

RDS *Railwatch*

A VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

No 41

OCTOBER 1989

60p

A network for the 90s

GRAHAM NALTY has analysed the service BR offers between towns and cities and offers suggestions for all campaigners who want to see better rail links.

If five years ago, anyone had suggested to me that passenger trains would run again between Coventry and Nuneaton or that Nottingham would offer an hourly interval service to Liverpool or Manchester, I would have dismissed them as unrealistic. But by good management, BR has achieved these goals.

The success achieved in these two instances in particular indicates that there must be considerable further scope for the introduction of many improvements in passenger services.

If a list were to be made of the largest 40 towns and cities in Britain, it could be divided into three distinct groups in relation to the rail service offered.

The first group would consist of all cities with a population exceeding 400 000, plus Cardiff and Newcastle/Gateshead. All in this group are well served by long-distance trains to most other major cities and almost all have extensive local suburban networks.

The second group, such as Derby, Reading and Southampton are situated on main lines and enjoy inter-city services in several directions. They are also important interchange points.

The third group, equal in number to the second, are those places at the end of or bypassed by main routes which are inadequately served by through trains to other major towns.

The towns and cities in my third group include Hull, Bradford, Stoke-on-Trent, Sunderland, Middlesbrough, Ipswich, Southend, Milton Keynes, Portsmouth, Swansea, Walsall, Bolton, Northampton, Blackburn, Oxford, Oldham and Southport.

The best way to improve rail services from these places at relatively low cost would be to introduce a Super Sprinter service specifically aimed at linking them into a proper network for the 90s. Such services, by calling at places in groups one and two along their routes, would greatly increase the journey opportunities from towns and cities now poorly served by rail.

The top-five routes I suggest are:

Southend, Colchester, Ipswich, Ipswich, Ely, Peterborough, Spalding, Sleaford, Lincoln, Doncaster, Hull.

Southend, Stratford, Watford, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Rugby, Coventry, Walsall, Cannock, Rugeley Town, Rugeley Trent Valley, Stafford, Stoke-on-Trent, Macclesfield, Stockport, Stalybridge, Huddersfield, Halifax, Bradford, Leeds, York, Middlesbrough, Stockton, West Hartlepool, Sunderland.

Hull, Leeds, Bradford, Halifax, Burnley, Blackburn, Bolton, Wigan, Southport.



Sprinting across England:

New trains could link up more towns and cities

Southend, Stratford, Slough, Reading, Basingstoke, Winchester, Eastleigh, Southampton, Fareham, Portsmouth.

Blackburn, Burnley, Halifax, Bradford, Wakefield, Sheffield, Chesterfield, Alfreton, Nottingham, Loughborough, Leicester, Hinckley, Nuneaton, Rugby, Northampton, Milton Keynes, Oxford, Reading, Basingstoke, Winchester, Eastleigh, Southampton, Fareham, Portsmouth.

The success of the recently introduced Nottingham - Leicester - Coventry service offers a model for how other combinations of very large places, fairly close together, could be served by through trains.

Oxford - Bristol: Ideally this should be served by extending the proposed Peterborough - Swindon service to Bristol. This would significantly increase passenger numbers, possibly enough to speed the introduction of an hourly service.

Northampton - Leicester: This requires the route via Market Harborough to be rebuilt. In the meantime, a link via Nuneaton may well be acceptable as part of a Sheffield - Nottingham - Milton Keynes service.

Walsall - Nottingham: Requires rebuilding of Walsall - Lichfield section and the reintroduction

of passenger services between Lichfield and Burton. Ideally this could be part of a Nottingham - Shrewsbury through service which gives greatly increased journey opportunities with only one change of train at both ends, rather than being limited to Walsall - Derby.

Walsall - Stoke: Requires extension of passenger service from Hednesford to Rugeley Trent Valley.

Stoke - Liverpool: A Nottingham - Liverpool through service via Stoke is believed to be under consideration by BR.

Stoke - Sheffield: Difficult to see how the excellent connecting services via Derby or Stockport could be improved without building a new railway over the Pennines via Buxton.

Sheffield - Bradford: The importance of these two cities is such that extending the slow Sheffield - Huddersfield service to Bradford to give a local Huddersfield - Bradford service would not be fast enough.

Liverpool - Bolton: Most direct route would be via St Helens and possibly Wigan, but may require some trackwork. It would provide extra justification for concentrating all Wigan passenger services at NW station and closing Wallgate. Ideally such a service should be extended via Bury, Rochdale, and Halifax to Bradford.

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Settle fails to bring us express relief

By RICHARD WATTS

The final stages of the campaign to save the Settle-Carlisle were very confusing. Only the day before the Secretary of State announced the line's reprieve, there was a major news story in the Yorkshire Post proclaiming that the Government was going to sell the line to a group calling itself Cumbrian Railways.

Despite the amazing volte face over the next 24 hours, it is clear this was the Government's favoured course of action. What took place within the Department of Transport we may never know, but informed sources suggest BR was as surprised with the final decision as we were.

The public revelation that Cumbrian Railways was not soundly based financially probably contributed to the Government's change of mind. The Department estimated that a buyer would need capital of at least £10 million while Cumbrian Railways could only manage £3 million plus.

The decision letter emerging from the Department on 11 April gives little comfort to those fighting closures.

On hardship, the letter says "the hardship case for retaining the line is now marginally stronger than it was, but (the Secretary of State) does not believe that hardship itself would justify retaining the line". It is difficult to imagine, given the wealth of hardship evidence presented to the TUCs, just what is needed to justify retention. The likelihood is that no matter how much hardship can be shown, the financial case for closure will always be more important especially if the Government is looking for public expenditure cuts or towards privatising the railways. The campaign proves how vital it is to ensure BR publishes its financial case for closure rather than passing it "in confidence" to the Minister.

