

RDS

RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

(incorporating RIS & RDA)

BM - RDS

London WC1V 6XX

01-405 0463

Price: 25 pence (free to members)

RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Number ONE

OCTOBER 1978

R. I. S. and R. D. A. are DEAD

LONG LIVE the R. D. S.

Following formal decisions by the membership of the three Constituent Societies, (the Railway Invigoration Society, the Railway Development Association, London Area and the Railway Development Association, Midland Area), earlier this year, the Railway Development Society came into existence on 1st October 1978, after many months of hard work by its interim Steering Committee, and was launched at a Press Conference held at "Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese", Fleet Street, London on 3rd October.

As the three Societies had virtually identical aims it was decided by the members that a merger would strengthen the voice of those campaigning for the retention and greater use of rail transport. Whilst it is sad in some ways to see the demise of three organisations which have been in existence for over a quarter of a century, the decision to merge was reached by an overwhelming majority of all three bodies.

Now that the Beeching Era is past - or so we are assured by the politicians - we must look to the future and it is the view of all concerned that we can achieve this more effectively together than apart.

This new Pro-Railway organisation will therefore campaign with vigour for the Development of the Railways in Great Britain, and, as will be seen later, there is even Parliamentary pressure to re-open some lines closed under the Beeching Plan, which is becoming to be regarded as an exercise in "overkill."

The immediate objectives of the new Society include, pressure for more investment in the railways; a rolling programme of railway electrification; more freight traffic on British Rail; and the re-commencement of the Channel Tunnel project as a rail-orientated link to the Continent, but without the massive roll-on, roll-off complex originally planned for Cheriton and which caused so much concern to those who cherished the environment of Kent.

Branches of the new Society will be formed throughout the country building on the foundations laid by the former organisations. Close co-operation will also be maintained with both the National Council on Inland Transport and Transport 2000.

Vice-Presidents: The Very Reverend J.H.S. WILD, M.A. Sir JAMES FARQUHARSON, K.B.E., B.Sc., F.I.C.E.

A.W.T. DANIEL, M.A., Ph.D., M.I.C.E., M.I.T.A., A.C.I.T. S.C. HAWTREY, C.B. JOHN ARLOTT, O.B.E.

ROBERT AICKMAN Sir JOHN BETJEMAN Chairman: R.V. BANKS General Secretary: J.M. STANLEY, M.A.

ELECTRIFICATION - KEY TO THE FUTURE OF BRITISH RAIL !

That was the theme of a discussion paper issued by the British Railways Board, in May, in which Sir Peter Parker, in his introduction, stated "a rolling programme for main line electrification over the next 20 to 30 years could emerge, to provide a transport system which our successors can enjoy in the next century."

By the time this item goes to press the Society will have submitted its detailed comments on the Document, but in the meantime a few observations would not be inappropriate. Firstly it is significant that only 21% of British Rail's route mileage (2,341 miles) is electrified, as against 99% in Switzerland; 48% in Italy and 27% in France, making it a mere 17th in the "league table" of national railway systems.

More significantly half of this was only completed in the last 20 years, including the first substantial part of the Inter-City routes.

Why should this be and why, only now, is the concept of a rolling programme being considered?

The first stems largely from the attitude of successive Governments to investment in the railways from as far back as the formation of the "Big Four" (L.M.S., L.N.E.R., G.W.R. and S.R.) in the 1920s, an attitude which was to continue even after nationalisation. Now, with the specific recommendations of the Select Committee on Nationalised Industries and the Government's commitment to a new approach to railway investment contained in the 1977 Transport White Paper (Cmd. 7038) it is possible to view such projects in a different light.

Both the former RDA and RIS have criticised the "stop/start" approach to electrification and the document confirms that by viewing schemes on a "network" rather than on a "line" basis, as in the past, "the combined net effect of electrification would exceed the sum of the quantifiable effects of electrifying individual lines." Also when considering the sample programmes it contains for illustrative purposes the document finds that the larger the network electrified "the potential for additional net revenue gains on other passenger and freight services through using electric traction is significantly increased." On the freight side it concludes "only when a substantial amount of route mileage is electrified, can the comprehensive use of electric traction for freight be contemplated." At the present time diesels are used, even on electrified routes, to avoid a multiplicity of traction changes.

From the energy point of view B.R. argues "If the railway turns considerably to electric traction and yet oil availability and prices turn out to be much easier than expected, no very serious effect will be felt." On the other hand if the eggs were put in the oil basket and the worst forecasts of shortages came true the position could be disastrous both for the railways and for the country as a whole. At the present time the railways use 800,000 tonnes of oil for traction in a year but with large scale electrification this could be reduced to 100,000 tonnes. The only apparent anomaly in the Board's present traction policy is the recent large-scale investment in diesel powered HST sets, but given the long lead time necessary to get a rolling programme of electrification under way and the decision to develop only the electric version of APT, with a life of at least 15 years, we may perhaps see HSTs on the London - Norwich, Cardiff - Crewe and even the Central Wales line!

