

Get back on track, Cecil

THE Government has been given a clear warning by the official passenger watchdog that its financial straightjacket is preventing British Rail from giving a good service.

"BR are trying to do the job but they haven't got the tools," said Major General Lennox Napier. "We need long-term strategic decisions from the Government, so we know where we are in the next 15 to 20 years, not just the next three or four years."

His message for Transport Secretary Cecil Parkinson was that there was a tight financial squeeze on BR from two directions. First money for day-to-day running of the railways was in short supply because the Government was axing the public service obligation grant completely for Network SouthEast and cutting it back for Provincial.

BR was also struggling to get "mega projects" like London's East-West Crossrail and the Channel Tunnel Link off the ground while having to rely for funds on increasing fares, property sales and borrowing from the Government which has to be paid back with interest.

Launching his annual report, General Napier, a former infantry commander, paid tribute to railway managers for making minor progress in an adverse climate. He conceded they were providing an "adequate" service overall despite "disaster areas" like the North Kent line.

But he said: "The committee is convinced there is a direct link between the reduction of PSO grant and declining standards for customers.

"I look to government to make it a good railway rather than an adequate one.

"While financial and quality targets are supposed to be equally important, it is quality which suffers when funds are short.

"I accept the need to achieve financial targets, but not at the expense of quality, nor without full regard to BR's social and economic obligations to the community."

He added: "Staff cuts have gone too far."

On the safety recommendations of the Clapham Junction disaster report, he said: "As yet there has been no clear commitment that any of the additional investment necessary will be funded by the Government."

At the time Transport Secretary Cecil Parkinson said "finance will not stand in the way of the implementation of the report".

General Napier is chairman of the Central Transport Users Consultative Committee which was set up by law in 1947. Its expenses are paid by the Department of Trade and Industry but it is supposedly independent of BR and the Government.

It is very unusual for the committee which includes the chairmen of the area committees to be so critical of the Government.



Birmingham here we come: The new 90mph trains for the Cross-City services which will start in 1992

The international set

The trains to be built for the £36 million Birmingham Cross-City electrification will have an international flavour.

Although the contract has been won by Hunslet Transportation Projects based in Stirchley, Birmingham, they will be assembled in Scotland - at the Hunslet Barclay factory in Kilmarnock.

The lightweight aluminium bodysells will be supplied by Aluisse of Zurich and the three-phase motors will come from the Dutch firm Holec.

The project was approved in February and delivery is scheduled to start in April 1992, with the three-car 90 miles per hour trains entering service when the October timetable is introduced.

Hunslet is also building a batch of the same trains for Network NorthWest in Greater Manchester.

There will be regenerative braking, giving admirable fuel savings of up to 30 per cent. Journey times between Lichfield and Redditch will be cut by 20 minutes.

There will be a "convertible area" for wheelchair passengers, parcels and mothers with prams. There is no mention of cycles.

Unfortunately they may well be nicknamed the Sardine Can specials because of the Department of Transport's insistence that the load factor must be 135 per cent. That means too many passengers will have to stand.

Bob Tarr, director general of Centro, the renamed West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive, said: "It means they will be standing on new trains, rather than old trains." He sees it as one example of how the DoT is thwarting attempts in Birmingham to encourage commuters off the roads.

Money, money, money

By DAVID BIGG

The society has received a Customs and Excise ruling which indicates that we will have to register for Value Added Tax later this year which looks set to increase our costs by a minimum of 15 per cent.

It seems unfair that the taxman should take money from a voluntary group such as ours and we will be contacting MPs to see what can be done.

But the ruling may mean we will have to ask people to contribute more to the society and we may have to consider an increase in subscriptions.

A working party has already been set up, which includes our new assistant membership officer Carl Kirkham, to look at ways of restructuring the membership.

Any subscription rise will be carefully thought out and we may, for example, offer a five-year deal at a reduced rate. At this stage, all ideas are welcome and should be sent to Reg Snow (address on back page).

Raising cash is one of the harder tasks for the society, in common with all voluntary groups. While many will give moral support, when it comes to the handing over of a cheque, it becomes quite a different matter.

So keeping RDS solvent is a constant struggle, especially in these days of high interest rates and poll tax bills.

We have the benefit of a rising membership and an enthusiastic band of fund raisers in the shape of Dave Finch who runs the monthly lottery and Reg Snow who has organised the national draw. However, it is the annual subscription that keeps us on the rails with 60 per cent of our income coming from this single source and a further 20 per cent from members' donations. The same pockets thus provide 80 per cent of the cash.

The society could not function without such generous support. So where does the money go? Roughly 20 per cent goes into the production and

distribution of Railwatch, with another 20 per cent going each year to the branches. Another 20 per cent is used to publicise the activities of RDS, to promote its image and to attract new members.

Around 18 per cent is spent on administration, reimbursement of some of the expenses of our tireless workers and hire of halls. The rest goes to support book sales.

What does this mean in money terms? Well, on a turnover just short of £25,000 for a year, I expect a "profit" of just £2,000 or less. The half year January to June 1990 shows a surplus of £1022.

What assets do we own? Well not a lot. If you exclude our book stock, we hold 100 shares in the Eurotunnel project and little else. Obviously this is not a situation that can be allowed to continue. Our hard-working team of specialists give freely of their time and living space and of course computer equipment and the like.

I would like to aim for the day when the society has its own premises and full-time staff. For this, our membership must continue to grow. But we can also appeal to industry and charitable trusts for some income support.

With our members' support, we can achieve our objectives.

If you need more information about RDS finances and VAT, please contact treasurer David Bigg at Eye Level, 76 Maldon Road, Witham, Essex, CM8

Some local authorities see the benefit of a strong RDS and have joined us as corporate members. Has YOURS?

Others are reluctant to join because they are worried about the political implications even though RDS is non-political. But many councils could benefit from seeing the arguments for better rail services. Can YOU persuade your local transport committee chairman, director of planning, local library, councillor or MP to take out a subscription to Railwatch. It costs only £2.80 a year. Applications to Alan Cocker (address back page).



What the papers say

In London, vehicles produce 80 per cent of the airborne pollution. Across Britain, cars produce 80 per cent of the 4.5 million tonnes of toxic carbon monoxide produced annually.