On substitution, the Secretary of State considered that "guaranteed substitute bus services could

cater adequately" for most essential transport journeys. Despite the massive upsurge in local usage and the total impracticability and expense of running bus services in this area, the Department remained unconvinced. Substitution appears to be still very much on the Department's agenda. Having been frustrated at Settle, what are the chances at Gainsborough-Barnetby?

On alternative services, BR had repeatedly said during the public hearings that, should the Settle-Carlisle close, it would operate alternative train services via Carnforth. The Secretary of State was clearly unimpressed by this as he comments: "If he were to give closure consent for the Settle-Carlisle line, he would not require the board to run this alternative service." Why not? BR it is known has been reviewing Provincial lines with a view to advancing substitution cases. The Skipton-Carnforth line is one that has been looked at. Its future is uncertain. Major expenditure will soon be needed to renew Melling tunnel and BR at this time may propose it for substitution. The lesson here is that it is only the Minister, at the time of giving consent to closure, who can stipulate what alternative bus and/or rail service the board MUST operate. Beware of claims BR may make at hearings. They may have no substance in them. So what are the main lessons to be learned? First, it is crucial that bodies such as RDS fight closures. The power vested in the TUCs is insufficient for the job they have to do. Legislation is urgently needed not only to strengthen their powers but to make future closure hearings into full public inquiries. At the moment TUCs are well-meaning, but toothless, watchdogs.

Finally, where the TUCs have too little power, the Secretary of State has too much. The machinations over the Settle decision are symptomatic of an unhealthy system. The Secretary of State is expected to act as judge. But he cannot be impartial. This urgently needs changing, particularly if privatisation comes.



What the papers say

There is a car crash in Britain every eight seconds, according to the Association of British Insurers.

Daily Mail

Whether the railways are privatised or not, there is a strong case for more public funding, if only to take the strain off the roads which are slowly seizing up.

Daily Mail

Tax concessions should be given on season tickets and longer and more frequent trains should be introduced to ease congestion, said the Institution of Civil Engineers.

Daily Telegraph

Austria is to ban heavy lorries from using trans-national roads at night because of their noise and pollution. The ban starts in December and is to be imposed in spite of a Common Market appeal.

Financial Times

London's rail and Tube system has a crucial role in helping the economy grow, says the London Chamber of Commerce.

Financial Times

Edinburgh is set to invest £180 million in a metro system. Some street running is expected along with Phonocard-style tickets.

Edinburgh Evening News

The Bishop of Southwark told the House of Lords: "Almost all know that the car has got to be tamed for the sake of us all."

Financial Times

Efficient railways mean less congested roads.

Evening Standard 5.7.89

Private luxury minibuses are called for in a new report Traffic in the City, produced by the Right-wing Adam Smith Institute.

Guardian

Glasgow's Argyle Street station is to be redeveloped to include shops at a cost of £15 million.

Scotsman 4.7.89

Cycling is the only form of private transport that is fully compatible with public transport, and cyclists everywhere should lead their support to the campaign for a sane, safe and efficient public transport system in London.

Daily Cyclist

Mrs Thatcher is the granddaughter of a railwayman. Her mother's father, Daniel Stephenson, was a railway cloakroom attendant who also looked after the lost property office at Grantham station. But Margaret came to believe that railways were a thing of the past.

Observer

Edinburgh's rubbish is being shifted from road to rail. A daily 450 tonne Railfreight Construction train will go from Powderhall refuse works to Kaimies quarry (on the freight-only line to Loanhead).

Edinburgh Evening News

"As well as easing congestion on the roads, the benefits will be seen in lower pollution from vehicle fumes and noise pollution of heavy vehicles," said environmental health committee chair Councillor Edna Milne who signed the agreement with BR. The district council is spending £2.5 million on equipment and £1 million a year running costs.

Ed Ev News 23.6.89

New hope for a million

By CHRIS WRIGHT

The withdrawal of train services between Oxford and Cambridge 21 years ago was described by the National Union of Railways as a national fraud and by Buckinghamshire County Council as an absolute folly.

Now though one of Dr Beeching's biggest mistakes, chopping up this key East-West rail route may soon be partly corrected. BR Provincial is considering the introduction of through trains between Swindon and Peterborough via Oxford, Bicester, Bedford, Corby and Manton. It is estimated that the trains would link nearly a million people en route and would multiply their journey opportunities. Many of the towns are already growing fast and will continue to grow. As an experiment, a Super Sprinter ran from Swindon to Peterborough in April following increased interest of local authorities along the route and the success of Provincial's newly created Express network. Detailed studies and planning are continuing.

The return of the Oxford - Cambridge "brains trains" may not be on the cards yet but the new service would link two Great Western main lines, as well as the West Coast, Midland and East Coast main lines. There would be a new link, albeit circuitous, from East coast to West.

Rail campaigners have played a crucial role in maintaining interest in the lines, since the foolhardy axe fell 21 years ago. One of the most successful is Richard Crane and the Bedford to Bletchley Rail Users Association. The association has breathed new life into a line that has continued to carry both passengers and freight but which has nearly died on several occasions.

Other groups have emerged to carry the fight further. The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Rail Action Committee was formed in 1987 to campaign for passenger trains from Milton Keynes to Oxford and Aylesbury on tracks that still exist for freight use. An Oxford - Bicester service was reintroduced in May 1987 and a new station at Islip was opened earlier this year. In its first full year, Islip is expected to see more passengers than at the time of closure.

Richard Pill and the Bedford and Sandy Reopening Association has the ambitious aim of rebuilding an eight-mile destroyed section. Two thousand people have already signed a petition urging the protection of that route. The route is now blocked at Blunham and is subject to a road scheme (!) at Sandy. Provincial's Sydney Newey has said, however, that if the route survived, it could produce encouraging results.

