

Chunnel Link – No Alternative

Recent months have seen loud protests by some people in Kent against the proposed Channel Tunnel high-speed rail link.

What are the alternatives? Chunnel trains could use the existing rail network – bringing congestion and unreliability to local users. Another option would be to build more motorways through Kent – three times as much space as a railway to carry only a fraction of the traffic.

In February we published a leaflet "Why we need a new railway to the Channel Tunnel"; several Kent members have helped distribute these. Arguments were also put forward in an open letter to Kentish Councils, media and MPs.

BR's public relations has been less than perfect on this issue, but we urge anti-rail-link groups to talk constructively with us. A carefully planned and sensitively constructed railway will be a national asset.

Lenton-Radford-Trowell Victory

On January 10, BR announced that the threatened Lenton-Trowell line was to be reprieved, and intensively used from May 1990 by Provincial Sector express services between Nottingham and Sheffield. This is a great victory for the Users' Groups, RDS branches and individuals who fought the closure proposal.

The closure case rested with the Midlands TUCC for several months, and a decision had still not been reached when, on January 10, BR announced that the closure proposal was withdrawn. This was apparently to give quicker journey times between Nottingham and Sheffield, but closer examination shows that Provincial are re-routing Peterborough-Nottingham-Sheffield services from May 1990 to avoid pathing problems and infrastructure costs on the East Coast Main Line between Peterborough and Grantham. The replacement Melton Mowbray-Syston-Loughborough route is 18 miles longer, so the previously-despised Radford Route has to be resurrected to compensate. This completely vindicates the RDS policy of objecting to rail closures. Today's little-used branch may turn out to be tomorrow's main line.

Clapham

Following the disaster at Clapham Junction just before Christmas, RDS submitted a letter to the public inquiry. We asked that the inquiry should consider wider issues than simply what happened at Clapham on that fateful Monday morning. For example, could lives have been saved if there was less overcrowding on the trains, more investment in modern infrastructure and equipment and better staffing levels on BR's engineering and signalling side.

2000

RDS membership exceeded 2000 at the end of January.

The Cannock Campaign

*Alan Bevan writes on
Page 2*

Lottery Winners

See the back page for the December, January and February results.

Underfunding Won't Solve Overcrowding

The Central London Rail Study, published by the Government at the end of January, is a step in the right direction – but only a step.

It is encouraging to find that, at last, Government and transport authorities are prepared to think big to tackle London's transport congestion. The proposals for full-size BR underground lines are bold and will eliminate much of the congestion at interchanges which would have occurred with a "tube" solution.

Less encouraging are reports that public funding for the new lines has already been ruled out, with fares increases and/or private investment being expected to provide the necessary capital. The study itself was ominously quiet on the question of funding.

Investors will risk money when new or rebuilt stations form part of profitable related developments such as shops or

offices; it is unlikely that they will do so to a significant extent for new lines.

If fares are increased to the extent needed to recover costs, passengers will desert to the roads in their thousands. This will totally defeat the object of the study, which was to relieve congestion on both rail and road by building more railway capacity. The effect of fares on travel habits was convincingly demonstrated during the GLC "Fares Fair" era and its aftermath, and, for the consequences of overpricing transport infrastructure, one need look no further than the Humber Bridge.

So, how should the lines be funded? We believe that four sources should pay a part – central government, local government, and, notwithstanding the criticisms above, some private investment and revenue from fares – but these should not be relied upon to provide more than a small percentage of the investment needed.

TRRL Computer Model Banned

It is unusual to find a section of the Department of Transport supporting the case for increased investment in public transport but, having done so, one such section has been stymied by Government.

The London Area Model, a computer simulation developed at the Transport and Road Research Laboratory in Berkshire showed that, of the four options tested, the Government's own policy of road building while cutting public transport subsidies fared worst.

The only option to make a profit in cost-benefit analysis terms was a strategy of charging for road use while ploughing the revenues thus generated into improved public transport. Options of large scale publicly funded railway building and large scale road building came second and third respectively.

