

RDS *Railwatch*

A VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

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New power for the people

More rail schemes may be given the go-ahead following a "tea and biscuits" meeting between RDS officials and Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman at the Department of Transport headquarters in London.

He gave cheering news that a key Government "Catch 22 rule" which has bedevilled attempts to improve rail services is to be eased.

He said the previous insistence that any investment scheme by BR must make a profit of eight per cent on capital may not be sacrosanct in future.

The value of rail schemes in easing road congestion and in encouraging economic regeneration is a factor which could be taken into consideration, he promised.

Depending on how this is interpreted by Department of Transport officials - who have been notorious for leading Britain up blind alleys in the past - the Minister's statement could be a major breakthrough.

The Minister responded favourably to a presentation by RDS man David Bigg that a Colchester - Coventry service via the North London line could be started with very little investment but would not immediately meet the eight per cent rule.

The RDS team which met Mr Freeman in January was led by president Michael Cato, backed up by Chris Burton and David Bigg. The Minister was supported by four civil servants.

The Minister plans to meet RDS again in April to talk about how road and rail schemes should be assessed on a fairer basis. We intend to press our long-held view that cost benefit analysis should be applied to both modes.

He has also invited RDS to submit its ideas on what we consider to be a minimum service for any given line, one of our key demands in recent months as Regional Railways has emasculated rail services, particularly in northern England.

Unfortunately the Minister said there were no extra funds available at the moment for rail schemes - bad news for a BR which is already crippled by a cash crisis.

But he did hint there probably would not be any further cuts in Network SouthEast's public sector obligation grant, if only for the political reaction it would provoke in Kent, Surrey and other Tory heartland areas.

He also hinted that there would probably be a flexible Government approach to new safety requirements on higher and longer platforms. Perhaps someone had reminded him that 5,000 people are killed every year on the roads - not on the railways.

The meeting came after a series of rail schemes had been approved.

A £20 million electrification package was approved in November - just two days before Transport Secretary Cecil Parkinson resigned.

Mr Freeman is not coming up with any money but he has allowed West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive to fund an extension of the 25kV wires



Give way to roads!

This is the nasty face of the Government's "give way to roads" policy - people forced to move out of their homes and other houses blighted by having a high-speed road near them. Already Britain has been ravaged by lorries being allowed unrestricted access to cities, towns, villages and supposedly protected countryside. This scene is in East London where houses are being bulldozed aside to allow "King Car" access to the city. Three hundred homes will be demolished for a short stretch of the M11 link road. One thousand people will have to move. The tragedy is that all the way along the alignment of this new road, the overcrowded Central Line runs parallel. Timely and adequate investment to increase the Central's capacity would have been a much better answer to traffic congestion. The link road will make matters worse particularly where the motorway traffic spills out on to residential areas in Hackney and Tower Hamlets. The Government's own Central London Rail Study recommended £4 billion of investment. It has not been implemented.

The people of London have voted against urban motorways but the Government, to the dismay of pedestrians, cyclists and businesses, is introducing red routes which will allow traffic to carve a swath through London.

Most people favour banning cars from congested areas, according to a Consumers' Association survey. Three out of four say traffic should be restricted at peak times. Most also want better public transport, proper enforcement of traffic regulations and better facilities for cyclists and pedestrians.

north from Leeds, to Shipley, Keighley and Skipton as well as spurs to Bradford and Ilkley. The main aim is to electrify the suburban services but it will also allow London InterCity electric trains into Bradford.

Then in December, after Malcolm Rifkind succeeded Cecil Parkinson as Transport Secretary, Mr Freeman gave the go-ahead for the £10 million scheme to electrify between Hooton, Chester and Ellesmere Port.

New electric services will start this spring on the Edinburgh to North Berwick line thanks to another £1.3 million scheme. It will be the first electrified commuter line outside the Strathclyde area and will use redundant Network SouthEast 307 units. The line between North Berwick and Drem was closed completely for six days in November while the equipment was installed. Buses ran an emergency service. Mr Rifkind has been urged to "fight his corner in Cabinet" for a more positive Government attitude to essential railway investment. RDS research officer Ken Sutherland told The Scotsman that the Government's harsh and discriminatory policies were holding up logical, much-needed extension of Scottish main line electrification.

Mr Sutherland criticised the enforced introduction of diesel 158s on key InterCity routes which he called a

"poor substitute for the enduring benefits which electrification would bring."

When Mr Rifkind was Scottish Secretary, the Scottish Office supported the proposal for a Dornoch Firth rail crossing. It was scuppered by BR and the Department of Transport.

But one of the first reported utterances of Mr Rifkind after he became Transport Secretary filled many transport experts with dismay. He said: "I see no point in sterile debates between road and rail" and he denied the Department of Transport was biased in favour of the car.

The rail union magazine Transport Review was aghast. "What planet is Mr Rifkind living on?" it asked. "If ever there was a case of turning a blind eye... Mr Rifkind offers a stunning example."

NOTE: The Department of Transport is currently engaged on a £16 billion road building programme, the biggest in Britain's history. £5 million of taxpayers' money is being spent every working day over the next 10 years to build new roads. At the same time, the Department is implementing a policy of cutting subsidies to the railways, looking on while BR reduces services and approving a policy of overcrowding on commuter and Regional trains.

Box on for Boxing Day

By DAVID BIGG

A clear demand for Boxing Day trains has been established following the publication of our simple leaflet shortly before Christmas.

There were some trains on Boxing Day. London Underground ran and BR operated a London Victoria - Gatwick service and a truncated Thameslink service from Luton to London St Pancras.

There must be a real chance of London - Stansted trains running on Boxing Day this year following the launch of the airport service this month.

But we must do all we can to make sure things improve in future. This time round London Underground considered cancelling Boxing Day trains because it was under financial pressure.

British Rail's publicity for its services was dismal. What they described on their posters as a "limited service", turned out to be a train every half hour. I have already written to BR about this and Railwatch readers in the Thameslink area could well do the same.

As this edition of Railwatch appears, the national and regional Press is being sent details of our campaign. User groups are being informed via their own newsletter Local Lines.

It is important that YOU write to your own area manager or Network manager pointing out the good sense of running Boxing Day trains. You could also write to your local newspaper or MP outlining our case and asking them to take it further with BR and London Underground.

The effect of all this should be to create a climate where Tube services are safeguarded and BR is encouraged to extend the Thameslink-type operation to other areas.

I can identify at least 12 lines where there is a strong financial case for running trains on 26 December. If you would like to be more involved in the campaign please contact me at Eye Level, 76 Maldon Road, Witham, Essex CM8.

At the same time, BR is also cutting back on Christmas trains. Two rail user groups protested after being given very little notice that there would be no trains

for 10 days over the Christmas and New Year period. The Transport Users Consultative Committee for the Midlands expressed serious concern about the tactic being used on the Bletchley, Bedford and Kettering line. South London line travellers between Victoria and London Bridge were also robbed of their trains.

A record 90,000 trains were cancelled last year, according to the Central Transport Consultative Committee. Passenger complaints rose by 50 per cent.

NEWSWATCH

Defence policy: Thankfully there are few outright rail closures proposed at the moment so we are giving our Anti-Closure Fund a new name - the Rail Defence Fund. Several lines already face severe service reductions, including routes in Yorkshire and East Anglia. The fund will have a slightly wider remit which will allow it to be used in campaigns against cuts in train frequencies. We have already used money from the fund to pay for our popular leaflet *Disappearing Trains*. The fund stood at £537 at the start of the year and the general secretary would be delighted to receive further donations.

In the past, money from the fund has helped the campaigns to save the Settle - Carlisle, Reedham - Yarmouth, Gainsborough - Barnsby and the North Warwick line. The fund is fuelled solely by donations and activities like sponsored cycle rides.

RDS is reorganising its committee structure. The Publicity and Sales Team has been abolished and a new Finance and General Purposes Committee has been set up.

Go for green: Green News and the Railway Development Society co-operated in collecting names for a petition calling for improved public transport as a way to combat the threat of global warming. The petition was being presented to the Government on 21 March. Green News costs £3 a year (four issues) from PO Box 708, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire BA15 1FA.



What the papers say

Like a driverless steam roller running downhill, the Department of Transport continues to plan and build its concrete follies. An alcoholic resisting reform yearns for one last drink and the beleaguered engineers at the Department believe that if they can lay a few more miles of motorway, all the cars will run swift and smooth just like in the adverts.

London Cyclist 2.91

London's public transport system is dirtier and less reliable than most systems in Europe. Even Prague and Budapest are better. London, alone among European capitals, lacks an elected city government.

The European 11.1.91

Incompatible signalling may prevent European Channel Tunnel trains travelling beyond London. Watch for assurances that trundling an occasional InterCity train into Waterloo for a 45-minute "connection" will be as good as a through train.

Railway Gazette International January 1991

Southern California has tried catalytic converters and lower speed limits but grave pollution continues. Far more extreme measures are now proposed including the eventual phasing out of all internal combustion vehicles.

Modern Tramway 12.90

It comes as no surprise to read of Toyota reneging on their promise to provide a rail link to the new car factory at Burnaston.

Letter in Derby Telegraph 12.90

Questions are being asked about London's popular, cheap and successful Travelcard scheme because it encourages too many people to travel by public transport.

Financial Times 1.11.90

The balance between road and rail investment over the next few years will shift more towards public transport, said Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman.

Daily Mail 30.10.90

Local authority leaders welcomed the Government's approval of a £130 million plan to extend London's Docklands Light Railway under the Thames to Lewisham and Greenwich.

Financial Times 21.11.90

The onus is on the state railways of Europe to give bimodal operators the right encouragement by charging reasonable prices.

Cargo Systems 12.90

London has 45 miles of bus lanes. Paris has 190 miles.

