

A Proposal for Revitalizing the NZAMRC

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Introduction

While the New Zealand Association of Model Railway Clubs (NZAMRC) has done well supporting the hobby in New Zealand, the last two years excepted, the NZAMRC's current mode of operation has become outdated.

We propose the NZAMRC be revitalized to ensure it continues to support the hobby in the 2020s in an effective way. The key changes will be to include individual modellers as well as clubs as members, to make greater use of electronic forms of communication to support modellers and promote the hobby, and to simplify the administrative structure.

The rest of this document summarizes our proposal for the revitalization of the NZAMRC. The proposal is divided into three sections: a description of the activities and services the new association would deliver, the niche the new association would occupy, and a discussion of why we believe the new association can achieve what is proposed.

Activities and Services

The underlying aims of the proposed activities and services are to promote the hobby and through this, encourage and support members and increase their number.

When deciding on the activities and services of the new association we consciously avoided creating a long list of activities and services that would be impossible to deliver using the resources available to the new association. We discuss this point further in the third section of this document.

The activities and services listed below are those for which there has been a demonstrated need since the last NZAMRC convention.

Biennial Convention

Continue with the underwriting and oversight of the biennial convention and the associated competition. We anticipate the convention and the competition will change to ensure they are in step with the hobby in the 2020s. Possible changes include profit sharing with the groups hosting the convention and simplifying the competition rules.

Although underwriting and providing oversight for the biennial convention would be an important role of the new association, we believe there are other important activities and services the new association should provide if it is to support modellers and promote the hobby in an effective manner.

Loans

Provide loans for groups wanting to run specific hobby-related events such as trains shows. These loans would help groups cover up-front costs such as the hiring of a venue. The NZAMRC already does this with the biennial convention.

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Newsletter

Publish an electronic newsletter that goes to individual modellers as well as clubs. The hardcopy version of *The Coupler* would no longer be published.

The NZAMRC published an electronic newsletter called *The Limited*. This newsletter contained news on the activities of the Auckland Model Railway Clubs. Approximately 200 modellers were on the mailing list for *The Limited*, including modellers outside greater Auckland area and those overseas. *The Limited* was well received and clearly filled a need.

Other activities and services

The new association would provide or coordinate some of the following services and activities. Which services and activities will depend on the interest shown by modellers and clubs:

- a) Hands-on workshops on both modern and traditional areas of the hobby. These workshops would necessarily be in-person.
- b) Operating sessions, either in-person or virtual.

The North Shore Model Railway Club hosted a very successful operating session for attendees of the 2018 NZAMRC convention. It was gratifying to see members of the Auckland Märklin Club participating in and enjoying the session.

Earlier in 2021, some New Zealand modellers participated in two virtual operating sessions.

- c) One-day regional events. These would be in-person or virtual.
The NZAMRC held a one-day event in Auckland February 2019. This event consisted of three presentations in the morning and a layout tour in the afternoon. The event started sufficiently late in the morning that modellers from outside Auckland had time to travel to the event on the same day. Modellers from Tauranga took advantage of this opportunity.
- d) Facebook remains a popular way to disseminate information about hobbies and the new association would have a Facebook page. This Facebook page would be an official page maintained by the association and provide a place for the association and clubs to make announcements and promote events, irrespective of the prototype. While some announcements would be available on other Facebook pages, there is currently no one Facebook page a club or modeller can go to get all information.
- e) An easy to maintain website. As well as the standard content such as an *About Us* page and contact details for clubs, the website would have webpages in which individual clubs could provide additional information about the club.

We have thought of other potential activities and services but have not included them in our proposal because we do not want to overstate our case.

Niche

While discussing our proposal with other modellers, we were asked the following important question

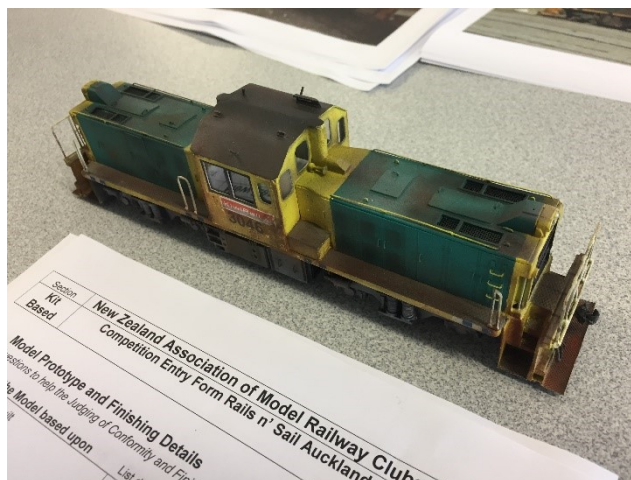
What niche would the new association fill, or to express it differently, what would the association provide that modellers could not obtain in other ways?

This is a good question for anyone proposing a revitalized national association for a hobby. There is considerable competition among hobbies for people’s leisure time and if we could not give a good answer to the question, we would be wasting both our own time and that of others.

We believe we have a good answer.

If there was no national association or equivalent organisation, it is unlikely the activities and services described in the previous section would be provided. They could be but we think it unlikely they would be.