At the eastern end, Peter Wakefield is campaigning to get Huntingdon - Cambridge reopened, as an alternative to the old route from Sandy to Cambridge which has been taken over by a tracked radio telescope.

To the north, Corbyrail has been campaigning for five years for better links for the one-time steel town.

At Bedford there are plans to divert the Bletchley line on to the Midland main line, south of Bedford where a southern park-and-ride station could be built and at Bletchley, services may be extended to Milton Keynes.

The growing economic power of Milton Keynes as a regional centre may well be crucial in bringing back the trains.

Milton Keynes, together with Oxford city and county councils, Aylesbury Vale, and North Bedfordshire, helped with a feasibility study. Another study into the strictly local effects is expected later this year.

Earlier indications suggest a two-hourly service with class 158 Sprinters which would later provide an hourly service. The new link would save many people from the chore of going to London merely for interchanges.



Battle with strategic importance

By PETER WAKEFIELD

Plans to reopen the 20-mile line from Cambridge to Huntingdon have provoked huge local interest - and some BR support. Cambridge is growing rapidly with the population now at 350 000.

Most jobs are in the city while most homes are on the "wrong side" of the green belt. Road traffic generally is expected to grow by 60 per cent up to the year 2000.

The line parallels the A11/A604 road which links Cambridge, St Ives, Huntingdon and Peterborough. It is already one of the busiest roads in the country and will be busier still after the 1991 expansion of Stansted airport. When the M1/A1 link is completed via Huntingdon, traffic levels will double.

The line is used for freight from Cambridge to St Ives but was closed to passengers in dubious circumstances in 1970. Fortunately the formation from St Ives to Huntingdon (closed in 1959) is still there, along with culverts and cuttings - but minus bridges. Space is available alongside the A604 Huntingdon bypass to get to the East Coast main line.

Our purely local service can thus assume a more

strategic importance. The journey to Peterborough would be 10 miles shorter than the present route via Ely. Significantly at present only two per cent of journeys between Cambridge and Peterborough are made by train. A cross-country link is possible, in conjunction with a rebuilding of the eight-mile Sandy-Bedford line, enabling people from Bedford, Milton

Keynes and Oxford to get to Cambridge and Stansted. Reopening a "basic railway" from Cambridge to St Ives would cost roughly £4 million and to show what is possible, BR was planning to run a shuttle service on Saturday 30 September from Cambridge to Swavesey as part of Network SouthEast gala day.

A bonus for Corbyrail

By DAVID FURSDON

Corby station reopened in April 1987 after being without passenger trains for 21 years. The success followed a five-year campaign by Corbyrail which was formed by local RDS members.

The present shuttle service from Kettering to Corby is being sponsored by Corby District Council for a three-year trial period. Many improvements have been made since the service started.

There is now an almost hourly service between the two towns with good connections at Kettering for InterCity trains. However, the reliability of the 30-year-old DMUs does give cause for concern.

The station at Corby is not manned and has been the target of vandals. We know this is deterring some people from using the shuttle. Fares are collected on the train.

Corby Council has recently commissioned consultants to study the possibility of extending the service north of the town to Oakham or Melton Mowbray. This created much interest from other local authorities along the route. The council is also however in favour of the proposed cross-country service from Swindon. There are even hopes that BR would extend the electrification from Bedford to Corby as work on the Wonderland theme park was due to start in September after several delays. The £223 million first phase is expected to open in May 1992.

TREVOR
GARROD'S
VIEW



Striking a new pose for the future

I was one of hundreds of thousands of commuters forced to go to work by road during this summer's rail strikes. Not one of the coaches on which I travelled reached its destination on time!

The national executive empowered me to write to the various parties in the dispute. I urged BR management to recognise the widespread dissatisfaction among their lower-paid staff in particular and to reach a speedy and just compromise.

Comments by Government spokespersons from the Prime Minister downwards did nothing to help the situation especially when the strikers had kept carefully within the law. I wrote to them accordingly.

My letters to the union leaders pointed out that, in the event of a long drawn-out strike, public

sympathy would not be unlimited and the road lobby would seek to exploit the situation.

Fortunately the NUR finally accepted management's offer but the issue of low pay has not gone away, nor has the question of pay bargaining. The present system may well need reforming but BR must beware of ditching it for one that is unnecessarily divisive.

Clearly when staff in many areas have to cope with aging stock and equipment and all BR employees face uncertainty resulting from continued managerial changes and the privatisation debate, this does not help morale.

So it is vital for RDS to keep campaigning for adequate investment in BR and against privatisation unless this can be clearly shown to be in the interest of rail users.

Jams yesterday, jams today and jams tomorrow

The Government's white paper entitled Roads for Prosperity was published in May. It plans to add or widen a total of 2 700 miles of road in England. Expenditure on the national roads programme will be doubled.

The spending of £6 billion of taxpayers money will certainly bring prosperity to car and lorry makers and to the oil companies who sell the fuel. Yet road building has been discredited as a way of solving traffic problems and recent studies have shown that there is no evidence that roads benefit the economy.

The white paper listed options for relieving congestion including greater use of railways and higher taxes on road users. They were dismissed in favour of widening existing roads and building new roads in a greatly expanded road programme.

With these plans, the Department of Transport has undergone a U-turn. It has claimed since 1978 that the motorway network was virtually complete. Now the weasels are planning another 900 miles of road and motorway. They are "looking" at more, from Kent to Hampshire, across the lower Thames and across the Pennines. £6bn is to be spent on trunk roads which will make them almost indistinguishable from motorways. No doubt they will all be misnamed "environmental improvement routes". How will they describe the planned 10-lane M1 or 8-lane M25?