Turning to the railways' general performance, the 1977 Annual Report is again encouraging and reveals an operating surplus, before interest, of £68.4m., compared with a surplus of £13.7m. in 1976 - an improvement of £54.7m. Once more the Board managed to work within the cash limits set by the Government by a margin of £27m. and to reduce the deficit on freight and parcels business from £66m. in 1975 to just under £5m. in 1977. Even so doubts have been cast by the Select Committee on Nationalised Industries (1) on the ability of the Board to reduce the need for Government support by the target date of 1981,

for whilst overall passenger revenue was up 4% in 1977, a move towards the 1981 target would require a growth in passenger volume assuming average yield per mile remained at present levels. In the Committee's view it is therefore unlikely that the remaining 23% reduction can be attained simply by continuing present trends.

Whilst railway manpower has been reduced by some 12,000 in the last 2 years to obtain a further reduction in net deficit a reduction of 45,000 - 50,000 would be required by 1981 as against the 40,000 proposed by B.R. 18 months ago. Similarly whilst more people travelled by train in 1977 with passenger volume up 3% on 1976 the Select Committee sees the need for a real growth in passenger revenue if the target is to be achieved.

Returning to B.R.'s Annual Report, on the freight side the new Speedlink services for less than train load traffic carried over 2m. tonnes capturing 25% new business, and with the provisions in the 1978 Transport Act for the return of Freightliners to B.R. the change will in the words of the Report "complete the marketing portfolio of Rail-freight and enable the quest for more profitable traffic to be pursued jointly, and in a manner which will allow a complete range of movement options to be presented to customers" more so as Freightliners appear to have finally overcome the need for large depots and expensive cranes by the development of a new handling technique called SCIDS.

This is a steel pallet capable of lifting ISO containers carrying up to 22 tons on its own telescopic legs and has been developed on airespace principles by the TRRL and Bath University. Its main advantage is that it can open up new areas not served by main depots and significantly reduce train turnround and lorry waiting times with an estimated saving of £30,000 p.a. on a 15 wagon Freightliner train.

The basic principle is that road vehicles, carrying containers, on the special pallets, would position them over the railway tracks, drop the telescopic legs to await the arrival of the Freightliner wagons which would then move beneath the pallets, lowering the containers on to the wagons by retracting the legs. By this means a 15 wagon train could be loaded and on its way in about 40 minutes. Considerable yard discipline and careful supervision would, however, be necessary for the system to work smoothly - its only apparent drawback.

The 1977 Report is by no means all euphoric and particular attention is drawn to the need for greater investment to replace worn out equipment, particularly as past constraints have already resulted in the accumulation of arrears of replacement, more so as much of the equipment purchased in the late 50s and early 60s is now coming to the end of its useful life. To meet these needs investment would have to rise by up to 30% during the next 10 years, assuming a start could be made in 1981/2, and this would have to continue for some years into the 1990s. Particular attention is drawn to the demands of rural services - often unprofitable and incapable of sustaining the high cost of rolling stock replacement - and the Board stresses that some decisions cannot be postponed much longer and that even new conditions on some services are becoming unacceptable.

Two new developments could, however, drastically alter this and it is worth briefly considering them at this juncture. The first concerns the rolling stock and the second the infrastructure. With the ageing fleet of DMUs, most of which were built in the late 1950s, serious consideration must now be given to their replacement. To use conventional units would be far too expensive as the only alternative (class 210) costs in the region of £600,000 for a 3 car set. B.R.'s recent project with British Leyland could therefore be the answer.

Consisting of a Leyland National 12m. body (40 seats); 100 ton end load resistant underframe; 4-wheel Flexicoil suspension and isolating rubber mountings between body and underframe, it has been tested at up to 88 m.p.h. and with modern suspension design can overcome many of the problems experienced with the traditional 4 wheel

railbuses of the 1950s. Later this year the prototype will be rebuilt as a self-powered unit for further testing. B.R. nevertheless have emphasised that there is no commitment to further development but it could well prove a cheap and flexible replacement for many lightly used services and the Society's East Anglian Branch has issued a detailed report on its potential. (See under Branches & Areas, p.9)

The other aspect of rural operation which has been receiving attention is the ever present problem of level crossings. In an effort to cut the cost of these a working party of officials from B.R. and the Department of Transport recently visited France, Holland, Switzerland and West Germany and the Department has since approved a 10 year plan to modernise 100 crossings a year at a cost of £40m. by the use of automation. 2,500 crossing keepers would however be made redundant over the period with a consequent saving to the Board of £11m. but this is surely less hardship than if whole lines had to close.

The final subject which has been causing concern in recent years is the transport of dangerous loads by road and here we find an unexpected ally in Miss Shelagh Roberts, in her capacity as Chairman of the Planning and Transportation Committee of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. Recently she expressed strong support for the pledge by William Rodgers, Secretary of State for Transport, that stringent measures to govern the movement of hazardous goods would be law by next Summer. We have heard this all before and as the Health & Safety Executive's Consultation Document has only just gone out to interested parties there still seems to be plenty of scope for feet dragging on this issue. A timely conference on this subject was held at the end of September but with only 25% of liquid petroleum gas going by rail and 75% by road Miss Roberts is pressing for this to be drastically reversed. (2) Unfortunately it appears that only major disasters such as those which occurred in Spain and Mexico are able to have any impact on the situation.

- (1) Seventh Report from the Select Committee on Nationalised Industries. HMSO. Aug. 1978.
- (2) Municipal Journal. 18/8/78. p. 819.