The new association will provide an efficient way of disseminating information about the hobby to interested modellers and clubs throughout New Zealand. The disseminated of most information is currently done by individuals or is for specific prototypes. In stating this, we are in no way denigrating the existing efforts to disseminate information. We are saying the new association would disseminate information on all aspects relating to the prototypes modelled in New Zealand as is reasonable. The emphasis would be on American, British, European and NZR prototypes.



Top left: F40PH-amt 391. Top right: Swiss Class 421. Bottom left: Apethorn Junction O scale layout. Bottom right: DSG loco NZAMRC competition.

Achieving It

As we stated in the section on activities and services, we could have proposed a long, impossible-to-deliver list of activities and services. To avoid proposing such a list, we spent considerable time over the last three years discussing with other modellers how the new association would deliver the activities and services.

On-line Presence

The new association would make greater use of the internet than the NZAMRC currently does. This would reduce the time needed to run the new association, freeing time for activities and services. The greater use of the internet would also reduce the cost of running the new association, freeing money for activities and services.

Simplified Administrative Structure

The administrative structure would be simplified to make the new association more efficient and less costly to run than the NZAMRC currently is. The simplifications would also mean decisions could be made faster. In addition, a faster response to external factors such as Covid would be possible.

The simplifications would include:

- a) reducing the number of members on the national executive;
- b) replacing the current areas by six regions.

We propose for a) to have a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, competition coordinator and events coordinator. The first five positions would be similar to those the NZAMRC currently has. The events coordinator would liaise with the competition coordinator and focus on delivering the activities and services. The remaining members of the national executive would focus on the day-to-day administration of the new association. These members would assist the events coordinator as necessary.

The role of area representatives would be retained. These representatives would be selected by the national executive and not elected at AGMs as is currently done. This change will simplify the appointment of area representatives and give the national executive greater flexibility to handle unexpected situations.

Although the administrative structure would be simplified, the AGM and annual elections for positions on the national executive would be retained. This will ensure the new association is democratic, the national executive is accountable to the members of the new association, and the national executive does not divorce itself from the members.

For b) we propose the current areas be initially replaced by six similar-sized regions across the country. We believe this change will allow for easier support of events, individual modellers and clubs in New Zealand than is possible with the current areas.

Limit on the Terms of Office

We know of an overseas example where people have reportedly been members of the national executive of a model railway organisation for more than forty years. While a long tenure has its merits such as providing institutional memory, these gains are more than undone by the reduced infusion of new ideas and passion from the regular turnover of executive members.

We believe that no matter how hard they try a person who has been on a national executive for a long time is not as willing to change as a new member of the executive. And change an organisation must if it is to remain effective.

We are not advocating change for change's sake but firmly believe an organisation must consider, and embrace where appropriate, new ideas if it is to prosper.

National Newsletter

The publication model of *The Limited* was simple and required few resources. We propose using the same model for the national newsletter. The national newsletter would be published every two months and contain news and announcements only. Each issue would be restricted to a small number of pages.

One-Day Regional Events

We know from experience that a one-day regional event requires far less effort to organise than a NZAMRC convention. With a one-day regional event, a local hall or the clubrooms for a model railway club can be hired as the venue. Catering is simple to arrange. Unlike the NZAMRC convention, there is no fixed format for a one-day event. This gives the organisers of the event flexibility should there not be, for example, enough layouts for a tour.

Operating Sessions

The in-person operating session held as part of the last NZAMRC convention required little effort to organise.

There are overseas clubs that host virtual operating sessions from time to time. To participate, a modeller registers for the operating session, downloads an app that controls the speed of the assigned locomotive, and connects to that locomotive.

Facebook Page

An association Facebook page would require few resources to create and maintain. A Facebook page can be created in a few minutes, there would typically be just one or two postings per week, and some of the information for the postings such as announcements about trains shows would come from clubs.

Website

The NZAMRC's website requires hand coding in html and not surprisingly the website is time consuming to maintain. We propose using a modern template such as that provided by Google or Sporty for the new website. Employing a template will greatly reduce the time needed to maintain the website and give it a modern look.

Financial

The new association would have a yearly budget and follow standard accounting practices. There are no adverse tax implications with the change from the NZAMRC to the new association.

Timeframe

The development of the new and revised elements of the revitalisation program is underway and is progressing well. As part of this work, we are creating a timeline for progressively introducing the elements after the 2022 AGM.



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interests lie in railways ranging across a variety of prototypes. Models in US O and N scale, German N scale and 9mm NZR. Past editor of the NZMR Journal and Coupler magazines and rides a Suzuki 1400 Intruder .



James Kelso, registered CPA Auckland. Current President of NZAMRC and has been on several

MRC executives over a 35 year period incl. WDMRC, ModelX and NSMRC. Models in northwestern US HO scale. Early DCC Digitrax adopter, interested in operations, signalling and JMRI. Other hobbies include DIY, Alt Energy and EV's.



Philip Sharp, PhD, from Masterton, semi-retired Mathematician. In the hobby for six years. General

interest in most aspects of the hobby. Models an obscure, 19th century Canadian prototype. Has been secretary of four Auckland MRCs. Edited *The Limited*. Other hobbies are ham radio and long distance walking. "Results over process."