In London alone, more than 100 local action groups have banded together to form Alarm (All London Against the Road-building Menace).

The car: A hopeless case

By ADRIAN FAWCETT

Concern for the environment has prompted many drivers to switch to unleaded petrol and the Government to give a long-term commitment to catalytic converters which will "clean" the car's exhaust gases. But it is virtually impossible to make the car itself green.

Unleaded petrol still contains some naturally occurring lead. Other additives such as benzene (a known carcinogen) are used in place of lead.

A far more serious problem than lead is presented by all the other emissions: carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxides and various hydrocarbons. They add to the greenhouse effect and acid rain and are a threat to health, particularly to people living in cities.

The two oxides of nitrogen rapidly convert to nitrogen dioxide, a strong-smelling poisonous gas which destroys lung tissue. Hydrocarbons change once released to form other oxides which irritate the mucous membrane and can be carcinogenic. Carbon monoxide can kill within 30 minutes if breathed in at only 0.3 per cent concentration.

Air pollution causes the build-up of ozone (not to be confused with the protective ozone layer in the upper atmosphere). This aggravates respiratory problems and could be partly responsible for the big increase in the number of asthma sufferers.

They are horrified by plans to build 40 miles of motorway-style roads in the capital at a cost of £3.5 billion. The plans will blight 100 000 homes, threaten 250 schools and playing fields, acres of parks and open spaces. Six hundred homes would have to be demolished.

It has been estimated by RDS member Peter Hayman that 10 to 15 per cent of Britain's contribution to the Greenhouse Effect could be eliminated by a shift to rail. Trains are at least four times more fuel efficient than road transport while juggernauts consume a gallon of fuel for every six miles they move.

You don't need to look at the Amazon rain forests to see blind destruction. Road building in Britain is already damaging 110 sites of special scientific interest. The Department of Transport has refused to say what cash value it put on Oxleas Wood in Greenwich which is being carved up for the East London River Crossing. It is almost certain to be an unrealistic figure.

Carbon monoxide levels in London were recently double the maximum considered safe by the World Health Organisation. Nitrous oxide levels are regularly over the European Commission levels aimed at safeguarding human health.

Yet the British Government subsidy to company cars (in the form of tax concessions) is about five times the subsidy to British Rail.

It is cheaper to build new railways than roads, and even cheaper to reinstate old lines and stations.

Catalytic converters convert carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides to carbon dioxide, water and nitrogen. Their failing is that they increase carbon dioxide emissions. They impede the flow of exhaust, making the engine run less efficiently. The engine also needs a richer petrol-air mixture so modern lean-burn technology is incompatible with catalytic converters.

Diesel engines are better in some respects, worse in others. Their exhaust contains a higher proportion of dangerous hydrocarbons, but less carbon monoxide. Technology can probably reduce the pollution but there are no magic solutions, certainly not enough to offset the increases resulting from the unchecked growth of road transport.

Despite stringent exhaust emission standards in the USA, American cities such as Los Angeles are among the most polluted in the world because of high car ownership.

Any short-term benefits of the recently announced road building programme will be heavily outweighed in the long term. It is also contrary to the Government's claim to be Green. We must all consume fuel efficiently by using public transport - especially railways.

Britain spends £80 million annually cleaning buildings dirtied by air pollution. Researchers at Middlesex Polytechnic claim diesel smoke is the worst offender.



To highlight the dangers of air pollution, cyclists wearing gas masks took to the streets of London in a protest in June. The frames round their bikes were to show how much road space is wasted on its massive road building plans and concentrate the capital with realistic investment in both cycle and public transport.

Road users must face up to the fact that they are responsible for 25 per cent of the damage to the ozone layer. They are also responsible for a poisonous cocktail of nitrous oxides, carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide which city dwellers have to breathe. Road hauliers should also be responsible for wrecking the road (and pavement) surface.

Transport produces one-fifth of all British carbon emissions. The road sector is responsible for 96 million tonnes each year, compared to 2 million from rail and 2 million from air. Road

The only real answer is to invest and electrify

By TREVOR GARROD

Proposals to spend billions of taxpayers' money on new road schemes over the next decade are being countered by increased RDS campaigning for rail investment. Our branches are putting forward proposals for light rapid transit in large towns and cities.

There is plenty of scope for expansion of rail services as the second, updated edition of our Z of Rail Reopenings shows. Our new report on the Property Board warns against sell-offs which could inhibit future rail expansion.

Most important, however, is our campaign for electrification. As our new leaflet shows,

electric railway attracts business from roads and reduces air pollution. It is fast, clean and takes up no extra land space.

The commercial benefits of a rolling electrification programme were recognised by the Department of Transport and BRB as long ago as 1981. We still do not have one! Schemes continue to be approved in a piecemeal manner with no overall plan and BR is even reluctant to submit a proposal to the Department unless it is virtually sure in advance it will be approved.

RDS published a suggested national electrification programme in 1986 and since then some of the lines, like Southampton - Portsmouth,

More roads lead to more traffic

You can travel around London by car or train, but whatever way you go, it's likely to be at an average speed of around five miles an hour. There are so many people able to choose, that overall door-to-door journey times remain in equilibrium.

If one new road is built, a proportion of train travellers on that route will switch to using their cars, speeding up their own journey but clogging up the road system in general.

These simple scientific conclusions have been drawn by Dr Martin Mogridge who has spent the last 20 years studying London's traffic and transport. He is now able to point out that the most efficient, as well as cost effective, way to speed up both road and rail traffic is to concentrate on improving Tube, train and bus services so that those "floating" travellers will leave their cars at home.

In the past, the Government has been reluctant to accept that building new roads is an expensive foray down a blind alley. But now Dr Mogridge, associate senior research fellow at University College, London, senses that politicians and even officials at the Department of Transport are listening.

