

# Railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

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## Tories steam ahead

Hopes that a group of Tory rebels led by Ashford MP Sir Keith Speed would kill off the rail privatisation Bill were dashed in the House of Commons on 25 May.

The rebels faded away when the Government made minor concessions on railcards and control of fares.

Labour's Transport spokesman Brian Wilson correctly predicted before the vote was taken: "A Tory rebellion is rather like tooth fairies. Believe in them when you see them."

The House gave the Railways Bill its third reading by 307 votes to 292 despite warnings from Bob Cryer, the Labour MP for Bradford, that: "Everyone who votes for this Bill is voting to sabotage our national railway network."

He also warned: "This legislation is a recipe for railway chaos, degradation and gloom. They have won the vote but the argument for breaking up the railways is in utter disarray."

"They have bought off rebellion but it means that investors are going to be even more mystified about where the profits are supposed to come from."

The Tory rebels were congratulating themselves that they had saved railcards for the young, elderly and disabled.

Protection for the cards will be written into the Bill when it goes to the House of Lords.

But Labour's Dr John Marek (Wrexham) warned that there was nothing to prevent franchisees putting up the price of travelcards beyond the reach of most people or reducing the discounts available.

The Government has so far managed to avoid making any concessions to the three million people who at present benefit from the Family Railcard, the Network card, or the Britrail pass.

Nor is there any guarantee that threatened lines will not close.

On a key amendment which would have allowed British Rail - the organisation with the relevant experience - to bid for franchises, only two Tory MPs put their heads above the parapet.

They were Stephen Day (Cheadle) and Hugh Dykes (Harrow East) who said it was "illogical and offensive" not to let BR bid. Mr Dykes said BR had made great improvements "despite the fact that it had been underfunded for years by a malevolent and mean Treasury".

Labour's Peter Snape said excluding BR was a disgraceful insult to hundreds of thousands of people who had spent many years working in the public sector.

The Liberal Democrats' Nick Harvey accused the Government of pig-headed obstinacy over BR's role and demanded: "Why should the



taxpayer have to pay for the ideology of a Government hell bent on pushing this into the private sector?"

Labour's Hugh Bayley (York) accused the Government of being frightened that BR would win the franchises.

The Bill now goes to the House of Lords where it is hoped peers will be able to dump it or emasculate it.

Labour's Mr Wilson said: "The battle now goes to the Lords but more important, to every railway community which will be made fully aware of the dangers involved in this folly. The battle continues."

Mr Wilson said: "There's no doubt that if the Bill goes ahead in its present form, then a substantial number of rural services are going to disappear within a relatively short space of time."

"The money will not be in the system to sustain them. Operators would use every trick in the book to close down loss-making services."

Scottish Nationalist Alex Salmond warned: "The privatisation process will be used as a pretext for washing the Government's hands of the future of the railway system, and the railway system most at risk from that process will be the lines in rural Scotland, rural Wales and rural England."

Labour's John Prescott also highlighted another danger of private franchisees who will receive "blue-eyed boy" treatment from the Government.

He said the Franchise Director would give so much money to private operators that there would be none left for the less profitable parts

which would continue to be run by BR. "This Bill has absolutely nothing to do with improving facilities for passengers, with reintroducing pride into our railway system and certainly nothing to do with common sense."

Transport Secretary John MacGregor claimed Labour was raising unjustified concerns and said the Government was not taking risks.

In another roundabout compromise, he said he would give "guidance" to the Franchising Director obliging private operators to participate in the Travelcard system which allows use of buses, Tube and trains with one ticket.

Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman said that the Railways Bill would be amended in the Lords to ensure that passenger fares were "reasonable" after privatisation.

The revenue will have to support at least seven new quangos resulting from privatisation.

A report by consultants Steer Davies Gleave showed that fares in the Network SouthEast area were likely to increase by 37 per cent because of privatisation. Overall costs would rise by 28 per cent if Railtrack has to make an eight per cent return.

A poll shows that the public is more aware of the dangers of privatisation than the Government: 71 per cent are against it.

A survey taken before the House of Commons vote reveals that 38 Tory MPs in 53 marginal constituencies may lose their seats at the next election if they support rail privatisation.

One voter in Christchurch warned: The Government will get more than a bloody nose if they're not careful. They'll get two black eyes as well."

# Councils set the pace

Despite lack of Government cash, Centro is pressing on with its campaign to build a Metro from Birmingham's Snow Hill to Wolverhampton.

