

What's the party line?

The political parties staged their annual conferences in September and October. We thought they were unlikely to come up with answers to questions rail campaigners ask.

So we devised the following questions and have sent them to the parties' transport spokesmen.

1 Do you think MPs should follow the example of Switzerland and receive travel expenses only if they travel to Parliament and official functions by public transport? Those coming by car would receive no travel expenses.

2 Do you think it is acceptable that rail passengers have to pay £70 for a saver return from London to Penzance or £57 for an open single ticket from Coventry to London?

3 Do you support plans for a national railcard to provide reduced fares for off-peak rail travel?

4 Should it be compulsory, as required by the European Parliament, for all operators to provide spaces for bicycles on trains?

5 Should buses be required to call at rail stations and to time their buses to suit rail passengers?

6 Should pensioners travel free on off-peak trains as on buses?

7 Should a high-speed railway (180mph) be built between London and Scotland?

8 Should trains be built to weigh less, bearing in mind that a modern Desiro passenger train is 14 tons heavier than a BR Networker?

9 Should the Midland main line from London to Sheffield, Nottingham and Derby and the Great Western main line to Bristol, Swansea and Penzance be electrified?

10 Should the whole rail network be electrified?

11 Should lorries pay the full cost of the damage they do?

12 Should the following rail lines be reopened: Carlisle-Edinburgh, Cambridge-Oxford (East-West Rail, Uckfield-Lewes)

13 Should a programme of rail reopenings be agreed?

14 Should there be a rail route round London like the M25 motorway?

15 Should the current franchised train services be replaced by sectors of Network Rail which could provide inter-city services, regional trains, city commuter services and freight services?

16 Should light rail lines be built in Liverpool, Leeds and Gosport?

17 Should light rail lines be built in all large conurbations - with more than 250,000 population?

18 Should Virgin Pendolinos go from Birmingham and Manchester to Ashford International?

STEAMY LADIES IN THE PICTURE



It's not a sight you'll probably ever see in real life. But Helen, 19, is a real volunteer from the Ffestiniog Railway.

She is the January picture on the 2007 Steamy Ladies calendar which is "a cheeky mix of beautiful girls and beautiful Ffestiniog engines".

Engine drivers, firemen, guards, cleaners, signwriters, booking office staff and buffet stewards reveal a bit more of themselves than usual. "It's not smutty in any way," said Sam Hughes, 34-year-old Miss February. One of the volunteers, Emily Sharp, 27, Miss

October, persuaded the rest to take part. Emily, who is also an EWS mainline driver said the main purpose of the calendar is to raise funds and awareness for Macmillan Cancer Support. At least 65% of the profits will go to the charity. They hope to raise £10,000 for Macmillan.

You can buy the calendar online at <http://www.steamyladies.co.uk/buy.htm> or by post for £8 (including post and packing) from The Calendar, 16 Holland Street, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 3TT. Make cheques payable 'For the Calendar'.