"We have got to the turning point. People realise that building new roads in congested conditions makes traffic conditions worse," he said.

In a 1985 paper, called Jam Yesterday, Jam Today and Jam Tomorrow? Dr Mogridge revealed how he had analysed and then re-analysed the available data. Both the time taken to get to stations and to find suitable car parking were often being ignored by planners.

He pointed out: "Things can actually get worse if you try to improve the wrong way and draw passengers off the more efficient system on to the less efficient. Paradoxical as it may seem, action



Dr Mogridge: Pro-rail

has to be taken to improve public transport in order to speed up the road system."

He called for strategic through running by BR to avoid terminal station delays and he is generally against new Tube-type railways with short station spacings.

Dr Mogridge concedes that there is opposition to his ideas.

"The Department of Transport has produced three papers trying to disprove them," he said.

"The car is actually quite slow and will never get much faster.

"I'm against spending money on motorways when a rail system would do the job better, with less money. Motorways are incredibly expensive in terms of land and resources.

"People feel that the tax money from cars should be spent on roads. But if you buy alcohol or a hi fi, you don't expect the Government to spend the money in those fields. It is a general tax.

"The Government has a responsibility to set up the best transport system possible. Then people have a proper choice."

Finally there are the small diesel-worked routes in otherwise electrified areas. It would make operational sense to electrify lines such as Marks Tey - Sudbury, Hurst Green - Uckfield, Bedford - Bletchley, Oxenholme - Windermere and Hooton - Chester/Helsby. Sometimes local councils and even property developers can be persuaded to back some electrification schemes with a certain amount of cash as has happened with the wiring-up to King's Lynn, though the bulk of the money should come from the public purse, as it does for roads.

Order your electrification leaflets from publicity officer Roland White (address on back page).

ANNUAL ROAD DEATHS: 5 125

ANNUAL RAIL DEATHS: 104

News in brief

The editor of Railway Gazette International, Richard Hope, will be the guest speaker at our national conference of rail users groups in London on 11 November (11am to 4.30pm). The afternoon session will be in the form of workshop sessions. If you want to attend, it costs £3.50, plus £3 for an optional buffet lunch. The venue is Friends House, Euston Road, London. Bookings and information: John Lark at 7 Gloucester Avenue, Gorleston, Great Yarmouth NR31 7LT

Membership secretary Frank Hastilow will not be standing for re-election in May 1990. Frank has performed this important task for five years, after a series of other national and branch posts. The search is now on for a successor. Ability to use the RDS computer, or willingness to learn, is the main qualification. Anyone interested should contact Trevor Garrod.

Just over £311 was raised by Clara Zilahi, Richard Pill, Michael Weinberg and Trevor Garrod on their sponsored cycle rides between Cambridge and Oxford on 3 June. Half of the money went to the RDS Anti-Closure Fund and is already being put to good use in helping the fight against closure proposals in Lincolnshire and Humberside.

Fast freight movements from Ireland to Europe via Scotland and the Channel may be possible after the construction of the cross-Belfast route and the decision of Northern Ireland Railways to apply for £50 million in European grants to upgrade its line to Eire.

SUBSIDIES

Per train kilometre in £s
1986 figures. Source: BRB

| | |
|--------------|-------|
| Luxembourg | 16.06 |
| Italy | 10.52 |
| Austria | 8.88 |
| Belgium | 8.19 |
| France | 5.83 |
| West Germany | 5.37 |
| Holland | 3.45 |
| Denmark | 3.19 |
| Switzerland | 2.39 |
| Britain | 1.95 |

Richard Cottrell is no longer a MEP, but has told us he would be delighted to remain a vice president of RDS. He remains chairman of Advanced Transport for Avon, concerned with building a Bristol area Metro, and as a consultant in advising clients of the transport implications of 1992.

Surprisingly a new magazine called Local Transport Today managed to produce three issues without mentioning the Railway Development Society. But editor Peter Huntley now wants to make sure that we do get a mention. He is hoping we will keep him informed of coming events. This is a valuable offer because his magazine is targeted at the professional planners inside local authorities without whose help we cannot hope to succeed. So send him details of meetings and seminars. The 16-page glossy magazine comes out fortnightly and costs £42 for an annual subscription. It includes news of metro, light rail, road planning, buses and BR

Send your news to Peter Huntley, PO Box 176, Preston, Lancs, PR1 6HZ

BRANCHES

East Midlands

The East Midlands, as always, is extremely busy. We have had a joint meeting with other branches over the Midland main line. We are actively pushing the MML campaign and are at present producing a paper for the line's development, including through services to the Settle-Carlisle and Glasgow and also to York and Edinburgh.

We recently held a meeting in Oakham to test support for a Melton Mowbray-Oakham-Corby-Kettering service and this will lead to a large conference in September or October at which BR has been invited to speak. The conference will be for MPs, councillors, council officers, business people and anyone interested in the idea.

Sutton Bonington and Kegworth parish councils have joined LANRAC (the Leicestershire and Northamptonshire Rail Action Committee). Wigston has been identified as a possible site for a new MML station as well as keeping its present one on the Birmingham line. Oadby and Wigston Borough Council has been invited to join LANRAC.

In the south, we are watching ideas in the Bedford area and remain committed to Bedford - Bletchley and development of links with Swindon.

Darryl Taylor-Smith

London and Home Counties

LOOKING FOR £4.5m: BR says reopening Uckfield-Lewes will now cost £10 million (not £7 million) although it still wants £4.5 million from "non BR funds". The Wealden Line Campaign will address itself to finding providers of that money. The result of a public inquiry into a developer's plan to build across the trackbed in Uckfield is still awaited. The reopening campaign is to be formalised with a committee and membership. Anyone interested should send a SAE to organiser Brian Hart, PO Box 645, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 5BZ. A public meeting is being arranged in Uckfield for the autumn. Details from Trevor Jones.

