

LEVEL CROSSINGS – ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE

Open and automatic level crossings bring benefits to users of many rail lines – and even to road users (if they behave properly at them). In a climate of continued Government cuts to BR's financial support, operating economies of this type help secure the future of many secondary routes. The East Suffolk line is to gain additional trains in – thanks to reduced operating costs made possible by new-style crossings and radio signalling.

RDS must accentuate these positive points, especially when opponents of open crossings like the Essex-based WATCH (Woodham Against The Crossing Hazard) try to spread their negative propaganda around the country.

Steve Wilkinson, the RDS Vice-Chairman, made these points in the Society's submission to Prof. Stott's review of level crossing safety, adding that it would appear "that it is the motorist

who needs to be educated somewhat."

Mr Wilkinson reiterates earlier RDS calls for the Department of Transport to launch a campaign through leaflets, posters and the news media to educate people how to behave at level crossings – just as they did when seat belts and crash helmets became compulsory, and as they do every Christmas over drinking and driving.

Meanwhile, our member Brian Hastings has been in correspondence with BBC Radio Humberside over their coverage of this issue following the Lockington accident last summer. He reports that their more recent coverage of the matter has been fairer, with less attention being given to the more hysterical critics of open crossings, and urges all RDS members to keep a careful brief on all rail matters in the newspapers – and be prepared to act to ensure that a balance of opinion is obtained.

New Strathclyde Rail Review

Strathclyde Regional Council are carrying out a further review of supported rail services in the Region; the last one was in 1983. That set out a course to reduce Regional grant to local railways from £29m. in 1983 to £17m. by 1990 (at 1983 prices). This was to be achieved by a combination of some route closures and service reductions, with modernization and introduction of new technology on other parts of the network.

As it's input to the review, RDS Scotland has produced a report on the Glasgow Rail Network, detailing the current position and the potential for improvements. It puts forward a strategy which aims to contain the grant payments, expand the network, attract more users and bring massive benefits to Glasgow.

The report shows that the earlier closure proposals were ill-conceived and would lead to severe dis-benefits to the areas affected.

Copies of the report are available from RDS (Scotland), Top Floor, 113, West Regent Street, Glasgow, G2 2RU at £1. The RDS (Scotland) Newsletter is also available to members in other parts of the country on receipt of a 13p. stamp or quarto SAE.

Royston – Cambridge Electrification – at last

Public Transport Minister, David Mitchell, gave the go-ahead, on March 4th, for electrification of this ten-mile link – at a cost of £2.5m.

The wires reached Royston from King's Cross in 1977. Since then repeated submissions by BR to electrify the remaining section to Cambridge have been turned down by successive ministers but RDS East Anglian Branch and local BR management have continued to campaign.

Electrification will give through electric trains between Cambridge and the populous area of North Hertfordshire – as well as bringing operational advantages to BR by linking the Anglia and East Coast Main Line electric networks.

East Anglian Branch, encouraged by this latest news, is to produce a leaflet urging further electrification.

1987 – A.G.M.

At our National A.G.M. in Newcastle Polytechnic on Saturday April 25th the guest speaker will be the General Manager of the Tyne & Wear Metro.

More Through Routes Planned by Provincial Sector

Early in March, two members of the RDS Passenger Committee met with a representative of BR's Provincial Sector to discuss current thinking within that sector.

In future, more frequent (but shorter) trains will provide an intensive service over a number of "core" routes while fanning out to a variety of different destinations at either end. This might give, for example, a half-hourly service between Leeds and Manchester.

New routes to be cultivated include East Anglia through to the Northwest via Peterborough, Grantham and Nottingham which, combined with an East Anglia to Birmingham service, will result in frequent (and faster) trains on the Peterborough – Ely line. What happens west of Birmingham is still under discussion, but there could well be through trains from East Anglia to Aberystwyth and Cardiff. East of Ely, trains will go on to Norwich, Ipswich or Cambridge on a regular pattern. It is also intended to improve the service between North and South Wales by way of Shrewsbury and Newport. There is a possibility of this becoming a core route with services between Cardiff/Bristol to Holyhead/Manchester/Liverpool. We were also assured that the Weymouth – Bristol service is safe.

