Railwatch

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No mandate for privatisation

By TREVOR GARROD

A survey before the general election showed only 25 per cent of the electorate were in favour of privatising British Rail.

Two days before polling day, the then Secretary of State for Transport Malcolm Rifkind said: "The Conservatives have no proposals to privatise British Rail's passenger services." He did, however, say that parcels and freight would be sold off.

The future of BR did not feature prominently in the Tories' election campaign or indeed in their manifesto. Some candidates did not mention it at all in their election addresses and certain of them made it clear in letters to RDS members that they did not believe in breaking up the network.

What a far cry from the heady days of Paul Channon and Cecil Parkinson, Michael Portillo and John Redwood, trumpeting the need to sell off our only national public transport system. It is also quite a change from the summer of 1991 when Mr Major's Citizen's Charter had privatisation of BR as one of its key points.

The return to power of a Tory Government with the smallest majority for over 40 years may well lead to less extreme policies than we have seen over the last 13 years. At least, it is more difficult for it to claim a mandate for selling off BR bit by

What has been the role of RDS in this process? How should we now proceed?

Since the mid 1980s, we have studied the BR privatisation ideas, initially floated by right-wing bodies like the Adam Smith Institute and later taken on board by mainstream Tory politicians. We expressed our concern that these schemes would not be in the interests of rail users, and questioned the practicability of some of them.

In 1989 we published Who Should Run Our Railways? examining in detail the arguments for privatisation and concluding in favour of a national rail network into which the private sector could have input, but warning that privatisation itself was "at least a distraction, probably an irrelevance and potentially a disaster."

Over the past three years, we have issued three new leaflets updating the issue and most of the 20,000 copies of the latest of these, Don't Break Deritish Rail, were distributed by our members in the seven weeks prior to the general election. Our parliamentary liaison committee also produced a briefing document on rail investment and practically all our branches organised lobbying of candidates, particularly those in marginal constituencies.

Of course, we were not the only ones warning against BR privatisation or spelling out its likely effects. So did the rail unions, Transport 2000 and other pro-public-transport organisations. In fact, I did not come across any knowledgeable or representative body arguing in favour of it. However, as the only independent voluntary body for rail users nationwide, RDS can justifiably claim to have helped to create a climate in which, whatever issues helped the Tory Party wrest



Signal effort: Sponsored riders pause a while at Isfield station

Sun shines on reopening campaign

The campaign to reopen the railway line from Uckfield to Lewes was given a boost when cyclists rode between the two Sussex towns in brilliant sunshine over the late May bank holiday. The mayor of Uckfield met members of RDS and the Wealden Line Campaign on the platform at Uckfield to give the cyclists a good send-off. Karin Clewes led the party followed by, among others, general secretary Trevor Garrod and two-year-old Alexander King in a child seat on the back of his mother's bike.

One of the stops on the way out was Isfield station which is a privately owned rail museum on the old line. When the cyclists arrived at Lewes, the town was enjoying a Green Wheels Day, supported by East Sussex County Council, Lewes District Council and the local paper, the Sussex Express.

victory from the jaws of defeat, it was not its policy on BR.

Did it indeed have a coherent policy? Some candidates to whom we wrote did not seem to know the official line. They passed our letters to Malcolm Rifkind who replied in largely identical letters like this one of 16 March: "We believe denationalisation of the railway system offers the best way forward for the railway and its customers."

Compare this with the quote from the same Mr Rifkind on 7 April, in the second paragraph of this article.

Mr Rifkind has now been replaced as Secretary of State (not surely because he changed his mind), although Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman remains. We in RDS have enjoyed useful contacts with Mr Freeman who took the unique step for a Government Minister of devoting a whole evening to an RDS seminar last July. We look forward to a continuing dialogue with him. Meanwhile I have also written to the new Secretary of State John MacGregor listing five key points which we should like to see acted on:

- 1 Resurrect the joint report on electrification issued in 1981 and use it as the basis for a rolling programme.
- 2 Study French and German investment methods, and what we can learn from them.
- 3 Study and publish annual figures for the costs of all forms of transport, so that the rail alternatives to road and air can be fairly put - and be prepared to put money into rail.
- 4 Decide which closed routes could possibly be rebuilt and maintain their integrity so that the options are open to rebuild them in the future.
- 5 Ensure that section 20 grant money to local authorities is ring-fenced to help long-term plans for public transport.

New face of your society

The annual general meeting of the Railway city centre stations, which give direct connections Development Society in Birmingham on 2 May elected the new national executive unopposed Three new members join the executive: Ian Murray of Porthcawl, Elisabeth Jordan from Gretton, near Corby and Malcolm Goodall of Eakring, Notts.

The following continue as members of the executive: chairman Steve Wilkinson, vice chairman Ray King, general secretary Trevor Garrod, treasurer David Bigg, membership secretary Frank Hastilow, sales officer Alan Harwood, Alan Bevan, Malcolm Conway, Mike Crowhurst, Trevor Jones, Peter Lawrence, Donald MacPhee and Peter Wakefield.

Chris Borland, Dave Finch and Tony Wiggall did not stand for re-election and were thanked for their work over the past year by the chairman.

At the first national executive meeting after the AGM, the following officers were appointed: publicity Roland White, Railwatch editor Ray King, Press David Pickersgill, computer Trevor Jones, advertising Ian McGill, membership promotion Lionel Boylett, assistant Julian Langston, lottery David Finch, commercial liaison John Saunders, local authority liaison Stuart McNair, student liaison Martin Thorne, road and rail research Peter Hayman, assistant Robert Griffiths, archivist Ray King, photographic Nick Lewis, cycling Malcolm Conway, parcels John Saunders.

The following resolutions were passed at the agm:

RDS welcomes the decision to locate Ashford International station within the existing station. We urge BR and the Government to resolve any remaining problems as soon as possible and proceed urgently with construction.

RDS urges that out-of-town parkway stations should be additional to, and not a replacement for,

A charter

competition

is needed

for fair

with local rail and bus services, as well as access to the city centre.

RDS should campaign for more equitable investment in road and rail. Rail infrastructure costs should be principally the responsibility of the state. cost-benefit analysis methods should be used, there should be a rolling programme of rail investment over five or 10 years as well as road pricing.

RDS urges the constitution of BR as a publiclyowned company with separate infrastructure and operating divisions. This would give BR greater freedom to make commercial investment decisions, and easier access to private and public sources of funds, as well as meeting European Community requirements for transparency in funding of rail infrastructure. It would also assist through working between BR and private railways and possibly certain specialised private operators, especially in the freight sector. RDS remains totally opposed to any break-up of the national network and reminds the Government that BR does not have a monopoly over transport provision.

A resolution calling on BR to adopt new performance and quality policies was approved but will go to the national executive for consideration.

A proposal calling for a £15-a-year teletext service giving details of BR engineering work was

RDS books will be made available to RDSaffiliated groups on a sale or return basis, up to a

Motorists should pay through taxes for all the medical, policing and associated costs of roads rather than have them subsidised by taxation.

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Trevor Garrod's View

I was recently telephoned by a journalist who, full of instant synthetic indignation, asked if I did not think it disgraceful that the BR passenger's charter would make it almost impossible for anyone to claim compensation if their train between Norwich and London was late.

I asked her what compensation BR's competitors were offering. There was silence at the other end of the phone. Then she said, almost in disbelief: "What do you mean - competitors? They haven't got any!"

I reminded her that BR competed with various coach operators and with Air UK for passenger business to and from Norwich and suggested she contact them. I then explained RDS policy on this issue: If compensation is to be paid, then it should be paid by all transport operators. A watered-down version of my remarks appeared in her paper the following day.

Over recent months, many people have been so brainwashed about "BR's monopoly" by rightwing politicians that they easily forget that the railways do not have a transport monopoly. Some politicians, and perhaps journalists, have an interest in perpetuating this myth. It is our task, in RDS, to explode it.

I was fascinated to receive a report of a meeting held under the auspices of the Consumer Congress (to which RDS is affiliated), attended by executives from well-respected bus and coach companies. It was suggested to them that public transport operators might offer financial compensatioin to their customers in the event of delay. They all threw up their hands in horror at the idea. They

were then told that BR provides free taxis for people whose last connection of the day is missed or cancelled. Not one of the bus managers thought this was reasonable and all were surprised to discover that BR did so.

The passenger's charter also commits BR to displaying figures about service punctuality - a practice which, in my experience, it has already observed at certain stations from time to time. Yet I have never seen such statistics displayed at a bus station or airport. Has any other member?

I recently sent the Prime Minister a dossier of successful and unsuccessful attempts by customers to obtain compensation from public transport operators and urged him to extend his Citizen's Charter to all of them. I received a note from an aide saying Mr Major was too busy to deal with

Our corporate member, the Yeovil and District Rail Action group, received a more sympathetic response from Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown whom they briefed on the matter.

We also sent the dossier to the Consumers Association (not to be confused with the Consumer Congress), urging them to launch a campaign against bus, coach and airline companies similar to that which they waged against BR in 1990-1. The response has been deafening silence - which merely hardens my determination to work for a level playing field on which BR can compete fairly for its share of the transport market.

■ Trevor Garrod is general secretary of RDS and also writes a column every four weeks for the magazine Rail.

Disturbing thoughts after one voter's brief encounter

RDS member Charles Niven took the opportunity to talk to the then Transport Secretary Malcolm Rifkind during the general election campaign in Scotland. Here are his impressions.