Financial Times 6.6.90

There are 105,000 British investors in the Channel Tunnel, compared to 535,000 French.

The Guardian 28 June 1990

British Rail is accused of racial discrimination in rejecting all 19 black or Asian guards who applied for promotion at Paddington. All four white candidates were accepted.

Daily Telegraph 30 June 1990

The Swiss city of Zurich gives trams priority at road junctions and has a general philosophy that the car gets only what road space is left after priority users - trams, buses, cyclists and pedestrians - have been satisfied. Even top executives go by tram.

Railway Gazette International April 1990

One rail track can move the same volume of traffic as 18 road lanes. One third of urban land in America is taken up by car parks and garages. Each year more Americans are killed on the road than in the entire Vietnam war.

Letter to Railway Gazette International May 1990

The Automobile Association opposed the introduction of the driving test. It opposed speed limits and it used to encourage drivers to evade police speed traps. It opposed the introduction of the 70 mph speed limit. It opposed the introduction of road humps. It claims to speak for drivers but never consults its members.

Walk Summer 1990

We need a speed limit of 18 mph in all residential areas, enforced by sleeping policemen at regular intervals.

Walk Summer 1990

I recently left Inverness for New Galloway which entailed a five-hour journey both ways. The whole trip was like one luxurious self-guiding natural history tour - luxurious because I did not have to drive.

Ray Collier Guardian 31.5.90

A thorough review of lines closed or downgraded under the Beeching regime should be carried out with a view to safeguarding them for future use.

Transport October 1989

Low morale and a sense of alienation among British Rail drivers emerges from a three-year study as the prime cause of an increase in signals passed at danger (SPAD).

Railway Gazette International April 1990

The relentless growth of road use will eventually make large parts of this overcrowded island intolerable for man and beast.

Daily Telegraph 14 June 1990

Most politicians don't use public transport. The approach of elections may inspire them to short-term thinking or to spectacular prestige projects.

Modern Tramway July 1990

Britain has at last discovered the virtues of light rail.

Modern Tramway June 1990

A German lesson in quality

British Rail and their rolling stock suppliers could learn a great deal by studying just how our European partners go about things.

The Germans are in the process of establishing a network of regional express trains which are the nearest equivalent to our Provincial Express.

The purpose-built Inter-Regio trains are already running every two hours between Hamburg and Kassel. The network, linking Germany's secondary cities and towns, will be complete by 1993.

The watchword for the new trains is convenience if not luxury. There are two toilets in each 50-60 seat coach which compares with Provincial's one toilet for every 100 passengers in the 156 Sprinters.

Half of one carriage is fitted out as a cafe-bistro with "non disposable" crockery.

There are compartments of various sizes, with differing seating arrangements, some with tables and some without. Considerable thought has been given to making the decor interesting.

Some seats tip up, some are adjustable and there are even small seats for children. Makers PFA, a

subsidiary of Deutsche Bundesbahn, stress that the aim is to cater for those who want to work, read, play games, talk or just doze.

Of course BR will point out that the Department of Transport insists on cramming as many passengers as possible into our trains. But even accepting BR's excuse for that, other German ideas like clothes hooks, luggage lockers, and a baby-changing table can be provided at minimal cost.

There are many other aspects of the European rail scene which illustrate how the people of Britain are being cheated out of an efficient and user-friendly rail system by mistaken policies of dependence on road transport. In France for instance electrification is paid for by SNCF if there is a direct economic gain to it, as an operator, including the chance of saving on operating costs or attracting new customers. Current projects include Calais - Hazebrouck and Lyon - Grenoble. But there are numerous schemes which may not satisfy national economic criteria but are wanted or needed by the regions. In such cases, local and regional councils and sometimes the national government contribute

to the capital cost. Lines already electrified in this way include Paris - Clermont Ferrand and the southern line to Brittany. Others just started include Poitiers - La Rochelle and Paris - Caen - Cherbourg.

Between now and 1995, national and local authorities will have helped SNCF to electrify 1016 km of line.

In the Netherlands, about 70 per cent of the network is electrified. The non-electrified lines are mainly single track rural routes in the north and east. Fifty km are being electrified now and there are plans for a further 250 km.

In the national transport structure plan, targets are set for improving both the economy and the quality of life by improving accessibility and reducing air pollution.

The plan which is also published in English says it is vital for jobs to be located near public transport and leisure facilities must be sited at points well served by public transport.

The government plans to spend £3.5 billion over the next 20 years to improve the transport infrastructure, of which £2.5 billion will be invested in the railways.

And what about that link to Europe?

By TREVOR JONES

I am looking forward to the day when I can go to Waterloo and get on a Euro express if I want to pay a visit to Paris or Brussels.

With luck there will also be an overnight sleeper to Austria or Spain, giving me a comfortable head start for a foreign holiday.

But I, like many others, am concerned about the wrangles which are delaying construction of a high speed link from London to the Channel Tunnel.

The point is not the question of saving half an hour on a long holiday journey, although the higher speed might get the businessman out of his noisy aeroplane or polluting motor car.

The point is that without a new double-track railway, both the railways and main roads of Kent will soon become hopelessly overcrowded.

The alternative is to build roads to cope with the traffic, which would probably mean another six-lane motorway which of course won't help those like me who don't want to drive.

It should be remembered that there are only a few short sections of four track main railway in Kent. Most of it is only two track.

Surely we all want to see as much traffic as possible on the rails rather than further cluttering roads like the M25.

At the very least, this means building new tracks to segregate fast and slow rail traffic through Kent.

RDS issued a Press release during Rail Development Week regretting the failure of the Government to make a decision and putting forward our own alternative for the section from Swanley to King's Cross, drawn up by Dr Frank Tomlins and described, with a map, in Railwatch 38. A briefing paper can be obtained from the sales officer.

Dr Tomlins also sounded a warning that the Channel's potential for switching freight from road to rail might not be realised because a massive freight transfer depot was being constructed at Coquelles. UK-bound traffic might

well proceed on lorries via the Eurotunnel shuttle.