Transport Review 12.90

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Tory 'tricks with mirrors'

National Conference of Rail Users November 1990 Railways and Local Government

property. All we can hope is that they don't sell ALL the family silver."

The second speaker at the conference, Mr Vincent Christie of the Association of District Councils, warned that because of present Government policy on railway land, it may well prove difficult to find suitable areas for freight depots.

He said BR is so short of cash it is scratching around to find any source of funds even if it means begging from or threatening local authorities.

"The Press and public do not understand the situation behind the weasel words when Government talks of 'massive investment in railways' and we still read headlines like: Government to Boost Rail Spending."

The European Community and other bodies have pledged £55 million to the £60 million total cost of electrifying Crewe - Holyhead, leaving BR to find only £5 million. But BR refuses to go ahead because

it knows that it will have the entire amount cut from its public sector obligation grant, said Alan Macbeath of the Omskirk - Preston Travellers Association. Yet the parallel A55 main road gets £569 million with half of it coming from the European Community. Is that fair, Mr Rifkind?

BR will not take seriously attempts to promote the use of the North London line as an orbital route and to promote reverse commuting on its London radial routes, said Steve Keams of the London Borough of Newham.

The conference broke up into workshop groups in the afternoon with David Bigg and Trevor Jones leading discussions on how to deal with BR management and John Broadbent and John Bigny helping groups to improve their publicity.

A 12-page report on the conference is available from John Lark, 7 Gloucester Avenue, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk NR31 7LT, price £1 (including postage).

The Wilson Labour government from 1964-70 fanatically carried out the recommendations of the Beeching report.

Western Mail 5.10.90

Banking on your safety

There are fears that demands for BR to spend more money on safety will prevent proper investment in an expansion of services.

Despite the overwhelming publicity which arises when one person is killed in a rail "disaster", rail is still an infinitely safer way to travel than road. More than 5,000 people are killed annually on the roads compared with only 69 on the railway (1989 figures).

BR chairman Sir Bob Reid has said his top priority is to make the railway safer and politicians are keen to say that money is no object when it comes to safety spending.

Former Transport Secretary Cecil Parkinson said: "Finance will never be an obstacle to necessary and cost-effective expenditure on improving safety."

In reality, Network SouthEast drivers have been told to keep the trains running despite lineside telephones being out of order and TV monitoring of passengers being inadequate. BR even failed to keep a record of their complaints about safety.

And BR's Rail News was accused by union leader Andy Dodds of refusing to publish a critical letter from him about safety standards.

The national executive of RDS is worried that strict new height and length rules for platforms will make it increasingly difficult to get finance for new stations. The rules could also add to overcrowding if only short trains can be used on certain services because there are some short platforms on the route.

National executive member Alan Bevan has been empowered to contact the Railway Inspectorate to find out just how these new rules are to be implemented.

When the Inspectorate was transferred from the Department of Transport to the Department of the Environment last year, safety expert Stan Hall warned that there could be problems if this resulted in a legalistic approach. He warned that the constructive relationship the Inspectorate had carefully built up with BR would be at risk.

Safety improvements are obviously welcome. The Inspectorate has been calling for several years for action on a system of automatic train control because of the problem of drivers going through red signals.

The Inspectorate's annual report says there is concern

because such incidents increased from 843 in 1988 to 963 in 1989.

Several years after similar systems have been used on the continent, BR is now testing a system for use on Marylebone services which will be uprated this summer. The £2 million ATP set-up could become the prototype for the rest of BR. The signalling changes will cost £12 million and the £46 million trains will also have "black box" data recorders.

As well as providing information after accidents, the recorders are said to promote disciplined operation, raising reliability as well as safety standards. At present, spot checks by traction inspectors are relied on.

Often it is shortage of cash which prevents proper safety measures. Low pay means that BR is short of signal engineers as we all discovered at the time of the Clapham disaster. BR announced in December that it hoped to cut its maximum working week to 72 hours!

New electric services between London King's Cross and Edinburgh have been delayed because progress on major signalling changes on Tyneside have been slowed down by safety checks designed to prevent a repetition of Clapham.

The IC225 services were scheduled to start in May. They will now begin on 8 July and an interim timetable will operate between 12 May and 8 July.

There was also public concern that overcrowding contributed to the injuries sustained in the Cannon Street station accident.

The Department of Transport has allowed BR to invest in new trains in the full knowledge that there would be overcrowding as result. Transport Secretary Malcolm Rifkind said after Cannon Street: "I understand the very natural concern about overcrowding."

He told the House of Commons: "British Rail's top priority is safety. There is no financial constraint on necessary and cost-effective safety expenditure."

However there have been suggestions that the new Networker trains which might help to reduce overcrowding on the south-east London services have been delayed by BR financial problems. The Finan-

cial Times reported that the Networker scheme as well as the West Coast main line upgrading "would be allowed to slip".

BR is already very safe. Is it being asked to strive for safety standards which will cripple it financially and force it to restrict its service to the public. Even if safety investment is paid for by the Government (highly unlikely), it could crowd out other investment which might have switched traffic from road to rail.

Hit the road: The Department of Transport cannot be relied on for safety information or judgments. Much of the road building programme has been justified on spurious safety grounds. The overall road casualty figures have remained stubbornly high despite vast expenditure and the few perceived improvements in some areas actually result from vulnerable people being physically prevented from crossing roads or terrorised by the weight of traffic into keeping away.

There is still no pedestrian phase at most traffic light junctions. Roundabouts with no pedestrian crossings continue to be installed with Department of Transport approval. "Red routes" are being introduced to speed up city traffic without proper consideration for pedestrians and cyclists.

Bargain books from RDS

The rail renaissance is under way in Europe and many other parts of the world. Read how Britain's railways can be improved to match those on the continent in our book *Rail for the Future*. Only £1.95. Other books on offer include:-

A Voice for Rail Users 60p, A-Z of Rail Reopenings £1.95, Bustitution - The Case Exploded £1.80, Fighting for Rail £1.80, Trains for Dereham £1.50, Who Should Run Our Railways £1.60, Places to Visit by Train in Kent and East Sussex £1.40

Thirty other books including regional railguides are available. Send orders for books or an SAE for a sales list to RDS sales officer Alan Harwood, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN.

Please add 10 per cent for post and packing

TREVOR GARROD'S VIEW



Do you want more than an apology?

Should rail travellers be able to claim compensation if their journey is seriously delayed? The Consumers' Association thinks so and is asking season ticket holders to keep logs of their journeys. If no compensation is forthcoming for delays, it is proposed to pick two or three cases and take BR to court.

The aim is to persuade BR to redraft condition 25 in its conditions of carriage and to accept liability for service failures - but not for disruption caused by events beyond its control, such as the weather.

RDS has supported the association by distributing details of its plans to branches and user groups. Any individual commuter who would also like full details should write to me and I will provide them.

However, we have also made it clear to the association that we shall not be a party to narrow, negative BR bashing and they have assured us that is not their intention.

One sensible outcome of the exercise could be a voluntary undertaking by BR to issue free travel

vouchers to customers who have suffered serious delay. Another possibility is for automatic compensation for season ticket holders by lengthening the validity of their tickets when trains are delayed by a daily average of more than, say, 15 minutes.

We are also arguing for any compensation rules to apply to ALL transport users. Why single out BR and not their competitors? Should not bus and coach operators, airline and ferry companies be required to pay similar compensation? If a lorry breaks down or sheds its load, should not all road users delayed thereby be entitled to claim compensation from the HGV owner?

There is food for thought here and perhaps the need for a much wider campaign. As general secretary, I am sounding out the views of other organisations on this question.

A group of commuters on the London - Norwich route have issued a writ claiming damages for late trains, breakdowns and dirty carriages.

Fair funding for local lines



Read all about it

RDS is proposing a new system of rail funding, designed to ensure the primacy of customer requirements over financial targets.

BR should introduce minimum service levels for all routes in return for stable Government funding. Statutory guidelines should also be laid down to define the role of local authorities in subsidising local lines.

RDS accuses BR and the Department of Transport of exploiting loopholes in the current legislation to cut many rural services and of holding councils to ransom by threatening to axe trains unless they provide financial support.

It is vital that a better means of protecting BR customers should be established.

These arguments were put over in a report by David Pickersgill entitled *Regional Railways - Who Pays and for What?* published by RDS in January.

The report urges that basic service thresholds should be established for individual lines, according to national criteria. To take account of local conditions, specific details should be agreed between BR, local authorities, commercial organisations and rail users' representatives.

Government financial support would have to be guaranteed - to prevent timetable reductions by a BR struggling to meet cuts in its public service obligation grant. The Government has slashed the PSO grant by £500 million over eight years.

In addition local authorities should be given power to fund extra trains above the threshold where it is not commercially attractive for BR to do so.

RDS is against suggestions that county councils should take over (from Government) full responsibility for rail funding because variations in policy between councils would lead to an unacceptable degree of instability and customer uncertainty.

RDS believes these proposals would help to breathe new life into many local rail services. It warns that Transport Secretary Malcolm Rifkind's promise to safeguard the future of rural lines is of little value if the services running on them are insufficient to meet passenger needs.

Regional Railways - Who Pays and for What? is published by RDS and is available from Sales Officer Alan Harwood, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN, for £1.85 including postage.

Settling down

A member of the present BR board was the man largely responsible for reviving the failed idea of substitution, according to a hard-hitting new book.

Mr John Palmer, then a senior civil servant at the Department of Transport, pushed the idea forward within months of his retirement.

This "poison pill" forced BR into a costly and time-wasting review of branch lines to see if any could be closed or replaced by buses.

Mr Palmer's reward was to be given a place on the BR board, say Stan Abbot and Alan Whitehouse in *The Line that Refused to Die*.

It is a story of the fight to save the Settle - Carlisle but it shows how the line's plight was part of the political meddle and muddle which has crippled the railways and which is continuing today.