The Provincial Sector has a commitment to the elimination of locomotive-hauled trains and their replacement by "Sprinters" – of which the next generation will have improved outward views. The (yet to be finally approved) "express sprinters" will have forward as well as good sideways view.

*Please address any queries to the Passenger Committee in the first instance – not the Provincial Sector
Paul Clark.

Fares Up by More Than Inflation

RDS took out advertisements in two national newspapers and printed 10,000 leaflets "Its not BR's Fault" to explain why rail fares went up by more than the rate of inflation in January. We are also in protracted correspondence with the Secretary of State for Transport on this issue.

PLATFORM

CBI Supports Rail

Sir,

It was nice to see in your report of the Rail User Groups Conference in Rail-watch No. 30 that Chris Green made the point that investment is not a real problem for BR and that they receive authorisation when a proposal offers a reasonable return. You might like to know that we have been supporting BR's investment programme as much as we have investment in roads. However, to pick up the point made by Don Mathew of Friends of the Earth at the same conference, the reason the CBI's "Fabric of the Nation III" has 20 pages on roads as opposed to 11 lines on railways was very simple.

The whole document was an attempt to highlight those additional infrastructure investments which CBI members would like to see. It was not an attempt to make a full appraisal of UK transport policy. Consequently our members listed a large number of individual road improvements that they wanted to see and also a number of rail projects.

The section on railways in fact said the following:

RAILWAYS

"In our 1985 report 'The Fabric of the Nation II', we welcomed the commitment of £306m over 6 years to the electrification of the east coast main line. This was recognition of the importance of a modern railway system in providing a cost-effective service.

Business will benefit from other schemes, such as:

- Links to Manchester Airport, and the Windsor link between Victoria and Piccadilly stations in Manchester.
- Manchester to Blackpool electrification.
- Electrification of Carstairs - Edinburgh, Edinburgh - Aberdeen, Glasgow - Dundee and Carlisle - Hunterston routes.
- Extension of the east coast electrification plans to Bradford and Hull."

I hope this reassures your readers that the CBI is in no way anti rail. After all our members give British Rail almost all of its freight traffic and use it for business travel. In addition, our members are concerned that their employees can get to and from work in reasonable conditions and also that their customers can get to and from their shops and leisure facilities similarly. We therefore welcome the improvements that Chris Green and other managers are introducing.

H.A.Benn,
Transport Dept., CBI,
Centre Point, London WC1

Open Crossings - is RDS Right?

Sir,

I can understand the RDS National Executive supporting open crossings because of the lower costs involved, yet I cannot help having grave misgivings.

One of the reasons I use rail transport where available is to separate myself from idiots such as those responsible for motorway madness. Opening up level crossings cancels out some of this separation.

Here in Tyne and Wear there have been some nasty accidents at open Metro crossings. For those involved it is scant consolation that, in each case, the road user has been the guilty party.

It is somewhat naive of the National Executive to urge the Department of Transport to educate road users on safer behaviour at crossings. How does one go about educating those who are ineducable?

R.K.Mains,
Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Isle of Wight Developments

Sir,

I read, with interest, two items in the November 1986 issue of Modern Railways :- "Drain plans unveiled" and "New stations proposed for the Isle of Wight". These two items could be related.

It was some years ago that British Rail's Waterloo and City line was to have its class 487 stock replaced with a new design. The order for the new stock has now been confirmed under Chris Green's modernisation plans. When this was first proposed, it was suggested in the media that the present stock would be transferred to the IOW Railways. This is now an urgent requirement as the existing IOW stock is now about 50 years old. Staff at Ryde Depot have worked wonders but, recently, several coaches have been condemned and cannibalised for spares. The 487 stock, which has just been refurbished, would make Ryde-Rail a more attractive line.

Let us all press for the Island Railways to be made a going concern again after all these years of uncertainty.

B.D.Druce,
Heston, Middx.

Letters to the Editor

The Editor is always pleased to receive letters, articles and good quality black and white prints for inclusion in Rail-watch. Opinions expressed by correspondents are not necessarily those of the Editor or of the Society. Letters may be shortened or otherwise altered while retaining the sense of the original.