CHANNEL TUNNEL REPORT MAKES FAVOURABLE IMPRESSION IN BRUSSELS.

RDA published its proposals on the Channel Tunnel and rail link (CTRL) earlier this Summer *, distributing the paper widely both here and on the Continent. This coincided with a welcome revival of interest in Channel Tunnel matters. Various schemes are being promoted - (bridge to motorway standards with rail routes, submerged pipes combined with a bridge using sandbanks and of course the joint BR/SNCF study for a single bore single track tunnel).

To some extent all this was no doubt prompted by developments in the attitude of EEC to infrastructure transport link assessment and financial assistance. The cancellation of the last project coincided with the Cairncross studies which were themselves overtaken by events so that environmental and social benefit aspects of the project still need to be investigated in greater depth.

The RDA (CTRL) proposals, on the basis of 1973 prices, are cheaper than previous proposals as they are based on the use of existing formations and very much less tunnelling and land already held by B.R., and requiring only minimal new land-take. By placing the high speed route in the centre of existing formations (the SR tracks then being on the outside) the environmental impact will be lessened. The location of a London terminal is of vital importance and the proposal for a mainline through station (underground) at Euston Cross will provide full interchange facilities with King's Cross, St. Pancras and Euston and will also provide the best possible link with LT's tube network. More importantly it will assure that the true travel time advantages through the tunnel are obtained with the added advantage of a station for the City at Black Friars and also one in South London.

As we see in a later item (p.7) diversion from air to rail on short haul trips will be substantial. The Channel Tunnel should therefore figure in all plans, debates and public inquiries concerned with airport strategies and planning in the South East. As probably 5-6% of air travellers live south of the river the RDA proposal for a station at Croydon and also at Ashford (Kent) - also possibly Tonbridge - will cater for that traffic. Construction of the link in Inner London using existing formations (some not at present in use) will of course create problems, particularly for LT., but the Executive say "the proposal is not impossible!" and indeed agree that Euston Cross would certainly be preferable to Victoria or (particularly) White City. Euston Cross would be a through station and stabling could best be arranged at Neasden. Ultimate development of on-going services would depend on finding a suitable route for continental vehicles - at least to Birmingham in the first instance.

A rail orientated Channel Tunnel, as proposed, will provide a long distance Motorail link from London and beyond, and thereby reduce the pressure on roads in Kent. At the same time by proposing a small three-station for motorail in Kent - between Westernhanger and Ashford - motorail traffic from the South would be catered for. Such a station would require about 9 hectares of land compared with the 138 proposed for Cheriton. Equally important for BR is the freight link for long distance Continental traffic and by proposing "European Gauge" full advantage will be gained for freight (trailer and lorry) traffic, and of course for containers.

The RDA proposals also deal with other aspects of the Channel Tunnel and are in favour of a single bore (double track) tunnel, in keeping with several international developments. This has cost and in particular safety advantages and provides flexibility for the siting of cross-overs and with considerable advantages for maintenance possession and for night traffic. The proposals were, needless to say, sent also to railway administrations on the Continent where they are still being studied. The response from Strasbourg/Brussels has been encouraging and it is hoped, of course, that the Department of Transport will eventually find that the financial difficulties can be overcome and not leave financing of a Channel Tunnel entirely to others.

The new Society (RDS) would like the proposals to be costed and fully assessed and will continue to work to that end and hopes that it will be done sooner rather than later, possibly under EEC auspices.

* The Channel Tunnel Project and the Future. RDA. MAR. 1978. K.M.

WIDE SUPPORT FOR ISLE OF GRAIN PROPOSALS

The Report * prepared by Transport 2000 for Medway Borough Council into the feasibility of restoring a rail passenger service on the Isle of Grain, in Kent, was finally published in May. Stemming from a request from its sponsors (Medway Borough Council) in February 1977, it has involved many months of research, house-to-house surveys, a traffic census and hours of work at home by our Chairman, Mr R.V.Banks, and one of the Society's Technical Advisers, Mr J.R.Ogilvie, C.Eng., M.I.Mech. E., M.I.E.E.

Among its conclusions are:- (a) That the population of the Hoc peninsula has more than doubled in the 16 years since the passenger services were withdrawn in 1961, and that most of the new residents are commuters.

(b) That to provide an appropriate service for local needs the present freight-only line should be electrified and if main line services from Gravesend and Sheerness were extended to places on the peninsula some journey times could be cut by as much as 90 mins.

(c) That electrification costs could be cut by £500,000 by the use of huge lineside storage batteries to drive the 4 coach trains similar to those used for driving submarines, which could draw current at off-peak times.

(d) That with at least 4,300 residents earning their living on the mainland and 2,200 coming in from Gravesham and the Medway Towns to man the island's major industries some 3,300 might use the train services for work and that 1,500 families could save up to an hour in travelling for shopping.

(e) The surveys indicate that there is an important job for the railway to be doing right up to the end of the century, particularly with the impending energy crisis. Some 13,000 vehicles use the A228 during the working day and restoration of the passenger trains would also reduce local road congestion.

(f) A complete scheme with 5 stations would cost about £3.5m. and a modified scheme to a "park & ride" station at Sharnal Street about £1m. This compares favourably with £4m. for one mile of motorway but the latter would not bring the same community benefits as a restored railway.