The passenger transport authority for the West Midlands has chosen a consortium of Taylor Woodrow and Ansaldo Trasporti to build and operate the 12-mile line with low-floor vehicles running every six minutes.

In Scotland, Clackmannan District Council has approved spending £412,000 on the £2.1 million Alloa-Stirling reopening scheme which is dependent on £800,000 being spent by the Central Regional Council and ScotRail which however is under intense financial pressure from the Government.

Central Region has already decided to switch money from road building and increase its spending on rail to nine per cent of its total transport budget.

In England, a regular train service returned in May to the Ribble Valley between Clitheroe and Blackburn thanks to support from Lancashire County Council. The service with some through trains to Manchester is provided on an experimental basis by Regional Railways. Lancashire County Council provided £676,000, Ribble Valley Borough Council £113,000, the

European Regional Development Fund £85,000, the Rural Development Commission £50,000, British Rail's Community Unit £4,500, and Blackburn Borough Council £4,000. The Government gave nothing.

**Rail-road:** RDS member Giles Angell appeared at a public inquiry into the proposed Kidderminster - Hagley bypass to urge that the potential of the Stourbridge line be considered before the road was given the go-ahead.

**Winning with RDS.** Lottery winners for February: M Savage, Cleethorpes £62.60, J Allen, Douglas loM £39.12, Alan Wallis, Little Clacton £23.47, John Thorley, Burnley £15.65, John Savage, Tring £7.83, D J Barr, Harrogate £7.83.

March: D E Williams, Harrow £63.16, W Emmerson, Belfast £39.75, Andrew MacFarlane, Knutsford £23.85, Peter Owen, Altrincham £15.90, R H Dewhurst, Southampton £7.95, Paul Burdon, Hordam £7.95.

April: G Smith, Gedling £64, R Neville, Cardiff £40, W Emmerson, Belfast £24, J G Willis, Barnet £16, Mrs P Hamlyn, London £8, M Nicholson, Pontree, Skye £8.

If you want to join the lottery for one year, send a cheque for £12 to Dave Finch, 28 Neville Avenue, Kidderminster, Wores DY11 7AL. Make cheques payable to RDS and remember to include your RDS membership number.

# Ticket to Saigon

In May next year the last link in an 11,000-mile rail journey between Britain and south-east Asia will be forged with the opening of the Channel Tunnel.

Two other missing links were recently put in place. The railway between China and Vietnam was reopened after decades of disruption by war, and the third link between China and the ex-Soviet railway system was put in place at Druzhba in central Asia.

This occasion in railway history will be marked by a once-in-a-lifetime rail journey of 32 days from London to Saigon. The trip is the equivalent of the entire BR network laid out in one line. Stops are at Moscow, Samarkand, the Great Wall, Xian, Guilin and Hue.

Three VIP trains will be chartered for the journey. An original Pullman set of vintage Wagon-Lits stock will run from Paris to Brest Litovsk. The Russian state train will run from Brest to Druzhba. From there, Mao Tse-Tung's personal state train will be used. Receptions and cultural events will be laid out at several stops.

On-board catering will be commissioned from top-ranking chefs from France, Russia and China, with menus reflecting the countries traversed.

Needles to say this is not a trip for the budget traveller. The price to the general public will be just under £8,000 all-in. But the organisers Voyages Jules Verne have indicated they will consider a discount for group bookings. The size of the discount will depend on the size of the group, with a minimum of 10.

I feel RDS should be represented on such a momentous journey. Would anyone else who thinks they MIGHT be able to afford to come, please get in touch as soon as possible. There will be no commitment at this stage but I will be able to gauge the size of possible interest. There will be no reduced rates for senior citizens or BR privilege travellers.

Mike Crowhurst (National Executive member), 33 Station Court, Aberford Road, Garforth, Leeds LS25 2QQ. Tel: 0532 864844

**Tuned in:** RDS people have been much in demand as the media have gradually woken up to the threat of privatisation of our national rail network.

Chairman Steve Wilkinson and treasurer David Bigg were both also interviewed by newspapers and local radio stations for their comments on the rail strikes in April.

General Secretary Trevor Garrod has appeared on Anglia TV and has broadcast three times on BBC Radio Suffolk as well as being quoted frequently in local papers which have also published his letters. Douglas Smart has had letters published in papers in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen as well as two special features in The Scotsman.

TREVOR  
GARROD'S  
VIEW



By the left  
right - or  
consensus?