The book identifies the point when the Department of Transport became the "Department of Roads" as when the Tories appointed Ernest Marples as Minister of Transport.

Marples owned the major road construction company Marples Ridgeway but sidestepped the problem of having such a clear vested interest by passing his shareholding to his wife.

"Then began a Tory tradition of giving to those with an interest in roads, positions of power over the railways," says the book.

But it also identifies Labour's Richard Marsh as the man who emasculated the S & C by approving the withdrawal of its stopping trains in 1970.

The book condemns Beeching for failing to under-

stand transport or examining the many implications of his axing policy - including the enormous amounts of money which have had to be spent on roads as a direct result of forcing traffic off the rails.

If as much energy as has gone into producing reports about how to dismantle the railway system in Britain had been put into making it more efficient, we might today have a viable modern national network.

Unfortunately the penny-wise, pound-foolish policy on the railways continues. The story of BR's attempt to close the S & C is a combination of Machiavellian scheming and stumbling incompetence.

The hero of the tale, however, is Ron Cotton. He was appointed by BR to close the line but managed to quadruple revenue and reopen eight stations.

He was driven by a vision of a people's railway that set him at odds with the transport establishment.

He is described as the greatest general manager the London Midland region never had and will be remembered as the man who invented the Saver ticket.

The Line that Refused to Die by Stan Abbot and Alan Whitehouse. Leading Edge, £6.25.



Safety first?

The campaign for automatic train control began more than 100 years ago after it was realised that human beings needed back-up to prevent disastrous mistakes.

But railway companies resented "unwarrantable interference" in their affairs and were reluctant to spend large sums in improving safety.

It was not until the railways were nationalised in 1947 that a nationwide programme was implemented to install the automatic warning system to help drivers respond to signals.

The realities of competition and nationalisation are revealed in Stanley Hall's book, *Railway Detectives*, the 150 years of the Railway Inspectorate.

As well as describing major accidents and analysing the causes, Mr Hall, a former BR signalling and safety officer, reveals the weakness of government resolve over the years.

Mr Hall's historical account also describes the 40-year struggle last century to achieve an efficient, interlocking signalling system and standardised train brakes.

Railway Detectives by Stanley Hall is published by Ian Allan, £16.95.

Exploiting assets

The railway's vast property assets are being used to subsidise train services as the Government puts the squeeze on BR.

How these assets were built up - and how they are being disposed of is just one aspect of a new book *The Railway Surveyors* by Gordon Biddle.

The title undervalues this book which is a comprehen-

sive survey of the railways from their beginnings, including the men who surveyed them and how they shaped the face of the surveying profession as we know it today.

Whether rail termini should be exploited to the extent of becoming mini shopping centres is open to debate, as is the question of disposing of land which could be used for reopening lines.

If you want to know more about this crucial subject, this is the book to read. *John Barfield*

The Railway Surveyors by Gordon Biddle is published by Ian Allan and the BR Property Board at £19.95.

* Also available (from sales officer Alan Harwood) is an RDS report on the British Rail Property Board. Price £2 post free.

BR lets down its customers

BR reliability is strongly criticised in *Yorkshire Rail Review 1990* but the real culprits are also identified: The Department of Transport and the Government Ministers who have presided over it.

As a result of kowtowing to the department, BR customers are now plagued by cancelled, late and overcrowded trains, warns the report published by RDS Yorkshire.

But branch chairman James Towler said: "Perhaps the most alarming event of 1990 was the programme of swinging cuts to services on our remaining rural lines."

"There is now a camaraderie between users and railway staff, united by a sense of despair at some of BR management's more absurd decisions."

The excellent review, edited by David Pickersgill, includes a survey of timekeeping, covering 2,500 expresses and 4,000 local trains.

On the right trail

As more people recognise the danger, pollution and nuisance caused by cars, the train is coming into its own as a purely leisure vehicle.

One of the best areas for exploring by train is around Glasgow which has the largest network in Britain outside London.

Strathclyde By Rail shows how to discover the area's rich industrial heritage, enjoy the sea breezes and the views around Loch Lomond.

After a 15-page summary of its rail history, five trails in Glasgow are described, followed by nine coast and country walks.

Then there are town trails for Lanark, Dumfries and five other towns, as well as brief descriptions of the Western Isles.

The 145-page book by Tom Noble, published by Leading Edge, costs £5.75.

Another book in the same series is called *Pennine Rails and Trails* and describes how to use the train to enjoy 18 walks in the Todmorden, Hebden Bridge and Halifax area. Again it is an area steeped in history, railways and industrial archaeology set in beautiful natural surroundings.

By John Morrison and Lydia Speakman, it too costs £5.75. Both books can be obtained from RDS sales officer Alan Harwood.



Europe's first big STEP

The European Commission proposed in December to set up a £100 billion high speed train network by the year 2010.

The future TGV network, which will link existing high speed lines with new ones, should eventually add up to 15,500 miles, allowing speeds from 120 to 200 mph.

But the Council of Ministers decided against immediate implementation of the scheme until there had been a study on its socio-economic and environmental impact and on the financial implications.

European Transport Commissioner Karel Van Miert, presenting the plan to the press, said the train will soon be able to do what only the plane could once do. The train will also give remarkable comfort and excellent safety standards and would give good value for money.

He said a TGV passenger will be able to breakfast in London, lunch in Paris and dine in Frankfurt the same day.

He added that TGV users will spend only five hours travelling from Frankfurt to London, instead of more than 11 hours now, seven hours from Paris to Rome instead of nearly 13 hours, and eight hours from Madrid to Brussels instead of more than 16 hours.

"Fast, safe, clean and using less space than the road, TGV trains will help solve traffic jams, which are becoming more worrying every day," said Van Miert.

The future standard European TGV train, already named Speed Transport European Product (STEP), will even be able to run, at a lower speed, on the whole length of the regular electrified European railway network, which is 32,000 miles long.

European Commission experts expected the standard TGV train to become a successful export product throughout the world.

The plan included 15 priorities, mainly railway links in border areas and maritime or alpine crossings, which would have to be adapted to the high speed trains.

Holyhead - Crewe, Belfast - Dublin and Channel Tunnel - London were the priorities for Britain.

Other key border links in Europe were identified as: Hamburg - Copenhagen, Utrecht - Arnhem - Emmerich - Duisburg, Strasbourg and Sarebruck, Brussels - Luxembourg, Rhine - Rhone, Lyon - Torino, Madrid - Barcelona - Perpignan, Portugal - Spain, Victoria - Dax, Milano - Basel, Bremer Pass, Tarvisio - Vienna and links to and within Greece.

The European TGV scheme will have to be approved by the decision-making council of European Community transport ministers. No date was set for that.

Top Ten Cities

Spending on new lines in 1990

San Francisco	Metro	£898m
Sao Paulo	Metro	£254m
Milan	Metro	£246m
Tokyo	Rapid transit	£156m
Amsterdam	Light rail	£58m
Stuttgart	Rail	£47m
Sapporo	Metro	£42m
Baltimore	Metro	£29m
Washington	Metro	£23m
Essen	Rail	£22m

Source: World Railway Investment

Europe: The European Community agreed in November to set up a special fund for transport infrastructure such as cross-frontier rail links. £84 million is available this year. Commissioner Karel van Miert is frustrated by BR's lack of interest in the loading gauge.

He said: "We continue to press for action, but we can only intervene financially when a project has been developed on a national basis and presented to us with government support."

"While our financial resources in this area are admittedly rather limited, any application for the purpose of enlarging BR's loading gauge would certainly be welcomed - but none has been presented to us."

The Commission is worried that BR reliance on using low-platform freight wagons to avoid the loading gauge problem will not attract enough traffic and will therefore not be profitable.

Commissioner van Miert wants all European railways to open up their tracks to rivals. He warned: "The railways must reorganise. Railways are at present national but markets are increasingly international."

NEWSWATCH

The planned rail link between London's Heathrow airport and Paddington should be integrated into the national and European rail network, according to the National Economic Development Council. It calls for westward links to the GWR main line (not just to London). This would allow people travelling from the West to reach Heathrow without going to Paddington. It would also make Heathrow a through rail station rather than a terminus. The NEDC report also suggests a southern link to the Staines-Feltham line. The investment would amount to at least £400 million.

A rail day is being organised in Kettering on 13 April to "promote railways in all their aspects", although one of the themes will be the campaign to electrify the Midland main line north of Bedford. There will be displays and film shows. Offers of help and further information: Elisabeth Jordan (tel 0536 770478).

Pre-Christmas Aylesbury to Milton Keynes shopper trains were sponsored by local councils as a way of highlighting the need for reopened rail links. The Oxon and Bucks Rail Action Committee say BR did not distinguish itself in marketing the trains and allowed trains to run empty from Northampton when they could have been filled. A regular service is feasible but Government spending constraints on BR preclude it at the moment.

Mean streets: The number of deaths on Britain's roads went up by six per cent last year to 5,373.

Top Ten Countries

Spending on railways in 1990

	Total	New lines
Italy	£3685m	£1117m
Soviet Union	£2235m	nil
USA	£1855m	nil
W Germany	£1707m	£295m
France	£1608m	£605m
India	£1476m	£82m
Britain	£803m	£12m
Switzerland	£616m	£42m
Spain	£497m	£9m
Bolivia	£495m	nil

Source: World Railway Investment

Rail users are doubly penalised by present Government policy, warns David Hollis of the Dulwich Society. They pay for roads through their taxes and then they have to pay again, through fares, when they travel by train.

Mr Hollis has prepared a seven-page report calling for changes in the way transport investment is decided and it may be reprinted with RDS backing. By the time this *Railwatch* is published, it should be possible to obtain the paper via Alan Harwood (address back page).

An RDS report on continental ticketing is being published in April. Details from Alan Harwood.