Members of the RDS international committee have attended two presentations, one by BR showing how King's Cross is to be redeveloped, and one by engineers Ove Arup who want to build an alternative fast link to Stratford and King's Cross.

RDS continues to believe that a fast link is necessary but that an interim solution could be

Read all about it

An excellent selection of pictures which tell the story of 1989 appears in Today's Railways Review of the Year (volume 3) by David Carter and Peter Fox. As well as BR's five sectors, light rail, preservation and the European scene are also featured. Platform 5 £13.95

Special Offers

In and Around London (new railguide) £3.50

Lancs & Cumbria by Rail £2.60

South West by Rail £2.30

Yorkshire by Rail £2.60

Settle-Carlisle Country (guide book) £6.25

The Line that Refused to Die (a new book from publishers Leading Edge) £6.60

Prices include post and packing

Offers close 30 November 1990

Thirty other books, including a new edition of North East by Rail, published by RDS are also available. There are also other rail guides, specialist books, re-use labels and Railwatch back numbers.

Please note that post and packing is now 10 per cent of order value, with a minimum 50p.

Apologies to those who have already ordered In and Around London. It was late arriving from the publisher.

Send orders for books or an SAE for a sales list to RDS sales officer, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN

for the Government to find the £520 million needed for the Thameslink Metro plan which would greatly expand potential for North-South movement through London.

Even without the link, BR plans to run 40 passenger trains and 27 freight trains through the tunnel, including direct trains from Manchester, Wolverhampton, Edinburgh and Leeds.

Orders have been placed for the first 30 train sets which will take three hours for London to Paris

How to agree on going local

Many local councils are facing increased demands to fund new rail services as well as propping up existing ones because the Government has cut the public service obligation grant. So the theme for the National Conference of Rail Users couldn't be more topical - it's Railways and Local Government.

You can hear how councils are coping at a time when they are coming under pressure to cut spending to keep down public spending.

Can local rail services survive in these circumstances? What are the long-term planning implications?

These are some of the questions which will be dealt with by two experts we have invited to the conference, to be held at Friends' House in Euston Road, London, on 17 November 1990 from 11am to 4.30pm.

Councillor Derek Bateman of Cheshire County Council is well qualified to speak on these issues as he is chairman of the Shire Counties Consortium. The other speaker is Vincent Christie from the Association of District Councils.

Admission is open to all members of RDS as well as its affiliates. The fee per delegate is £3.50. The optional buffet lunch costs £4.00 and consists of a ploughman's lunch followed by homemade fruit tart and cream.

If you would like to attend, please send a cheque or postal order (payable to RDS) with your name and address to me at 7 Gloucester Avenue, Gorleston, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk NR31 7LT. Please enclose an SAE if you require immediate acknowledgement of your booking.

TREVOR
GARROD'S
VIEW



How we all
subsidise
car drivers

First let me declare an interest. I do not drive a company car. Nor do the vast majority of people in this country.

Those who do, according to a Press cutting sent me by a member, benefit by between £2,102 and £8,697 a year. This is in spite of some attempts by the present Chancellor and his predecessor to curb the generous tax concessions they receive. These figures were revealed by the *Independent* on 4 June 1990.

Research by the London Amenity and Transport Association has shown that tax concessions to company car drivers, and similar perks like free parking, amount to a greater hidden subsidy than the cash support to Provincial and Network SouthEast rail passengers.

Furthermore most company car drivers do not need these vehicles for their work. In any rationally organised system they would be expected to pay for their own transport, claiming for any business-related travel expenses.

The present gross distortion in our transport financing is a typically British phenomenon. Other European countries do not have the same degree of automatic presentation of a transport status symbol to anyone who happens to have reached a certain level of management. They pay their managers a bit more perhaps and then let them decide what they want to spend their money on.

RDS president Dr Michael Caton is writing to the finance ministries of each of our European partners for further details of what perks, if any, they offer to company car drivers. We hope to report results in a later issue of *Railwatch* and to make use of them in lobbying our own politicians. Meanwhile I have written to John Major to express approval for the tax curbs on company cars in his Spring budget, as one small step on the way to a more balanced transport policy.

* Trevor Garrod also writes a column on rail development issues in the fortnightly news magazine *RAIL*.

A high speed network for Britain

The French have announced plans to spend £20 billion on 14 new TGV lines, adding 2,000 miles of high-speed track to the highly successful routes to Lyon, Aquitaine and Brittany. GRAHAM NALTY believes Britain should be building new high-speed lines and calls for a rail lobby speaking loud enough to be heard by government which is accused of having an Alice in Wonderland attitude to transport planning at present.

There is a very strong case for building several new railway routes in Britain to provide for the explosion in travel and transport which cannot adequately be met by road transport alone.

Rail transport is the most space-efficient form of transport for both passengers and freight. It is also the most economical to provide for large flows of traffic.

It follows that wherever there is a case for new motorways, there is an even better case for new investment in parallel rail routes.

Not only that, the larger the individual flows, the greater the proportion of the total traffic that can be more economically handled by rail.

Evidence of this is the high proportion of daily commuters who use rail transport to get into central London.

Although it is essential for these new routes to be high speed, giving very fast end-to-end journey times, some of them will provide journeys which BR cannot at present offer. So there can also be a number of stopping and limited stop services.

A strong feature of the routes is that they link city centres both to local airports and to airports in other parts of the country. High quality rail services are THE way to connect with flights. Many air journeys do not start at local airports. Heathrow for instance has the whole of Britain as its catchment area.

Rail and air operators may not be enthusiastic in calling for new lines because they will increase competition. But they make sense to the passenger. It is the passenger who must demand they be built.

Not everyone will agree with the choice of routes although no-one could argue with route one. Every route that IS built, strengthens the case for the next one.

HIGH SPEED ONE

London Heathrow - Birmingham - Manchester - Glasgow

The diversity of separate routes from London to Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow has prevented BR from building up passenger traffic on the West Coast main line.

As the four largest conurbations are almost on a straight line, a route linking all four is the obvious answer, despite the costs of providing for 150 miles per hour plus through the centres of Birmingham and Manchester. The route also links the airports of these cities.