COLNE VALLEY HOPES: A public meeting is to be held in the Watford area in the autumn about hopes of establishing a Chesham-Watford Jct-St Albans Abbey-St Albans City service. RDS supports a conventional rail service but the Colne Valley Transit Co-ordinating Group wants light rail. One feasibility study is being published in September. Details from Keith Dyal or Trevor Jones.

Trevor Jones

East Anglia

Threats to late-night trains from Norwich to Sheringham, Yarmouth and Lowestoft have been lifted following promises to subsidise them by Norfolk County Council at at least two district councils. It is hoped a similar deal can be negotiated in Suffolk. The councils are to be commended for their action but a possibly dangerous precedent is being set and the situation must be watched carefully.

The Breckland line has been given slight service improvements after local protests. RDS will be campaigning to revive the defunct users group as a way of giving users a better deal in future.

Work has started on the narrow-gauge Bure Valley Railway which will link Aylsham with the Norwich-Sheringham line. RDS welcomed promises by the company that it will co-ordinate its services and ticketing with BR.

Prospects for the expansion of the East Anglian Railway Museum on the Sudbury branch look

promising. It should boost off-peak usage of the BR service.

RDS has welcomed Cambridgeshire County Council's proposals for a light rail system in the Cambridge area which would incorporate the St Ives freight line. We shall be submitting detailed comments.

Trevor Garrod

Lancashire and Cumbria

BR Provincial is looking at reintroducing a regular passenger service on the Blackburn-Hellfield line. Provincial's new development manager at Manchester, Nick Briggs, believes it could be running by May 1991. An enhanced DalesRail service could be operated during 1990. Lancashire County Council will consider capital expenditure but will not give revenue support. Clitheroe station could therefore be refurbished and other stations reopened.

Fewer people are using the Ormskirk to Preston line. This has prompted the line's travellers association to undertake a study into The Future Development of Network NorthWest and its implications for the West Lancashire line. Local authorities have formed a working party to investigate the feasibility of restoring the Bursough curves. All RDS members are invited to a public meeting on 8 November on the theme of Developing Rail Links to Southport. It is at 7.30 pm at the Midnight Lounge, Southport Theatre.

The success of Blackpool's Pleasure Beach station has led BR to examine plans to increase capacity on the South Fylde line from Blackpool South to Preston. It is thought a passing loop will be constructed, possibly at Lytham, allowing a half-hourly service. Fears that BR might downgrade the Furness line by diverting freight trains away seem to be fading. Problems with the two viaducts on the line had led BR to look at options for the future of the line. It now seems the viaducts will be upgraded. The line has also gained regular through services to Manchester Victoria and even an express service to East Anglia.

Richard Watt

Yorkshire

BR is sharply criticised by the TUCC for the North-East over the closure of Leeds Wortley curve. This short length of line allowed InterCity trains from Bradford to King's Cross to give a faster service by not stopping at Leeds. Four years ago BR removed one of the junctions without notifying the TUCC. Bradford Council took BR to court and won. The Court of Appeal said the TUCC, and not BR, should decide if hardship is caused. Now the TUCC says a final decision on Wortley curve should be delayed for five years, pending the proposed transfer of InterCity services from Bradford Interchange to Bradford Forster Square.

Rail Plan No 1 was recently published by West Yorkshire PTA which predicts more new stations and improved facilities at existing ones. Public address systems, car parks and ticket machines are mentioned.

The Ripon Railway Reinstatement Association learned at a meeting in July that much of the former trackbed has survived. Six bridges will have to be rebuilt but the chief difficulties are at Ripon where the county council wants to use the trackbed and the bridge over the river Ure for a road! A housing estate has been built across the track at Littleport. The association now has 220 members who are aiming for main line standards and 90 mph running.

A meeting is being planned to consider reopening the line from Garsdale (on the Settle - Carlisle) to Hawes.

Denis Bradbury

Wales

Overcrowding and poor reliability has bedevilled the Cardiff Valleys because of a shortage of Sprinters. Mid and South Glamorgan are concerned about their investment which could jeopardise the next project, Cardiff - Bridgend - Maesteg.

RDS has devised a low-cost passenger service which could save the Forth - Maerdy line. The county council has plans for a relief road (!) along part of it. Meetings at Newbridge and Cwm, organised by Transport 2000, called for the reopening of the Newport - Abertillery - Ebbw Vale line.

A light rail scheme has been proposed by RDS for Cardiff Bay and also for Swansea, as part of an extended, reopened Mumbles Railway. A possible third scheme for Pyle - Porthcawl is being investigated.

Conwy Valley cheers: A silver band played and the whole town turned out when a diesel multiple unit broke through a banner in July to signal the opening of Llanrwst station. The old Llanrwst is now known as Llanrwst North. There have also been successful Sunday shuttles on the four miles of spectacularly beautiful line between Blaenau Ffestiniog and Maentwrog. Congratulations to BR and the CEGB.

More than 160 girls from Moreton Hall school enjoyed a day-out from Rossett station (reopened for the day) to York. The Press made a great fuss about the train being 25 minutes late.

The Welsh Office would not fund a rail link to Rhoose airport. Welsh Minister Wyn Roberts told Parliament after the subject was raised in his maiden speech by John Smith, Labour MP for the Vale of Glamorgan.

Rod Fairley

Seven unstaffed stations on the Whitland - Tenby - Pembroke Dock branch have been adopted by volunteers. Working closely with the area manager at Swansea, they carry out routine care and maintenance work to platforms, signs

News in brief

Saturday 21 October: A special meeting of the national executive is being held in Leicester to discuss the society's long-term strategy. Make sure your branch has its say. All branches and specialist committees have been invited to send a representative.