Since publication considerable interest has been shown in the project, both locally and in the country as a whole, and it also featured in a special $\frac{1}{2}$ hour programme on Radio Medway. Messrs: Banks & Ogilvie have recently met officials of Kent County Council and Medway Borough Council when further details were requested. Above all the final hurdle has been overcome in that the report has been accepted as a very professional operation. Particular credit, however, must go to John Ogilvie for the amount of work which he has put in to produce a document of undoubted high standing.

R.V.B.

* "Passenger Trains on the Hoo Peninsula - a feasibility study. Transport 2000, Kent Working Party. May 1978.

Copies of the report can be obtained from Mr Banks at the address shown at the end of this magazine, price 50p. + 15p. (p. & p.)

A LOAD ON YOUR MIND

"Britain is now paying more for moving less than it was 10 years ago," and government policies over the last decade have caused more energy per tonne to be used in transporting freight. "In 1966 one ton of derv and petrol moved 299 tons of freight by road but by 1976 the same ton of fuel was moving only 215 tonnes of freight."

These facts and figures, pointing out the disadvantages of moving freight by road are amongst much useful material contained in a book recently published, under the above title, by Transport 2000. It is a pity, however, that the booklet does not also describe some of the vested interests, on both sides of industry, which seek to perpetuate this situation and stand in the way of a shift of more freight to the railways - like the reluctance to introduce tachographs and the T&GWU threats to "black" firms interested in greater rail usage.

This book can be obtained from Transport 2000, 40, St. James ST. London W.1., price 50p.

T.J.G.

A GUIDE FOR RAIL USERS' GROUPS

This 12-page guide, the first to be published by the new Society (RDS) is full of useful advice on why and how to set up and run a rail users' group. It should be our ambition to see such groups functioning on all secondary rail lines, and some main lines as well, to involve local people in their promotion and improvement, whilst also being prepared to fight any future attempts to run down or close them.

The guide gives detailed information on how to arouse local interest and set up such a group; and shows what existing groups (many of them closely associated with the Society) are doing in the South East, East Anglia, the Cotswolds, Lancashire and Lincolnshire. Not only people wishing to set up new groups, but also members of established ones, should find something that they can learn from this guide; especially groups whose activities may, up till now have been largely or entirely centred on the problems of commuters.

T.J.G.

The above guide costs 30p. and is available from:- V.G.Christie, 26, Davis Road, London W3 7SQ (Single copies) (Bulk rates from Mr Banks)

SPARKS EFFECT

As further proof that rail electrification actually works and produces results, in fact every electrification scheme has brought new traffic, the King's Cross - Hitchin - Royston new electric services were expected to increase revenue by 6% in the first 6 months. In fact revenue went up by 30% !!!

IN PARLIAMENT

For former members of RIS who would normally expect to find this feature at this point, see the enclosed SUPPLEMENT - a bumper issue - in which form it will appear from now on.

REPORTS FROM BRANCHES & AREAS

(This section, which is based principally on information provided by branch secretaries and area representatives, tells what the RDS is doing throughout the United Kingdom, as well as giving news and views of railway happenings.

With this first issue some Branches have not been fully inaugurated and Areas are those of the former Railway Invigoration Society. A full list of the Society's Branches and Areas will be published with the next issue.)

BRANCHES

LONDON & HOME COUNTIES

London Teams Join Forces - Two strong teams join forces in the London Branch of the Railway Development Society, due to meet for the first time as a single body on 25th October. Members of both constituent Societies have been pursuing similar objectives, such, for instance as the building of a full-size rail tunnel under the Thames at Woolwich to link up Eastern Region and Southern services.

Complaints by Spanish and Portuguese airlines at having to use Gatwick instead of Heathrow Airport show the timeliness of our call for a direct rail link between London's two main airports. The helicopter service between them, begun on 9th June, is obviously inadequate. It seats only 28 and costs £12 (Single). When the noisy and costly service was inaugurated, the London "Evening News" found that a taxi, costing £10, taking an hour and a minute, was two minutes quicker than the helicopter. A train service, on the other hand, could cover the same journey in 50 minutes, given a rail link between Heathrow and Feltham, as envisaged in the former RDA's "Eavis Plan" published in December 1955.

Meanwhile cheaper transatlantic fares are making London's airports busier, and Heathrow cannot easily be enlarged because of errors in planning. More and More London travellers are using the tube connection, whilst coach services to the inconvenient terminal in West Kensington are being run down and now stop earlier at night. The Borough of Hillingdon, incidentally, wants the Heathrow tube to be extended further westward to Hayes.

Keeping the Flag Flying from Brussels to Haringey - Only the opening of a Channel Tunnel will make a dramatic contribution to solving the problem of airport congestion. A "Times" article on 25th June, evidently inspired by publication of the first part of the RDA (CTRL) (See above) by our member Dr Frank Tomlins, asserted that one passenger in seven travelling through Heathrow is going to Paris or Brussels, and that the inclusion of Amsterdam brings the number below one in six.

No doubt the inclusion of Mediterranean resorts and other parts of Europe would reduce it to nearly a quarter. Roll on the Chunnel !