HS1 would extend the proposed new line from the airport to the M25/M40 Interchange Parkway, High Wycombe Parkway, Oxford (bypassed to the NW but with connecting spur), Stratford upon Avon, Birmingham International (with bypass route via Solihull and Tyseley), New Street, Walsall, Stoke on Trent, Manchester airport, Bolton, Preston (bypassed to NW), Lancaster, Carlisle, following the M6 into Glasgow and on to Glasgow airport.

Trains stopping only at Birmingham and Man-

chester could run every 20 minutes and there could also be stopping trains every hour or half hour. It would give foreign tourists the chance to go direct from Heathrow to both Oxford and Stratford upon Avon.

HIGH SPEED TWO

London Heathrow - Gatwick - Ashford - Channel Tunnel

This would give a much-needed link between Heathrow and Gatwick but would also give a more satisfactory route from Birmingham and Manchester to Europe rather than through central London.

High speed running would be possible through Heathrow via non-platform tracks. The route would go to Leatherhead/M25 Parkway, cross under the present Gatwick station at an angle and curve round near East Grinstead to Tonbridge, Ashford and the Channel Tunnel.

HIGH SPEED THREE

London Heathrow - Northampton - Leicester - Sheffield - Leeds - Stockton - Sunderland - Ashington - East Coast main line

This route duplicates the Birmingham line to High Wycombe and then goes to Aylesbury to join the West Coast main line at Bletchley, and then to Milton Keynes, Northampton, then to Leicester (via Rugby), along the Midland main line to Loughborough, bearing left to burrow under East Midlands airport and into Derby via the Siffin line. After Derby, it follows the existing route to Sheffield and then a new route via Barnsley, Wakefield, Leeds airport, Harrogate, Ripon, Northallerton, Teesside airport, Stockton, then along the path of a dismantled railway to Sunderland. After Sunderland, it could be extended to Newcastle or to join the East Coast main line at Ashington via South Shields, Tynemouth and Bedlington.

HIGH SPEED FOUR

Liverpool - Manchester - Bradford - Leeds airport - Leeds - Hull

Starting at Liverpool, this route should go via Liverpool airport, Manchester airport, Manchester Piccadilly, Oldham and Rochdale to Halifax. It could then go either to Leeds airport and Sunderland or to Leeds and Hull.

HIGH SPEED FIVE

Cardiff - Newport - Birmingham International - Nottingham - Hull

This route could follow the Western main line to Newport and then the road route to Monmouth, Ross on Wye, and then the M50 to join the railway main line as far as Bromsgrove, then along the M52 to Birmingham International (under the present station), East Midlands airport, Nottingham, Gainsborough, Scunthorpe and via a tunnel under the Humber to Hull.

This could provide an hourly service and would give scope for local services.

HIGH SPEED SIX

Ashford - Brighton - Portsmouth - Bournemouth - Exeter

This follows the course of the present railway

route from Ashford to Hastings, Brighton, Worthing and Bognor Regis, but then runs to Hayling Island and under the water to Gosport, under the Solent to Lymington, Bournemouth, Poole, Dorchester, Bridport, Axminster and then to Honiton and Exeter. For faster services to Plymouth, the route could run to Sidmouth, Exmouth and under the water to Dawlish.

It might seem surprising to avoid Southampton but the important point would be to achieve the fastest end to end journey times. There would be scope for additional services to and from Southampton via Portsmouth or Bournemouth. The under-water tunnels could include roads.

HIGH SPEED SEVEN

Ashford - Gravesend - Stansted - Cambridge - Peterborough

This route links the Channel Tunnel to North East London and Stansted airport via Maidstone, Gravesend, Brentwood, Stansted, Cambridge, Huntingdon and Peterborough.

HIGH SPEED EIGHT

Harwich - Colchester - Stansted - Luton airport - Luton - Milton Keynes

This route links Harwich with the West Coast main line and provides for through trains to Birmingham.

HIGH SPEED NINE

London - Peterborough - Grimsby - Hull - Middlesbrough - Sunderland

There are a number of large towns on the East Coast which are not adequately served by direct trains from London. The total population of these towns compares with the towns on the Midland main line which now enjoy two trains per hour throughout the day.

This route could provide an hourly service with a secondary service calling at Spalding, Boston, Cleethorpes, Scarborough, Whitby and Stockton.

HIGH SPEED TEN

Portsmouth - Southampton - Oxford - Birmingham

This route could follow route six from Portsmouth to Gosport, then on to Fareham, Southampton, Southampton airport, Winchester and then to Newbury, Oxford, and then on to route one to Birmingham.

HIGH SPEED ELEVEN

Norwich - Cambridge - Stevenage - Watford - Heathrow - Guildford - Portsmouth

This route follows the existing route to Thetford, then a new line to Newmarket and on to Cambridge and Stevenage, then a new route to St Albans, Watford, Heathrow, Woking, Guildford and Portsmouth.

HIGH SPEED TWELVE

Brighton - Gatwick airport

This route follows the present Brighton to London route for most of the way, then leaves it to join the Channel Tunnel - Heathrow route two, just south-east of Gatwick.



If only: High-speed rail services could transform the map of Britain if only the political will existed

Thinking big: Voters in California have voted in favour of paying taxes which will raise £176 million a year for building metros and light rail systems around San Francisco and Los Angeles. Wisconsin is studying plans for high speed rail lines between Chicago, Milwaukee and Minneapolis-St Paul. Another 311-mile high speed line is planned for Florida. In Texas there will be a 750 mile high-speed triangle linking Houston, Dallas and San Antonio.

Flying start: A new rail link has been set up between Rome and Fiumicino airport. A second airport station is to be built at Frankfurt at a cost of £340 million because the present one is too busy. The national airline Lufthansa already

runs its own trains. Hamburg's S-bahn is to be extended to Fuhlsbüttel airport at a cost of £70 million.

Reverse gear: Petrol taxes will rise in the Netherlands by five per cent next year, and every year thereafter. Cars moving at peak times in four main cities will have to display a tax disc showing they have paid a 25 per cent supplement and also pay daily tolls. The money raised will be invested in public transport, mainly railways. The aim is to double the amount of train travel.

Speed link: The first non-stop freight train linking the Netherlands and Austria started running in May from Rotterdam to Wels.