Big investments in public transport are needed if there is not to be "severe environmental and economic degradation" in the Black Country over the next 20 years, according to a report by the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority. The report, backed by Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton, calls for £370 million of new investment by the authority in Midland Metro and British Rail projects. But the report still expects £1.620 million to be swallowed up on motorway and other road schemes.

Tubewatch: A magazine called *Tubewatch*, produced by an RDS member, casts a critical eye over London's Underground system. One year's subscription (six issues) cost £5 (£2 unemployed) from *Tubewatch*, PO Box 22, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8 (cheques made payable to Transport Resources).

Labour Party planners have asked RDS to advise on the route of a round London railway which they are considering as part of their transport manifesto for the next election. We will probably make the case for an outer London ring instead, based on the Oxford - Bletchley - Bedford - East Anglia route in the North and the Ashford - Reading route in the South.

Please Sir: BR is expected to ask the Government later this year to allow it to upgrade the West Coast main line. Kawasaki may tender for the contract to build 32 new trains which will have "cost deficiency compensation" but not "active tilt".

Women are the main victims of cuts in public transport, researchers at Bradford University have found. Much more account should be taken of their needs.

£4 million job: The advertising agency which helped the Thatcher government to power in 1979 with its "Labour isn't working" campaign has been awarded a £4 million contract by InterCity to promote both the East Coast main line electrification and the transfer of 125 diesel trains to more cross-country routes and other InterCity services.

French Railways is considering building a new rail line capable of taking containers, stacked two high. It would be without tunnels and would run along the Rhone valley, linking Spain and Italy with northern Europe.

France is planning to invest £2.3 billion in 1991 on its national railways compared to £1.8 billion last year. £26 million will be spent in Paris to build another cross-city line as well as an inter-suburban network.

The prize in an InterCity frequent traveller competition was a car!

Eighty per cent of land traffic out of Hamburg docks goes by rail. Germany, which relies heavily on rail transport, has the most powerful economy in Europe.

The unique RDS By Rail series now covers all of Great Britain. Within six years, we have built up this comprehensive set of rail-based guidebooks, and sold tens of thousands of copies.

From June 1993, however, it will also be possible to board a train in England and travel direct to Lille, Paris or Brussels, while Amsterdam, Cologne, Luxembourg and Strasbourg will be among the many cities no more than one change of train away from London.

RDS is therefore preparing its most ambitious book yet, provisionally entitled *Beyond the Channel Tunnel by Rail*. It is proposed to cover northern and eastern France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the south of the Netherlands and a sizeable part of western Germany.

We shall not attempt to describe every line, or go into as much detail as some of our British railguides do. Our aim, however, is to encourage British people to venture by rail to historic, interesting and attractive places on the near Continent and to sample the scenic delights of the Rhine and Moselle Valleys, the Ardennes, Picardy, Normandy and other regions by train.

The General Secretary would like to hear from any member able to help in any way, however modest, with this book. If you have travelled by train in these areas in recent years, you may like to write an article, contribute an anecdote or comment on someone else's draft (for all RDS railguides are products of team-work). You may possess photographs (of rail or non-rail topics) or have access to sources of information that would be useful.

Many sample articles have already been written to show you what is intended, and a synopsis of the book is also available. It is hoped to have the text complete by the end of August 1992 - but please let the General Secretary know within the next couple of months if you are interested in helping.

A report on the role of parish councils in developing rail services has been published by the Oxon and Bucks Rail Action Committee. The four page report is available for £1 (post free) from Chris Wright, 83 Blackmoor Gate, Fuzton, Milton Keynes MK4 1DD (cheques payable to OBRAC).

BR's external finance limit

85/86	86/87	87/88	88/89	89/90
682	777	591	520	439*
In £ millions				*planned

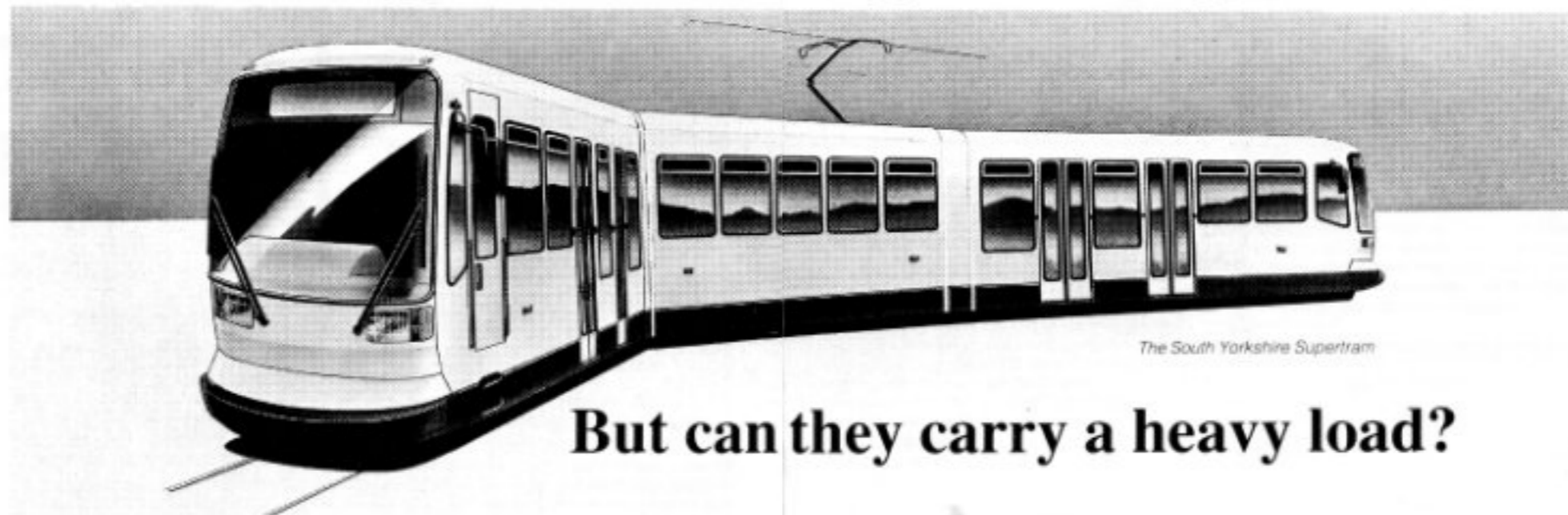
Remember Helen: A fund has been set up by RDS to provide a suitable memorial to rail campaigner Helen Broadbent who died in November. She lived in Clarkston, Glasgow, and, among other battles, fought hard to improve services on the East Kilbride line. She was also on the national executive of RDS and organised the recording of the song for Rail Development Week last year. If you would like to contribute to the fund, you can send your donation to David Bigg, RDS treasurer, Eye Level, 76 Maldon Road, Witham, Essex.

Welcome: Tony Wiggall of 25 Enfield Close, Erdington, Birmingham B23 5SE has filled the vacancy on the national executive left by Helen Broadbent. Tony attended his first national executive meeting on 10 January.

Steps to sanity: A new RDS leaflet *Steps towards a Safer Transport Policy* puts the case for railways to play a full part in an environmentally based transport system. You can order free supplies from Roland White (address back page).

Remember the annual general meeting of RDS is being held in Edinburgh on 4 May.

Charge of the Light Brigade



The South Yorkshire Supertram

But can they carry a heavy load?

By GEORGE BOYLE

Trams and light rail seem to be flavour of the decade for many planners. Manchester's system is under construction and the first section between Bury and Victoria should be in operation by September. The latest organisation to jump on the bandwagon is the National Economic Development Council which believes trams, light railways and monorails could significantly ease London's traffic congestion. Neddly said LRT systems should be considered for London because they operate at a fraction of the cost of new Underground lines and would offer a better service than London's buses. Often the introduction of trams allows large areas of cities to be pedestrianised, the House of Commons Transport Committee was told last year. As a result, shopkeepers' takings go up, the area becomes much safer and the level of pollution and noise declines, said Dr Carmen Hass-Klau, giving evidence for the Pedestrians' Association.

The British Government, slow to wake up to transport realities, has belatedly given the go-ahead for several British schemes. Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman gave approval in November for Sheffield's plan for a 20-mile Supertram network. The £230 million scheme includes long stretches of new tracks running on or alongside roads. It will not replace any BR services. One line will run five miles from the city centre to Meadowhall shopping centre and should be open in 1993 if the Government releases some money this year. Another 14-mile line from Hillsborough to Moshborough could be open by 1995.

The Minister said the Government would foot the

bulk of the construction bill after receiving assurances about the cost. The system will be privately run.

A provisional go-ahead was also given to the proposed £81 million Midland Metro between Birmingham and Wolverhampton which could be open by 1994. Other lines should follow.

Nottingham (which had trams until 1936 and following that a large trolleybus system) is carrying out a feasibility study into a light rail network for its 500,000 population conurbation. It has already been discovered that thoughtless abandonment of existing urban rail rights of way was gravely mistaken.

Edinburgh, Cleveland, Cardiff, Merseyside, Milton Keynes, Belfast, Chester, Croydon and Bristol are also considering a light rail network. Tyne and Wear Metro is building a two-mile extension to Newcastle Airport which will be open next year and will provide a 20-minute journey from the city centre. A feasibility study is also under way into extending the metro to Sunderland and Washington.

London's Docklands Light Railway is to build a £130 million extension under the Thames to Greenwich and Lewisham, giving connections with Network SouthEast. The Government, however, insists it must be privately owned. At the other end of the line, the Bank extension will begin operating from July. Canary Wharf station should open in May.

But light rail schemes can create problems, particularly for freight operations.

LRT schemes fall into two broad categories:-

1. Completely new schemes not involving conversion

VATman loosens his grip: I represented the society at a three-hour Value Added Tax appeal hearing at Colchester on 17 December, writes David Bigg.

The following rulings were handed down: The cover price of *Railwatch* is exempt from VAT, RDS should register for VAT and the branches can be excluded from overall turnover calculations.