After an election meeting in an Edinburgh church hall, I managed to speak very briefly to Mr Rifkind. I asked him about the Tories' plans for the railways. He said there was to be "no privatisation" of BR! However Railfreight would

He reitersted his belief that more freight should be moved by rail and that passengers should also be encouraged to make more use of rail transport.

He welcomed the news that Stagecoach was to hire coaches with seats for use on InterCity sleeper rains. Apparently Stagecoach believes that Inter-City is inefficient in not being able to provide seated accommodation on these trains.

I then asked him what the plans were for general passenger services. These were not to be sold but franchised to private operators. He also promised that railways would no longer be a "bottomless pit" into which taxpayers' money was to be poured. Obviously he didn't consider the thousands of millions of pounds for new roads a drain

I did manage to get him to reveal some worrying aspects of his thoughts. He held up the Bathgate line - partly funded by Lothian Regional Council as a great example of the potential of rail transport.

But when I pointed out that all the proposals for reopening currently being carried out by ScotRail were in conjunction with local authorities, he shook his head and said the policy was that new services had to be brought forward by the private

He left me in a state of disbelief. He speaks very quickly and I had only about three or four minutes to raise these questions as people were trying to 'drag him away'

But did he mean that the Alloa branch would not reopen in 1994 as currently planned? What is to become of the Ivanhoe and Robin Hood lines in England? Could an intelligent man really be propounding such contradictions?

Members will now realise what kind of attitudes are prevalent and that the job of lobbying MPs, especially Tories, is only just beginning in earnest as far as privatisation is concerned.

Meanwhile this was one floating voter who did not contribute to Mr Rifkind's increased majority on 9

Since this brief encounter at the hustings, Mr Rifkind has been replaced as Transport Secretary by Mr John MacGregor, another Scotsman.

Envelope re-use labels

RDS envelope re-use labels are available with the slogan: For Cleaner Air, Go by

£1.80 per 100 post free from RDS sales officer, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN. Cheques payable to Railway Development Society.

A return ticket, please!

in the long campaign to reopen the Robin Hood line from Nottingham to Mansfield and Worksop.

The 32-mile long scheme to bring back the trains WAS given the go-ahead earlier this year but:

WHEN the idea was first mooted by Nottinghamshire County Council, BR said there was no point in looking at the scheme because Kirkby Ashfield tunnel was blocked by coal waste. BR persuaded the council to concentrate on investing

WHEN costs were discussed, BR said it would not be able to contribute financially in any way.

LATER after detailed studies had shown the tunnel could be excavated and was in good condition, the council asked BR - as the experts - to conduct a route development ana-

lysis. BR was reluctant to take the idea seriously and so the council went to independent consultants who "saved the project"

NOW BR is involved in the choice of rolling stock. It had suggested "totally unsuitable" Pacers and then was reluctant to release an experimental Sprinter set which was languishing unused in shed. Notts is considering buying or leasing Sprinter-type trains.

NOW BR is asking a 'very, very expensive" £250,000 a year to operate trains on the

NOW the whole project could be jeopardised by the BR sector set-up. Passenger trains will not run over the whole route until Trainload Coal gives the go-ahead to a £5 million resignalling scheme for the northem part of the route.

These were just some of the difficulties out-

lined to the RDS reopenings conference by Nottinghamshire County Council's team leader for the project, Mr Arthur Cowie.

Mr Cowie said the BR project manager who had now been appointed was committed and enthusias-tic and was pushing ahead with it.

But he said: "It's still not an easy task for him to deal with the various sectors of BR and then the various county councils and district councils."

There were eight local authorities involved.

Mr Cowie said raising the £10 million needed for the scheme was still a big problem.

"We need to get a section 56 grant from the Government, but that is like asking for the holy

When the last application was made, the Government said in effect: "No money, join the queue, come back next year.

But Mr Cowie was hopeful about obtaining EC grants for regional development and for coal mining areas hit by closures.

The conference saw a professional video about the line called Return Ticket.

In a phased programme, 11 new stations will be built to accommodate three-car trains. Park and ride facilities will be stressed. Reopening is Hucknall old colliery site

The third edition of the RDS book, A - Z of Rail Reopenings, was launched at the conference by editor Alan Bevan. Order yours from Alan Harwood.

RDS president Michael Caton said: "People all round the country are asking for railways. If local people come forward and demand railway investment, the Government will have to take action.

Privatisation could halt the rail renaissance if as predicted, it led to fewer trains, fewer passengers, higher fares and fewer lines, the conference was

Ken Davies of RDS explained how there were schemes for BR to run through trains on to

Another new station takes shape: Pontyclun, near Cardiff, with the 1330 Swansea to

preserved lines and vice versa. He wanted BR

Sprinters to work through to Minehead on the

private West Somerset Railway. BR trains might

Richard Pill of Transport 2000 said protection of

existing but closed railway alignments was vital if

there are to be future reopenings. To reopen

Bedford - Sandy, some new alignments would

Gerald Duddridge of RDS outlined a possible

classification scheme for routes which should be

reopened. In his own area, Barnstaple, Bideford,

Tiverton and Tavistock should be priorities. Track-

beds of all possible reopening lines should be

BR's pathetic attitude to cycles on trains was

raised by several speakers at the conference. RDS

general secretary Trevor Garrod blamed the

of Transport" who insist the new trains must have

as many seats in as possible. Regional Railways

director Gordon Pettitt had said that more space

COULD be released for cycles when Sprinters

Reopenings were also high on the agenda at

another RDS meeting at Ely, Cambridgeshire, in

Only 14 miles of new track is needed to create a

gentlemen in the Ivory Tower of the Department

also work on Peak Rail.

came up for refurbishment.

have to be created.

protected.

York approaching the platform on 29 March.

With minimal expenditure (compared to highly expensive and anti-social road building), the link would provide connections with nine main lines.

Its key role, however, would be to give people the chance to travel by rail between East Anglia and the South Midlands for the first time since the 1960s without going though London.

The scheme was outlined by Peter Wakefield on 22 February to about 100 special guests at East Anglian branch's 20th birthday party in Ely.

Mr Wakefield, an RDS national official, said even BR recognised the potential of the route but found it impossible to finance it. The idea is to revive the truncated Oxford - Cambridge rail route with new

alignments. There would also be modern 158 Express through trains from Bristol and Swindon to Ipswich, Norwich and Colches-

Critical expenditure would be in providing a line from Bedford to Sandy, using much of the old trackbed but with new alignments at Blunham and Sandy. Instead of following the old route via Gam lingay, the modern trains could go via Huntingdon and a reopened Cambridge - St

All that would be needed then would be to upgrade the freight only line from Bicester to Bletchley.

Mr Wakefield urged county councils and district councils along the route to get together with British Rail to find ways of bringing the dream into reality. They should set up a working party, learning from the way other councils were putting money into re-

creating key rail routes. He praised local councils' initiative in Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, South Wales, and Lothian region.

In Strathelyde, campaigners are now hoping to get Cumnock and Mauchline, closed in 1966, re-

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Send orders for books or an sae for a sales list to RDS sales officer, 139 Harrowdene Gardens. Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN. Make remittances payable to Railway Development Society.

I MUST disagree somewhat with the Article 'Ouch! The impact of the car'.

When I used to cycle regularly, one of the menaces on the road (pavement) were lamp posts/ telegraph poles right on the edge of the pavement, from which you had to be careful to keep your

In fact a lot of what is euphemisfically called 'street furniture' which has been installed supposedly to help nonmotorists, and in particular pedestrians, have their own associated hazards. For example the 'in' colour for bollards (to keep cars at bay; off pavements or out of pedestrianised streets) is now black, or dark creosote if wooden ones are used. Thus at night they are not very visible to say the least! At least lamp posts and telegraph poles reach above normal eye level so you have a better chance of spotting them in

The recent 'traffic calming' scheme, as such, in Godalming High Street, has installed (invented) another type (hazard) with the traffic 'bollards' used at the 'throats' of single car lane 'chokes'. These are in the form of cast iron (steel?) bell shapes. only about a foot high at the most, also painted the ubiquitous

R Holliday, Basingstoke

A Borderline case

BORDERS REGION in Scotland is the only region/ county on the British mainland that does not have a railway station. This has been the case since closure of the Edinburgh-Carlisle 'Waverley' line in 1969.

South of Galashiels the trackbed has been obliterated by the Melrose by-pass, but the trackbed between Edinburgh and Galashiels is still largely intact, including the Newbattle viaduct. The population of Galashiels has grown considerably since the closure of the line; I believe that the Edinburgh-Galashiels section should be reopened, with intermediate stations at Eskbank, Newtongrange, Gorebridge and Stow. The line would be single track, with a passing place midway. An hourly service operated by Class 158 units could complete the journey in just under an hour, thus requiring just two train sets and crews.

The bus service between Edinburgh and Galashiels takes one and half hours along the winding A7 road, which can be severely hampered by snow. Furthermore Edinburgh is near saturation point with cars.

Perhaps RDS can lobby ScotRail, Lothian Regional Council and Borders Regional Council to promote the reopening of this line.

Matthew Ross, Edinburgh

IN SPITE of the energy that the RDS has in publicising the railway case, it is sad to note that it still does not get everywhere! I was astonished to find, when talking to a young executive, that he thought it still took 12 hours to get to Edinburgh from London! He was astonished to learn that the schedule is four hours and utterly incredulous that it had been done in three and half! What with BR's wet adverts and the Press's antipathy, what can one expect!