BRANCHES

North East

The revised guide book North East by Rail was launched on August bank holiday Sunday at Stanhope station (on the Weardale branch) and at Alston station (on the South Tynedale Railway). Guest speakers were Brian Sutcliffe, chairman of the Friends of the Settle - Carlisle Line and Robert Murrell, the recently retired transport coordination officer for Durham County Council. Happily the S & C is now linked with Alston on summer weekends by a bus service from Langwathby to Alston.

The branch's North East Rail Review was published in August. It is targeted at, among others, local MPs, local authorities and the media.

Concern continues to grow about the immediate future of the Leamside branch which operates on a freight-only basis, although it can be used as a diversionary route when the east coast main line is closed through Durham. The branch believes there is scope for a passenger service on this Ferryhill - Pelaw line as sizeable settlements have flourished along the route over the years. Stations could be built at Shincliffe, Sherburn, Belmont, Leamside, New Lambton and Washington. Local MPs have given their support to the scheme.

I was interviewed live on the mid-morning chat show on BBC Radio Newcastle in May, giving me the chance to publicise RDS and to outline some of our future rail prospects.

Local authority involvement in the rail industry was outlined at a branch meeting by Mr R Murrell.

Geoff Longstaffe

London and Home Counties

British Rail's London regional planning manager Richard Malins is to talk to the branch at 1900 on 6 November 1990 at Friends Meeting House opposite Euston station in Euston Road. He will tell us about Thameslink developments especially the plans for extra tracks through London Bridge and up to Blackfriars. He will also talk about new railways planned for central London. Non members will be welcome to attend.

A branch members' outing was scheduled for 1 September with visits planned to Stratford and Ongar via the Central line to Epping and including the outer section which is now operating all day rather than only at peak hours.

Christmas cards (a drawing of Wateringbury station) are available. The same pattern as last year. They cost 10p each (minimum £2) from Ian Crighton, 19 Oakdale Avenue, Kenton, Harrow, Middx HA3 0UJ (081 204 2642). The same picture mounted as a print is also available at £1.85. Both post free.

A working group has been discussing during the summer how to proceed with the branch's Surrey Rail Strategy. Copies are still available from Reg Snow, price 35p post free.

We are hoping to be represented at a seminar being organised in September by Thurrock council (west of Tilbury) as a result of the proposed closure of Tilbury Riverside to which we have objected. It also raises the risk of the subsequent closure of the Tilbury ferry which people on the Essex side seem more keen to keep than those on the Kent side.

Now that NSE is again running passenger trains (non stop) between Stratford and Tottenham Hale, we have hopes of trying to get the intermediate Lea Bridge station reopened.

Trevor Jones

BRANCHES

Yorkshire

Swinging cuts to already inadequate timetables are in prospect from October as BR Provincial tries to comply with the latest directive to reduce its public sector obligation requirement. The Leeds - Goole route, already limited to four trains each way, will see just three trains to Leeds and two in the opposite direction, while the Sheffield - York local service will be cut from six trains each way to four. Since the minimisation of rolling stock requirements, rather than any attempt to meet passenger need, is clearly the main consideration behind the planned timetables, patronage and revenue on both routes look set to fall markedly.

Rumours about the future of the above services, together with the Skipton - Lancaster route, still persist. RDS Yorkshire chairman James Towler sought an assurance from Eastern Region and was told there are no plans for further closure proposals. The local RDS and user groups remain unconvinced.

A consultants report on the Brighouse reopening has recommended a Bradford - Huddersfield service as the initial option, with a link to Leeds via Dewsbury to follow. West Yorkshire passenger transport authority is committed to the new service, though the opening date depends on the final arrival of class 158 and 321 units in the county.

RDS and several user groups were represented at a seminar in Leeds to discuss West Yorkshire PTA's annual RailPlan. RDS urged that priority be given to remodelling the western approaches to Leeds station in the interests of service reliability across the region and stressed the need for better information and more suitable rolling stock.

Hull City Council has called in a firm of consultants to explore ways of easing traffic congestion in the city. A light rail system and improved conventional rail services are among the options to be studied. Both measures were called for by RDS in its Yorkshire Rail Development Strategy earlier this year. Also in Hull, port expansion, including reopening of the mothballed Alexandra Dock, has raised hopes of increased Railfreight traffic - unless of course BR's Speedlink review renders such thoughts academic.

David Pickersgill

Scotland

Observing the Scottish media and politicians, one would imagine we were about to be linked to France by a road bridge not a rail tunnel. All the emphasis is on road building.

While we welcome the backing for railways from opposition MPs (are the Tories beyond redemption as far as supporting railways are concerned?), why is it that road building always seems to loom so large and Dornoch Bridge has again been "knocked back" by Scotrail? But at least they say they want to protect the environment and want more freight to switch from road to rail.

The reaction to the £1 billion plan to convert the A1 road into motorway only as far as Newcastle is typical. Opposition MPs and the media are demanding that the motorway should continue to Edinburgh even though at present it only carries 5,000 vehicles a day north of the border.

A motorway would carry 60,000 vehicles a day which is plainly absurd but that is what the road lobby, opposition MPs and Scottish newspapers are demanding. One would have thought that anyone concerned about safety and the environ-

ment, to say nothing of the poor old taxpayer, would instead oppose the whole idea of a motorway on the A1 and demand that the money be spent on rail links through or round London and on electrification north of Edinburgh.

Meanwhile the M74 scandal is becoming quite extraordinary but still there is still not a word of opposition except from a few farmers on the route. Suddenly the cost seems to have escalated from £300m to £500m without any official announcement or explanation. All this to provide 10 lanes of traffic for present traffic of 20,000 a day. The road already has the capacity to handle 45,000. The scale of this monumental white elephant is quite grotesque but it has been totally ignored by every politician and newspaper in the country except for the Greens. A fraction of the money to be squandered on the M74 would transform life for every rail traveller throughout the UK.

The Government seems quite oblivious of the fact that there is a strong connection between congestion on the roads (very rare in Scotland outside the cities) and the relative decline of the railways. It is also getting away with the utter hypocrisy between what it is saying about the environment and value for money and what it is actually doing about transport.