The decision represents a gain to the society of 40 pence per member, compared to having to pay full VAT on our turnover. The Liberals have offered expertise should we decide to appeal, and both Labour and Tory parties may offer further assistance.

Why I joined RDS: A new leaflet, produced by Neil Lewis, has been produced. If you can help to get copies into the right hands, send for free supplies from publicity officer Roland White, Latymer, The Drive Belmont, Surrey SM2 7DJ

Drawing ahead: Enclosed with this issue of *Railwatch* are two books for the Rail Development Draw 1991. The aim is to raise much needed funds to extend our activities. Some members objected to receiving two books last year and we have tried to ensure they do not receive them this year. Despatch is a very complicated and onerous job. Please accept our apologies if you receive the books by mistake.

of existing BR tracks although sections of abandoned trackbed are sometimes used even here.

2. Schemes involving use of existing BR routes. A completely new scheme is obviously welcome as an addition to the public transport network of the city involved. The experience of London Docklands should, however, be a warning that, in an effort to save money, it is possible to under-engineer the scheme, with the result that expensive upgrading is necessary at a later stage.

For this reason, RDS believes that, wherever possible, the track and structure gauge and parameters should be suitable for conversion to full rail operation at a later date. Such schemes should also be closely integrated with existing BR operations in the area and not seen in isolation. There should be plenty of interchange stations and, if possible, through ticketing.

More problems arise with proposals involving conversion of existing BR routes. RDS believes that in such cases the preferred option is the retention of "heavy rail" suitably electrified and resignalled etc., rather than conversion to LRT.

Both the Tyne and Wear and Greater Manchester schemes demonstrate the problems of conversion. Both involve a reduction of the loading gauge to accommodate overhead wires cheaply and, certainly in the Manchester scheme, existing BR services will have to be diverted on to less satisfactory routes to achieve the necessary separation of traffic.

RDS Freight Committee has watched the growth in such schemes with anxiety. In 1983 it contacted the Tyne and Wear Metro authority to ask about their

attitude to freight traffic on their ex-BR lines. The reply made it clear that freight got in the way and the existing freight was accepted only on sufferance.

When it is considered that more than 22 schemes are currently proposed for LRT, the dangers are apparent. Most cities could become isolated from direct rail freight services.

Given the present state of the roads, it is not inconceivable that, in future, factories positioned along some of these routes might wish to install private sidings. For this reason, RDS believes that BR should insist, in any lease or sale of routes to LRT, on the right to carry present OR FUTURE freight traffic on the route in question.

The question of light rail and metro systems was raised at an RDS national executive meeting and it was felt appropriate that our policy on such systems was explained. Members should be aware of the problems and there ought to be a debate if any aspects of the policy need review given the increasing number of such schemes.

Having stated the policy and reasoning, the National Executive would welcome any comments from members, which can be sent to the general secretary or to me at 200 Buxton Road, Furness Vale, Stockport SK12 7PX.

• George Boyle and Bob Osborne are currently compiling a book for RDS on rail freight. There will be chapters on Speedlink, the Channel Tunnel and parcels. It will probably include case studies on particular firms. If you can help, by providing information or pictures, contact George at the above address.

• Electrification of the Midland main line is estimated at £95 million, which is £900 million less than the cost of improvements to London's M25 orbital motorway which have been approved.

• A handbook on electrification is being compiled by Mike Crowhurst for RDS. If you can help in any way, contact Mike at 33 Station Court, Aberford Road, Garforth, Leeds LS25 2QQ.

• Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman is "not allowed" to use public transport when he travels between his home in Kensington and work at Westminster. He uses a Ministerial car because he carries Government dispatch boxes.

Teacher Helen Ancomb bravely challenged the Department of Transport's case for an M40 extension beyond Oxford on the grounds that it had failed to take into proper account the option of upgrading the little-used railway which ran parallel. She lost the legal case, but not the moral or common-sense one, and ended up in debt as a result.

When her case was highlighted in the Daily Telegraph, readers helped with contributions and she was able to pay off her debts. She has now been able to rejoin RDS, as a member of Thames Valley branch.

The final section of the M40 opened in January while the railway has been reduced to single track and carries only one train an hour. This is just one of many railway trunk routes that are under-used and which, if properly managed, could negate the need for expensive, anti-social new motorways.

Helen who lives at Hightrees, Ashmansworth, Newbury RG15 9QH now wants advice (if possible from a BR engineer) on how to convert the M40 into a railway line.

Winning ways: The successful RDS lottery is being revamped next month to give more people the chance to win. Each month there will be six winners instead of four as in the past. The first new-style draw will take place at the society's annual meeting in Edinburgh on 4 May. Why don't you join now and help the society at the same time. Half the money raised goes to help RDS campaigning. It costs £1 per month but most people join the lottery for three months or a year. Entry forms available from Dave Finch, 28 Neville Avenue, Kidderminster, Wores DY11 7AL.

November winners: 1 Paul Keepin, Wisbech £53.50, 2 Mr and Mrs S L Haynes, Axminster £26.63, 3 H A White, Barnet Green, Birmingham £13.31, 4 K C Burton, Thetford £13.31.

December: 1 John Logie, Inverness £52.50, 2 Edina Lewis, London £26.26, 3 R H Dewhurst, Southampton £13.12, 4 Joan Coombes, Ipswich £13.12.

January: 1 Brian Calmain, Isle of Bute £50.25, 2 William Morton, London £25.13, 3 Mary Rawnsley, Solihull £12.56, 4 Mrs P Impey, Cambridge £12.56.

RDS member John Armstrong gave Keith Vaz (MP for Leicester East) a briefing on the Midland main line electrification campaign when he initiated an adjournment campaign on the issue on 20 November.

Bikes don't count: Traffic counters thought to be working for the Department of Transport were spotted recently near the Angel, London. They said they had been instructed not to count cyclists. This casts doubt on all Government transport statistics and begs questions about the London Area Transport Survey currently being undertaken by the Department which talks of questioning "drivers" at road checkpoints.

Stalybridge station buffet which has provided good food and drink at reasonable prices for several years is under threat from BR plans to sell the lease for a wine bar which will be of little use to rail passengers. Protests can be addressed to BR's Chief Estates Surveyor, Room S09, 34 High Street, Manchester M4 1QB

A photographic contest is being held by Glamorgan Rail Users' Federation to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Taff Vale Railway. Prizes include two free tickets to anywhere on the British mainland. For full details and an entry form, send an SAE to the Organiser, GRUF Photo Contest, 9 Dranllwyn Close, Maifon, Newport, Gwent NP1 8QP

BRANCHES

Yorkshire

Doubts expressed in the last issue proved groundless as the Leeds - Bradford - Ilkley - Skipton electrification received the green light at the end of November 1990. The first stage from Leeds to Bradford Forster Square should be completed by 1993 allowing Inter-City trains to serve the latter station without a traction change. It is likely that the number of King's Cross - Bradford services will be substantially increased once the wires are in place. However, West Yorkshire PTA has yet to receive authority - or the requested grant - to acquire new Class 323 electric units for local services and fears it may be forced to lease them instead, which would strain an already stretched budget.

British Rail's first Channel Tunnel freight centre will be situated at Normanton, it was announced just before Christmas. Formerly a major junction and freight complex, Normanton was a surprise choice over the existing Freightliner terminal at Souton, six miles up the line on the outskirts of Leeds. The development will provide a major boost to the economy of an area suffering from the mining industry's decline.

Service cuts continue to generate controversy around the region. An RDS-led campaign resulted in the TUC receiving hundreds of objections to proposed reductions on the Brillington - Scarborough route, and wrung a modicum of concession from BR. User groups in Pontefract and Selby also ran a similar joint effort, pointing out that the cuts have caused cases of hardship which would have carried real weight if arising from a closure proposal but which, in present circumstances, leave passengers with no statutory recompense.

The station at Sheffield's new Meadowhall shopping centre has proved almost too successful, generating some of the worst overcrowding ever witnessed in this area, though high cancellation rates on some of the shuttle services from Barnsley and Doncaster do not help. RDS raised this matter with the General Manager, Eastern Region, and were pleased to hear that extra units were drafted in to handle the pre-Christmas rush. The reality of the "Meadowhall Experience" is more than the advertisers envisaged.

The Wakefield - Huddersfield service won a reprieve when, following much lobbying from MPs, councillors and the local users group, British Rail agreed to maintain its share of funding for a further year. What happens beyond then is anyone's guess, given the financial squeeze on both BR and West Yorkshire PTA.

David Pickersgill

North West

News from the North West is mostly doom and gloom with reliability still a major problem on Merseyrail's Northern Line which appears to suffer from train crew shortages, and in Manchester which seems to suffer from shortages of everything! Regrettably the North West has not escaped from service cuts as Regional Railways strives to meet unrealistic cuts in the public sector obligation grant. Principal among these are the Skipton - Lancaster and West Cumbrian lines where rail services have been reduced to a token presence, almost isolated from the rest of the network.

It is ironic that BR made promises of improvements to both these lines when they were trying to close the Settle - Carlisle. Now the Settle line is safe, these promises have evaporated. Another dark cloud on the horizon is the insistence by the Department of Transport that BR should raise platform heights at many stations by a deadline which is unrealistic and could lead to station closures.

Through day-time trains from Manchester to the Continent will not now be ready until well after the opening of the Channel Tunnel. "I am appalled," said

Lancashire county councillor Joe French, "Lancashire and the North West have been very badly let down." Manchester's Metrolink is becoming more of a reality with an increasing amount of track appearing in city streets. The system is not, however, without disadvantages. All the existing BR stations will be derailed when they transfer to Metrolink and trains will be one-person operated, a fare dodger's dream. Details of through ticketing on to BR remain sketchy.