G Lankeman, Rhos-y-Gwaliau

Privatisation-good

BY MAKING the break-up of the BR network its primary objection to privatisation, I think the RDS has overlooked a much worse scenario. Namely, the sale of BR to property developers and almost certain dismemberment. Here, the public would lose out twice over. First, as passengers deprived of regular services and secondly, as taxpayers swindled by the sale of their undervalued and underpriced

With regard to the latter point, it is worth recalling the fate of the privatised National Bus Company. Millions were made from the disposal of bus stations and garages. In fact, the taxpayer only benefited from the sale of 18 sites out of 1500 properties (Source: Ninth Report of the House of Commons Committee of Public

BR is a much larger land owner than NBC. It requires little imagination to envisage the scope for asset stripping. And there would be nothing to prevent this as things presently stand.

To avoid this situation, a change in the law would be required. Currently, BR are under no obligation to provide a rail service. They can alter, suspend or withdraw any service, any time, without notice or redress - as BRB Condition of Carriage 25 makes abundantly clear. This is a grossly unsatisfactory and unjust state of affairs that demands rectification.

In the 19th century, Parliament compelled the railway companies to provide minimum standards of service for passenger trains (i.e. the Parliamentary Trains Act 1844 and the Cheap Trains Act 1881). A modern and updated version of this concept is long overdue. It could stipulate, for instance, the number of trains on any route - say, three per day each way, morning noon and evening, lay down minimum speeds and quality standards, establish maximum fares and make provision for through ticketing and co-ordination with other railway companies, etc. I understand that, in Japan, the private railways must

submit fare and timetables to the transport ministry for prior approval. Also, a licence is required to run a railway business.

These sound like sensible ideas, probably worth adopting in this country. A statutory provision to run a rail service could incorporate many of them.

It would safeguard the public (who have no rights at present); prevent asset strippers from acquiring BR; and be a double-edged sword to be deployed against privatised railways (if they materialise) or BR, should it remain under state ownership.

Privatisation might threaten the network, but continued state ownership offers no guarantee either. Since 1948 the route mileage has nearly halved and the number of passenger stations reduced by two thirds. Also, it is a myth to assume that a co-ordinated network can only be provided by a national body owning and operating all rail services. Switzerland demonstrates that this is not so.

Where an adequate system of state control exists, state ownership becomes unnecessary. The privatisation debute has obscured this point; in fact, no one appears to have given it much thought at all. As for the relative merits of state versus private ownership, I would suggest that these arguments are largely academic, indeed, even irrelevant; what is of far greater importance (to the user, anyhow) is the degree of public control and accountability.

PS Although I am currently Secretary, London and Home Counties Branch, I would add that the opinions expressed are entirely my own.

J Helm, Gravesend

AFTER THE Beeching Report in the 60s the area in which I live has been without a railway for 30 years.

The transport problems now in the area are atrocious, not only do people have to cycle to get to the nearest station (Mill Hill Broadway) the tremendous potential for a railway has been neglected for many years. The Midland main line, which I travel on mostly, should be electrified throughout - there is scope for railway services to Leeds and Scotland and to the Channel Tunnel via Thameslink. The amount of money spent on the roads is disgusting, short-sighted and very foolish.

At the present time the railway bed lies empty and deserted, the local MP has the cheek to call it a nature walk when it is simply derelict wasteland. The privatisation strategy adopted by this Government will do away with the Midland for good, as it may not be 'profitable' enough, while the local MP for Kettering drives to work every day. Compared to France, British railways are a shameful and utter disgrace, lack of public investment etc. The electrification could be very popular with the connections involved: East Midlands-Paris, Edinburgh-Paris, Leeds via Sheffield-Paris and Kirkcaldy-Paris with electrification.

We all know that electrification improves the environment: less noise, pollution; and the scope for an improved Thameslink with private and public sector borrowing would be beneficial to the wealth of this country as well as lower fares and improved track maintenance on the main lines and local sections of track. RDS East Midlands branch please keep up the good work.

Sehinde Raji, Belmont, Middx

IF WE are looking for a slogan for a car-sticker I think 'It's quicker by rail' takes a lot of beating, especially if observed by a fellow motorist on the world's biggest circular carpark - the M25.

As a senior citizen railcard holder I am appalled by the recent decrease in discounts on cheap?day returns. The cost scale has now tipped in favour of staying with the car for two of us - oh well, just as I was beginning to enjoy the Chiltern Turbos!

Paul Wilson, Flackwell Heath

Driving out the

THE ASSERTION that road users more than pay for what they get is made categorically in various forms by the government, the road lobby, road users associations and road-users.

If the assertion is true: A large part of what road users get is being paid for twice; once by road users, and once by rate/poll tax payers.

Councils spend immense sums of rate/poll tax payers' money on the road system as, for example, on road building, road maintenance, road planning and administration (very expensive), traffic wardens, free and underpriced car parking, salting, gritting, snow clearance, signalling, sign-posting, and sundry other items.

If the assertion is true the Government has already collected more than sufficient money from road users to cover all these costs. It follows that the Government has a serious obligation to hand over to the councils

or bad for BR?

THE INTRODUCTION of private enterprise to the railway system can only do good in my opinion. The Stagecoach Company intends to provide cheap travel between London and Scotland and other long-haul routes. If they make a profit, this can provide the service people want.

On the freight side, we have the Pedigree Petfood traffic handled by CharterRail and the Foster Yeoman stone traffic. The RDS should encourage private enterprise as it will help to subsidise loss-making passenger services. Full scale denationalisation will be all right providing the Government continues to provide the subsidies

At a loss

I WOULD dispute the fact published by the Eastern Daily Press in a report on British Rail privatisation on 23 January that branch and rural lines are lossmaking. Most of the passenger lines run down and closed by the railway management in the past, or open at present, either operate at a profit or could be operated at a profit.

If BR had not been nationalised in the first place I doubt if the following lines in East Anglia would have been closed to passenger traffic: Cambridge-Haverhill-Colchester. 'Oxford-Cambridge, King's Lynn-Dereham-Norwich and King's Lynn-Hunstanton, as the latter railway lines link main centres of population.

Giving BR more subsidies only means the railway management can afford to run down and close more passenger lines. Should BR be privatised then existing train services would be improved and many closed passenger lines would be reopened to traffic so as to make profits.

E H Longland, Buckhurst Hill

Government does so forthwith.

car users roughly equally,

If the assertion is untrue:

everything which they, the councils, have spent

on the roads and associated items, but which the

Government has already collected from the road

users. The councils should demand that the

Rate/poll tax payers comprise non-car users and

In the interests of its own integrity as well as in

duty to the people, the Government should

admit publicly and decisively that what it

collects from road users is seriously inadequate

for paying for what road users get and that

consequently road-users, every one of them, are

significantly subsidised by rate/poll tax payers,

irrespective of whether or not such payers are

car-users. As it is unjust for non-car users to

have to subsidise the privileged transport of car-

users the Government has a duty to see to it that

what it collects from road users covers all the

In other areas of transport, private ownership has proved successful. Associated British Ports are doing a good job in running the ports they operate.

R Adams, Cambridge

WITH REGARD to your request. for personal experience of complaints and compensation, I have had varying experiences with National Express.

In one case, when a friend was put down in the wrong town at dead of night, we were able to get a compensation voucher, and gather this has happened with Oxford City Link services.

However, more generally, I find bus companies, and National Express in particular, totally faceless and unresponsive organisations when one wants to make any kind of comment or criticism.

Letters rarely get any response, and on the ground there is never any sign of management, especially in the evenings what do you do when waiting at a totally dark and deserted coach station for someone who got off (not through her own fault) at the wrong stop? Knock some sense into them!

T Burford, Linton, Cambridge

myths about road costs and revenue

Sealink-the whole story

ON PAGE 1 of the April "Railwatch" there is reference to Seacontainers' acquisition of Sealink but, with all due respect, it does not paint a complete picture.

James Sherwood was allowed

to buy a profitable BR shipping business for less than half its book value at a price less than that offered by a national transport undertaking - in answer to a question raised at the time via my MP, the Minister concerned alleged that "the best possible price was

Sherwood, having asked the

Prime Minister for his money back because of her alleged 'volte face' on the Charnel. Turnel, then sold the Sealink ships only at a profit of £364 million, keeping the ports. As the Financial Times for 9 December 1991 revealed. Sealink is now a loss maker. If such a relatively small transaction can produce such a monumental cock-up for the taxpayer, what hope

You can be sure that the present administration will not allow the survival of a coherent national transport network (your phrase) without massive meddling.

costs to which they give rise. The injustice to

(a) The fact that the subsidy is concealed in such

a way that the great majority of people are

(b) The coming of large-scale road transport has

entailed considerable transport deprivation for

non-car users, which in turn has entailed

The counter argument that subsidising car users

is fair because car users subsidise public

transport does not stand up to close examination

because public transport is not available to all

Private transport is not available to all. Any car

user can at any time decide to go by public

transport where such is available. The non-car

users cannot decide at any time to go by car.

non-car users is aggravated by:

unable to recognise it as such, and

considerable social activity deprivation.

A P Lambert, Mawnam Smith nr

THE DEMISE of InterCity in Shropshire is well documented. Its replacement at the time of writing, is expected to be a faster and more frequent Class 158-operated service into Birmingham to provide a cross-platform connection with London trains

Despite the attempts of BR and the Transport Minister to sell this as an improvement for Shropshire, there has been large-scale objection from a variety of quarters.

However, this 'best ever' service for Shropshire conceals a virtual halving of frequencies at most of the smaller, intermediate stations between Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton, leaving them with a two hourly off-peak one. These smaller stations, now unstaffed, have borne the brunt of two years' poor reliability caused, extensively, by the use of old DMU stock on the line.