Dr Tomlins has also been keeping the former RDA's flag flying at Haringey, North London, where he and Mr Lionel Boylett attended an inquiry into plans to build over parts of a parkland walk, namely the disused track of the line from Finsbury Park to Highgate, closed in 1954. Most objectors, like Friends of the Earth, had the praiseworthy object of saving their rural walk, and there was surprise and laughter when Dr Tomlins suggested that the rail passenger service should be restored after a lapse of more than 20 years; but there was support for the idea and it was this that received most prominence in the "Hampstead and Highgate Express" (The Ham & Hi.)

The need for the train service had increased since its withdrawal, said the Doctor. It would link with the Barking - Kentish Town line at Stroud Green; permit full-sized trains to operate to High Barnet, Mill Hill and Edgware and also allow freight services to reduce congestion. He added, for the benefit of the environmentalists, that a single track would suffice for even a 10 minute service. This would leave an ample 12-foot strip for continuance of the parkland walk - with of course the attractive addition of an occasional passing train.

Concession gained on the North London Line - A useful concession has been obtained from B.R. by Mr Vincent Christie, a London member of the former RIS, who pointed out that when taking an Awayday excursion from Liverpool Street, he was unable to use his ticket from Acton Central to Broad Street on the North London Line, although he could have used it without extra payment from Richmond BR to Waterloo. "I hope it is not the policy to deter passengers from using the North London Line" he said. After considering the matter for nearly nine months, the Customer Relations Officer replied: "it has now been agreed that the North London Line will in future be accepted as a cross-London link, where appropriate, in conjunction with Sealink excursions for which through "via London" fares are published."

West Hampstead problem shows need for P.T.E. - London RDS welcomes the enterprise of BR in issuing leaflets to show that West Hampstead is an interchange point for the Bakerloo and North London lines and for Midland Region trains to Bedford. It also welcomes plans to link the three stations, now standing side by side, by a moving footway, and to link also the Marylebone line. There is, however, local opposition to plans for a massive commercial development on adjacent railway land, and a report by the North London Line Committee declares that a development on the scale proposed is unnecessary: "equal to three buildings each the size of Centre Point." The interchange would be enlarged by the proposal to terminate there SR trains from Blackfriars, but as the report rightly comments: "considerable benefits to passengers and the London region would derive from projecting the service into the outer North London suburbs." The Report also says there is a clash of policy between BR & LT, "caused by lack of a single Passenger Transport Authority for London."

WEST MIDLANDS

Snow Hill Scheme - The West Midlands Committee have submitted to B.R. Property Board their observations on the redevelopment of the Snow Hill site in Birmingham. They have argued for a new sub-surface local rail station with a new bus station immediately above. Six major commercial developers have also submitted outline schemes to the Board and there is now at long last a much better prospect of securing a re-use of the site for both rail and property ventures. The last train left Snow Hill in March 1972.

Longbridge - Four Oaks - The new cross-city line incorporating the newly opened Longbridge section has secured an estimated 22,000 passengers a day which after only 3 months operation is 60% of its mid-1979 target. The line has new stations at Longbridge, University

and Five Ways City and the service is entirely operated by 3 and 6 car suburban DMUs.

Stratford-upon-Avon - British Rail tried an experimental Sunday service during the month of August between Birmingham (New Street) - Solihull - Stratford-upon-Avon. Three trains ran each way on the 45 minute journey and despite bad weather the trains attracted heavy use. Having also undertaken some market research BR are considering establishing a direct through service between London and Stratford.

West Midlands Fares - Together with colleagues in Transport 2000 an objection was lodged in August to the WMPTE application for a 20-25% bus (and local Rail) fare increase. The Traffic Commissioners decided to allow only a 10% increase in fares having taken into account an earlier PTE surplus, the rate of inflation and the Government's 5% guidelines.

General Meeting - The West Midlands Branch of RDS, covering the counties of Hereford & Worcester; Shropshire; Staffordshire; West Midlands and Warwickshire, is due to hold its Inaugural Meeting on 7th October to elect a Committee and consider policy and future activities.

Motor Show - For the combined Motor and Commercial Vehicle Show being held at the NEC, Birmingham, from 18th - 29th October, which will be attended by some 1½ million people, BR is providing a Euston - New Street Inter-City service every 10 minutes at peak and 15 mins. off-peak, plus many special trains from other parts of the country. The PTE local services will operate every 10 minutes. Bus and rail travel to Birmingham International (next to the NEC) from anywhere in the West Midlands, including admission to the Show, is available at £2 (adults) & £1.45 (child) by ticket from BR and PTE offices and stations.

Cannock Line - RDS colleagues in the Walsall Area Passenger Action Group are continuing to press as top priority for the re-opening of the Walsall - Cannock - Rugeley line which is at present a twin track freight-only line but serves the important Bescot yards and links two electrified main lines. Extensive new overspill housing developments and opencast mining along the route both need to be served by the railway and passenger services could usefully feed into the Walsall - New Street service. Local elected representatives and Councils are increasingly showing interest in a possible train service and discussions have taken place between Staffordshire County Council and British Rail to ascertain the likely costs of implementing and running a local service. It may be that the line will be a test case for shire counties as to the formula, costs and prospects for re-opening rail lines outside metropolitan areas.

New Town Stations - Rail services and stations for new and expanding towns in the West Midlands appear to be sadly lacking. Redditch had to move its station away from the centre to make way for new shops and a bus station and still suffers only 2 trains a day each way to Birmingham. Telford promises a new station but clings to the grimy Oakengates. Perhaps the £3m. Milton Keynes station project will stimulate interest in the West Midlands.