The private operators, obviously with profitability in mind, say they are confident of being able to operate with the minimum rolling stock. Where have we heard that before? The light rail system should offer a greatly improved off-peak service but concerns have been voiced about peak-time capacity. News of extensions to the system along a disused rail line and two non-rail alignments is conspicuous by its absence.

Robert Cummings

North Wales

No you don't: The branch is planning a campaign against Sealink Stena's announcement that it plans to close its container handling facilities at Holyhead.

Reopen: Holyhead station has been completely rebuilt and was reopened in January.

Flood: The Conwy Valley line was closed for two weeks over Christmas because of flooding. £80,000 will need to be spent on remedial work and bridge repairs.

Shopping list: A plan has been put forward to rebuild Llandudno station with shops and small craft units. Tanks a lot: A new freight service has started to Mostyn Docks. There will be 15 tank wagons a week taking acetic acid for Warwick Chemicals.

Swap hopes: The possibility of a £60 million road/rail freight terminal at Shotton has been announced.

Caught short: There have been terrible stock shortages since Chester depot closed at the end of September. The Hooton - Chester and Wrexham - Bidston lines have suffered from the failure of Manchester to provide decent rolling stock. It is costing Chester a small fortune to hire coaches and taxis.

Last trains: There have been protests against the possible loss of the last trains each way between Chester and Shrewsbury.

Sparking along: Following the Hooton - Chester electrification news, Wrexham - Bidston may become the next candidate for electric wires.

Rod Fairley

Midlands

Snow joke: The Department of Transport has refused "credit approval" for the £20 million scheme to reinstate the Snow Hill - Smethwick West link. The scheme has parliamentary approval, passes all the tests, would qualify for European Community grants and was approved by the BRB investment panel. But the Government has decided: Not this year! The scheme would provide much-needed relief to congestion at New Street station.

Parish power: People in Whittington are hoping to raise £100,000 necessary to open a new station on the Chester line out of Shrewsbury. So far £65,000 has been pledged by Shropshire and Cheshire county councils, the Rural Development Commission, Whittington parish council and Shrewsbury and Aitcham borough councils. Oswestry borough council which may also contribute has granted planning permission. Construction is expected to start in October and the station should open in May 1992.

Expansion: The prospect of extending the Cannock

Chase line trains to Rugeley and Stafford remains good. Staffordshire County Council has expressed firm support and is currently evaluating estimates from BR. New stations would be needed at Rugeley Town and Colwich.

Go north: The new £280,000 station at Bloxwich North, together with its 50-space car park, is expected to attract 1,200 passengers a week.

Safety question: Further stipulations by the Railway Inspectorate about length and width of platforms has increased the cost of a planned station at Kingsbury. There is now a question mark over the project and the councils would have to approve increases in funding. Sites north and south of Trinity Road bridge have been considered. The north side is much cheaper but has generated objections from some residents.

Ringway: A ring of parkway stations around the Midlands motorway box is a relatively inexpensive way of reducing urban traffic congestion and giving environmental benefit. RDS Midlands has suggested this in its response to the Environment White Paper. Sites at Wychbold, Earlswood, Brinsford and Causeway Green have been suggested to emulate the success of Bristol Parkway and Birmingham International where motorists are attracted from a very wide area but do not take their vehicles into urban areas. We have sent four-page booklets setting out our plans to Government departments, transport authorities, MPs, the media and environmental groups. We have had many messages of support and good coverage in local newspapers.

Blind spot: A document identifying various issues to be addressed in a review of the Stratford-upon-Avon local plan has failed to include any reference whatsoever to the town's rail station and services. The reason may well lie in the document's reference to proposed new roads which could well concrete over the through rail route, demolish the rail bridge and force relocation of the station. Local developers are also making plans for land around the station. We say the rail route and station must not be moved or used for roads or redevelopment. They must be retained on their present site as an essential transport facility. Alterations to pointwork at Stratford now enable platform 1 to be used for northbound departures and for locos to be released just below Alcester Road bridge.

Reopening: Restoration of the former rail route between Longbridge and Rubery which is mentioned in Birmingham City Council's draft unitary development plan is being considered as part of the redevelopment of the extensive hospital lands near Frankley.

Alvechurch: Along with electrification of the village train service, the single line platform is to be rebuilt nearer to the road bridge and to standard height. The present isolated platform is dangerously low and is surrounded by fields.

Up and up: The anniversary of the Lickey incline was combined with the official opening of Bromsgrove's second platform. The extra platform and footbridge, costing £92,000, benefited from a £60,000 contribution from Hereford and Worcester County Council and £10,000 from Bromsgrove district council.

Alan Bevan

East Anglia

BR has welcomed as a "very good idea" the branch's suggestion that a temporary station be built at Chetisham level crossing while works are under way at Ely in January next year. The BR project manager was evaluating the costs and benefits of a one or two-platform station. The temporary station will enable bus travel to be kept down to a minimum and each bus will serve as a link for all the lines affected - March, King's Lynn, Norwich as well as Cambridge and Ipswich, while also going to Ely town centre.

Peter Wakefield

BRANCHES

Scotland

Little has been said about the implications for transport policy of the Gulf war. But it has surely shown the folly of Britain depending on an oil-based road transport system.

There is a prospect of reopening to passengers some freight lines in Glasgow. Larkhall, one of the largest towns in Scotland without a station, may even get its line relaid and electrified. The news that Larkhall is being considered has prompted us to raise the possibility of reopening Bathgate - Airdrie. Perversely for all the good things Strathclyde Region wants to do, it cannot see the value of 200 yards of track at St Enoch which would unite the north and south electric systems in Glasgow. The Secretary of State has also refused to sanction the extension of the East Kilbride line into the town centre.

Tayside Region continues to decline to support the proposed new station at Wormit despite overwhelming evidence that it would reduce congestion on the Tay road bridge and in Dundee city centre. Politicians seem to have the will to build roads but not to promote schemes which will benefit rail users. Sprinters and 158s continue to receive mixed reactions in Scotland. It is the first time for a generation that new, rather than second-hand stock, is operating in Scotland. But the trains have not been specifically designed for Scotland. Minimal attention has been paid to people's desire to view the scenery and the train's ability to carry parcels, bicycles, skis, prams and mail. The train will therefore lose its advantages over the coach cowboys.

The new rolling stock has solved the problem of unreliability but caused another - serious overcrowding. We have made sure the Press knows that overcrowdings is caused by the Government's policy in forcing BR to replace three units with two. Nor has this new investment taken into account the fact that new trains attract more passengers. It adds up to scandalous discrimination against rail users.

Douglas Smart

London and Home Counties

Urgent efforts are being made to stop the threatened closure of Tilbury Riverside station which provides a vital link by ferry from Essex to Gravesend and Kent. Neglect however is the order of the day and if the station closes, the ferry will be at risk too. London branch secretary John Helm is urging travellers to protest to the Transport Users Consultative Committee at Peterborough (tel 0733 312188).

Jack Ellis

BR has finally come clean and announced it wants to withdraw the Watford Junction - Liverpool Street service, close Primrose Hill station and shut "certain sections of line". This almost certainly refers to the Graham Road curve in Hackney which was built specially for this service in the 1980s at considerable cost.

This service was a condition of BR being allowed to shut Broad Street station and sell the site at a monumental profit. The Broadgate office development now occupies the site. But BR has been reluctant to provide a proper service. It has been unreliable and prone to cancellation. It has now been whittled away to one train a day each way, making Primrose Hill the worst-served station in London.

This closure proposal is a blatant case of deliberate rundown and "closure by stealth". If BR were suddenly to announce it was to open a new direct link between north-west London and the City it would be front page news - yet one already exists and BR is trying to get rid of it! Objections need to be sent by mid-March to the London Regional Passengers Committee, Golden Cross House, 8 Duncannon Street, London WC2N 4JF.

Graham Larkbery

Most of the eastbound BR trains using London's planned Crossrail will go to Shenfield, with a few going as far as Southend. Richard Malins told us in November. Mr Malins, Network SouthEast's London

regional planning manager, said that it is just possible some trains may also go to Chingford. Likely western branches are Aylesbury (via Harrow) and Reading. Planned improvements for Thameslink include two extra tracks near Southwark Cathedral and a flyover near New Cross to get Thameslink trains across to the Brighton main line.

A report on the last Channel Tunnel links seminar describes how nippy NSE Networkers (delayed by cash shortages) are expected to dovetail in with international services. It also deals with the delays to Ashford's new £100 million international station which now may go ahead thanks to a £20 million deal with developers. The 12-page report is available for £2 (post free) from branch sales officer Graham Bird, 44 Ravensmead Way, London W4 1TF. East Sussex County Council and Hastings town council believe there should be a semi-fast Coastway service from Ashford to Brighton (and preferably further) as soon as the Channel Tunnel opens in 1993. BR, however, does not plan to get its act together to electrify Ashford - Hastings until 1995/6.

We support the councils and believe a service is needed now from Hastings to Southampton and Portsmouth. We discussed this at a joint Coastway meeting with Wessex branch at Havant in January. Although Brighton is quite good for changing trains because there are no footbridges or subways, we see the immediate desirability of some east-west through trains, perhaps by extending the occasional Portsmouth - Brighton train to Hastings. A four-page draft Coastway strategy paper is available for 40p (post free) from the sales officer. A more substantial report will be produced in due course and comments can be sent to me.

Trevor Jones

Sevenside

Stroud MP Roger Knapman has shown welcome interest and assistance. He has visited Tiphook to study their latest ideas for transferring freight from road to rail. We gave him a detailed statement about Speedlink operations and told him of our worries about the adequacy of the proposed Avonmouth Channel Tunnel freight depot. Mr Knapman has pressed for an early decision on provision of a parkway station in the Berkeley Road area, saying: "The need is there for all to see." We raised the issue with BR 12 years ago.