The RDS pocket diary is back. Order your 1990 copy now for £2.95 post free from Alan Harwood (address on back page). First come, first served.

RDS books make ideal Christmas presents. Scotland by Rail costs £2.95, the updated East Anglia by Rail is £2.50 and Bustration £1.80. They are available by post from Alan Harwood (address on back page). Add 10 per cent for post and packing (minimum 35p).

The second edition of our A to Z of Rail Reopenings is now available. It is ideal as a present for county surveyors and planning committees who have done little or nothing for railways. It will draw their attention to what other people have done. The book costs £2.05 post free from Alan Harwood.

An RDS report called Sprinting across England has proved so popular, it is being reprinted. It is available for £1 post free from Roger Skilton, 63 Abbots Road, Leicester LE5 1DD

PLATFORM

A load of problems

North Midlands branch secretary Malcolm Goodall is unhappy with RDS attitudes to the continental loading gauge in view of the Channel Tunnel. He writes:-

I was both surprised and disheartened to learn that RDS policy is against any conversion of lines to Berne loading gauge or larger. Short-term tactical moves, such as construction of small-wheeled low-height wagons, are very useful in the short term but such wagons are expensive to build and maintain.

Has the RDS no vision of a long-term strategic objective of a network of Berne gauge routes to our principal cities? The time to start such work is now, with all new lines, structures and alterations being built to more generous dimensions.

Together with the use of singled and dequadrified tracks, and a legacy from pioneers such as I K Brunel and Edward Watkin, the conversion of routes would become feasible in the future. To meekly accept the status quo is a recipe for stagnation and decline.

If the RDS is too myopic to contemplate long-term changes, then perhaps it should adopt the initials of a certain railway engineering firm and rename itself the Railway Fossilisation Society.

Yours despairingly

R M Goodall
Albmarle Cottage
Kirklington Road
Eakring
Newark, Notts

General Secretary Trevor Garrod outlines RDS policy:-

RDS considers it desirable that larger loads should be accommodated on Britain's railways, such as can be carried on most European lines. However, there is more than one way to do this. Heightening bridges, increasing the size of tunnels and knocking back platform edges is not the only way. Much can also be achieved by building stock with smaller wheels and lower axles.

Such low-loader vehicles are already being built, for example by Powell Duffryn, as are swap body, or caisse-mobile, vehicles. RDS supports this development which will enable larger international containers to be carried on BR. Given such innovations, would the high costs and widespread disruption entailed in converting bridges, tunnels etc be justified for that proportion on international traffic which could not be accommodated in any other way?

RDS believes it would not, at least in the foreseeable future. Our policy was arrived at, after 3-4 years of study and discussion by our specialist committees and national executive. It was confirmed by an open and democratic vote at this year's AGM when both sides of the argument were put. Over 100 members attended and only three voted for a motion to adapt routes to Berne gauge. Of course, is a further motion on this issue is duly proposed and seconded at our 1990 AGM, it can be debated. RDS is a democratic organisation.

and waiting shelters. Other organisations are being encouraged to get involved. The largest project is the rebuilding of a waiting room at Narberth, on the site of the old signal box. In the line's 125th year, passenger revenue increased sharply, helped by a regular Sunday service in winter. The adoption group wants more Sprinters. They have produced a Rail n Ride leaflet giving details of tours from stations along the line, with the aim of encouraging cyclists and tourists. The co-ordinator is Des Brown, 16 Lady Park, Tenby SA70 8JH

Des Brown

Severnside

RDS is pressing Avon County Council to support reopening Charfield station, although much of its catchment area lies in Gloucestershire.

Great interest is being shown in reopening Bristol Road, Stonehouse, following the success of a new stopping train service between Gloucester and Bristol together with the reopening of Yate station. It could be crucial in reducing car commuting into Bristol.

New office building and the high cost of car parking in Bristol could give more weight to reopening proposals at Saltford and Corsham. Extra Sprinters are needed to relieve overcrowding on the Trowbridge line and to cope with extra traffic from the new station at Worle.

Thamesdown (Swindon) Borough Council, the NUR Bristol No 2 Branch and Clifton Properties have joined RDS as corporate members.

Eric Barber

IRISH FREIGHT

The Irish Sugar Company has closed its Thurles factory, the only one able to handle rail-borne freight. There were fears that everything would go by road but now happily rail sidings are to be reinstated at the Mallow factory.

Ian C Downey

There were 5 667 accidents involving police vehicles in London last year, resulting in eight "civilians" dying.

Our book Who Should Run Our Railways? has been described by one senior BR manager as "a very good basis for the debate which ought to take place. I very much hope it is widely circulated and read". Have you read this little orange book yet? It is £1.95 post free from Alan Harwood

A discredited policy

The accident toll for 1987:

| | |
|------------------|---------|
| ROADS | |
| Total casualties | 311,493 |
| Serious injuries | 69,000 |
| Deaths | 5,125 |
| RAIL | |
| Total casualties | 9,890 |
| Serious injuries | 434 |
| Deaths | 104 |

After the privatisation of the British Airports Authority, Government Ministers are reported to be worried about the growing conflict between BAA's policies and the wider public interest of coping with booming demand for air travel.

They should be so lucky

By TREVOR JONES

Many of the people who have been campaigning against the high-speed link to the Channel Tunnel will benefit directly from it in the shape of better and faster links to London and the north.

Network SouthEast project manager Bob Breakwell outlined some of his sector's plans to improve Kent services when he spoke at an RDS seminar in July.