EAST ANGLIAN

Branch goes into the Cinema Business - with the production of a 15 minute, 8mm. colour film of the highly-successful special train service between Norwich and Dereham on 8th April. The film, together with a recorded commentary on cassette, can be hired for £1.00 (plus postage and carriage) from Mr T.J.Garrod, 15, Clapham Road, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ (Tel. 81721). The film was due to have its first public showing at the Branch's Inaugural Meeting on 7th October. Two other special passenger trains on freight-only lines, chartered jointly by the former RIS and local rail action committees, were due to run in the second half of September and will be fully reported in the next issue.

Local Support for Railbus Project - As reported above the BR Research and Development Centre at Derby unveiled, in June, a new type of experimental lightweight railbus, produced in co-operation with British Leyland. Members of the Branch and associated local users' associations and action groups have followed this project with interest. At the beginning of September a report was issued by them giving their interim reactions. Copies have been sent to BR, British Leyland and the Department of Transport, rail unions and the local press.

The report welcomes in principle co-operation between BR & BL and says that the experimental railbus in its simplest form, without toilets or guard's compartments, and one-man-operated, could be used on short shuttle services, e.g. to provide a restored passenger service between March and Wisbech. For most other possible uses in this region (e.g. on other lines that could be re-opened; or as a cheaper alternative to conventional DMUs on some existing services) it should have toilet and luggage facilities, be capable of running in sets of 2 or more and have adequate suspension.

Branch presses for Rail-served Airport - Over a 4 year period the Branch has pointed out the rail alternative to expansion of the controversial Norwich Airport; whilst at the same time accepting the case for an Airport in East Anglia, especially for overseas traffic, and tending to support those people who have urged that alternative sites to the present one be investigated. In 1975 support was given to the suggested development of Tibenham airfield, some 12 miles south of Norwich and close to the Norwich - London main line. Tibenham airfield has now been put up for sale and this coupled with the holding of a public inquiry into the proposed new terminal at the existing Norwich airport, has prompted the Branch Secretary to write once more to the local press, urging that serious consideration be given to a rail-served airport at Tibenham.

Sudbury - Marks Tey - The local rail users' association (a corporate member of RDS) has just published the results of a survey of passengers which it conducted on 6 days in June. The results show a modest increase in journeys compared with the County Council's survey of November 1976, and confirm the problem of heavy peak usage and low off-peak carryings on the line; illustrating what the RDS and SMTRUA have frequently said about the need for BR to encourage more off-peak traffic.

Especially interesting are the results of a further questionnaire about points of origin and destination. This revealed that passengers on the line were beginning or terminating their journeys at 76 different stations elsewhere, including as far afield as Portsmouth, Teignmouth, Barnstaple, Birmingham, Sheffield, Darlington, Cromer and even Inver-gordon! Tourists from 6 foreign countries were also using the branch. This shows the importance of such lines as Inter-City feeders and gives the lie to those who, like some of the authors of last year's White Paper, try to dismiss them as being purely of local significance.

Full reports of East Anglian Branch activities and rail developments in the region are contained in the quarterly Branch Newsletter. RDS members living outside East Anglia may also receive this on sending 17p. per issue to the Branch Secretary (address above).

AVON & WYE (Provisional area)

Forest of Dean Coal - The National Coal Board and British Rail have devised a scheme to supply Didcot Powerstation partly with Forest of Dean coal and reduce the allocation from the Midlands, but instead of bringing back into use the coal loading facilities and line between Parkent and Lydney, which are still available, they have surprised interested parties by the intention to road-haul it from the opencast site, not far from Parkent, and load it onto rail at the Concentration Depot at Cheltenham, which has prompted a strong objection from the Borough Council.

This could involve alteration to the pointwork and additional shunting power. Since withdrawal of the Parkend - Lydney coal and ballast train there have been extra lorry movements through narrow streets to a new loading point near Lydney (main line) station. The same road is also used by large lorries carrying scrap metal to a rail served yard and to the Trading Estate which formerly had private sidings.

Timber Transit Revived - After a lapse of about 15 years the BR freight depot at Gloucester is now handling sawn timber for delivery to one of the several yards alongside the canal. The packages are conveyed in new air braked vehicles from Felixstowe and the customer is well pleased with the service. It seems likely that batches of about six wagons will continue to arrive at Gloucester and similar consignments may likewise be forwarded by rail instead of road to the firm's premises in other areas.

Train Ferry Wagons replace Ro-Ro. - Palletised fibreboard is now arriving at Gloucester BR freight depot from Yugoslavia in German "VTG" bogie type vans. The equivalent of 3 articulated lorry loads are stacked in each wagon, the consignee providing road haulage from Gloucester to Brimscombe. Various firms in the Gloucester area receive a variety of traffics from the Continent in Train Ferry Wagons and with other firms also despatch exports by the same service from Gloucester. An exhibition of Train Ferry and other modern wagons is being planned and is expected to be held at or near the new Gloucester passenger station.