Left or right? By the left right or consensus

When we are criticised from left and right, I feel confident RDS is remaining true to its constitution - to be independent of political parties.

In Railwatch 54, a member urged RDS to endorse Labour and Liberal Democrat rail policies and oppose the Government openly.

In the last issue, another member warned of attempts to politicise the rail debate and the risk of alienating the Conservative Party.

Our central aim is to promote the use of rail and the interests of rail users. To do that, we have to conduct meaningful dialogue with many people, including politicians in power or likely to wield power and influence.

I do not want to be general secretary of a non-political RDS. During the seven years that I have been general secretary, we have had meetings with three consecutive public transport ministers and with Labour and Liberal Democrat politicians at national level.

We have also had a constructive relationship with local councillors of all parties.

It is not always easy. Five years ago, I approached no fewer than 12 different Conservative MPs with invitations to address our annual conference of rail users. Not one accepted.

I believe we are correct to remain non-aligned because we are free to praise or criticise politicians of any party, measured against the common yardstick: Will their actions give us a better railway?

We have to argue against the proposals of this Conservative government just as we would attack the policies of any government seeking to break up our only national public transport

network and threaten us with 12 years of re-organisation and instability.

We have evidence that many Conservatives share our concerns. Our recent series of national press adverts "Rail Users say No to Privatisation" attracted by far the greatest response from readers of the true-blue Daily Telegraph.

It is important these Conservatives make every effort to stop or emasculate the Government's plans.

We support much of the Labour Party's transport policy but how could we possibly back Labour MP Bryan Gould last year when he criticised the Government's modest attempts to reform the company car tax perk. This has for many years distorted transport economics to BR's disadvantage. Mr Gould who represents Dagenham - home of Ford - apparently wanted to see more company cars.

If a Labour politician in office was seeking to load the dice against the railways, we in RDS would have a duty to point this out.

Those of our members who are also supporters of the Labour Party would then be urged to argue against such views.

There is much that RDS members can do, whether they support any major party or none.

They should call for a political consensus that sees the national rail network as an essential public service with an expanding role.

They can also insist that while the private sector can play a part in it, it is the duty of government to ensure that the network is viable.

\* Trevor Garrod is general secretary of RDS and writes a column every four weeks for the magazine Rail.

## Books for sale

*High Speed Trains - Fast Tracks to the Future* (new) £9.99

*The Line that Refused to Die* (new edition) £7.99

*Traffic Congestion - Is there a Way Out?* £9.95

*Our Environment: A Bigger Role for Rail* £5.25

All prices include post and packing. Make cheques payable to RDS.

Other books can be ordered through RDS. Send orders or an SAE for a list to Sales Officer, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN.

# The juggernaut rolls on

Privatisation will make it even more difficult to keep freight on the rails.

As more juggernauts rolled on to the roads carrying traffic snatched from the beleaguered railways, it became clear that the major change for the future will be the abandonment of the idea of charging freight trains only the marginal costs of using the track.

In future Railtrack will have to charge freight trains a "commercial" rate.

The enormous losses of freight in the last few months have resulted from Department of Transport directives to Railfreight to start taking more notice of the commercial rate of return it gets from operating trains.

In some cases, that has meant price increases to the customer of 179 per cent.

The Government did make a gesture in the right direction by changing the rules for giving grants to help switch freight from road to rail.

But in the past the admirable aim of these "freight facility grants" grants has been undermined by penny-pinching interpretation of regulations and lack of adequate funding from the Treasury. There is little reason to expect this will change in future, particularly as the Treasury is grower ever more desperate in finding ways of cutting public expenditure.

The insignificance of these Section 8 grants is obvious. They form an infinitesimal .0014 per cent of rail freight revenues.

Transport Secretary John MacGregor announced the changes to "Section 8" grants in March when the Press was full of reports of freight being forced off rail.

Now the Government says it wants to assist firms investing in rail freight infrastructure. Locomotive costs may now be eligible, as will projects relieving motorways and dual carriage-way roads - previously viewed as not needing relief from lorries.

In addition lorries en route to a rail head with a railfreight cargo may in future be allowed an upper weight limit of 44 tonnes. The danger is of course that the 44-tonne lorry will become

accepted as the norm to the glee of the road haulage industry.

The society's freight committee has long lobbied for bigger grants and also wants faster decision making from the Department of Transport.

But if these grants are to be any use, they must reflect the scale of the problem and of Railfreight's desperate position. The Government has given no hint as to how much money will be available in future but it has warned that there will be a fixed budget subject to review. Not much of a commitment there.