The Department of Transport has ordered the TRRL to stop using the model but, after a sensitivity analysis, the TRRL is still convinced that its result is valid.

THE CANNOCK CAMPAIGN STORY

Alan Bevan tells the successful tale of the Cannock reopening

Had we known that our campaign to reopen the Cannock line would have continued longer than World War II, many of us would have given up at the start! In the event, the case for restoring a local passenger train service was so strong and important our determination did not waver.

Two factors were particularly relevant to our campaign: the Birmingham-Walsall half-hourly electric service was threatened, while a Council survey in the Cannock area showed that residents overwhelmingly preferred a local train to new roads. This, together with the availability of the freight line, galvanised our resolve.

In late 1981 "Walsall Rail Supporters" was established and quickly recruited 500 members by issuing newsletters, running charter trains and holding public meetings. In 1983 we published an 8-page booklet and canvassed widely. In 1987 an appeal fund toward the cost of the new station quickly reached £500.

Reopening to passenger trains was complicated by having 6 miles within the shire county and 4 miles within the WMPTA area where Section 20 required the PTE to meet the full cost of trains. Both authorities funded a BR study which showed reopening to be practicable and that potential traffic could cover the marginal cost of an hourly Walsall-Hednesford service.

Despite successive budget provisions for £200 000 capital costs, a 5070 name petition, a sound second RDS report on economic viability and apparent support from all quarters, no real progress was



A Walsall to Rugeley local leaving Ryecroft Junction in May 1963

(Photo: J. Hadock)

made until 1986 when BR confirmed that operating costs would be on a marginal basis.

In November 1987 local residents expressed indignation at lack of progress. We continued with behind-the-scenes correspondence and meetings until March 1988 when Staffordshire formally confirmed its wish to secure the train service and agreed to obtain an independent consultant's report on viability, which was favorable. Staffordshire and WMPTA agreed to reopen the train service on April 8 1989. Coincidentally, the shire county elections occur in

May 1989.

The West Midlands will contribute its share of station and running costs and 5 new stations will be built for £198 000 at Bloxwich, Broad Lane, Landywood, Cannock and Hednesford. After 2 years the service is expected to cover its running costs. The WRS will be spending some £1000 promoting the new trains, running a seaside excursion and developing a user group. Given the urban overspill and expansion in the 1960's and 1970's, the Cannock line is certainly one that Dr Beeching should not have closed on January 18 1965.

Council to assess their own station. Members may wish to purchase copies for their own local council. It is important that the results are acted on. Copies at 75p inclusive from D Taylor-Smith, 4 Linden Avenue, Countesthorpe, Leicester LE8 3PG.

Thanks.....

to all those who supplied information on the North West - East Anglia and Birmingham-Norwich services. A report will shortly be available at £1 inclusive from R. Skilton, 63 Abbots Road, Humberstone, Leicester LE5 1DD.

Privatisation -

In May, we publish a 20-page booklet "Who should run our trains?". This will elaborate on the ideas in our leaflet of the same title. We question the wisdom of privatising when every other EEC country has a nationalised rail network - most of which enjoy more public investment than BR. Are they all wrong and only our Government right?

Missing Fares

Scores of members filled in the Missing Fares Questionnaire. The results show some parts of the country where staffing cuts, or reductions in overtime, are causing BR to lose considerable revenue. There are also some lines in which collection of fares and inspection of tickets is done very efficiently.

A full report is going to the relevant BR managers; members can also purchase a copy for £1 (postage free) from Alan Harwood, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 0DN.

Company Cars

RDS wrote to the Chancellor urging him to make a further cut in tax concessions to company car owners in his 1989 budget. Trevor Garrod also pointed out in a letter published in the Eastern Daily Press on January 25: "Company cars received a hidden subsidy of £2357m in 1988, as against £550m for rail passengers".