Privatisation

It is RDS policy to oppose privatisation of British Rail, as we are not, at present, convinced that it would lead to a better deal for rail users. We are currently endeavouring to find out if the Conservative Party intends to put this issue in its election manifesto.

Three years ago, when the idea was first floated, the Society's National Executive passed a resolution "totally opposing the administrative privatisation of any existing BR rail routes. We consider that the present network must be treated as a whole, to be supported by public funds where appropriate. Any role for private enterprise should be in providing, or helping to provide additional or experimental services and facilities."

Briefing notes for members are available from the General Secretary.

Dornoch Crossing

Professor Mackay's independent report on the case for a rail crossing of the Dornoch Firth concludes:

"We believe that a very strong social and economic case can be argued for a rail bridge. It is essential that the project is assessed within the wider cost-benefit framework and not simply by conventional financial evaluation techniques."

This vindicates the stand which RDS has taken, not only in Scotland but throughout the country, on the test case of road and rail investment.

RDS Cuttings Library Grows - but more help needed.

Officers and members are welcome to contact the archivist if they require information from the library.

WE NEED, however, volunteers to monitor the following papers: Daily Express, Daily Star, Financial Times, The Independent, The Sun and Today. Cuttings should be forwarded on a monthly basis, marked with date and source.

If you would like to help in this practical way, contact Ray King, RDS archivist and research officer, 4, Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU.

SALES OFFICER - CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Members are asked to note the new address of the Sales Officer, Geoff Kent, which is now:- 21, Fleetwind Drive, East Hunsbury, Northampton, NN4 0ST. Arrangements for forwarding mail have been made but it would assist if all society literature bearing his name could be suitably altered.

North West

Despite the 40% fare increase which took place in April 1986, business is booming on Merseyrail. November counts - the latest available figures - of journeys into Liverpool City Centre by train show a record high of 650,000 per week - 12% up on 1985. The report by the Merseyside PTE also shows record numbers of passengers using two of the three Merseyrail lines. Use of the Northern Line between Southport, Hunts Cross, Ormskirk, Kirkby and Liverpool rose by 18% compared with 1985. Travellers flocking back to the City Line - linking Lime Street with St Helens, Wigan, Preston, Crewe and Warrington - boosted its figures by a massive 45% in 1986. A 10% fall in usage was expected across the whole of Merseyside following the April increase in fares, and competition from bus services, following deregulation, was expected to increase this trend. However, the reverse has proved to be true

following the very successful public meeting held in Clitheroe (See RAILWATCH No. 30) a reopening campaign has been launched for the Blackburn - Hellifield line. The campaign is being spearheaded by RIBBLE VALLEY RAIL. The group is hoping to hold a Ribble Valley Rail Day by chartering a DMU from BR to operate a Preston to Clitheroe service for the day. Further details of this event can be obtained from Richard Watts, 15, Stanley Avenue, Penwortham, PR1 9RB, Lancashire. Membership of the group costs £2.00

Freight - Another year gone

At the end of the RDS year what can we look back on and feel that some real development has taken place? Who, if we could, would we give a gold medal to for their contribution to rail freight development?

Russells... for, amongst other development, the continuing expansion of their tainer services for coal and other commodities.

isis-Link... for their continued development of transmodal depots and traffics.

Unilever... for their edible oils traffic from Purfleet to Bromborough.

Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company ... for their building of the Trimley to Felixstowe Dock "South Freightliner Depot" line.

Railfreight... for the construction of a new large fleet of China-clay wagons.

Railfreight... for the development of timber log traffics throughout the U.K.

CAIB (formerly TSL)... for the continuing development of cereal traffics.

Railfreight/SNCF/Dover Harbour Board... for the development of the train ferry terminal at Dover and for the new ferry.

Private sidings... for all those companies who have installed a new private siding.

BUT.....

Freightliner... planned closure of 8 depots - showing a lack of imagination about the re-development of problem traffics and, it would seem, planning road trunking on an even larger scale.

Rowntree-Mackintosh... for their extraordinary decision to go over to road distribution, bucking the trend of increasing use of Speedlink by other major firms.

MOD/PSA... for their equally extraordinary dismissal of rail for the Faslane Navy Base development.

British Gypsum... for their mining development at Barrow-upon-Soar that is to turn all its production over to a never-ending fleet of Juggernauts.....