And anyway, it looks as if new charges from Railtrack could more than wipe out the effect of these grants.

As Sir Alastair Morton asked: "Road freight does not pay per tonne-mile for road use, so why should rail?"

In England grant enquiries should be made on 071-276 4834, in Wales 0222-761456 extn.5280 and in Scotland 031-556 8400 extn.4140.

With continental railfreight opportunities and more positive planning advice emanating from the Department of Environment, these belated changes are welcome - as far as they go.

The Government keeps saying it wants more freight on rail but has so far created the economic and financial environment which makes it impossible.

The Government delights in being financially stringent but remains economically shortsighted, penny wise but pound foolish. It saves small amounts of money by squeezing the railways, decants freight and people on to the roads and then lavishes huge sums of money on building more roads, the most wasteful and polluting mode of transport.

It is the opposite of what it claims to be trying to achieve and is out of tune with public opinion.

Perhaps the Government has a secret agenda. The road lobby which has been generous in its donations to Tory party funds has good reason to fear the railway renaissance.

Roads and traffic are now accepted as a major factor in the decline in our quality of life and the biggest cause of local environmental pollution.

French Railways freight director Alain Poinsot has warned the British Government that its privatisation proposals is likely to "eliminate any hope of the profitable development of rail freight transport in Britain."

He points out that road infrastructure costs are largely borne by the community as a whole whereas Railtrack will be charging a commercial rate for use of rail.

The future of the rail link to King's Lynn docks is in doubt after BR put its prices up - and overnight achieved a 50 per cent cut in traffic!

The Department of Transport's response: It is up to British Rail.

In Wales, protestors lined roads from Oswestry through Welshpool and Newtown to Aberystwyth after Shell switched its Stanlow to Aberystwyth oil flows from rail to road in mid Wales.

The Labour group leader in Powys Chris Mann rightly pointed out: "There will be financial costs of transporting oil by road."

"But any extra maintenance on our roads as a consequence of use by heavy vehicles, has to be borne by the county council and its taxpayers."

To add insult to injury, Transport Secretary John MacGregor announced: "The Government wants to see thriving, competitive rail freight businesses in the private sector offering safe, efficient and environmentally sound distribution services."

"Our policies are both flexible and innovative." He also announced the sell-off and reshaping of BR's freight businesses.

\* Lorries of course are eight times more likely than cars to be in fatal accidents.

\* One lorry does as much damage to the road as 100,000 cars.

\* It is estimated that 93 per cent of road haulage firms break the driving hours laws.

# The big squeeze for cyclists

After years of being elbowed off the roads by a combination of dangerous drivers and bad planning, cyclists are now being squeezed with a vengeance by British Rail.

BR turned the screw with a price increase in May for taking cycles on trains which was condemned by cycling groups as an outrage.

It now costs £3 for each leg of the journey on InterCity and Regional Railways. So a simple day return journey costing you say £3.60 will cost £9.60 if you want to take your bike too.

"This is an absolute disaster for regular bike and rail users outside PTE areas," said Andrew MacFarlane of RDS.

There are some unhelpful railway managers but the real blame for this situation is the Government. The Department of Transport has forced BR to operate unsuitable trains without adequate luggage space and the Treasury has choked off its lifeblood of funding.

The Government is set to make matters even worse by failing to make it a condition of privatisation that trains must carry cycles. Its

new roads, provided at lavish public expense, are all hostile and dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists.

But RDS has attempted to maintain its campaign for more sensible policies. Our cycling officer Malcolm Conway has submitted comments to the Cyclists' Touring Club as part of a survey which it is undertaking on cycle provision throughout the country.

He considers the demand for carrying bicycles on trains is suppressed by the restrictions which now exist on many types of trains. We concede that SOME of these curbs are understandable.

There has however been some noticeable effort recently to provide and sign cycle racks at stations.

Malcolm also suggests that BR could do more for cyclists by putting symbols in the timetable to show which trains carry cycles and how many cycles each train can carry.

East Anglian branch committee member John Thompson has been continuing to correspond with Regional Railways managers on this issue,

using his influence as a member of the Waveney Cycle Forum. We have also received a useful report from the Tandem Club on their members' experiences of taking tandems and other large bikes by train. They suggest business is being lost to BR where these machines cannot be taken.

Interestingly club members say they have not met with hostility from other passengers. This contradicts the claims by some BR managers that bikes annoy passengers.