RDS People

John Lark now represents RDS on the Board of Transport 2000.

We report, with deep regret, the sudden death of Paul Evans, a founder of our corporate member ADEPT (Association for Dunstable Area Passenger Trains). The project for which he campaigned tirelessly looks like coming to fruition at the end of this year.

It was with great shock and regret that we learnt of the death of Mary Colmore at her farm in North Wales on February 5.

As secretary of the Chelsea Riverside Action Group (a corporate RDS member) she was a stalwart opponent of the Road Lobby, seeking to protect Cheyne Walk and West Chelsea from the onslaught of the juggernaut.

Station Assessment

E. Midlands Branch has produced a station assessment paper for use by any

PLATFORM

New Lines

Richard Crane is right (RAILWATCH 38) to criticise "impractical dreamers", especially those who pontificate on what should happen to railways in areas other than their own, apparently without consulting new users first.

RDS policy on reopenings and possible new construction is based on careful study and widespread consultation going back over a number of years. Our recommendations have been set out in publications like "Bring Back the Trains" and "A to Z of Rail Reopenings".

Apart from a high speed link to the Channel Tunnel, we believe that a modest amount of new construction should be considered to relieve congested lines, improve journey times or make new cross-country journeys possible. The French, Dutch and West Germans have built new railways for such reasons and it is not unreasonable that we should do likewise.

The RDS Passenger Committee is therefore considering such projects and aims to produce a set of recommendations at the end of this year. Local branches and users' groups will be fully consulted in the process. Anyone with ideas is invited to write to Mike Crowhurst, Cowman's flat, Heath Hall Farm, Wakefield WF1 5SL or Chris Burton, 79 Tenison Rd, Cambridge CB1 2DG.

On the specific question of Bedford, two possible options being considered by the Society are a new curve at Manton to allow through running from Bedford via Corby to Peterborough, or a new direct link from Bedford to the East Coast Main Line which could use part of the former Bedford-Sandy trackbed.

I think Mr. Crane will agree that either of these is a more realistic option than the "impractical dreams" that he rightly dismisses.

Trevor Garrod
RDS General Secretary

Cycles on Trains

The present proliferation of Sprinter-type stock is making travel by train with a bicycle prohibitively difficult in many areas. I am appalled by the short-sighted attitude of BR management. Public transport can never satisfy everyone's journey needs, but train and bicycle can compete with the door-to-door convenience of the motor car. As the roads become more congested a marvellous marketing opportunity exists for the railways. Yet even those who already use this dual form of transport are being squeezed out.

Many people work in industrial estates built for proximity to motorway junctions rather than to workers' homes,

and a mile or more from the nearest station. Robbed of the opportunity to take their bikes on the train, they become obliged to use cars. Many tourists too like to explore the country on bicycles but now vast areas are being made inaccessible. The absurd booking system makes no allowances for missed connections or those needing emergency transport following breakdown, illness or injury. The restriction to two bicycles per train makes the facility useless for families, let alone groups. Many who do not consider themselves cycle-tourists might happily use a bike if

they could only get it there on the train, rather than join the twenty mile tailback on the M-whatever. The ensuing benefits for the tourist areas themselves are obvious.

I think that this is an issue RDS could be more vocal about. We live in a society that condones a level of slaughter on the roads which would be totally unacceptable in any other place. Here is a very positive way in which change could be wrought.

Ariadne Tampion
Southampton

REGIONAL NOTES

Lynn Electrification Goes Ahead

The Secretary of State for Transport has approved electrification of 41 miles from Cambridge to Ely/Kings Lynn by the end of 1991 at a cost of £20m.

RDS has campaigned for several years for this project. As the Cambridge-Norwich electrification neared completion in 1987, East Anglian Branch published a leaflet urging that the Lynn scheme be approved. Local MP Henry Bellingham has been a staunch supporter and much of the credit must go to Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council which produced a wealth of well-researched campaign material and has pledged £750 000 over six years towards any operating losses after electrification. Norfolk County Council has also promised £100 000 - a move that would have been unheard of less than ten years ago.