Having no PA system and 'bus shelter' waiting facilities, unreliability has taken its toll on patronage. However, surveys taken last June/July fail to reflect how recent improvements have attracted passengers back. So it should be, for in terms of journey time, rail has a huge advantage over bus and car for travel into the traffic-choked West Midlands conurbation, for even short

Stations like Codsall, Billbrook and Albrighton have markets as yet untapped. The proposed frequency, we are told, is the best that can be justified given the resources available, yet there will be 16 limited-stop services running through. One can understand the need for faster services, but the experience of the past two years suggests that the potential for passenger growth at smaller stations is as yet unrealised and May 1992's proposals will ensure that this remains so, to the advantage of bus and car!

M Crump, Committee Member, Shrewsbury-Wolverhampton Rail Users Association

LIVING IN the North West I can feel sympathy for your correspondent James Howison of Shotts (Railwatch 51) for his comments in his final paragraph. We, too, in the North West are becoming just a little fed up with reading about all the rail investment for Network SouthEast whilst we have to endure clapped out Class 304 EMUs and, ten times worse, the appalling four-wheeled abominations they call Pacers.

S M Watkins, Liverpool

WE, the Welsh Rail Action Group, give total support to the standing conference on regional policy in South Wales in their recent efforts for the provision of a new rail inter-modal Euro-terminal or freight village complex in the Swansea area.

We have always proposed, along with Cardiff, the location of a freight terminal in Swansea at British Rail's regional forums and working parties, the preferred site being the former Freightliner Terminal at Danycraig Swansea - flat site, ideal for development, adjacent to the A483 Swansea Eastern approach and a rail link to Swansea docks.

BR's planned freight facilities at Cardiff are too far away to persuade private companies to invest in the

We respectfully suggest that the revised Section 8 Grants should be introduced to help industrialists to make full use of the railfreight services with possible European regional funding which could aid the implementation of the project.

It is vital that south west Wales is fully included in the new European rail network.

M Matthews, Chairman, Welsh Railways Action Group

H Atkinson, Whitley Bay

Trains should rule the land By RUSS HAYWOOD

The door is not only ajar for local campaigners who want new or improved rail services. It is wide open.

Opportunities are increasing to present the case for rail and to criticise car-based answers to traffic problems.

To understand how things have changed, we need to go back to 1947 - the year when the railways were

It was also the year which saw the introduction of the modern British town and country planning

With state control of both land use planning and transport, one might have expected a golden age of integrated development to have followed.

With benefit of hindsight, we now know that the road lobby proved far more adept at influencing government policy than could have been imagined.

For the most part, railways were regarded as a residual service. The need to provide access by road was the overriding consideration in land use planning decisions.

However, things are beginning to change thanks to a national crisis over road congestion and international concern about global warming. Both have highlighted the energy inefficiency of much road

After a decade which was generally pretty disastrous for transport, albeit with some bright spots for the railways, the government mood first showed signs of changing in late 1990 when the White Paper This Common Inheritance was published.

This made the right noises about the need to encourage use of public transport, especially in towns. Surprisingly though it said that relationships between land-use patterns and transport systems were not well understood and there was a need for more research.

It was suspected that this reflected friction between the public-transport-orientated Department of the Environment and the car-centred Department of

The call for more research was a political ploy.

Nevertheless things have moved on and in its most recent advice to planning authorities in updated Planning Policy Guidance Notes numbers 1 and 12, the Department of the Environment has introduced the notion of "sustainable development"

In addition, the Government has endorsed the notion of a plan-led approach to the control of development rather than the opportunistic and market-orientated approach of the eighties which at times looked like a developers' free-for-all.

The result of theses changes is that there is going to be a lot of plan making going on over the next few years. The impact of intended patterns of development and their attendant transport systems on the environment as well as their energy efficiency is going to come under close scrutiny.

This new policy context, along with the opening of the Channel Tunnel and its potential for rail freight, represents the best opportunity there has ever been to argue the case for well worked-out railway

This is particularly the case if they are debated in the same context as parallel road schemes as has happened recently with the Trans-Pennine Studies. Then the advantages of rail are very apparent.

The draft update to Leicestershire's Structure Plan

development is restricted to what are termed transport choice corridors. There has to be an alternative to the car and for the most part, this will mean rail.

The plan states that most development should be located within half a mile of an existing or proposed station. The Ivanhoe and Robin Hood Line reopenings also show that planning authorities are centrally involved in the process.

The case for other rail reopenings needs now to be made during the statutory planning processes by RDS branches and affiliated groups on sound railway grounds but also on the widest environmen-

To be effective the campaign has to be in concert with environmentalists and other non-car transport

NEWSWATCH

RDS lottery winners for February: E Ratcliffe, Manchester £37.20, Giles Angell, Kidderminster £23.25. M Savage, Cleethorpes £13.95. Andy Brabin, London £9.30, Paul Burton, Horsham £4.65, Barry Buttigieg, Croydon £4.65.

March: Mrs Hamilton-Cox, St Bees £37, N Walling, Manchester £23.12, Donald Bulmer, Weston-super-Mare £13.88, J E Wilson, Altrincham £9.26, Mrs P Hamlyn, London £4.62, C W Goodings, Wymondham £4.62.

April C W Goodings, Wymondham £36.60, 2 Bill Stoneham, Maidstone £22.88, R Worthington, Stalybridge £13.73, D McCutcheon, Portsmouth £9.15, Chris Burton, Cambridge £4.57, Dr A Berson,

If you would like to join the lottery, write to Dave Finch, 28 Neville Avenue, Kidderminster, Worcs

Greetings: North West branch of RDS is selling Christmas cards of colour rail scenes. There are nine different choices. The recipient can re-use part of the card as a postcard. The cards are 21 pence each. The cost to rail user groups is 21 pence each. Order yours from Malcolm Conway, 58 Greengate Lane, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 5LL.

Veteran campaigner Frank Hastilow is planning retire next year after stalwart service as RDS membership secretary. His job is probably too big to be taken over by one person so the workload will probably be split. Are you willing and able to help in this vital society task? If so, contact the general secretary. Being able to use a computer would be useful but those without the desire to be involved with computers can still help.

Tiger Rail has succumbed to the recession - after trying to keep the former Speedlink service between Scotland and the South West going when it was ditched by BR. The private company has gone into receivership. Tiger's 379 wagons have been bought by another private company, CAIB (UK). One effect was that ARC traffic to Fen Drayton, Cambridgeshire, which was operated by Tiger was halted for several days. The Government says it is relying on private enterprise to get more

Our environment - the role for rail

RDS is staging a seminar at Leicester entitled Our Environment - A Bigger Role for Rail on 20 June. The TSB is sponsoring the event which will be held from 1100 to 1600 in the YMCA building (opposite the station). A new report on rail and the environment will be launched. Chris Amundson, it also has input from many other members. If you would like to attend, send £2 (non-members £3) to Paul Clark, 69 Glenmere Close, Cambridge CB1 4EF. A buffet lunch will also be available at extra cost with a choice of hot or cold food.

Steve Bell 200 SHALLENSURE I SHALL SET UP A त्रधाक्षक्ष्या १००३ I SHALL CALL IT THT THE TRAINS RUN CONSUMER THERLANDRORUM 'OFRAIL' IN TIME! WATCHDOG WITH WHEN I GAIN CONTROL OF THE WORLD HOJ WILL A REALLY CLEVER HOJ WILL YOI DO THAT? NAME

-Privatisation? Er..it might be-

was notably absent from the House of Commons when MPs discussed the Government's privatisation plans for British Rail on 11 May, just one month after the general election.

The policy had begged many questions when set out in the Queen's Speech to the new session of Parliament thus: "My government will pursue outspoken. He said: "The Government's preoccuvigorously its programme of privatisation.....My government is committed to increasing the role of the railways in the country's transport needs. Legislation will be introduced to enable the private sector to operate rail services."

The parliamentary Bill aimed at giving Government the legal powers talks of a transfer of BR's commercial activities to "the private sector". If passed without amendment, the Bill will give the Government unlimited powers to "transfer the functions, property and rights" of BR to privatisation but something different. 'any other body or person'. But it does not Mr MacGregor WAS in the Commons a week later mention privatisation.

Most MPs and rail travellers had been left guessing just what the Government's intentions were but some indications emerged from the fog of Government secrecy on 11 May.

The man providing the information about the railways' future was not a transport minister but William Waldegrave, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. He is responsible for the Citizen's

Railway-union-sponsored MP Donald Dewar asked: "Is what is included in the Queen's Speech properly described as the privatisation of

Mr Waldegrave responded: "What is described is access to the network by franchising to private capital. If what we do leads to privatisation, so much the better.

Answering a question, Mr Waldegrave said: "The state has an absolutely crucial role to play - that of the regulator, legislator and creator of the framework. But nationalisation is dead.'

that all companies have fair access to the track. He said the Tories had cut back on rail subsidies and that agreed standards are met."

Later, he added: "The regulator, British Rail, will be accountable for the performance of the

Tory Robert Adley, a railway enthusiast, said We do not want Wessex fighting Mercia in privatised armies.

Then he asked a series of pertinent questions including "What thought is being given to utilising the tax system to encourage the use of Tory MP Robert Adley also warned the Governrailway system. The BR timetable has 1,39; want this Government or any government to

The new Transport Secretary John MacGregor pages and costs £5.50. I urge my honourable friend the under-secretary of state for Scotland to suggest to his colleagues that before they risk tearing it up and destroying one of the best railway systems in the world, whatever its faults, they should read the timetable and see what is involved.