Stonehouse (Burdett Road) - Revenue at this station for the 4 weeks ending 17th June 1978 was £3,103, being 133% more than during the same period last year. New houses ten minutes walk from the station are now occupied and more trains are being allowed to stop there. Up to 38 people join the 08.15 train for Gloucester and Cheltenham and there are frequently more passengers joining or alighting at Stonehouse than at Stroud, which is a much larger town.

Sharpness Dock Traffic - Block trains of crane parts for the Middle East are expected to be resumed soon and train loads of export steel are handled at Sharpness from time to time. Block trains of wood pulp are also handled there, being traffic formerly imported at Portishead, but hauled from Berkeley Road to Gloucester and back because of removal of the Berkeley loop direct to the Bristol line.

Long Marston Scrap - Large quantities of scrap metal are being road hauled from Long Martson to the Midlands and South Wales (probably because the circuitous rail route via Worcester is now time consuming and more expensive). Scrap is, however, still being hauled from Long Marston to Llanelli and to Round Oak and it is hoped that trains to Sheerness will also be resumed. A large proportion of the metal is ex. BR and LT locos and stock. (Some BR passenger rolling stock has been sent to Long Marston for scrapping which appeared in good condition and only a few years old. Many people would prefer to ride in locomotive hauled stock rather than underfloored engine DMUs. Furthermore reconditioned loco-hauled stock would be desirable for new type cross-country services associated with the re-opening of stations on goods-only lines. The countrywide shortage of locomotives seems to be worse because of the continued scrapping of diesel electric locomotives. Consequently a Long Marston - Llanelli train of scrap metal has been up to a week in transit.

Gloucestershire T.P.P. - The long awaited Gloucestershire TPP has now been published and of the few references therein to the railway is a statement of support for applications for private sidings, subject to planning approval. Unfortunately the County Council is simultaneously promoting the construction and widening of various roads which would prejudice such rail access.

AREAS

North East England

Our correspondent in the North East reports:-

It is thought there may be a six months delay in Tyneside's Metro becoming operational. Modifications to the rail depot at South Gosforth which will be the Metro nerve-centre are thought unlikely to be on schedule, and there are also delays on tunnels, stations and electrification of track. Delivery of the Metro tramcars is also late.

On the credit side, however, the new bridge over the Tyne is now completely in position, and only awaits laying of the track. A joint committee is being formed between the Tyneside PTE, Northern General and United Automobile Services to co-ordinate bus services with the Metro.

The improved services between Newcastle and Morpeth are now in operation. They have attracted increased custom, but there has been criticism because they are being operated by 20 year old DMUs in poor condition. It has now been established that the reason services are not being operated to Bedlington (RIS P.R. No. 115) is that Northumberland County Council has decided against meeting the costs asked for by BR. (P.R. No. 113). The County Council has also decided not to go ahead with plans for a halt to serve the new County Hall being built at Morpeth. On the other hand Wansbeck Council is challenging BR's accounting system, and is seeking to restore services to Bedlington and Ashington.

Durham County Council planners and BR are considering re-opening the Newcastle - Consett line to passengers for the first time since 1955, involving re-opening of some old stations and provision of some new ones. BR has already timed a passenger diesel along the route.

Some refurbished trains are now operating between Newcastle and Sunderland, and there are eventual plans to introduce brand new rolling stock, although present estimates suggest this will not happen until 1982 at the earliest.

BR claim that the Inter-City 125s have brought a 10% increase in usage of the Newcastle - London services but officials at Newcastle Airport deny this has been at their expense.

Merseyside

Merseyside PTE's Merseyrail rationalisation proposals put forward last year have now been watered down considerably, with the exception of the Rock Ferry/Hooton line's off-peaks. The latter's frequency is still scheduled for reduction from half-hourly to hourly on weekdays from 2nd October despite strong opposition from TUAC (Wirral) Wirral Council and Bebington Rail Action Group. Concomitant with this frequency reduction, BR plan to cut back Helsby - Rock Ferry trains so that they will terminate at Hooton, with passengers having to change there into Rock Ferry/Chester trains (off-peak weekdays) - last trains to/from Helsby will be around about 19.00.

Other Merseyrail lines are to mostly retain existing services, some with minor modifications. The big and welcome news was a surprise last minute decision by Clwyd Council to give financial support to the Birkenhead - Wrexham line until May 1979 at least - this replaces the complete withdrawal of support by MPTE - and BR have agreed to continue the service with a turnaround at Bidston instead of Birkenhead North as previously. Cheshire County Council have apparently refused any financial help for either this line or the Helsby line beyond Hooton (MPTE's responsibility ends at Hooton) with the excuse that they "do not want to set any precedents vis a vis other lines in the County!"

Peak Liverpool/Birkenhead Park only EMUs have been withdrawn to provide stock for strengthening Northern Line services. The first set of new Class 507 EMUs was due from York BREL works a few days ago

but there is no word yet of sightings. The provision of a disabled person's lift at Lime Street (underground to mainline) has been given financial approval, and the Loop now nears completion with the opening of Moorfields main station buildings from 31st July.

Part II of the MPTE's Corporate Action Plan for the next 5 years has been published, and the main rail points are:-

(a) As an alternative to the proposed diversion of Warrington DMUs from the Mossley Hill line to Garston, BR has suggested that instead electrification be extended from Garston to Hunts Cross, with Warrington trains then terminating there to connect with those of Merseyrail.