East Midlands

We are especially concerned about the Bedford-Bletchley line since BR, at the very last moment, withdrew from negotiations to extend the service to Milton Keynes, despite Councils offering funding for the line work involved.

We look once more to the AGM knowing there is much to do and a real need for volunteers, either for the Committee or on specific projects from wordprocessing to helping the LAMRAC and Melton-Corby campaigns. Our Midland Main Line campaign also needs some specialists. Offers to the Branch Chairman, M. Jordan, please on 0533 770478.

London and Home Counties

After our public meeting in Chiswick last October, a user group has been formed for the Hounslow Loop.

We are producing prints, costing £1.50, based on our Christmas cards, which are also available at 5p + postage (minimum quantity 20) from Ian Creighton, 19 Oakdale Avenue, Kenton, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 0UJ.

North Midlands

The 1989 Nottinghamshire Structure Plan Review takes a more positive approach to railways than previous documents, and features the proposed Nottingham-Mansfield-Workshop reopening idea. However, there is little mention of rail transport's potential for relieving chronic traffic congestion in the City of Nottingham. RDS members attended a consultation meeting in January to voice their views, and plan to submit a comprehensive rail development plan to the County Planning Department.

Over 450 000 passengers are travelling the Settle-Carlisle line each year according to the North East and North West TUCCs, who held public meetings last year to assess the impact that the new local services were having on usage. The first train from Skipton to Carlisle was regularly carrying between 60 and 70 people a day.

BR London Midland Region General Manager Cyril Bleasdale told a conference organised by Lancashire County Council on 28 January that BR were hoping to introduce a half-hourly service on the line from Preston to Blackpool South and build a new Inter-City "park and ride" station on the West Coast Main Line south of Weaver Junction. The Wirral Transport Users' Association have published a report recommending the conversion of the Mickle Trafford to Dee Marsh (Shotton) freight line to light rapid transit, with a branch to serve the centre of Chester.

North West

BR have produced a report on the costs and potential of restoring the Burscough Curves, which would make a direct Preston to Southport service possible. The cost is estimated to be in the region of £1.3m. The Ormskirk Preston Travelers' Association is planning to bring in a consultant, at a cost of £1500, to reassess BR's costs and revenues, and is appealing for donations, which should be sent to Richard Watts, NW Branch

REGIONAL NOTES

Chairman, at 15, Stanley Avenue, Penwortham, Lancashire PR1 9RB.

One line threatened with Bustitution is the Skipton to Carnforth (or Little North Western). North West Branch will be holding a public meeting in March at Bentham to form a rail user group.

North West Branch is planning to produce a North West Rail Strategy book covering from Cheshire in the south to Cumbria in the north. The Greater Manchester Transport Resource Unit has contributed to the £2000 cost. Send ideas for inclusion to Robert Cummings, 141 Crossefield Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire SK8 5PF.

Scotland

Recent months have highlighted the very different approach to public transport by different Authorities in Scotland.

Lothian Region are carrying out a consultation exercise on future transport provision in Edinburgh. Various options are put forward, none involving road construction within the city centre. The option of reopening freight lines was not included but an LRT option includes some closed lines as well as street running. RDS will be making a submission on the basis that the existing rail infrastructure should be used to the maximum.

Strathclyde, meanwhile, press on with their ludicrously expensive and damaging road proposals for Glasgow; their latest plans have appeared suddenly without consultation. Progress on rail development is slow; a small extension of the Airdrie line is now under construction and some new stations are to be provided. The much-needed link between north and south lines remains a dream.

Severnside

Mrs Dawn Primarolo, MP for Bristol South, has stated that she will block the Avon Metro Bill because she doesn't want property developers to dictate routes.