Considerable interest was shown, according to a parish survey at Severn Beach and Piling, in increasing the use of Piling station if more trains stopped there. But peak hour trains between Avonmouth and Severn Beach are threatened and BR Property Board is considering selling land in the area. Permission to use Saltford station site for housing - part of the original Avon Metro plan - has been refused. Details are awaited of a separate Supertram route from Bristol to Bath which may serve the village.

A parkway station is being considered for Keynsham at Hicks Gate, and park-and-ride stations at the former Bashford Halt site and at Monkton Farleigh. At Corsham, the station campaign is fighting BR Property Board plans to sell for industrial use land which is needed for a future station car park. We need new stopping train services between Swindon and Bristol which would allow the reopening of stations in Wiltshire and Avon.

The Severn Vale light rail scheme will be the subject for our speaker M R Taplin at the branch's annual general meeting on 23 March at 1400 at the National Waterways Museum, Gloucester Docks. Members of other branches are invited.

Eric Barbery

Government grant to BR in 1985:	£800 million
Government grant to BR in 1988:	£500 million
Company car subsidy in 1990:	£3,000 million

PLATFORM

Great expectations

I am appalled at BR Railfreight's defeatist attitude towards potential Channel Tunnel traffic. I was disgusted by a recent assertion that, if there were more than one terminal in the North West, a degraded service would result.

Similarly it was announced that a terminal is proposed for Port Wakefield on a green field site. The implication is that goods will be transported by road from obvious rail depots at Leeds, Sheffield and Hull.

This all arises out of extremely pessimistic figures of the amount of freight BR expects to carry through the tunnel. The absolute minimum of Channel Tunnel depots should be the same as the total Freightliner depots, that is, the existing network plus Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Gateshead, Hull, Sheffield and Swansea.

Ideally the number of depots should equate with all those proposed by Dr Beeching, that is, Warrington, Preston, Carlisle, Bristol, Northampton, Leicester, Peterborough and Norwich.

Other problems which give rise to concern is the much debated one of Berne gauge, the Reading - Redhill route for freight trains and no mention of 100 mph freight trains to attach to French and German trains.

If this is the best that BR Railfreight can do, I suggest that rail freight operations be put out to private tender.

J M Berry, 252 Prescott Road, Aughton, Lancs L39 5AQ

Rail is the answer

I was extremely surprised to notice that both two letters published following my article on high speed routes were of a critical nature.

If people really want to prevent erosion of the countryside by transport, they should actively support the call for more railways. Otherwise those who want to build more motorways will call the tune.

It is very important for the RDS to sell rail transport to the public. We must inform people of the benefits and advantages of rail transport. We must do this with imagination so that they can relate it to their needs and aspirations. We must be seen to be enthusiastic about railways.

We must sell rail to the transport planners who rely almost exclusively on roads, but now are learning stage by stage that road cannot meet our future demands.

In London, rail can achieve the volumes day by day that would choke the road system. We cannot expect transport planners to put their faith in rail if the rail lobby consists of dirty haversack and sandal types whose aspirations for better rail services are little more than the reopening of branch lines closed by Dr Beeching. Meanwhile the road lobby are asking for hundreds of miles of new motorway!

Bounds of possibility do change, and the best way to effect change is to show the advantages of that change. Twenty years ago railways were closing faster than opening, now more stations and routes are opening than closing. And a lot of credit for this must go to those RDS officers and members who have worked so hard towards this change. But we can't afford to stop now.

Graham Nally, 6 Mill Close, Borrowash, Derby DE7 3GU

The price of oil

The story of our railway must now be rewritten. Everybody knows that the price of oil will never be stable again, nor will the flow of it. This means that no matter how the Government fiddles the figures, road transport will never be able to compete against rail.

G R Low, 50 Follaton, Tones, Devon TQ9 5ND

WESTMINSTER

Heathrow Railway Bill

The second reading of the Heathrow Express Railway Bill was moved on 18 DECEMBER by Neil Thorne (C, Ilford South).

The purpose of the Bill, he said, was to allow the construction and operation of a high quality, high speed, dedicated mainline rail link between Heathrow airport and Paddington station.

Heathrow is the largest airport outside the United States, but many competitors, particularly in Paris and Amsterdam, would like to take over the lead, and one way to do that was by making better ground access. Access to Heathrow included the London Underground. That was now adequate, but unless there was provision soon for wider choice, congestion would spoil the otherwise excellent service.

Powers were obtained in 1967 for a link on Southern Region, but these lapsed when the Piccadilly line was extended to the airport. Joint BR-BAA (British Airports Authority) proposals then emerged, and the Heathrow Railway Bill was deposited.

Four trains an hour

The key to the Heathrow express was the high quality of the service, proposing trains from 5am to 11.30pm, and trains should run every 15 minutes. The journey time from Paddington to Heathrow would be 16 minutes.

Robert Adley (C, Christchurch) said he had raised the question of a westward-facing link, so that trains from south Wales, the west country and south-west could travel directly from Heathrow. Could he consider an amendment, to provide for land to be preserved, making it face west?

Mr Thorne said Mr Adley was an acknowledged expert on the railway system. A connection to the west would be possible, but there would have to be such a demand. It did not seem to exist at present.

Peter Snape (Lab, West Bromwich East) said he was concerned with the former Southern line, west of Feltham. Mr Thorne said it was important to ensure that any expenditure at this stage was not out of context.

The other school of thought was that, as it ran on the Western Region main line, members should consider the national dimension of the Bill. That line did not merely go to Bristol, Cardiff and Swansea but proceeded on to Fishguard and the Irish ferries, so it was an international line. Through the link from Didcot to Oxford, Banbury and Birmingham, the line connected with the rest of the Midlands, the north and Scotland, and offered an alternative route to the better-known one from Euston.

"Almost everyone, except the promoters of the Bill, understood the connection between the Bill and the westward-facing link."

Fast line to Heathrow

Toby Jessel (C, Twickenham) said he was inclined to support the Bill. It seemed common sense that there should be a fast rail connection between central London and Heathrow. The present rail link by Underground, the Piccadilly line, is hopelessly inadequate. It stops 15 or 20 times between central London and Heathrow; it stops every two or three minutes. Contrasted with that, a 16-minute service from Paddington to Heathrow will be excellent.

The one thing that would stand in the way of the report for

the Bill is the thought that it was linked in any way to the concept for a fifth terminal at Heathrow, as was half implied by the member for Ruislip and Northwood (C, John Wilkinson).

Channel Tunnel link

Tony Banks (Lab, Newham NW) asked the Transport Secretary on 26 NOVEMBER for a statement on prospects for the Channel tunnel fast link to London.

Roger Freeman, the Public Transport Minister, replied that British Rail was eager to proceed with the rail link to the Channel tunnel as soon as it was a viable proposition. "It expects to reach a conclusion on its preferred option next spring."

Mr Banks asked the minister what were his impressions of his recent visit to Stratford. Would he give a clear public assurance that BR was seriously considering Stratford as the site for the international station for the Channel tunnel? Would he say that BR would publish the criteria that it had adapted for considering the options for the route linking Kent to London?

Mr Freeman replied that the director of Network South-East had said he would consider the prospects for redevelopment of the station straight away to improve facilities for lines that now run through Stratford.

"As for Stratford being the location for the international station, that is for BR to evaluate. It is important for passengers to arrive at a terminus in central London.

"Insofar as the second terminus is to be King's Cross, the government support BR. That is not inconsistent with a station at Stratford, but is an important consideration."

Bob Dunn (C, Dartford) asked if there was some misunderstanding about the timetable to be followed, following the presentation of BR's proposals for the construction of a high-speed line through Kent.

BR's answer

Mr Freeman replied that BR had said that it would conclude its study of the alternative routes into London by spring. BR had

made clear the view that central London needed a second terminal, and that it should be King's Cross. A proposal for the preferred route and the method of financing it would be considered as quickly as possible.

Ron Leighton (Lab, Newham NE) asked whether, pending the decision to make Stratford the international interchange for the Channel tunnel link, which would be a sensible decision, did the Minister remember his promise that there would be immediate improvements to Stratford station?

Mr Freeman said that improvements were needed to the station. Services and facilities there were not up to those that a major interchange station needed. "It will receive my personal attention."

Public financing

Joan Ruddock (Lab, Deptford) asked whether the link would pass through south-east London, unless the Minister changed the criteria?

Would he follow the advice of the European Commission and change the rules to allow for a mix of public and private money to finance the link in a way that would meet national, economic and environmental needs?

Mr Freeman said he understood perfectly. The line that was safeguarded between Folkestone and the North Downs did not prejudice any of the three routes.

"It is a safeguarding procedure to prevent developments or construction along the line of the route that would be inconsistent with perhaps one or two of the proposals. It is certain that the route will pass through Ashford, and the Government have given a commitment to support Ashford station.

"The Government have not ruled out public financing of a high speed rail link, or a contribution from Network South-East to reflect improvements to commuter services in south-east Kent. A high-speed rail link that serves commuters will bring benefits to those who live in the south-east and therefore bring higher fares and revenue to BR."

WATCH

King's Cross Rail Bill

Garry Waller (C, Keighley) moved on 10 DECEMBER the King's Cross Railways Bill, to provide for a new passenger concourse. It would be designed to serve both King's Cross and St Pancras stations, replacing a temporary structure which is due to expire in 1995. The Bill is also designed to provide greatly improved facilities for passengers now using the two main stations.

Thirdly, it is intended to expand the capacity of the Underground station, to reduce congestion and improve interchange.

Furthermore, the East Coast main line will connect with Thameslink. Construction will allow for a low level station for Thameslink and for international services running from London and the north via the Channel tunnel to Paris and Brussels.

The Bill was carried by 141 votes to 43.

Electrification progress

Sir Anthony Meyer (C, Clwyd) asked the Transport Minister for a statement on the current rail electrification programme on 26 NOVEMBER.