> pation with the privatisation of the railways is, classically, a triumph of ideological hope over the experience of those countries who owe their fast, efficient and safe railway systems to government policies on planning and investment."

> At the end of the debate, Mr Dewar concluded: "Privatisation is a term that is hard to define. Mr Waldegrave looked distinctly shifty on that issue, but he ultimately admitted that what was proposed for the railways in the Queen's Speech was not

for the second reading of the so-called "paving"

He attempted to justify continued massive investment in roads but would make no promises about ANY investment in the railways.

He confirmed that passenger services would be franchised, freight and parcels would be sold, a rail regulator would be appointed to ensure all companies have access to the track.

BR's accounting and management systems would be reorganised to divide the track and infrastructure from train operation. He said the operating side would continue to provide passenger services where there was no franchise arrangement.

He confirmed that subsidies would continue to be available for services which meet an essential social need.

Labour transport spokesman John Prescott warned that private operators want to run services at peak times but not in the early morning or late at night. He said he was not sure where Mr MacGregor stood but it seemed the Bill gave powers for BR to Earlier, he said: "A new rail regulator will ensure take the first faltering steps towards privatisation.

while giving generously for roads.

He said: "The railways offer a wonderful opportunity. They can make a major contribution to improving the quality of our lives."

They can help to solve the environmental and traffic congestion problems. But he said the Government seems to have a vendetta against a public rail system.

rail freight?" He warned: "We have a complex ment "in a friendly way". He said: "I do not

decimate our railway system and then to look back and say, What a shame, we got it wrong."

He said there were an enormous number of questions to be asked. For instance was it in the national interest to allow cherry pickers to pick off the bits they want?

He said the Japanese have not privatised their railways. The Germans had rejected privatisation. Sweden has a corporate railway but there is no intention of selling off the shares. The nationalised SNCF was the pride of France.

And even in the home of capitalism, the United States, the passenger railways had been virtually nationalised with the creation of Amtrak.

He said people must expect at least the minimum level of service to which they have been used.

He said there had been "double standards" paticularly in London Docklands where £250 million was coughed up for one and a half miles of road "no questions asked" while the Jubilee line Tube extension had to rely on private investment.

He said: "The railway is the last means of civilised transport known to man. I am keen to

"We have much to lose. There is much at risk: a national timetable, through ticketing, interchangeable tickets, national products such as railcards. senior citizens' concessions and facilities for disabled travellers. Many people, including pensioners, anxiously await answers to questions concerning those services."

Liberal Democrat Malcolm Bruce said: "The Government's plans are shrouded in secrecy.'

The "paving" Bill was nevertheless approved by 325 votes to 256 and goes to the committee stage.

The White Paper which the Government was too emburrassed to publish before the general election will now be available "in the summer". A full-scale Bill will come later in the session.

If you are unhappy about what the Government looks likely to do to your rail services, you can protest to your MP. The Tories have an overall majority of only 22.

"Privatisation" could mean the end of the Bristol to Portishead line. A local bus company called Badgerline wants to rip up the track and turn it into a guided busway. Will they be able to under new legislation?

Reliance on private companies following the deregulation of the buses by Mrs Thatcher's Government has been a disaster. The number of bus companies has mushroomed but fares have soared and use of buses has plummeted. Mr MacGregor said it had been a great success.

NEWSWATCH

Blocked minds: The Government has published a pathetic document entitled A7 Hawick to the Border, pointing out that traffic congestion is now so bad that "something has to be done". It is softening up public opinion to accept more road building even though it is frightened to say so. Nowadays the propaganda-conscious bureaucrats call it a "route action plan".

The traffic problems between Carlisle, Hawick and Edinburgh are caused directly by Government action, the closure of the Waverley rail route from Carlisle to Edinburgh. But nowhere in this document is rail mentioned. The real solution to the traffic problems would be to reopen the railway. It would cost less, give people a proper choice and benefit the environment. The Scottish Office hopes to start implementing the 10-year road building programme for the area by the end of this year.

The Government is already making the A74 Carlisle to Glasgow road into a motorway and spending £200 million widening the A1 road between Newcastle and Edinburgh, Meanwhile British Rail (with no Domoch Firth crossing) is cutting staff on its line north of Inverness because it is losing customers to the new road already built across Domoch Firth with taxpavers' money. The Government has also refused to allow £100 million for the line from Edinburgh to Aberdeen to be electrified.

A tale of two cities: A campaign to persuade people to leave their cars at home and use public transport was launched in Birmingham in May.

The "Don't Choke the City - Ease the Squeeze" message was backed up by demonstrations of how much road space is wasted when people use their cars instead of trains and buses.

Birmingham's Passenger Transport Authority has had a consistent policy of improving public transport, reopening stations, providing park and ride stations and pleading with the Government for cash for the Midland Metro project.

What a contrast to London where the Government is directly responsible for public transport and the squeeze on BR has been so severe that it has cut off-peak services and withdrawn staff from stations so many people are being forced to switch to cars. The bus service is jammed by traffic and the Tube is dangerously overcrowded.

BR has closed Westbourne Park station and now wants to axe Primrose Hill and the Graham Road curve in Hackney with the result that another useful link in the chain of communications is lost, Other stations and services have almost certainly already been targeted for future closure or cut-

There is no money for CrossRail while Thameslink 2000 and the East London line extension have been stopped and there is a question mark over the Jubilee line extension. Cure for mad car disease: Amsterdam city council is drawing up plans for more cycle lanes and pedestrian zones after a referendum calling for a reduction in traffic.

Another chance to win with RDS: The national lottery is aiming to raise money for reopening campapigns. If you haven't already returned your lottery books, please do so as soon as possible You still have time to sell some to friends and relations and spread the railway message at the same time. The draw will take place on 18 July so hurry. Remember the first prize is £400 and there are many other prizes.

Government secret: A 40-ton juggernaut travelling at 60 mph has the same impact momentum, if it hits anything, as a family car travelling at 1,400 mph. Despite public opinion, the Government continues to favour road transport at the expense of safe, sensible, environmentally friendly rail.

Government admission: The Department of Transport admits that 68 people were killed by cars on pedestrian crossings in 1990. The department's aim nevertheless is to speed up traffic in towns

Cars only here please: There are no cycle racks at the Department of Transport Cardiff base at Caradog House.

LOCAL ACTION

Wessex

Harbour link: There is concern over BR's decision to close the Hamworthy freight line which serves Poole harbour. Talks have been held with the main user of the line who is keen to continue rail

Recycled railway: The former Chichester to Midhurst line is to be converted into a cycleway by the local authority. The branch is disappointed that rail services are not returning to this picturesque area but the proposal is preferable to other forms of

Island hopes: The annual meeting was held in Wareham and was the best attended for many years. The main feature was a presentation of the case for reopening the Isle of Wight's Ventnor to

Salisbury relief: Work has started on the new depot in Salisbury for the 159 diesel units which are to be introduced on the Waterloo to Exeter line this year. Driver training will begin in September and the units will be progressively introduced into service, initially on reliefs.

Reopening study: The branch was delighted to learn that Wiltshire County Council has started work on studies to reopen Wilton and Porton stations. Progress is also being made on the case to extend the platform at Tisbury

Better Brighton: The Cardiff to Brighton service has been substantially improved by Regional Railways for eastbound travellers. It allows a choice of trains for day trips - even on Sundays!

Peter Argent

Midlands

Midland link: A video was shown to the branch's annual meeting by Mike Owen of the Friends of the Settle - Carlisle Line. Afterwards there was a discussion on ideas for a through service from Leicester (at least) to the Settle and Carlisle. A conference on ideas for through services between the Midland Main Line and the S&C will be held in Leicester in October, Branches affected will be invited but general constructive views in writing are also welcomed. Please send them to RDS (S&C) 4 Linden Avenue, Countesthorpe, Leicester

Job lot: Our affiliated group, the Leicestershire and Northamptonshire Rail Action Committee, is developing and is looking for a development officer/ public relations officer (usual RDS rates of pay and conditions). Kettering Borough Council has joined it and the group is looking at the idea of councillor briefing papers.

Darryl Taylor-Smith

Severnside

Bridging the cash gap: British Rail is publicising its 63 trains a day between Cardiff and Bristol as an alternative for motorists who are paying increased tolls on the Severn Bridge.

Council action: Avon County Council has been instrumental in cetting changes to summer services on the line from Bristol to Weston-super-Mare and Penzance. A better spread of services is now provided for travellers at Bedminster, Yatton, Worle, and Weston but fewer trains now call at Parson Street and Weston Milton.

Thinking long: Plans to lengthen the platforms at Worle to deal with InterCity trains are under

People want trains: There is public suppport for a proposed service between Swindon and Bristol with reopened stations at Wootton Bassett, Corsham, Saltford and St Anne's Park, Resignalling will be necessary if, as is desirable, there is an intensified mix of stopping and express trains, together with additional reopenings at Long Ashton

Private expansion: The West Somerset Railway is keen to extend its independent line to the nowunused up bay at Taunton to allow regular connections with BR services. Some summer weekend BR trains from Bristol may also be allowed to run over the private line.

Joint action: Reopening of Chard junction station near the Dorset-Somerset border has been recommended by RDS to the South West Regional Planning Conference.

Wait for it: The large sums being spent on road schemes are attracting the attention of Dursley residents who have been waiting for years for funds to be allocated to railway improvements. They want a reopened station at Coaley Junction rather than a new station further north as suggested by Gloucestershire County Council. The junction site has the advantage of an existing bus service to

Eric Barbery

North Midlands

Double track: The annual branch meeting was marked by a local landmark in rail development an imminent start on not one, but two rail schemes. Chairman Graham Nalty was able to announce that, after years of campaigning, work on the first section of the Robin Hood line is due to start this year between Hucknall and Newstead, ready for opening in 1993. The ambitious Ivanhoe line scheme based on Leicester should open in stages during 1994/5.

