



Shildon Railway Institute

Membership Strategy

Version 1.2 (Updated): 2 Sep 2024

Reviewed and Revalidated: 26 Sep 2025

1. COMMUNITY

We will let our community know that we are Community Owned through the following means:

- We hosted a public event as part of the relaunch and invite all interested parties. We refreshed our logo and branding to include this information so that marketing material (event posters, tickets) show the new status.
- We relaunched our website and social media channels announcing the change and explaining what it means to be a CBS.
- We displayed a banner on the railings outside the building with key information (where to find more information, how to get involved etc.)
- We placed notices inside and outside our building using the existing notice boards.
- We will took information with us to display when we are represented at community events offsite (Fun Days, Fetes, and Fairs etc.).
- We encourage local stakeholders and other organisations to become Members so that word spreads among their users.
- When we published articles in the local press, we made sure to mention the change.

2. CUSTOMERS

Shildon Railway Institute already has a Membership base. We will need to seek agreement from each member on the new model and implement a fair transition phase (*see section 4*). We will invite customers old and new to become Members through the following means:

- We will publish a list of Member benefits in the building, on our website and social media channels.
- We will tell the story of Shildon Railway Institute - how it began and how we got to where we are today.
- We will promote and respect inclusivity, diversity, and accessibility wherever we can.
- We will be creative in formulating Member only events and offers.
- We will create a rich and varied programme of activities that everyone can participate in. Wherever possible, we will seek to work with our stakeholders and partner organisations.
- Membership application forms will be readily available on site in the entrance foyer and behind the bar. We will plan to enable people to also apply online, via our website.
- Wherever possible and where they permit, we will plan to publish updates and event details for and from groups and organisations that use our facilities.
- We will continue to use our existing social media channels to reach old and new customers by communicating positive messages. We will plan to investigate new social channels that appeal to a younger audience.
- We will encourage Membership for people who may not live close by but wish to support our aims.

3. BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

The benefits of Membership of Shildon Railway Institute will be as follows:

3.1 Tangible Benefits

- Members receive a Welcome communication, thanking them for joining and explaining their role as Members and what we can offer them.
- Members will be able to attend or buy tickets for (where applicable) 'Member Only' events.
- Members will receive discount on hire of facilities at Shildon Railway Institute.
- Members can participate at a free member's raffle at events.
- Members will be able to participate in members only trips and excursions.

- Members will have a say in the future of the Institute and how it is run. Members will be able to vote on key decisions.
- Members will be able to attend Committee meetings to raise any ideas or concerns they may have.
- We will plan to introduce a 'Service Award' scheme where Members will be able to earn recognition for volunteering, Committee service or fundraising achievements.
- We will plan to run a monthly Membership Number draw where Members can win a prize (e.g., a 'bar-tab').

3.2 Intangible Benefits

- Members will be part of something that has a unique historic importance; they will share an experience in common with many hundreds of ancestors, including the first railway pioneers that founded the Institute.
- Members will enjoy a sense of 'ownership' because they will be shareholders of this special organisation.
- Members will be part of a whole community of Members, young and old sharing great experiences together. In turn this will create an enhanced sense of belonging.

4. TRANSFER OF EXISTING MEMBERS TO NEW MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE

Shildon Railway Institute is an organisation with 190 years of history behind it and already has a strong membership base. We required existing members to become shareholders of the newly constituted Community Benefit Society. This required express acceptance of the purpose, mission and aims of the business.

As stated in the 'Rules for Community Ownership of Shildon Railway Institute' (sub-section 8.3 of the Model Rules), all Members must also hold the minimum share value (1 share priced at £1) which entitles them to a vote at Members' meetings. Any additional Member benefits* are subject to an annual subscription of £5 per calendar year.

Existing SRI members

These had to agree to the new model rules by purchasing the minimum share value to retain their right to vote at Members' meetings.

We made all reasonable attempts to contact this group to give them the chance to do this before the annual subscription renewal date. Only Members who have purchased the minimum share value will be entitled to Member benefits*.

Existing SRI Life members

- We created a register of who we believe to be existing SRI Life members and made all reasonable attempts to contact them.
- SHA donated £1 for 1 share to each existing Life member who agrees to the new CBS framework, thus transferring their right to vote at Members' meetings with no cost to the Member.
- They then became a Life Member of the new CBS to enjoy Life Member benefits**.
- Those who we failed to reach or who do not wish to become a Member of the CBS, will still qualify for Life Member benefits** but will not be entitled to a vote at Members' meetings.

Existing SRI members due to qualify for lifetime membership in the 5 years post relaunch

- As an important recognition of long-term contribution, we created a window of opportunity for any existing member who believed that they are within 5 years of qualifying for Lifetime Membership.
- We offered the chance to pay their balance of lifetime subscriptions***.
- However, they were also required to agree to the new CBS framework by buying the minimum share value to transfer their right to vote at Members' meetings.

- Those who did not wish to become a Member of the CBS still qualify for Life Member benefits** but will not be entitled to a vote at Members' meetings.
- Those who fail to pay the final membership balance*** in the 12 months post relaunch will lose the opportunity to become a Life Member.

