

Road-rail myths exposed

Railway Conversion - the Impractical Dream by E A Gibbins

Review by Norman Bradbury

Most Railfuture members will be familiar with campaigns to convert railways into roads for use by buses and heavy goods vehicles.

The first such campaign was the work of Brigadier Lloyd and dates from 1954. This was followed by the Railway Conversion League which survived until the death of its chairman Angus Dalgleish in 1994.

More recently, Paul Withrington has revived the idea under the banner, Transport Watch.

Mr Gibbins' book has thoroughly researched the conversionist's proposals, explaining difficulties and analysing the costs involved and systematically deals in great detail with the technical issues.

It becomes clear the conversion of rail into road is far from a simple matter of laying tarmac on the formation and the conversionist's claims seriously under-estimate the costs and difficulties, while at the same time grossly over-estimate the benefits, if indeed there are any.

Also explained are the real reasons for the railways' economic plight due to governmental interference and mismanagement from the First World War to the present day.

This book is to be highly recommended and should be on every rail campaigner's bookshelf.

The book is available by mail order from Leisure Products, 11 Bedford Grove, Alsager, Stoke on Trent ST7 2SR. Tel: 01270 873208

Campaigning for European links

"New possibilities for European passengers" will be the theme of the European Passengers' Federation annual general meeting and conference on Saturday 10 March in Munich.

Speakers have been invited to tell us about new developments in many aspects of travel, from ticketing to infrastructure.

There will also be workshop discussions at this event, which provides an excellent opportunity to network with pro-public transport campaigners in many European countries.

Booking forms and programmes will be available as soon as possible after Christmas from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ on receipt of SAE.

Information will also be available at www.epf-eu.be together with details of other EPF activities and policies. It is also possible, via links from this website, to reach the websites of our 22 sister organisations in 14 countries.

Crossing borders

Travelling across European borders by train is in some cases easier than it used to be.

If you want to go from London to Brussels, Cologne, Amsterdam or Luxembourg, you have a good choice of international trains

which cross borders seamlessly. There are also some border crossings which have been improved in recent years, such as Enschede-Gronau on the Dutch-German border or at Wissembourg between Germany and France.

However, there are other crossings where services are infrequent, connections are poor or where trains no longer cross the border. This hampers the rail industry when it is trying to compete with road and indeed air transport.

The European Passengers' Federation is working on a report on European cross-border services which will sometimes cover bus and tram as well as rail links. We shall show how and where improvements have been made but also point out priorities for further enhancements.

Four members of the Railfuture International Committee have been working on the report in collaboration with Continental colleagues from several countries. It is envisaged that the report will be published during 2007.

Stratford

Eurostar managers have assured Railfuture that they do intend to serve this newly built station but they cannot say when. The new station is about 600 yards from the domestic one, which is an in-



The EPF logo

creasingly important hub. The Docklands Light Railway link to it should be open in 2010, but Eurostar passengers may not have to wait that long to use the station.

We had suggested a shuttle bus between the two Stratford stations as an interim measure. After all, some international airports are served in this way from their nearest railhead.

Eurostar has said that the high volumes of construction traffic being generated by the Stratford City and Olympic Park redevelopment would make it very difficult to run good quality, reliable bus services to the new station.

We have accepted that a shuttle bus along busy roads may not be ideal - but this option should be balanced against the alternative of an additional three-mile train journey into Liverpool Street and a trip along the busy Circle Line to reach St Pancras International.

Could some market research be carried out into what passengers to/from Docklands, East London and much of East Anglia would prefer?

Colne connected

By Andrew Macfarlane
andrew@mcrua.fsnet.co.uk
and Andy Shackleton
ashacks@btinternet.com

Campaigners fighting to re-establish a rail link from the Yorkshire Dales to Greater Manchester - by rebuilding the 12-mile line from Skipton to Colne - got together in October.

The Colne Connected conference was well-organised and well-attended and held at the Old Stone Trough Inn at Kelbrook, near Colne. Campaigner Colin Speakman said rail services brought great economic benefits to society, particularly in enhancing employment prospects.

If the line did reopen it would be the first since 1998, the Robin Hood line. It could be opened within five years for £33million while a road "solution" would cost double that. Brian Simpson MEP of the North West Rail Campaign said the reopening was viable, and would be more likely if

"we had control of our own affairs in the North West, as in Scotland and Wales".

He said campaigners constantly had to challenge the "can't do" attitude prevalent in the rail industry. Network Rail should be keen to enhance the network.

Drew Haley of Northern Rail said that the South East Lancashire Railway Action Partnership was doing a fantastic job but subsidy would be needed to run trains on the reopened line.

Gordon Prentice, Labour MP for Pendle, said many transport planners were still locked into the bypass culture of the road lobby.

Andy Shackleton of SELRAP encouraged people to send in a letter of support for the Skipton-Colne to someone of influence or persuade someone else to do so. 23 MPs had already sent in letters of support. More info: www.selrap.org.uk

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Third Annual General Meeting of The Railway Development Society Limited will be held at Lancashire County Council, County Hall, Pitt Street, Preston, PR1 0LD at 11.00am on Saturday 12 May 2007.

There will be a morning session with a guest speaker commencing at 11.00 followed by a buffet lunch. The formal AGM will commence at 13.30.

Nominations for election to the Board of Directors must be sent to Railfuture Returning Officer, POBox 7690, Hinckley, Leicester LE10 9WJ to arrive by 1 February 2007.

Nomination forms can be obtained from the same address or from the Railfuture website, www.railfuture.org.uk.

Special Resolutions to amend the Memorandum of Articles of Association should be sent to Railfuture Returning Officer, POBox 7690, Hinckley, Leicester LE10 9WJ to be received by 24 March 2007.

If you wish to receive a copy of any special resolutions please send a stamped, self addressed envelope to the same address marking the envelope 'Special Resolutions' in top left hand corner.

Motions for discussion at the AGM must be sent to: M Crowhurst, 33 Station Court, Aberford Road, Garforth, Leeds LS25 2QQ to arrive by 28 April 2007.

Further details and a booking form for the buffet lunch will be sent to members later.

By Order of the Board, C A Lingard, Company Secretary,
1 December 2006