The Freight Committee

for individuals and £3.00 for families. The Membership Secretary is Mrs. Gordon, 16, Meadow View, Clitheroe, Lancashire.

Further to the item concerning "The Dalesman" in the last RAILWATCH it should be noted that each train is carrying an average of 81 passengers. The Settle Carlisle Joint Action Committee are to hold a public meeting in the Public Hall, Appleby on Saturday 2 May to launch the new Settle - Carlisle service.

The Ormskirk to Preston Travellers' Association were due to hold a major public meeting in the Southport Theatre on 8 April. The aim of the meeting is to launch a leaflet outlining why the Burscough curves should be restored and a Preston to Southport service introduced. Copies of the leaflet are available on receipt of an SAE from Richard Watts (address as above).

Mike Breslin/ Richard Watts

Sevenside Notes

The restoration of the Gloucester to Chalford railcar service is to be looked into by Stroud District Council. This welcome move was reported in the "Stroud News & Journal" dated 1 January 1987; it follows a motion by Mr Leo Bennett (Thrupp) that the Council should enter into negotiations with a view to reopening the service. The request, aimed at attracting to the area, improving employment prospects and alleviating traffic congestion in Stroud town centre, was put before the

December full meeting of the Council. It was decided that the proposal, which includes reopening halts and stations in the Stroud Valley, particularly those serving Brimscombe and Chalford, should be put before the Land and Resources and Economic Review Subcommittee for observation and report.

Eric Barbary

Forum told of more Cross-London Links

The campaign for the South London Line received added impetus on 26 February at the Rail Transport Study Circle Forum when more was revealed of the thinking of Network SouthEast management and the London Strategic Policy Unit on the development of Cross-London Links.

Apart from the exciting developments at Ludgate Hill, following on from restoration of the Blackfriars - Farringdon Link, announced by Network SouthEast Planning Manager, Chris Austin, in his illustrated talk, both he and Dick Halle, of LSPU spoke of ideas to restore and improve the South London Line with a new service from Lewisham. The diversion of the western section from Victoria to Clapham Junction was shown to meet an established local need and despite some scepticism on the part of NSE, LSPU are likely to pursue this option with the support of the local Boroughs. Indeed the Branch Committee, at its meeting on 3 March - which was attended by a representative of the local Transport Action Group in Lambeth (through which part of the line runs) agreed to support this aim.

Network SouthEast support for restoration of Sussex Link

Rapid progress has been made since our last report with attempts to re-open the missing links between both Uckfield - Lewes and Tunbridge Wells - Eridge, the former closed in the 1960s. Brian Hart, leader of the Wealden Campaign, is reported, after a meeting with Network SouthEast Director, Chris Green, to have lowered his sights by concentrating solely on restoring a single track line from Uckfield to Lewes, leaving TWERPS, the more preservationist orientated group, to tackle the Tunbridge Wells - Eridge link.

London & Home Counties Branch Chairman, H.T.Jones, has attempted to adopt a neutral line and act as mediator between these apparently conflicting groups with notable success. Also encouraging is the news that Sainsburys, who want to develop Tunbridge Wells West station site as a restaurant, food store and garden centre have agreed to leave room for the terminus of a single-track railway should TWERPS succeed in their aim.

All this has been made possible by

(continued over -)

support and co-operation from the local authorities and more importantly the insistence of East Sussex County Council that no steps should be taken to destroy the formation of the line from Uckfield to Lewes.

EAST ANGLIA

At the Branch AGM held in Bury St. Edmunds on 21 February, Steve Wilkinson was re-elected Chairman and Peter Lawrence (75, Marpit Lane, Norwich, NR5 8XN) was elected Secretary. The meeting saw a video made by member Russell Whipps of the new direct line from Trimley to Felixstowe Docks - the building of which RDS supported seven years ago.

Even longer ago, we started campaigning for some day return fares on East Anglian Paytrains - and on 11 January BR at last introduced them! Through booking between Paytrain lines is also now possible and for most return journeys the fare is now actually cheaper than it was before 11 January.