As for the railways we can only wait in the hope that, when we finally reach the point when all trains in Scotland are operated by relatively new stock, the trains will provide better and more reliable competition for the roads. However, the fact that new rolling stock ought to attract new passengers, may well lead to overcrowding. Again it will be left to RDS to ensure that the blame for this falls squarely upon the Government.

There is also a bitter fight on now to ensure that cuts in freight traffic do not take place. Once again no politician has the guts to point out that the corollary of saving rail freight is a drastic reduction in the bloated roads budget.

Douglas Smart

East Anglia

We went to great lengths only to advertise our second special train from Cambridge along the St Ives line locally so that BR could not say that "enthusiasts" filled the trains. About 3,500 passenger journeys, largely by local people, were made on the two days.

That did not stop a BR spokesman (anon) souring the otherwise excellent Press coverage by claiming just that. According to him/her, the area must have the largest number per head of the population, of that dirty word in BR's lexicon, "rail supporters".

Transport Minister Roger Freeman inspected the Cambridge - King's Lynn electrification work and criticised plans to run 317 electric multiple units to Lynn. Perhaps he will tell his department to allow BR in future to build low-density stock for such lines. Ely blockade: For nine days, Ely is to be closed to allow resignalling. It never used to be necessary to condemn railway passengers to a 25-mile journey in double decker buses because of work on the line. Why now? There has already been a 20 per cent reduction in passenger journeys between Cambridge and Lynn because of the electrification works. We shall be pressing for the use of buses to be minimised.

Imagine: Every Provincial line in East Anglia now has an active users group, following the formation of the Mid Suffolk Rail Users Association in July. Local concern about cuts in

stopping trains, leaving communities of over 3,000 population like Needham Market and Elmwell with gaps of four hours or more in the timetable, led to RDS calling a public meeting in Bury St Edmunds. BR has provided little marketing over the last few years. When the 156 Sprinters are cascaded to local routes, we will offer BR help in relaunching the local services. We hope BR will be imaginative. Secretary of the new association is Mrs Margaret Ibbetson, 66 Eastern Way, Elmwell, Suffolk IP30 9DP.

Questionable: A question mark hangs over several services on the Ipswich - Felixstowe and Ipswich - Lowestoft lines. Two busy trains, the 0610 ex Lowestoft and the 1637 ex Ipswich, face the axe. Their loss will have repercussions on the loadings of other trains and hence the viability of the route. The excuse given is the unreliability of the "heritage fleet" because of delays in delivering the 158s.

Tories to the rescue: Labour-controlled Ipswich borough council has refused to continue supporting Suffolk councils' funding of late night services to Felixstowe and Lowestoft. The transport committee chairman called it a moral issue, the "transfer of funding of train services from central government to local authorities". Another councillor said the Government is forcing BR to go round with the begging bowl. But the Tory-controlled county council stepped in to say they will pay whatever is necessary to keep the trains running until 1993. Tory-controlled Suffolk Coastal district council was expected to follow suit.

Practicality: Norfolk County Council has promised £40,000 to safeguard late-night trains from Norwich to Yarmouth, Lowestoft and Sheringham, for the next year.

Pinch point: Rural lines are suffering a loss of traffic because so many people are being deterred from travelling by restrictions on SuperSavers.

Initiative: NSE has greatly improved off-peak services from Liverpool Street to Clacton, Walton, Colchester, St Botolph's and Braintree. Even Sudbury now has an hourly shuttle to Marks Tey.

Good luck: The new narrow gauge railway has been officially opened from Wroxham and Hoveton to Aylsham.

Peter Harding

Autumn initiative

The society is planning an autumn initiative to show how the improvement of railways is one of the key ways to improve our environment, reduce pollution, and counter the effects of damage to the ozone layer.

We will issue our new "For a Safer Transport Policy" leaflet and Press release to highlight the link between transport funding and environmental damage.

Other groups have been invited to support our stance. If you can help get these leaflets into the hands of the general public and politicians, please order supplies from Roland White (address back page). The leaflets are free although an SAE will help to keep down RDS costs. If you want to make a donation so much the better.

PLATFORM

Black and Wight

I have urged British Rail to reopen the four-mile Shanklin to Ventnor line to passenger trains.

I have examined the figures for 1985 when the line was open and believe that if it was reopened, the total revenue now would be about £1,400,000 a year. BR say they have no plans for reopening even though I believe there is an economic case for it.

E H Longland
20a Rous Road
Buckhurst Hill
Essex

Going Green

I visited the Green Show at Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre. While some of the organisations represented were clearly inappropriate for such a show - the Rover and Volvo companies, British Nuclear Fuels, the Department of the Environment - I would have expected to see an RDS stand. Look forward to seeing you there in 1991?

Steven Harman
47 Goodyers End Lane
Bedworth
Warwickshire

Call to action

Rail travellers on the Shrewsbury - Crewe and the Shrewsbury - Wolverhampton lines have no users group to act as a channel of communication between them and railway management.

Associations do exist for lines radiating from Shrewsbury to Chester, to the Cambrian coast, to Swansea and to Craven Arms and Church Stretton.

Given adequate support, the Shrewsbury - Chester Rail Users Association would be willing to help in the formation of groups for these two unrepresented lines.

To gauge the level of such support, interested parties are asked to contact secretary Paul Stocks at 29 Scotland Street, Ellesmere, Shropshire SY12 0DG

David Lloyd
Chairman
SCRUA

A RER way to go

I find it interesting that many rail campaigners appear blind to the less spectacular alternatives to massive new construction. Surely one of the strengths of rail is that capacity for growth still exists in the present network.

For example while politicians and armchair planners rant and rave over the best route for their £500 million London Crossrail, they ignore the fact that exciting new services like Reading - Colchester and Oxford - Cambridge could start running tomorrow at a tiny fraction of the cost.

The North London Link line has the capacity for a two-hourly semi-fast service despite its important freight role. Allowing the need to run between slow local trains, I calculate that the Reading - Colchester run could be completed in two and a half hours. This would include stops at Ealing Broadway (for Central and District lines), Willesden High Level (for West Coast main line), West Hampstead (for Thameslink), Highbury (for the City and GN services) and Stratford (for Docklands and Stansted airport).