Mr John Wyatt, leader of Avon Council, has confirmed that work will start later this year on a new station near Worle Junction which will have hundreds of hundreds of car parking spaces to serve 22 000 residents of an expanding housing area. The facility will be in addition to services at Weston Milton Halt and Weston-Super-Mare, which our branch has insisted shall be retained. Mr Wyatt believes that it is extremely important to pursue this project which will relieve the A370 road.

Tyne-Trent

BR Provincial management have worked effectively with local authorities to reopen many stations, such as Langley Mill in Derbyshire. Following

representations from the RDS and others, Derbyshire have considered reopening Tutbury on the border with Staffordshire, but the latter have displayed little interest in rail for many years. However, to quote BR Provincial Midlands manager David McIntosh, speaking of the Walsall to Hednesford proposal, "Together with Walsall Rail Supporters, the Litchfield Rail Action Group and the Railway Development Society, we gradually wore them down", and the service will start in April. The change of heart has extended to Tutbury, which will reopen in May at a cost of £80 000 just in time for the Tutbury 900th anniversary celebrations. The hourly Derby-Crewe trains will serve the new halt.

Lottery Winners

December:

Stocks (Sheffield) £19.75
White (Birmingham) £9.87
Wells (Sawbridgeworth) £4.94
Southon (Cambridgeshire) £4.94

January:

Buttigies (Croydon) £30.50
Oley (Formby) £15.74
Keene (Exmouth) £7.63
Ratcliffe (Manchester) £7.63

February:

Ralph (Leeds) £39.00
Mills (Brighton) £19.50
Stocks (Sheffield) £9.75
Humphrey (Romford) £9.75

Wales

Consultants appointed by Clwyd, Cheshire and Gwynedd Councils to investigate electrification from Crewe to Holyhead have announced their findings. Cost: £50m; journey times between Crewe and Holyhead reduced by up to 35 minutes. A further study is investigating freight potential from Ireland and the effects of the Channel Tunnel. The Irish Government has been quick to distance itself from reports that it would press for EC investment in the line. While welcoming the prospect of

electrification, we feel an immediate program to upgrade the line is urgently needed.

Continuing traffic growth on Cardiff Valley services is again leading to overcrowding. Matters are not helped by the blatant anti-rail attitude of the Welsh Secretary, Peter Walker, who refuses to sanction the second stage of the Valleys Rail Development Strategy.

The Provincial Manager for Wales has reassured travellers on the future of services west of Swansea. Traffic growth has seen the deficit on these reduced from £3m in 1983 to £750 000 in 1988. The scaremongering tactics of local councillors are very harmful and it is encouraging to see BR management rebutting unfounded rumours.

Wessex

A newsletter has been published and was distributed with AGM literature to 67 members and a further 33 potential members, who had either answered RDS advertisements or written pro-rail letters to the press.

Branch Chairman Jon Honeysett has attended Channel Tunnel South Region Section 40 working party meetings, both freight and passenger. Last December he hired a mini-bus and drove a working party from Havant West to potential freight sites.

Yorkshire

Improvements are planned for Huddersfield station. Platform 1 will be widened to extend to one of the through lines. The present line which serves Platform 1 will terminate in a bay for the sole use of Sheffield trains, which will then have direct access to the station without being held up by Manchester trains. Widening the platform would also reduce congestion at the ticket barrier.

Suggestions are again being made to open a station at Elland Road on the Wakefield-Westgate-Leeds line for the benefit of fans going to the Leeds United football ground which is close by. This would avoid football fans being herded by the police for the mile and a half's trek from Leeds City Station to the Ground.

RAILWATCH is edited by Ray King, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU (Tel: 01 985 8548).

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General Secretary: Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 1RQ (Tel. 0502 581721).

Administrative Officer: Reg Snow, 48 The Park, Great Bookham, Leatherhead, Surrey KT23 3LS (Tel. 0372 52863).

Membership: Frank Hastilow, 49 Irnham Road, Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B74 2TQ (Tel. 021 308 2865).

Sales: Alan Harwood, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 0DN.