Government policy: The branch decided that the probably well-intentioned Passenger's Charter will be a mixed blessing unless much-needed investment is not restricted as at present. Privatisation is another issue that will not benefit rail users while the competing road system is publicly funded using hypothetical criteria. All members were urged to campaign for more rail investment both to relieve road congestion and promote rail as an inherently more environmentally friendly mode of travel.

Strategy: Branch officers have put a lot of work into commenting on the Greater Nottingham Strategic Transport Study, and the Transport 2000/Council for the Protection of Rural England response to the Department of Transport's document Moving into the Nineties.

Ivanhoe: Mr James Holden, public transport coordinator for Leicestershire County Council, gave a fascinating talk and slide show to the AGM. The Council sponsored the reopening of South Wigston station in 1986 at a cost of £135,000, largely to help relieve traffic congestion in Leicester. Emboldened by this success, a more ambitious scheme was drawn up.

Although Leicestershire County Council were initially refused a Government Section 56 grant towards the capital cost of the scheme, a second application for £5 million was successful. Such grants are based not on the benefits accruing to rail passengers, but on relief of road congestion and onsequent time savings for road users! Studies by Leeds University show that the line will make an operating profit, giving the council an opportunity to receive a return on its investment. Rolling stock for the line will be purchased by the council, and might well be the class 157, a derivative of the class 156 Sprinters, built as part of a larger order for Strathclyde and Nottinghamshire County Council. Future land-use policies may well direct new development to sites on public transport corridors, with new railway stations being built in Leicester itself and on the lines to Melton, Market Har-

borough and Nuneaton. Getting the balance right: In 1991, the Department of Transport produced a document called Moving into the Nineties: Transport Development in the East Midlands. This regional brief made an encouraging start by stating: "The aim is to achieve a balance between roads, rail, air and sea transport so that each can make its proper contribution to a safer, more environmentally friendly and efficient transport system." However, the basic facts in the brief fail to achieve a balance. Most of this bland document is devoted to the department's roadbuilding schemes, with only passing mention of public transport. Strangely, there is no reference to the 1991 DTp booklet Transport and the Environment, or to the 1990

Government White Paper This Common Inheritance. The Government's 1986 Standing Advisory Committee Report on Trunk Road Assessment (SACTRA), which recommended the establishment of overall objectives for the whole transport system, is similarly ignored. The local branches of Transport 2000 and the Council for the Protection of Rural England have produced a booklet called Getting the Balance Right, a joint response from 21 organisations including the RDS. A conference with the same name was organised by Nottinghamshire County Council, due to be held on 16 May as part of National Environment Week, with national speakers and topical workshops to thrash out the ssues of transport and the environment. RDS looks forward to continued co-operation with other transport and environmental groups in formulating a rational transport policy.

Malcolm Goodall

London and Home Counties

As the new Government launches its transport policies, it is worth reminding ourselves that the Government is spending £2.8 billion on widening the M25. The Tory manifesto also contained a pledge to spend £6.3 billion on roads in general while making no commitment to any definite sums for railway investment. £2.8 billion could go a long way to making Network SouthEast one of the best systems in the world.

Private companies may be good for some things but they would be unlikely to undertake either Thameslink 2000 or CrossRail. The Government's flirtation with the idea of rail privatisation means we will have to defend and promote these essential schemes.

The Citizen's Charter gives a commitment to improved quality but in my experience as an NSE commuter, the things which delay my trains are often the direct result of decades of underinvestment in infrastructure - and poor investment when it does take place. The Government has made it clear no additional money will be made available to implement the charter, so any passenger compensation cash will come from other people's fares or from investment funds. BR might be tempted to withdraw services rather than pay compensation on a regular basis. The community will then be the

We are waiting with interest to see what the new Secretary of State for Transport will say about the closure proposals for Tilbury Riverside and Primrose Hill-Graham Road. By his deeds we shall

Howard Thomas

East Anglia

Comforting news: Class 156 Sprinters finally arrived on the East Suffolk line on 9 March and have greatly improved the comfort and reliability of the service. From 11 May, timings have been speeded up by 10 minutes. RDS has urged BR to mount an aggressive marketing campaign to win back lost business and gain new, now that it has a more attractive product.

Raising the roof: BR delayed but then went ahead with plans to demolish Lowestoft station roof, starting on Maundy Thursday. Waveney district council representatives have made it clear to us that they do not want to preserve the building as a station. They want it as a shopping centre with a new road across the platforms. A new station would have to be built to the west of it. Both RDS and the East Suffolk Travellers' Association have stressed the need for a central station on a single site, preferably the present one, and questioned the need for a new road. If the latter does go ahead, however, there must be traffic-calming measures in front of the new station and it must have easy access and bus and taxi interchange facilities. Indeed, the local bus company could be invited to contribute to the latter. We have also listed for Waveney district council and BR managers the facilities we expect to see in a station serving a town of this size.

Streetwise solution to traffic

At last! After no less than six delays (or five, or four, depending on who you ask), Manchester Metrolink light rail system began running between Bury and Manchester on Monday 6 April and hit the city streets a few weeks later on 27 April.

Initial impressions have been quite good despite the high fares and poor ride quality between Manchester and Bury. One disturbing incident occurred on 27 April when a tram failed near Crumpsall, blocking the line. All passengers on a following vehicle were decanted at Crumpsall and left to make their own way home by other means.

We have also been disappointed by the attitude of the traffic authorities in Manchester who have refused to give the trams priority at the many city centre junctions, thus slowing the trams' passage through the city.

The man who led the team which built the Metrolink system for a bargain price of £130 million was guest speaker at the RDS annual general meeting in Birmingham on 2 May.

Mr Eric Black, a former airborne soldier, also helped to set up the impressive Hong Kong mass transit system which he pointed out carried as many passengers per day as the entire BR network. Getting Metrolink moving was an enormous task and a race against time but the project had set the ground rules for future British systems. Of the 48 cities and towns bidding for a system at present, he estimated that about 10 would be built.

He said the Bury line was in such a decayed state when it was taken over from BR that rotten wooden bridge decking could be holed by a finger jab and stonework was as crumbly as a Cadbury's

More than 9,000 people had applied for the 200 jobs on offer and on average eight people were interviewed for each job.

Job flexibility was essential and even secretaries were currently encouraged to train as drivers so they could move a tram in emergencies.

It was already possible to buy a ticket from BR stations throughout Britain to any station on the Metrolink system, thanks to BR's Aptis system.



Give way to the tram: Metrolink should put cars in their place in Manchester city centre

But because of initial funding limitations and the unmanned Metrolink stations, the reverse is not ossible yet. But Metrolink tickets could be used for connecting journeys on trains throughout the Greater Manchester area.

Funding considerations had also been a key factor in choosing vehicles for Metrolink. The present ones cost £1 million each. Low-floor vehicles would have cost £1.8 million.

He pointed out that Government cash in the form of section 56 grants, as well as public cash raised locally had created Metrolink.

Mr Black said that to expect a private company to finance, build and operate such a system was "lunatic". He said: "They just could not do it."

The annual revenue of Metrolink is expected to be around £10 million while £250 million would now be needed to create it. Mr Black said he had set up a management structure for Metrolink which gave a clear line of responsibility.

On railways generally, there were often too many chiefs, while at the same time, no-one seemed to want to take responsibility.

When he had looked at London Transport manage ment in the past, he couldn't find anyone who actually ran the railway

Thanking Mr Black for his address, RDS president Michael Caton said many people had looked on with dismay when Britain abandoned its tram systems just when continental cities were developing theirs. Now thank goodness Manchester was spearheading a new era of trams for Britain.

"We hope it will lead to a great reduction in road

And the tram was doing 30

By JACK ELLIS

This phrase from one of John Betjeman's poems about London still sticks in my mind after 60 years.

At that time, 30 miles per hour was an exciting speed for city traffic. Today 30 is still pretty fast for the new breed of trams.

Manchester's Metrolink "supertram" which opened for business in April from Bury to Victoria will be limited to that speed on the street, and in the congested city centre, 30 mph is more than adequate.

But there have been complaints that the new supertram is considerably slower and more expensive than the old Bury electric trains which it replaces. It is restricted to 50 mph on the old Bury

But Metrolink marketing executive Margaret Hyde said: "Even if the tram takes a little longer, it takes the passengers right into the centre of the city and

"As for the fare, we are a private company and charge what we have to."

A single from Bury to Victoria costs £1.80.

Metrolink, however, is re-introducing many Britons to trams. The Docklands Light Railway in London is a similar concept but has no street

Only Blackpool kept faith with the tram when the rest of the country despatched them to the scrap yards. Blackpool by the way had electric vehicles from as early as 1881.

In the world of trams, Britain has fallen way behind Europe. The Metrolink vehicles were bought from Italy.

Manchester's new trams should have priority over road traffic in the city centre, as they give better service to a higher percentage of the travelling public. The now-10-mile-long Metrolink will be gradually expanded, providing the long-demanded rail link between Victoria and Piccadilly stations. Later it will be extended to Altrincham, taking over the present BR line.

It used to be said that what Manchester does today, London will do tomorrow. With its appalling traffic, London could do well to take notice.

It might also look to Grenoble in France where an excellent modern tram system is operating.

More than 40 other British towns and cities are considering copying Manchester.