The NSE trains will be slotted between international trains. Although there is expected to be great demand for international movements, there will always be spare capacity on the high-speed line at times when Eurotunnel is running its shuttle trains through the Channel.

The NSE trains will be able to run at 125 mph and will be dual voltage so they can work through London, probably on to Great Northern routes. If Stratford emerges as a Channel Tunnel terminal, local services from Kent might also use the new East-West London Crossrail (if the Government approves it).

There will be a train from a new Mid Kent Parkway station (between Maidstone and the Medway) to London every half an hour with one every 20 minutes in the peak. Margate via Canterbury as well as Ramsgate via Dover will get an hourly off-peak service by way of the high-speed line. This will obviously free line capacity for other service improvements.

The journey time to London is expected to be 22 minutes from Mid Kent Parkway and 35 minutes from Ashford with much less chance of delays because there will be few junctions or stations. Premium fares may be charged for peak-time travel.

International connections will be available at Ashford. A footbridge will link the NSE station to the new international platforms on the north side.

Mr Breakwell said the new Mid Kent Parkway would enable BR to serve residential areas which are, at present, some way from a station.

BR is confident that Ashford-Hastings will be electrified to allow better services from Brighton. It will probably be a single line with passing places at Rye and possibly Appledore. An "occasional" Sprinter is expected to arrive at Ashford from South Wales via Reading, Guildford and Redhill.

Kent is the nearest point in Britain to the Continent and traffic through it is bound to grow. The most environment-friendly way to do it is by rail.

This theme is the subject of our latest leaflet Why



An artist's impression of the Channel Tunnel shuttle trains which are to be built by a consortium including Brush of Loughborough. Deliveries are programmed to start in October 1991

Kent needs a new railway to the Channel Tunnel. Free copies can be obtained from the publicity officer (address on back page).

A follow-up seminar will be held in Ashford on 2 December. Details from me at Flat 2, 11 Guildford Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1SW. I can also supply a nine-page report of the July seminar for £2 (post free).

Chunnel progress

By NICHOLAS HAMMOND

The scale of the work on the Channel Tunnel is vast, with £2 million of borrowed money spent each day on the whole project. The Cheriton terminal site is the second largest civil engineering site in Britain - after Canary Wharf. The La Coquelle terminal site near Calais is as big as London airport and 50 kilometres of railway are being built there. About 7000 people are employed on the whole project.

There are serious ramifications if any of the work, including tunnelling, gets behind schedule. Eurotunnel can fine its contractors Transmanche-Link for delays. The lending banks have the right to refuse to release funds if they are dissatisfied with progress and to take control of the project in extreme cases.

The confidence of the lending banks is maintained if Eurotunnel keeps up the pressure on the contractors. Delays can cost £17 million per month in borrowing interest and Eurotunnel also pays penalties to the railways. Eurotunnel can borrow £4 billion in any of four currencies. Francs are being used because French interest rates are the most favourable.

Eurotunnel's financial advisor Mr Graham Corbett said that 25 per cent of the total work on the project was complete in July. By the end of 1988, £995 million had been spent.

News in brief

The property board is crucial to British Rail. Last year alone, it produced £263 million from land sales, a large chunk of BR's overall profit of £304 million.

But there are fears it is not taking into account the changed climate of the 80s and 90s - typified by reopenings and expansion of rail travel. That was what prompted an RDS investigation conducted by John Barfield.

He has identified various problem sites, including Cricklewood, Beeston, and along the route of the Bedford - Sandy line.

The full report costs £2 (post free) from Alan Harwood (address this page)

The RDS lottery winners for June were 1 Hubert Snewin, Worthing £40.25, 2 B Keighley, Morecambe £20.13, 3 Ian Rider, Whitehaven £10.06, 4 Charles Roe, Orpington £10.06 (Prize pool £80.50) July: 1 A Lambert, Falmouth £39, 2 Joan Coombes, Ipswich £19.50, 3 David Marks, South Wirral £9.75, 4 Alana Mills, Birmingham £9.75 (Prize pool £78) August: 1 Alan Mills, Birmingham £36.25, 2 Paul Stocks, Ellesmere, Shropshire £18.13, 3 George Lillie, Alnwick £9.06, 4 J Shemilt, Ashbourne £9.06 (prize pool £72.50)

The lottery needs more members to make the prizes more attractive. You can help RDS raise money and have a chance to win yourself by joining. Details from Dave Finch, 28 Nevill Avenue, Kidderminster, Worcs, DY11 7AL

The annual general meeting of RDS will be held at Manchester's Liverpool Road conference centre on 5 May 1990.

Plans are going ahead for Rail Development Week between 25 and 31 March. Have you contacted your branch secretary with ideas and offers of help? One interesting suggestion from Helen Broadbent is to look for foreign twin towns and see if we can learn from them. Lille, Amiens, Genk, Wurzburg and Zurich are world leaders in transport at the moment. Why not organise a meeting, set up an exhibition or ask the local Press to do a feature.

Railwatch welcomes advertising. Small ads cost 20p per word. Display rates are available from the editor.

You have until 31 December to send in your entries for the RDS photographic contest. Send them to Nick Lewis, 36 Common Road, Stotfold, Hitchin, Herts SG5 4DB. Full details of the contest were in Railwatch 40.

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Assistant editor: **George Cooper**.

All copy for the next issue, to be published in January, must be in the hands of **Mr King** by **Saturday November 11**.

Subscription supplies: **Alan Cocker**, 11 Franklin Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP3 9DX.

Published by the Railway Development Society, an independent voluntary body.

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Membership: £7.50 per year (families £8.50). Pensioners, students and unemployed £4 (families £5). Rail users groups: £8.50. Special rate for local authorities and companies.

Printed by Print-Out, High Street, Histon, Cambridge (Tel: 0223 232709)

ISSN 0267-8943