We will not be carrying on the Life Member scheme once we relaunch as a CBS.

*as defined in Section 3

** as defined in Section 3, without the requirement to pay an annual subscription

***as defined in the current SRI rules, subject to verification of individual status

“SRI” – Shildon Railway Institute

“SHA” – Shildon Heritage Alliance CIC

“CBS” – Community Benefit Society

5. COMMUNICATION

We will communicate with Members in the following ways:

- Our Committee Members will communicate openly with Members.
- We will communicate with our Members and the wider community via our social media channels.
- We will publicise significant news and events through the Shildon Town Crier and, where appropriate and possible, other press channels.
- We will maintain an email distribution list with our Members on matters such as renewal reminders, upcoming events etc.
- All critical Member communications, including notices of meetings, will be available in hard copy form inside the building. Minutes of ordinary meetings are kept and made available on request
- We will never exclude those Members who are unable to access the internet access. We will ensure that we are able to provide hard copies of any essential communications on request.
- We will provide a quarterly newsletter

6. ACTIVITIES

Members will be able to interact with us through the following opportunities.

- We will allocate part of each Committee meeting to any Member(s) who wish to raise an issue directly.
- We will create an email address for direct feedback to the Committee.
- Every Member of the Committee will be available to Members on an ad-hoc basis and be responsible for passing on any feedback to the rest of the Committee.
- We will have a suggestion box available to Members situated on site.
- We will publish all available methods of contact on the internal notice board.
- We will continue to encourage appropriate interaction and engagement on our social media channels.
- Our staff will be ambassadors for the Institute and will also be responsible for passing all customer feedback to the Committee.
- Ensuring that wherever possible, there is a Member of the Committee on site during normal opening hours.

7. VOLUNTEERING

We will encourage and reward volunteers for providing their valuable skills and time through the following means:

- We will publish a list of ‘volunteer opportunities’ setting out what kinds of things we’d like people to contribute.
- We will endeavour to publicly recognise volunteers for their contributions whenever possible.
- Where appropriate we will offer free tea, coffee, or soft drinks to volunteers while they are undertaking their volunteer activities.
- With the appropriate permission, we will include photos and volunteer updates on our social media channels.
- We will provide a volunteer induction to ensure that volunteers are aware of the important safety and responsibility criteria.
- We will ask our volunteers to log their volunteer time.

8. ENGAGEMENT

We will encourage Members to play an active role in our democratic activities, elections, and AGM by:

- We will look to combine the AGM with a social event for attendees where we offer incentives such as access to the bar and snacks.
- We will publish examples of where we ‘listened’ and ‘acted’ on Members feedback.
- We will advertise all Members’ meetings well in advance - on our noticeboards, on social media, and by email.

9. TRAINING

Members will understand the organisation and how they can play a role in it through the following measures:

- We will publish information on our website and noticeboards.
- We will post social media links to the key information.
- We will have a series of short briefings post relaunch.
- Interested parties will be able to talk to Members of the Committee.

10. GOVERNANCE

We will refresh our democratic structure by encouraging participation and supporting the development of existing participants through the following means:

- We will seek to establish additional sub-Committees with specific focus, encouraging Members in the relevant constituencies to take part as a step toward full Committee positions, for example:
 - Women’s sub-Committee
 - Young Members sub-Committee
 - Volunteers sub-Committee
- We will encourage participation and involvement across all age groups.
- We will post information and vacancies on the notice board and website.
- We will foster a culture of empowerment and both ‘your Institute’ and “use it or lose it” ethos and we will encourage Members to “be the change” they want to see.
- Committee members and post holders will be expected to listen, encourage and be open.

- We will have a succession plan for Committee roles and where possible, seek to appoint deputies as part of that succession plan to ensure knowledge transfer and sustainability.
- We will source funding to train our role holders, staff, and volunteers where appropriate.
- We will encourage representation from our team of staff in Committee discussions and sub-Committees.

11. MONITORING MEMBERSHIP

We will seek to understand that our Membership strategy is working by:

11.1 Tracking Measurements

- Quantifying movements in the number of Members that have provided contact details to subscribe to our email updates.
- Quantifying movements in the number of Members recorded on our Membership database.
- Regularly monitoring the automated social media data on engagement and reach.
- Quantifying the number of volunteer hours contributed by Members that choose to volunteer their services toward Institute aims.
- Quantify the Membership renewal rate year on year to understand how many Members renew their subscription.

11.2 Additional activities

- We will form a sub-Committee to review the Membership model, strategy and benefits and practices - learning and refining on an ongoing basis.
- We will issue general and specific surveys to Members occasionally to gauge how they value their Membership, how satisfied they are and take suggestions on how Membership could evolve.
- We will include presentation of a Membership Report at each Annual General Members Meeting.
- We will maintain a database of Membership that allows us to produce reports in Membership uptake and movements.

Version History:

Version	Date	Version Notes
1.0	22/04/2023	Created from strategy 'long list' and presented for adoption by agreement
1.1	10/10/2023	Agreed as adopted following completion of decision to transform
1.2	02/09/2024	Updated at annual review with most changes relating to presenting past-tense on activities and principles that are now in the past.