Roger Freeman said the East Coast main line electrification would be completed in late spring next year. Other projects such as Tonbridge-Redhill and Birmingham Cross-city are being implemented.

Sir Anthony asked if Mr Freeman thought British Rail was responding with the necessary courage and imagination to the challenge and opportunities of the Channel tunnel and 1992? In particular, is it considering the ultimate necessity for an electrified link all the way via North Wales to Ireland?

Mr Freeman said it was for BR to come forward with investment proposals. "We shall certainly look at InterCity proposals that are presented as being financially viable.

"The French minister responsible for transport, to whom I recently spoke, said that when French railways appraise InterCity trains, they use exactly the

same basis as we use - the 8% financial rate of return."

BR would invest some £1.4 million to prepare this country for the opening of the Channel tunnel. "When it brings forward proposals for a high-speed rail link, Government will look at them favourably, constructively and urgently."

The French attitude

Donald Anderson (Lab, Swansea East) asked the minister if, for instance, he was seriously saying that on the Paris to Strasbourg TGV route, French railways is employing the same restrictive criteria as British Rail?

Surely it is the Government who are responsible for regional policy and who should therefore look at ways in which regional investment can be fitted into overall regional policy. Would the minister look as positively as French railways at areas such as the South Wales route for electrification, to ensure that Britain can benefit from the Channel tunnel?

Mr Freeman replied that he confirmed what he said earlier about the attitude and approach of French railways and the French Ministry of Transport to the provision of rail services between capitals.

In the terms of the basis of proposals for provincial services, only 50 per cent of total rail investment over the next three years has had to meet the eight per cent rate of return test. The other 50 per cent had been justified for largely non-financial reasons.

It took into account the benefits of non-users and certainly the economic and social benefits of the cities, regions and towns that such rail projects serve.

Sir Marcus Fox (C, Shipley) said there would be despair among his constituents if they thought that electrification stopped at Leeds. Electrification was needed to encourage the further development of the community.

Mr Freeman said he was happy to confirm that the Government would reserve the appropriate resources to permit the electrification of the line between Leeds and Bradford and



between Skipton and Ilkley. Others who had benefitted included members for Pudsey, Keighley, Batley and Spen, all of whom had asked for it.

Robert Hughes (Lab, Aberdeen North) protested that East Coast electrification would not be completed by the time stated, because it went only as far as Edinburgh.

There could be no confidence either in BR or the Government, when BR was cutting services and seemed about to cut freight services to Edinburgh.

Mr Freeman said the Government would look carefully at any case for the extension of electrification to Aberdeen, but InterCity services must meet the test of an eight per cent real rate of return.

"We shall look at other factors, including regional and social benefits and alleviation of congestion for services other than those we call the commercial railway, and take them into account."

Public anxiety

The structural strength of the rolling stock involved in the accident at Cannon Street, London, will be examined by the Railway Inspectorate, Transport Secretary Malcolm Rifkind told the Commons on 14 JANUARY.

He said he understood the widespread public anxiety and irritation about overcrowding. He promised that the inquiry would consider the numbers of passengers that were on the train and any implications that this may have had.

EDITORS' NOTE: Unlike in Britain, the French include cost/benefit analysis in their calculations. For example, improvements to the line from Paris to Clermont Ferrand would have yielded a financial return of just 1.5 per cent. The cost/benefit return, however, was some 28 per cent. Road projects, unlike rail in Britain, receive a "user benefit" allowance.

For example, it is calculated that 10,000 journeys a day will save half an hour by using a new road. This produces a notional gross time-saving of 5,000 hours at, say, £6 an hour, which equals £10.95m (6 x 5,000 x 365) of benefit per annum to set against the costs of the road project. Source: *The Line That Refused To Die*.



Swap tactics for Britain

British Rail is gambling that by closing the Speedlink freight operation, it will be able to target resources on setting up intermodal services with private enterprise partners.

Even BR concedes that one and a half million tonnes of freight will be lost - shunted on to Britain's over-crowded roads.

Tory MP Robert Adley urged in vain that the Government should delay the closure of Speedlink until a full environmental assessment is made. So much for the Government's Green credentials.

Lancashire county councillor George Slyn said: "This is another example of the balance sheet mentality which seems to dominate thinking on national transport strategy. It makes no sense at a time when national debate is increasingly turning to concern for the environment and congestion of our roads."

One company which operates from 150 freight intermodal terminals in Europe is hoping to set up a joint company with British Rail to expand the amount of rail freight moving between Britain and the continent.

Joint managing director Francois Leclercq told Rail-watch that 1991 would be a key year for operators and customers in seeing how the Channel Tunnel would affect their businesses.

"This is the time to prepare for the Channel Tunnel," said Mr Leclercq of Novatrans-Kombi which has launched its first intermodal service in Britain using rail between Harwich and Garston (Liverpool). Tank vehicles carrying chemicals and powders were a significant cargo.

There were many intermodal services in Europe (allowing swap bodies to travel by both road and rail) and Novatrans ran daily trains from the continental Channel ports to Italy, Spain, France, Austria and Germany. There were 1.3 million unit movements in 1990.

Interest in Britain had been limited until now. Mr Leclercq said: "The Channel Tunnel has been the trigger for development. Companies are already preparing for it, considering what investments to make and thinking about how they will operate."

But he added: "Some people have been upset by BR's attitude. Customers need to make very significant amounts of investment if they are to use Channel Tunnel rail services. Just one swap box for instance can cost £10,000."

He said the Italians were extremely interested in using the tunnel for British traffic, partly because of the restrictions both Switzerland and Austria imposed on lorry traffic.

For British internal freight traffic, Mr Leclercq said there was little scope for swap body freight except perhaps between London and Glasgow.

The company he was hoping to set up with BR would aim at European traffic and would probably need only six terminals in Britain. It was probable the new

FREIGHTWATCH

company would be owned by road transport operators (52 per cent), Railfreight Distribution (24 per cent) and Novatrans-Kombi (24 per cent).

Novatrans-Kombi itself is owned jointly by road transport companies and the French and German state railways.

European Community Transport Ministers met in Brussels in December to approve a package of measures to encourage combined transport in an attempt to boost efficiency and reduce pollution.

Approving a draft directive, they backed tax rebate measures to encourage hauliers to move away from pure road transport to combined transport, which involves moving containers and swap bodies by road, rail and boat.

The extent of the rebate will depend on how much of the journey is by rail and boat.

Hauliers using combined transport will also benefit from the removal of existing cabotage restrictions on the movement of goods by road.

Cabotage limits the ability of shippers from one country to carry goods within the borders of another.

To liberalise the transport market, the ministers also decided to increase road haulage licences in the EC by 40 per cent in 1991 and a further 40 per cent in 1992, ahead of the total liberalisation of the market in 1993.

In addition, 940 licences will be issued to take into account the increased size of the EC following German unification. Half the licences will go to German companies with the rest divided among the other 11 EC member states.

The Commission will monitor lorry market conditions and will have the power to take action such as stopping further licensing, if there is overcapacity.

• Tiger Rail is considering running a freight train from the South-West to the North-East and Scotland.

• A new Munich - Verona RoadRailer service is being set up by a German company which is receiving soft loans from the Bavarian authorities because it is "in the public interest" to get freight off the roads. The company, BTG, will start a Munich - Dresden service

Freight facilities grant

85/86	86/87	87/88	88/89	89/90
£7m	£6m	£2m	£4m	£4m*
*planned				

later this year. RoadRailer vehicles have been approved by German, Austrian and Italian state railways.

• People living near the Heinz factory at Orrell, near Wigan, are struggling against "the blight of heavy lorries thundering through their streets and lanes". They are hoping Heinz will develop rail sidings to let its products go by train. The Orrell Traffic Action Group is worried that lorry traffic will get worse because Orrell, once a tranquil place, is sandwiched between the M6 motorway and development land.

• BR's choice of Normanton (Wakefield) as its first Channel Tunnel rail freight "village" has been criticised. Leeds "had been led to believe" it would be at Stourton and Doncaster is already building a terminal.

• The well-engineered Woodhead railway linking the North-West to Yorkshire should be reopened as a way of reducing congestion on the trans-Pennine M62 motorway. Paul Salvesson of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies said the Woodhead line should be a dedicated freight route able to take continental size wagons and piggyback vehicles. It could be a northern gateway to Europe via the Humber.

• BR hopes to get a 20 per cent share of Cross Channel freight by the time the Channel Tunnel opens. But its past performance does not give any ground for optimism. In 1975, 15 per cent of freight in Britain was moved by rail. By 1987 it had fallen to 9 per cent.

BR chairman Sir Bob Reid has asked the Government for about £5 billion extra over the next four or five years to "get things right", including the Channel Tunnel link, the West Coast main line upgrading and London's Crossrail.

Public expenditure on transport

	1985	1986	1987	1988	85-88
ROAD	2950	3000	3050	3000	+2%
RAIL	1100	900	700	600	-45%

In £m Source: Department of Transport

ADVERTS

A conference on the need for an integrated transport policy for London is to be held on 21 May at the Cathedral Conference Centre, Victoria. Details from Pat Crane, 5 Elm Way, New Southgate, London N11 3NP.

A one-day conference on East-West rail links is being held in Bedford on Saturday 23 March. The £3 cost includes a ploughman's lunch. Details from Richard Pili, 4 Rowlandson Way, Bedford MK41 7LT (tel 0234 347039).

A four-day conference called Transport of Tomorrow will be held in Sorrento from 20 to 24 May. Details from ICHCA Tel 010 39 81 26 6566 (Naples).

An international conference on freight and transport is being planned for 11 to 13 June in Brussels. Details from World Trade Promotions 081 642 7866 (London).

An East-West Interfreight conference is being held in Budapest from 19 to 21 March. Details from Cargo Systems 081 330 3911 (London).

European Rail Travel

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