At present the limiting factor is the slow, life-expired diesel multiple units that operate out of Paddington. With the introduction of Net-

worker Turbos in 1991, this service could become a reality.

As patronage of the service grows, facilities could be improved and more destinations could be served, just as is happening with Thameslink today.

Although my suggested route would not serve the central zone with direct trains like the proposed Crossrail, it could expand to form a Paris-style RER network linking all four London airports, while providing orbital movement uncatereed for by the present network as well as freeing the central zone of crosstown travellers.

A third crosstown service could run via Kensington, linking Milton Keynes to Guildford with another service from Gatwick to Heathrow.

I have drawn up a map showing how a completed network could look in 1995, a full five years before the most optimistic forecast for Crossrail opening.

If we wait another 10 years for Crossrail, it may be too late to save London from atrophy as a major financial centre.

M Froud
69 Oxford Road
Swindon

Home truths

I am shortly moving house. One reason for moving is the poor level of public transport here, especially as I am at present three miles from Bognor station.

I wonder how much traffic is lost to British Rail because customers cannot easily get to and from the station by bus. Because of this, many people go all the way by car.

Stanley Allchin
16 Mulberry Court
Pagham
Bognor Regis

Railwatch appeal

Could we please have Railwatch monthly. The present three-month gap is too much to keep protesters and campaigners actively informed.

T Longstaff
35 Kingsley Avenue
Rugby

NEWSWATCH

National draw winners: Thanks to all those who contributed to the draw and apologies to those people who object in principle to the idea. It is not possible, given the strict timetable for despatch, to separate out those who do not wish to receive draw tickets. The winners were: 1 £400 The Rev and Mrs J P Atack, Cleveleys, Lancs, 2 £200 Mr C T Barclay, King's Lynn, 3 £100 G Hill, Brampton, Cumbria, 4 books Bob Burgess, Melton, Leics, 5 books Mr Rose, Timperley, Altrincham, 6 vouchers for RDS books to D Field, Poole, Dorset, D Randall, Peterborough, G C Baker, Milton Keynes, C S N Walker, Cheltenham, Mrs and Mrs Laverock, Ilford, Bernard Eyre, Norwich, F K Farrell, Addlestone, Surrey, Mrs M A King, London E9, D Marks, South Wirral, W H Hamilton, Tewkesbury.

Lottery winners: June: 1 P Bisatt, Stoke £52.25, 2 C F Burton, Cambridge, £26.13, 3 J M Hounslow, Watford £13.06, 4 P Mosley, Walsall £13.06, July: 1 M Mitchell, Cheltenham £53.25, 2 Mrs V Humphreys, London NW3 £26.83, 3 J C Baker, Beaconsfield £13.31, 4 R E Grainger, Edenbridge £13.31

PARLYWATCH

In a debate on European Community railway policy, Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman said the Government recognised the need for the public service obligation grant to Network SouthEast because of the high-cost of providing peak-hour services.

He said on 12 June that the EC also recognises certain services need grant assistance, especially urban commuter services but it wanted the grant to be properly identified and paid, possibly as a contract, rather than as a grant.

It also wants infrastructure costs separated from operating costs which should be run on a profitable basis.

The EC also believes that some vehicle taxes could be waived to encourage road hauliers to use intermodal rail services.

An EC report on the development of high-speed passenger train services was expected by the end of the year.

But Mr Ronnie Fearn (Lib Dem Southport) warned: "By the time we have stopped burying our heads in the sand, the rest of Europe will have established itself in the market and will be reaping the economic and social benefits."

Labour's John Prescott condemned Transport Secretary Cecil Parkinson's decision not to put money into the high-speed rail link from the Channel Tunnel to London.

Speaking on 15 June, he said: "This is the result of the Government's anti-rail, anti-passenger attitude and will condemn Britain to the economic periphery of Europe." Mr Parkinson, making the announcement, said there was no reason for dismay. The regions would still be well served.

Sir George Young (Con Ealing, Acton) said some Tory MPs were disappointed and asked how long existing capacity would be able to cope.

In an opposition-sponsored debate on railway policy on 26 June, Mr Prescott demanded to know how much money the Government had actually given to the railways, not how much of its own money BR was allowed to spend.

He said one of the reasons the Channel Tunnel link had been delayed was because private investors wanted an 18 per cent return on their investment.

Mr Tony Banks (Lab Newham North-West) said the Government claimed it was investing a "massive" £1.6 billion in rail but the national roads programme, paid for by the taxpayer, amounted to £5.7 billion.

Mr Parkinson said cost benefit could be taken into account in making rail investment and giving grants for transferring freight from road to rail.

Mr Edward Heath (Tory Old Bexley and Sidcup) warned: "It is said that, when the demand for a better rail link arises, it will be met, but that is a fatal approach. When the demand arises, it will be too late to meet it."

Mr Fearn said: "We should treat our railways as a national public utility, in much the same way as we do our roads."

The threat to rail freight

The effects of BR's announcement about Speedlink's future being at risk has alarmed many people who want to see more freight switched from road to rail.

There is a distinct danger that much of Speedlink traffic in Scotland alone will be forced to switch to road, according to a survey carried out by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies. Ten thousand extra lorry journeys a year could be the result.

Speedlink is the modern successor to the traditional pick-up goods and can therefore deal with individual wagon loads.

It has suffered recently because coal, petrol, cement and steel traffic has been transferred to the bulk sectors of Railfreight.

So last year Speedlink lost more than £30 million on a turnover of only £45 million even though there had been attempts to mitigate the loss.

Railfreight is forced to take some action because the Government is demanding that it make a profit of £50 million by 1992/3 which is the equivalent of a 4.5 per cent return on assets. Bulk freight will have to produce an eight per cent return by 1994/5.

The Government is also demanding that private sector involvement must be maximised in improving overall financial performance and that the "business" must be reshaped to seize the opportunities of the Channel Tunnel.

Railfreight was seeing its customers individually in July and August to assess their future needs. It points out that Speedlink represents only two per cent of Railfreight's business.

But it could be that small lines which only see a few trip workings could be at risk of closure or privatisation.

