time at the railway as Managing Director/General Manager.

During my time at the railway I have overseen:

1. The rebuilding of 22 passenger carriages

2. The construction of 4 new wheelchair accessible coaches
3. The rebuilding of 4 steam locomotives
4. Building a new Running Shed and Fabrication shop.
5. Rewiring the entire railway premises
6. Removal of gas from the site and fitting all LED lighting
7. Undertaken coal and coal alternative trials over 6 years
8. Transforming the railway from a £300k business to a £1.7m business
9. Made the railway debt free and self-financing
10. Ordered the first all new design and build Battery Electric Locomotive for use on a regulated railway of any gauge.

I am a regular driver on the railway both steam and diesel

Noel Hartley

Business and Operations Manager, Keighley & Worth Valley Railway

Noel Hartley is an experienced Heritage Rail professional and has been involved in the industry for over 25 years. Currently the Business and Operations Manager for the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway, Noel is responsible for ensuring the company meets its annual business targets alongside leading the operational and commercial teams to deliver the train plan safely and provide an array of events each year. Noel has worked in other areas of the rail industry in the past including Transpennine Express and the National Railway Museum.

In his first role at the NRM, Noel worked on projects such as the ‘Great Gathering’ of A4s and Railfest. In a subsequent role he was responsible for all rail operations and locomotives within the Science Museum Group, including the iconic Flying Scotsman.

Noel has a passion for rail and is determined to help ensure that the sector is sustainable and has the longevity for future generations to still enjoy it:

“I grew up with railways as a child, my father leaving me no choice but to be interested as he spent time driving steam loco’s on two heritage railways! At a young age I learnt the value of being part of a special heritage railway community and it shaped who I am today, something that I feel is really important for other young people to experience. Railway heritage is dependent on the young people that become passionate about it, just as the young people of the 1950’s and 60’s were. We must nurture and give opportunities to these people in order for our beloved railways to survive.”

Noel likes to innovate and push the boundaries of what is possible. The easy option is not the norm and, with lots of energy and a desire to succeed, every day is a busy time! Noel has spent 3 years as a HRA director and has been involved in various aspects plus also chairs the HRA Business and Heritage Committee.

Married with 3 children, Noel loves family time and alongside this has hobbies of driving steam locomotives at the KWVR and NYMR, teaching drum kit and performing in a function band across the North of England.

Stephen Clews

Vice-Chair, Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway

My initial background was as a Marine Engineer working for Shell and then BP. My career started as a sea going engineer before coming ashore in 1997, initially working on ship construction and culminating in managing 40% of BP's fleet of tankers – 23 ships. This gave me knowledge and experience of managing safety management systems in high risk environments and diverse work forces.

My career then took a change of course into standardisation running BP's engineering standards function. I sat on five international technical committees, including ISO, and chaired one of BSI committees. This gave me an in-depth knowledge and experience of the development and management of standards, practices and guidance. I am Vice-chair of the HRA Operations and Safety Committee, participate in HRAs liaison with ORR and RAIB and a founding member of the Heritage Rail Safety and Standards Board steering group.

I am a Chartered Engineer and a Fellow of the Institution of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology.

I have worked on heritage railways, predominantly the W&L, since 2004 and was its Chairman from 2015 to 2025 when I stood down to become Vice-chair and Safety Trustee. I am also a duty manager, controller/blockman and mechanical inspector having retired from driving in 2024.

I believe that we are entering a crucial phase in the life of heritage railways. For them to survive they must get the mix of commercialism and nostalgia/heritage right. The public now expect a lot more than just a train ride; we have to become more professional and better governed. Environmental expectations and regulation have increased whilst the cost-of-living increases have tightened the purses of visitors and made efficient management even more critical. I think the HRA has a role to play in the future as the single face to the regulators, as lobbyist on behalf of our membership and providing standards, guidance and best practice.

I hope that my experience of safety management systems, standards development and railway management and operation would be thought a useful contribution to the HRA Board. I would be honoured to serve on the board for the benefit of the membership.

Stephen, Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay
Shadow Heritage Minister, House of Lords
Chairman, HRA

Stephen Parkinson, who served as Minister for Arts, Heritage and Libraries in the UK Government from 2021 to 2024, was formally co-opted to the board of the HRA in July 2025 (taking-on the chair role from Paul Lewin, General Manager of the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways, who had been Acting Chair since the Association's previous chair Peter, Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill became Rail Minister in July 2024).

During his spell as Heritage Minister, Lord Parkinson secured £15m of public funding for the National Railway Museum's new Central Hall project and took part in the centenary celebrations of *Flying Scotsman*. He also worked closely with the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Heritage Rail on issues ranging from coal to young volunteers.

Lord Parkinson has also had a long-term commitment to diversity and widening engagement, with a passion for ensuring that people of all backgrounds can follow their talents. The North Tyneside-born peer is also a trustee of a registered educational charity.

"Both in government and in opposition, I've made the case for the key role heritage rail plays," Lord Parkinson said. "From the visitor economy to rural employment and the creative industries, our heritage railways and tramways have an essential place in our national life."