(b) Further electrification schemes (other than above), e.g. Hooton/Rock Ferry, Garston/Hough Green, not recommended until 1982/3, but preparatory design work to continue.

(c) Land acquisition powers for proposed NE and SE Loops to be allowed to expire, and a cheaper route sought for electrification Central via Edge Hill to St. Helens in conjunction with BR's main line electrification plans Edge Hill to WCML (Northwards).

(d) Proposals outlined for a number of new stations - mostly for consideration in relation to further electrification.

(e) Provision is made for Capital expenditure over the 1978-1981 period of £130,000 for station car parks and £250,000 for other improvements to stations.

(f) Suggested that last year's order for 30 new 3 car EMUs be increased by a further 3 units to cover amongst other possibilities the continued increase in loadings apparent on Kirkby/Garston line, plus additional factor which could arise in this respect if the extension of electrification to Hunts Cross is proceeded with.

(g) A Zonal ticket system is planned covering travel at will by train, bus and ferry within the Merseyside area, introduction to be on a season ticket basis in October this year, followed by pre-paid zonal tickets on a single journey basis. The latter are to be sold in books of tickets for a specified number of rides, at a discount.

Lincolnshire

The South East Lincolnshire Travellers' Association, set up by RIS in 1976 and working in close co-operation with that Society, continues to work for the retention and improvement of the Grantham - Skegness line. In its latest Newsletter it welcomes the recent improvements in connectional facilities to Lincoln off the branch at Sleaford but expresses concern at "cutbacks and economies that have reduced siding accommodation at Skegness to three. It does seem that, given competitive fares, people want to travel by train and yet the volume Skegness can now cope with is greatly reduced." (During the Spring Bank Holiday, 15,813 passengers arrived at Skegness by train - the highest over a bank holiday for many years.)

SELTA praises the local railway staff for doing "a very good job trying to work often in impossible conditions due to economies and trying with limited resources to publicise facilities." The Association is, however, concerned about delays in receiving publicity material from BR Divisional H.Q. at Doncaster.

The former RIS Representative in the northern part of the County, Mr M.J.Savage, has been trying to get BR to introduce a one-day Ranger ticket in Lincolnshire, similar to the successful One-Day Anglia Ranger which has been offered during the past two Summers by Norwich Division. The latter operates like a Cheap Day Return over Paytrain lines which otherwise have only single fares. At a meeting of RIS in Lincoln in November 1977 it was felt there was a need for a similar facility in Lincolnshire, and a resolution was passed urging BR to introduce one. BR at Doncaster replied on 22nd May (sic!), "we are looking at this in conjunction with promotional plans we currently have in hand for increasing local travel in Lincolnshire.

Oxford

The Cotswold Line Promotion Group is moving into action. With a Chairman of such unbounded enthusiasm and a Secretary down the road, with whom on average there are at least two phone calls a day, something is bound to happen. Launching day for the Group was Saturday 11th March. Twenty weeks later a membership of 166 was reported, resident along the line between Oxford and Worcester. British Rail, from the station staff to area managers, realising the potential of such a group for boosting rail travel, have been helpful all down the line.

Railway enthusiasts are a queer bunch. Motivated sometimes by natal and even pre-natal influences they can be starry-eyed. Only slowly does such an affection mature into an appreciation of the social and environmental case for rail travel and transport. BR especially at managerial level, weigh in heavily on the side of economic realism and operational practicality, and so a balance is struck between dreams of railway revival and the exigencies of the "BR remit." In our case BR have responded by printing 15,000 leaflets which set out clearly what the Cotswold Line Offers at present and how much it will cost to users. Incidentally the leaflet owes a great deal to our Chairman and his colleagues. The line's necessary dependence on bus and coach has not been overlooked, although more might be said about times and places of interchange and final destinations in the Cotswold area.

CPLG has been given 5,000 of these leaflets and "moving into action" means distributing and placing them to the best advantage. Salesmanship is required. It should not be so exaggerated as to provoke a cynical response; our hopes for what the line could be far exceed its present performance and usefulness. But the conviction that for journeys of 20 miles and over, the train, if it goes there, is usually the most civilised and socially responsible way of making the journey adds strength to one's arm. To tell that to the Great British Public is our task. Having thought and talked about it for 10 years and felt it in one's bones for a lifetime, it is good at last to be moving into action on a particular stretch of line.

South West England

We are pleased to report that another line users' group has been formed and is in contact with us. The North Devon Railway Line Development Group has been formed to promote and improve the line from Barnstaple to Exeter.

EDITORIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Editor: J.W.Barfield, ARICS, ACIT, 108, Berwick Road,
London E16 3DS

Sub-Editor: A. Bevan, 12, Morris Field Croft, Hall Green,
Birmingham, B28 ORN

Mr Bevan is responsible for branch and area reports, Mr Barfield for all other matters. To ensure inclusion in the next issue (to be published in January 1979) all material must be in the hands of the appropriate editor by Monday 4th December 1978.

PUBLISHED BY THE RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

Chairman: R.V.Banks, "Savernake", 121, Ashford Road, Bearsted,
Maidstone, Kent.

General Secretary: J.M.Stanley, MA, 12, Westcombe Park Road,
London S.E.3.

Membership Secretary: H.G.M.Rogers, 64, Cowper Road, London W.7.