The light way forward for freight trains

The question of whether freight trains can run over light rail or tram lines has been considered by British Rail.

The Railway Inspectorate has insisted that shared tracks will be considered only when one of two conditions is met.

Either the tracks will be shared on a tin separation basis (for instance freight at night, LRT during the day) or if all vehicles using the shared route are fitted with automatic train protection (ATP). This device will automatically apply the

brakes if a train or tram passes a signal at danger.

Other technical details such as whether wheel profiles are compatible will have to be taken into account but BR says there is "no reason in principle why such freight traffic should not run"

If there is a demand for freight services on a private tram line such as Metrolink in Manchester, the private owner would have to agree to freight train operation. Then ALL the vehicles operating on the line would have to be fitted with ATP unless the trains were time-separated.

LOCAL ACTION

North West

Offside: BR proposals to withdraw passenger services from the Philips Park No 1 Junction to Ashburys West Junction as well as Ashton Moss North Junction to Denton Junction have prompted us to object officially. It is ironic that the Prime Minister has promised cash to build a "Wembley of the North" stadium adjacent to one of the lines. It is understood that this stadium and a neighbouring velodrome will be built regardless of the outcome of Manchester's bid for the 2000 Olympic

South flaw: A timely reminder of what happens when a line loses a passenger service, and thus any statutory protection, occurred when the branch was officially informed of the decision to close the Northwich-Sandbach freight line after 10 May 1992. The decision seems to be partly due to a fire which destroyed the signal box at the line's northern end. What makes it difficult to understand is that this link provides the only direct route from Vauxhall Motors's Ellesmere Port factory complex to the south and ultimately the Channel Tunnel and Europe.

Spark gap: It is pleasing to see an increased number of trains running along the Cumbrian Coast line, following the introduction of the summer timetable. This has been countered, however, by a decrease in the InterCity services from Blackpool to London and Manchester to Edinburgh. Both these services are hampered by the need to change traction equipment at Preston, and their dependence on ageing (and expensive) Class 47 locomotives. What a difference Blackpool-Manchester electrification would make.

Numbers up: The branch's stall at Longsight depot open days was a resounding success despite a staffing shortage. Where were you all? Great interest was shown in RDS books and leaflets. It was a huge improvement on Crewe open day in 1991 which appeared to be full of trainspotters only interested in locomotive postcards.

Scotland

Positive thinking: Branch members were pleased to be involved in experimental rail trips round the suburban line in Edinburgh and to Culross and Leven in Fife, all freight lines which could some day carry passenger traffic. These trips suggest a degree of positive thinking in ScotRail.

Voters lose out: This optimism must, however, be tempered by serious disappointment following the result of the General Election. Certainly the serious prospect of a level playing field between rail and road investment has been dashed. Privatisation is also on the agenda again. Even though the electorate clearly wanted what RDS was campaigning for, their aspirations were not delivered by the

Suspicious silence: It was also scandalous that throughout the election campaign, the main parties and the media almost totally ignored the transport and environment issues. In Edinburgh though, transport was a major issue at election meetings. At one meeting, an RDS official pointed out that the city had nothing to show for having had Malcolm Rifkind (MP for Edinburgh Pentlands) as Transport Secretary for 15 months.

Advice line: Two days after the general election, the branch held its annual meeting. Guest speaker RDS national treasurer David Bigg gave us sound advice on how the privatisation issue should be handled in the new political situation. He also gave the branch some ideas for future action.

Strathelyde Council has announced a 20-year transport plan giving Glasgow £1 billion worth of new links. There would be a £74 million route to the airport and £250 million for an LRT scheme,

Douglas Smart

Yorkshire

Station lift: Passenger facilities at Leeds - long a cause for complaint - are in line for improvement

at last. The plans were described by station manager Gerald Egan when he addressed the branch annual meeting. The idea is to complement the long-standing proposals to increase track capacity. New ticket barriers and more comprehensive information screens will be installed, together with a new entrance at the south. Existing lifts will be upgraded for passenger use, and better waiting rooms provided. RDS welcomes these proposals which will go a long way to meeting our aspirations for the busiest station in our area.

Comeback: The Wakefield - Pontefract line is now open to passengers 25 years after falling victim to the Beeching cuts. An hourly service now runs between Knottingley and Wakefield Kirkgate. RDS hopes to see these trains extended to and from Wakefield Westgate, with a long-term aim of a through service to Leeds when track capacity

Diversion: Another interesting development in the new timetable is the diversion of certain York -Selby trains via Sherburn-in-Elmet, for which Selby District Rail Users group has long campaigned. It restores some of the Sherburn - York services lost when the Sheffield - Pontefract - York timetable was cut, as well as providing a link between Selby and the growing industrial estate adjacent to Sherburn station.

Closure row: In the same area, controversy over the Castleford - Milford junction closure proposal grinds on, with the Transport Users Consultative Committee for North East England sharing the doubts expressed by both RDS and Pontefract District Rail Action Group about the legality of the closure notice. BR, however, refuses to concede it is at fault. The Wakefield - Scarborough service over the line has been reduced to a Sundays-only operation, but BR has agreed to resume the joint publicity campaign with the action group in an effort to boost revenue - even though 1992 might well be the last summer in which it runs. I wonder if any private operators would be interested in

David Pickersgill

Midlands

A new Birmingham Heartlands station, located at the intersection of the Aston - Stechford line with the Washwood Heath tracks, could offer a major opportunity for rail development in the West Midlands - as long as a wide range of complementary infrastructure and services is also in place. This conclusion of the branch follows intensive assessment of the mega project which is uniquely placed to attract funding from several sources.

The scheme could provide many beneficial rail developments and help several areas where there are severe track capacity problems.

However, there is much concern that the initial media hype was unduly premature in that essential preliminary consultation with relevant authorities was not undertaken and that passenger surveys and feasibility studies have still not been arranged.

The Heartlands station concept would mean the concentration of all InterCity and international services at the new station and for all Regional services to run to or via Heartlands as well as the existing central city station at New Street. The scheme also assumes provision of an additional Metro route and diversion of the newly electrified

In reality these additional projects may not materialise. The full Heartlands scheme, initially announced as a £50 million project is more likely to incur around £200 million if fully implemented with all the supportive infrastructure.

A more fundamental concern of the branch is the ability of InterCity to deliver not just a three-level international station, but all the necessary ancilliary transport links and services, including Metro, Centro and Regional rail links and a new Black Country parkway. Without ALL the connecting and interchange facilities in place, the remote Heartlands station should remain no more than an interesting concept.

Alan Beyan

NEWSWATCH

British Rail's contract to carry letters for the Post Office is up for renewal and BR's parcels sector is hopeful that it will be clinched by the autumn.

RR officials admit that the environmental benefits of letters going by rail will not be an issue. The final decision is almost certain to be made on the basis of price and "quality of service".

Yet only recently the Post Office launched its 'green' awareness programme which seemed to be limited to switching some of its vehicles to run on lead-free petrol.

But some commitment to rail seems to remain with the introduction last year of two new Royal Mail Travelling Post Office services, one from Peterborough to Carlisle via Crewe, and the other from Carlisle to Peterborough via Newcastle.

Because of the new northbound service, the current Euston - Carlisle TPO was being speeded up and extended to Glasgow.

Around 2.1 million first class items are TPO-sorted each night with as much mail again conveyed for

This involves 650 staff and the nightly use of 32 TPOs. About a fifth of all mail travels by train for at least part of its journey.

This comprises a daily tally of 130 chartered trains plus the use of around 400 passenger services.

The recent changes will allow mail posted at the House of Commons at 9pm to reach Glasgow airport in time for the first flights — and next day delivery- to the Western Isles.

Two other TPOs, Whitehaven - Huddersfield and Peterborough - Crewe - Peterborough were withdrawn last year because they had become "out-

The Channel Tunnel opening is now unlikely before September 1993 - which gives us a little extra time to make our next major book a really

Articles on the French cities of Nantes, Rouen, arras, Tours, Orleans, Strasbourg, Mulhouse and Verdunhave now been added to those already on the stocks. An article on the northern Ardennes has also been received and one on the Luxembourg -Liege route is promised.

Is any member travelling to the Moselle valley, especially between Koblenz and Trier this summer? Is anyone planning to spend a holiday in Paris? If so, your help would be particularly welcome in contributing articles or commenting on those already written.

This book, like our other railguides, is a team effort, and the more people with knowledge who contribute, the better it is likely to be.

Further offers of help should be sent to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ

Drivers agree: Fifty per cent of drivers in London say they would use their cars less if public transport improved. Government response: Put financial pressure on British Rail so it makes big cuts to services in London.

Manchester is looking at ways to improve public transport after reckoning traffic congestion in Greater Manchester is costing £220 million a year.

A railway bridge at Woodlesford, near Leeds, has been fitted with one and a half inch steel plate to protect it from constant bashing by heavy lorries. Most of the incompetent, law-breaking drivers

Government policy: The number of company cars quadrupled between 1979 and 1991, increasing from 560,000 to 1,950,000.

Swiss sense: The leading Swiss cheical shippers, Ciba-Geigy, Sandoz and Hoffman La Roche, have formed a joint working party with Swiss Rail, aimed at reducing road traffic in favour of

Lorry carrying trains proposed to run north-south through France would save £100 million a year in motorway maintenance costs alone. The one-mile long trains with 100 lorries on baord would travel every six minutes at 75 mph.