Born in North Shields, Tyne & Wear, Stephen grew-up on Tyneside, as well as in Surrey, Suffolk, and Hampshire. He was educated at state comprehensives and at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he gained an MA in history and was elected President of the Cambridge Union.

Beginning his career in the Conservative Research Department, he has worked for a think-tank, for two successful referendum campaigns, and as special adviser, then Political Secretary, to Theresa May at the Home Office and at 10 Downing Street. He stood for Parliament in Newcastle-upon-Tyne North in 2010 and joined the House of Lords in 2019, serving as a Lord-in-Waiting (Government Whip) from February 2020, and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Arts) at DCMS from September 2021 to July 2024.

Stephen is currently Shadow Heritage Minister and is active in the Lords on a number of issues affecting heritage rail and the wider heritage and cultural sector, including securing statutory guidance on young people volunteering on heritage railways (through the Employment Rights

Act 2025), working with HRA President Lord Faulkner of Worcester and others across the sector to solve this long-standing issue of concern.

Rebecca Dalley
Chief Executive, The Watercress Line

Rebecca has a passion for industrial heritage and engineering. Over a 25-year career in the national museum and independent working heritage sectors, Rebecca has focussed on the interplay between societal relevance and financial resilience, in particular where collections are moving beyond living memory.

Rebecca's heritage career started at the Science Museum, working in commercial development across both the main London Museum and the large-object storage facility in Wroughton, Swindon where she fell in love with industrial conservation.

A lifetime love of aviation helped to secure a role at the Imperial War Museum Duxford, setting up the first dedicated commercial department to maximise the benefit of the airfield site. Highlights included being publicly censured by the Museums Association for bringing in the Antiques Roadshow and publicly praised in Parliament for the Duxford Flying Proms.

During 12 years at the Royal Air Force Museum based in London, Rebecca's career developed from commercial to development, researching, writing and delivering the Museum's first Strategic Plan that culminated in the £26M redevelopment of the Hendon site for the Centenary of the RAF in 2018. The change centred on cultural and organisational relevance, storytelling and even usage of the 10-acre site, creating long term commercial and political partnerships and doubling visitor numbers.

A move into the working heritage sector was fulfilled by The Shuttleworth Trust, an independent charity that manages a traditional country estate as well as a unique collection of early flying aircraft and operating cars. A CAA-regulated environment running ten air shows a year and highly sensitive to visitor revenue, Rebecca managed the organisation through Covid, leveraging the Cultural Recovery Fund to secure unique heritage engineering skills and the operation of its aircraft to mitigate flying skills fade; organising the world's first Covid-secure Drive-In Air Show.

Rebecca discovered railways in 2023 and quickly fell in love with the sector, recognising the familiar challenges of relevance, commercial viability, rising costs, fading skills, and audience expectations. She has been CEO at The Watercress Line since 2023. She brings an enthusiastic outsiders view to the industry, recognising the pressures and assumptions about the sector that can act as barriers to success.

She is a non-executive Director of a heritage aviation restoration and engineering company that provides maintenance and servicing to the historic aircraft of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force and splits her time between Bedfordshire and Hampshire.

Robert Gardiner
Chairman, Downpatrick and County Down Railway

I joined the Downpatrick and County Down Railway in 1997 as a teenager about to leave school. While I had a casual interest in railways, it was also simply something to do before university. Nearly three decades later, I lead that same organisation and am honoured to be proposed for the Board of the Heritage Railway Association.

The heritage railways of England, Scotland and Wales have always inspired me, and I firmly believe in collaboration across our sector. Sharing ideas and experience, particularly when so many of the challenges we face are universal, has real impact.

I have devoted much of my adult life to heritage railways because I believe there is something special about our sector. We have all heard the “old men playing with trains” stereotype, and I have worked consistently to challenge that perception, helping move Downpatrick from a well-meaning amateur operation to a confident, regulated, financially disciplined social enterprise delivering measurable community benefit.

In 2024 we were named Social Enterprise of the Year in Northern Ireland, and in 2025 received the King’s Award for Voluntary Service. I am immensely proud of both. They demonstrate that our model works and that heritage railways can command respect well beyond our sector. Our movement was built by communities, and we should not forget that. Embracing the social enterprise model not only connects us back to our roots, but strengthens our voice with government and regulators. Professionalism is essential, but if we pursue corporate models without retaining our community DNA, we weaken what makes heritage railways distinctive and credible.

I also bring a distinct perspective as operating in Northern Ireland brings particular challenges. Volunteering is not embedded in the culture in quite the same way as in Great Britain, and we work within a distinct devolved regulatory framework. My experience at DCDR has been about innovation, building relationships and partnerships across devolved and national government, private business, the rail sector and the education sector, while also working through incredibly tough circumstances. From Covid to flooding, my term has been marked by resilience and an unwavering belief in what we are building.

The UK rail story does not end at Stranraer, and neither should representation within our sector. If elected, I would be proud to represent Northern Ireland on the HRA Board, bringing long service, hard-earned resilience and a clear belief that heritage railways must be professionally governed, but also socially relevant and unapologetically ambitious as we shape the future of our movement.