Buoyed up by its victory in saving the Reedham - Yarmouth line, the East Norfolk and Suffolk Rail Alliance (of local authorities and community groups, including RDS) met on 17 March to plan a similar campaign to raise some £100,000 to provide a passing loop at Beccles on the East Suffolk line. Suffolk County Council have indicated informally that they could provide half the sum required and the Development Commission may also be able to provide funding.

At the other end of the region, our member John Tizard, who is also a Bedfordshire County Councillor, reports encouraging progress on the fight to re-open Arlesey station (between Hitchin and Biggleswade). BR's Network SouthEast have agreed to include the station in their 1988 capital program, and a total of £55,000 has been pledged by the County Council, Arlesey Town Council and North Hertfordshire District Council.

Full details of rail events, RDS and users' group activities in the region are contained in the Branch's quarterly newsletter RAIL EAST, edited by John Brodribb. Members of other Branches can also obtain this from John Page, 132 Ross Street, Cambridge, CB1 3BU. A donation of £1.20 would not be refused.

LINCOLNSHIRE

The Branch held a well-attended AGM in Lincoln on 31 January, when Brian Hastings was elected Chairman and Phil Strong was re-elected Secretary. Speakers at the meeting were RDS General Secretary, Trevor Garrod and BR Area Manager, Malcolm Phillips.

Mr Phillips said that the creation of the Provincial Sector of BR had given rural lines like most in his area a much better prospect, with more publicity, and he

outlined improvements to services which would come when the "Sprinter" fleet was introduced in May, at which time "Pacers" would also take over services into Lincolnshire from Leeds and Sheffield. This summer, BR would spend some £15,000 promoting its services, and an almost equal sum was also promised by local councils. Mr Phillips also described work in progress, or proposed, and answered a wide range of questions.

Full details of RDS activities in Lincolnshire, the North Midlands, Yorkshire and the North East are contained in RAIL TYNE-TRENT, issued three times a year. It can be obtained by members outside this area for £1.20 per annum from the General Secretary.

Trevor Garrod

NORTH MIDLANDS

Alton Towers on the Derbyshire/Staf-fordshire borders is the most popular leisure park in Britain, with two million visitors annually. A few thousand of these travel by rail and then by coach link from Stoke-on-Trent. Plans are afoot to improve the poor road access along winding lanes by a link road from the A50, using the trackbed of the Uttoxeter to Leek railway. RDS is co-operating with Derbyshire Transport 2000's study of a variety of rail-based alternatives, which would allow the continuance of the present unofficial footpath trail alongside a single track line; a road would occupy the entire trackbed and have problems with overbridges.

The North Midlands RDS continue their association with Venture Rail trains in 1987; DMU charters having been scheduled from Matlock and Derby area stations to London on 4 April, and to Kidderminster for the Severn Valley in June. It is hoped that the highly popular "Wirksworth Phoenix" shuttle service will return again over the Spring Bank Holiday in late May, to carry visitors from Derby along the freight line to the historic lead-mining town for the well

known celebrations, subject to platform repairs at Wirksworth.

Mansfield retains the dubious distinction of being the largest town in Britain without a passenger train service, but Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire County Councils have expressed interest in RDS plans to reopen the line from Pye Bridge to Mansfield and Work-sop. British Rail Provincial Sector are at present non-committal, telling us that the provision of such a service must not be a further burden on the Public Service Obligation grant. Correspondence with the District Councils is continuing.

Malcolm Goodall

YORKSHIRE

The new Central Station in Rotherham is to be opened on 28 May. The station and the Holmes Chord, which provides the link between the Midland Main Line and the former LNER line, both from Sheffield, will have cost £2.4 million, half of which has been paid for by a grant from the European Regional Development Fund. It is hoped that the first train to leave the station will be an InterCity 125 pulled by the power car named "Rotherham Enterprise".

The threat of closure which has been hanging over the Penistone - Huddersfield line for so many years has been lifted for the time being by an announcement from the West Yorkshire PTA that they are to contribute £250,000 towards its upkeep this year and an annual sum of £400,000 in future.

West Yorkshire PTA have announced a program of three new stations a year starting this year. A scheme has been put forward to build a bypass between Harrogate and Knaresborough which would involve diverting the line and losing the station at Starbeck. The cost of diverting the line would be about £1 million, apart from the loss of revenue from Starbeck station. The plan is being opposed.

Denis Bradbury

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