Railfreight director Colin Driver met RDS chairman Steve Wilkinson at Euston in July. Steve left 21 points for Mr Driver to consider. Steve has also discussed the problem informally with private sector operators and the Private Wagon Federation.

A special meeting of the freight committee was held in August to discuss further plans and RDS national executive was planning to discuss the issue at its September meeting.

Steve is keen to point out that, despite some gloom, there is good news for Railfreight. Among other things, 700 new wagons have been approved for BR's deep sea container business, a new contract has been signed to move Ford

parts, and electrification of Tombridge - Redhill has been approved along with 20 new class 92 freight locos able to operate both on overhead 25 kV and third rail 750 V supplies.

But Ian Brown, managing director of Railfreight Distribution warned: "Customers will have to tolerate huge price increases, amalgamate their traffic into dedicated trainloads, or transfer to Freightliner."

The Scottish study, by Chris Salvesson, has shown that Speedlink serves remote locations which could never generate enough traffic for bulk trainloads.

Commodities include timber, whisky, grain, coal, china clay, fertiliser, agricultural produce and oil.

Caledonian Paper at Irvine receives 10,000 tonnes of timber each year from Fort William and Inverness and had expected it to increase to 60,000 tonnes per year. The company was reported to be "sceptical" now whether any timber would be moved by rail in future.

Inside Scotland, BR's timber traffic amounts to 100,000 tonnes a year, most of it won in the last five years.

This is now all at risk, given the nature of the traffic which is relatively small consignments collected at a number of railheads on a daily basis in remote parts of the north and north-east.

Facilities to most whisky distilleries would be at risk, particularly where the infrastructure costs are high, on the branch lines to Menstrie and Dufftown.

If the Menstrie freight-only branch had to close, it would hamper plans by a number of local authorities to reopen the Stirling - Alloa - Edinburgh route.

The Scottish study concludes that there is a very real danger of a substantial transfer of goods from rail to road, with severe environmental consequences. If just the timber traffic switches to road, there would be more than 10,000 extra lorry journeys in Scotland each year.

It could be that intermodal trains could take over some of the Speedlink traffic and there is already an Interfret service working from Harwich to the North West.

A new freight venture called Charterail has been set up involving BR and the private sector, including GKN, to run intermodal services. Tiphook Rail will supply 40 new wagons which will allow road semi-trailers to go piggyback on

rail. Charterail is also the British licensee for the RoadRailer system and plans to launch a RoadRailer service later this year.

Members are urged to write to Railfreight director Ian Brown at Enterprise House, 167/169 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 6JY with comments on what the closure of Speedlink might mean for their areas.

NEWSWATCH

Fill 'em in: Please fill in the questionnaire on international ticketing circulated with the last Railwatch and return it to Mike Breslin.

Keep calm: Traffic calming was one of the key themes of a conference on urban transport strategies held in Bristol in June and attended by RDS man Chris Amundson. John Roberts of Transport and Environment Studies described how it was widely applied in Europe and how more 20 miles per hour limits could make our cities user friendly. Architect Harley Sherlock also called for more emphasis on planning for the pedestrian. Coincidentally the Illustrated Guide to Traffic Calming by Dr Carmen Hass-Klau has just been published, price £4 from Friends of the Earth, 26/28 Underwood Street, London N1 7SQ

Scotland's for us: The 1991 annual general meeting of RDS will be held in Scotland - for the first time ever - on 4 May. Railfreight will be one of the themes of the meeting in Edinburgh. For those who will have to travel a long way to Scotland, an added attraction could be the opportunity to plan a weekend or longer holiday there.

Ride on: Eight cycle rides from various stations on the Ipswich - Lowestoft line are described in a new leaflet, sponsored by a local cycle hire firm. Most are in an area officially designated as of outstanding natural beauty. The line still has old trains which can take bikes easily. For a copy, send a second class stamp to Trevor Garrod.

Confrontation: Railway safety expert and author Stan Hall is critical of Government plans to switch the Railway Inspectorate from the Department of Transport to the Department of the Environment. He said the existing spirit of cooperation between the inspectorate and BR could be replaced by confrontation.

Poisonous policies: The Government is failing to investigate the hazards of air pollution faced by the public, particularly from car exhaust fumes, warned Dr Malcolm Green, chairman of the British Lung Foundation.

ADVERTS

Special train from Bedford (departs 8am) via the freight-only Bletchley to Oxford line to Swindon, Bath and Bristol on 6 October 1990. Fare £12.50 (children £6.50). Send payment to Bedford/Bletchley Rail Users Association, 23 Hatfield Crescent, Bedford MK41 9RA

Join the South London Line Travellers' Association. Send £2, payable to SoLLTA, c/o Graham Larkbey (secretary), Flat 6, 9 Elms Crescent, Clapham, London SW4 8QE. SoLLTA AGM: 17 September 1990 at 7.30pm at 13/15 Stockwell Road, SW9 (opposite Tube).

Railwatch is edited by **Ray King**, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU (Tel 081 985 8548)

Assistant editor: **George Cooper**, 85 Jubilee Court, Bracknell, Berks RG12 3QR

Circulation: **James Apsey**, Hillside House, Acle, Norwich NR13 3DH

Subscription supplies (£2.80 annually): **Alan Cocker**, 11 Franklin Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP3 9DX

All copy for the next issue, to be published in November, must be in the hands of Mr King by **15 October**

Published by the Railway Development Society, an independent voluntary body

General Secretary: **Trevor Garrod**, 15 Clapham Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 1RQ (Tel 0502 581721)

Administration: **Reg Snow**, 48 The Park, Great Bookham, Leatherhead, Surrey KT23 3LS (Tel 0372 528663)

Sales: **Alan Harwood**, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN

Press officer: **Dave Sallery**, 77 Florida, Prestatyn, Gwynedd LL19 8DY (Tel 07456 89783)

Publicity officer: **Roland White**, Latymer, The Drive, Belmont, Surrey SM2 7DU (for free publicity leaflets)

Membership Secretary: **Frank Hastlow**, 49 Inham Road, Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B74 2TQ (Tel 021 308 2885)

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 CB4 4JD (Tel: 0223 232709)

ISSN 0267-5943