WESTMINSTER WATCH Crossing the River The railway would also be an additional crossing of the Thames -

creeping privatisation of transport in

London, and the transfer to the

LDDC was an outrage. It was a

prelude to complete privatisation.

how a railway system under the

aegis of the Department of the

with the rest of the rail and bus

as little impact as possible on

residential areas and community

facilities. That is why Government

must take responsibility for transport

and be willing to use public money

where necessary for their objectives.

Two of the reasons why there had

been so many problems with the

DLR were the underfunding and

to ensuring that it ran effectively.

Government's lack of commitment

Rosie Barnes (SD, Greenwich) said

that the people of Greenwich must

by Docklands. Congestion in the

river, was appalling.

taking them to the city.

be given the opportunities presented

area, particularly when crossing the

Even those who travelled to work by

Rolls Royce would be tempted by a

railway crossing the river to Canary

Wharf in 10 minutes, and then

The railway's route through

Greenwich was surprisingly

The line would stimulate

development and increase

centre. A great waterfront

to be provided.

uncomplicated, an almost ready-

made route was available and it

investment in Greenwich town

development was planned for the

forthcoming decade, but a proper

transport infrastructure would have

She hoped there would be no delay

mean the difference between a

car in the Blackwall tunnel.

journey of 10 minutes and one of

perhaps an hour or more, stuck in a

in proceeding with the Bill. It would

would cost little to local residents.

networks in London.

There had been no explanation of

Environment would be co-ordinated

Public transport must operate in the

wider public interest, and must have

Discussions in the House of Commons were cut short this spring by the approach of the election. More changes were brought about by the arrangement of a new Parliament.

The London Docklands Bill discussed the long-awaited extension of Docklands Light Railway south of the Thames. Shortly before the approach of the election ended the old Parliament. the Bill was passed on 24 FEBRUARY enabling the

Docklands Light Railway to cross south of the Thames. Neil Thorne (C. Ilford South) said the purpose of the Bill was to permit the extension of the line from Mudchute Station under the river to Lewisham via Greenwich British Rail station.

"It will be elevated through the Deptford creek area and continue on ground level and in cutting along the valley of the Ravensboume river.' It was intended that construction and operation of the railway would be undertaken by the private sector. This was the first time in which the private sector would retain ownership of the works and maintain a commercial interest in the operation of the railway after its construction. A concession arrangement would operate. Mr Thorne said that John Maples (C, Lewisham West) and Colin Mornihan (C, Lewisham East) were enthusiastic about the proposals. London Docklands Development Corporation, London Transport has made a mess of it.

Four-year old baby

Mildred Gordon (Lab, Bow and Poplar) said: "The line is a four-year old baby with teething problems. To extend before the problems are sorted out would be ludicrous. It is pernicious that the railway is effectively being privatised by a Private Bill. If it is cheaper to build a tunnel at ground level, that is what the company will do. If it is cheaper to build an ugly railway at a lower price, why not?"

Roger Freeman (Public Transport Minister) said an extension of the Docklands Railway to Lewisham and Greenwich would provide welcome access for the people of south London to an important

something that was relatively limited, even with the recent opening of the Dartford-Thurrock bridge.

The Government had supported the principle of the private sector for the simple reason that the project would be completed sooner than would otherwise have been the case. Without the private sector involvement in the project, it might have taken several more years. "Those words will be heard many more times," said Mr Freeman. "The Channel Tunnel project has been a remarkable success. The Government believe the private sector's provision of the tunnel is a tremendous achievement."

Badly designed Joan Ruddock (Lab, Deptford) said she spoke both as a constituency member and as a front bench speaker on transport in London. "I begin with the record of the Docklands Light Railway," It was badly designed, with a capacity far too limited for the potential demand. It was another example of the Government trying to get new infrastructure on the cheap. The extension would create a much needed cross-river link between east and south-east London and greatly improve links with the Docklands. It was likely that many commuters using an extended DLR would transfer from their cars. That was enormously important to cutting pollution and easing road congestion. It was also undeniable that DLR and its extension were fully accessible to people with mobility handicaps. This was important and a considerable improvement on existing public transport services in south London. Turning to proposals to transfer the DLR to the London Docklands Development Corporation, the Labour party had long argued that there should be a strategic plan for transport in London. It could not be left to the operation of market forces. Private companies could not and did not wish to pick up the responsibility for a coherent transport network. It was up to the

Government to provide that

framework.

Serious Objection

Alan Amos (C, Hexham) said he strongly supported public transport in London and he frequently tried to get to work on the Docklands Light Railway. It followed that he supported the extension of the DLR. "I have one serious objection. How can the management be expected to run an extended system to Lewisham and Greenwich when they cannot run the present system? DLR Limited must be the most hadly managed and incompetently run part of the whole London transport system. I have wasted

more time hanging around for trains and buses than I care to remember." The Government were right to transfer the management of the DLR to the LDDC if for no other reason than they could not do worse than London Transport had. Tower Gateway escalator was often out of service. There was no coordination between routes to Stratford and the connecting trains at Crossharbour to Tower Gateway and Bank. The disruption is bad because it is daily, he said. "I say yes to the extension, but only if the management are paid by results directly related to DLR's reliability and punctuality, the only incentive to bring about radical improvements in the operation of the newly extended system. The DLR is superb in concept but disgraceful in its conception."

Lack of planning

Harry Cohen (Lab, Leyton) said the fact that DLR was a disaster was because the Government had built it on the cheap. It was an example of market forces at work and of what happened when there was a lack of proper planning in building such a system. Matters would not be much better if the LDDC had organised the system when it first appeared. but the LDDC was not a transport operator. It would control the railway only as a first step towards privatisation. The disaster would continue as a result of the Government's chosen course. Ms Gordon could tell her constituents how she had defended their interests when the Government and the LDDC wanted to walk all over them. As Ms Ruddock said, the Labour party welcomes investment in new public transport infrastructure.

Such investment had been grossly lacking in 13 years of the present Government.

The control of London's transport was being fragmented. "The transfer of the Bill to the LDDC half way through its

proceedings was disgraceful. It was wrong in principal because one could not ensure the strategic planning for London transport as a whole. It broke up management of the transport network. It was also a step in the direction of privatisation."

Closing the debate, Mr Thorne said the original railway was designed for 25,000 people a day. It was now intended to cater for 100,000. The Bill was given a third reading.

and passed.



EDITED BY JACK ELLIS, STUART McNAIR AND LLOYD BUTLER

Rocks off the road

By GEOFFREY SYER

The absurdity of the Government's lack of commitment to rail and its preference for road is being shown up in a plan specifically aimed at cutting pollution.

To reduce acid rain, four coal-burning power stations in the Midlands are to be fitted with de-sulphurisation equipment.

One of the stations, Ratcliffe on Soar, Notts, will need to receive 300,000 tonnes of limestone every year.

It has yet to be decided whether the limestone will come from Wirksworth or Buxton quarries which are both in Derbyshire and on the edge of the Peak District National Park.

There is a rail link between Wirksworth and Ratcliffe needing only minor attention after years of disuse.

It has been calculated that one train a day would be enough to carry the stone compared with 100 movements by lorry.

Yet amazingly an argument is still going on as to whether the limestone should go by road or rail. Powergen is said to be worried that using rail is more expensive.

But the use of lorries would go far towards negating the whole purpose of the exercise - to reduce pollution.

The Government meanwhile claims it wants to clean up the environment.

The MP for West Derbyshire Patrick McLoughlin was a junior Minister in the Ministry of Transport tand we all know what that means). With magnificent understatement, he is quoted as saying he is "not against road transport".

Since Mr McLouglin was returned at the general election with an increased majority, the outlook for rail is not good.

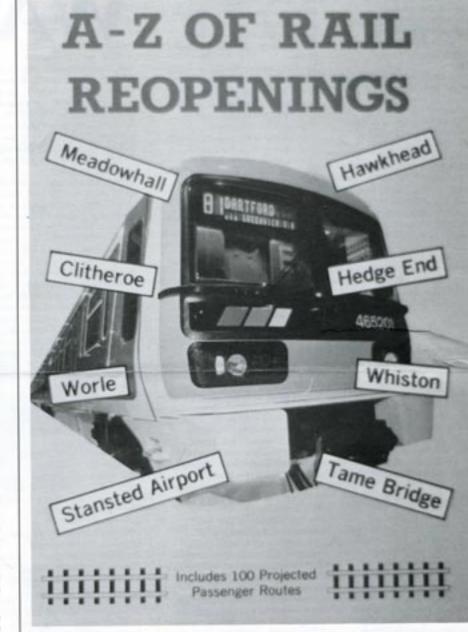
However an organisation called Rocks off the Road is fighting the matter and is enquiring about a promise by the old Central Electricity Generating Board (supposedly given before it was privatised) to use rail.

Rocks is receiving support from Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Greens.

Originally 10 power stations were to be fitted with de-sulphurisation equipment. Now it's only four. They are Ratcliffe, Rugeley, Staffs, Drax, Yorkshire and Ferrybridge, Yorkshire.

If you want to contact Rocks off the Road, ring Nigel Giligan on 0629 56347 or Greg Clare on 0629 580607.

 Ratcliffe is the seventh worst power station in Britain for sulphur dioxide emissions, according to Friends of the Earth.



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This is the new book produced by RDS to highlight some of the good news on British Rail. It gives details of which lines and stations have reopened in the recent rail renaissance but it also explains the routes which RDS is fighting to have reopened in the future. For small amounts of money, compared to the vast amounts wasted on roads, really useful links can be put back in place giving people a chance once again to travel by rail. The book is already selling well. Order your copy from RDS sales officer Alan Harwood, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN. It costs £5.70 (including post and packing). Make cheques payable to RDS.