Some managers have claimed that loading bikes causes accidents and that their presence prevents them accommodating more passengers, highly questionable arguments which are not given much house room in more enlightened countries in Europe.

One RDS member wishing to load his bike into the ONE space provided on a 158 train found the area was taken up with a passenger's heavy luggage even though there was ample room in the racks. A simple notice that the area was for bicycles would have helped.

In May BR banned tandems!

## Car crazy

Encouraging people to use public transport is a matter of education, not merely provision. Many people think only of cars, forgetting about trains and buses. If they cannot use their cars, they often borrow one or ask for a lift.

A typical example is the journey to an airport. A genuine instance I heard once was "I'm taking the day off to drive my son back to university" - St Albans to Coventry. Father would come back the same day on his own of course. It's this sort of abuse which leads to congestion on the M1.

Similarly, look at the number of cars containing mothers ferrying offspring to school. They are denying their children the independence of travelling by public transport "because the roads are so busy". This is absurd reasoning and engenders car dependency in children's formative years.

My final example concerns four adults who went on a continental holiday by coach which started at Dover. Their home is a mile from Margate station, 22 miles from Dover. Rather than use the hourly train service via Ramsgate, the man of the house drove the party to Dover.

He would not leave the car in a car park (too expensive) or on the street (too risky), so once there, he telephoned his daughter to say where he had parked it. His daughter then set off from Margate to Dover in her car with her boyfriend.

Daughter locates dad's car and drives it back to Margate in convoy with boyfriend driving hers. On the day the four holidaymakers are due back, daughter and boyfriend drive the two cars to Dover again and, after parking dad's car in the same street as before, they go back to Margate in daughter's car. Later dad finds his car and drives the party back home to Margate.

You have to give these people some credit for dreaming up such a hare-brained scheme for avoiding public transport. They turned a 44-mile round trip into 176 vehicle miles. I am ashamed to admit this able-bodied party were my brother-in-law, sister, mother and aunt.

This sort of thing goes on all the time. The way to reduce it is to ensure we have a public transport network, properly advertised, reliable, predictable and affordable. In the meantime the road builders are laying more tarmac.

*Andrew Loughton, 125 Cottenham Park Road, West Wimbledon, London SW20 0DW*

## Fuelling illusions

One of the difficulties in promoting rail travel is its perceived expense relative to the car. I suggest that much of this is because many people do not realise what it costs to run a car these days, as the money is not handed over in relation to a specific journey. The nearest it comes to, is paying for fuel, and that is assumed

to be the whole cost of the journey. Yet according to the autumn 1992 AA Magazine, even for a smallish car, this only accounts for about 40 per cent of the actual running cost, with no allowance for standing charges at all, and therefore no allowance for depreciation which is, to some extent, mileage related. If more people realised just what it did cost for a specific journey by car, perhaps more would use public transport. What can be done to make people aware of this?

*The Rev P L Roberts, A P C Manse, Camustiel, Applecross, by Strathcarron, Ross-shire, Scotland IV54 8LT*

## Surgical strike

With the privatisation debate entering a crucial stage, it is vital RDS members get their views across to MPs, especially Conservative MPs.

There is no better way of doing this than by speaking personally to your MP, for example at a "surgery".

As the member of the parliamentary liaison committee with responsibility for co-ordinating the lobbying of Conservative MPs, I would urge all RDS members to make a point of attending the next surgery to express whatever concerns they have about the Government's "semi-privatisation" plans.

*Peter R Wood, 24 Lutterworth Road, Sunderland SR2 9AX (tel: 091 5226036)*

## Welcome to women

Julian Langston's excellent research (Railwatch 55) has confirmed my worst fears: Only 10 per cent of the RDS membership is female. Therefore we need to co-opt a women's development officer on to the executive. This must not be done next year or even next month. It must be done today.

Opposing the dismemberment of our national rail system must necessarily remain our top priority. But next must come a coherent campaign to attract women. Can we not set an ambitious target to have 30 per cent women by 1995?

Women often rely solely on public transport. We must listen to them. Most passenger rolling stock now has no provision for prams, pushchairs or even plain, heavy shopping. Would a woman have designed such stock? Never in a thousand years.

*Stephen King, 9 Railway Terrace, Caerfili CFS 1HX*

## Integrated network needed

As a once-active Conservative, I believe private enterprise to be excellent in its right context.

Such as hairdressers and plumbers only have to serve a local need. Competition and choice can bring benefits. In transport and communications, however, there is a clear case for integrated networks serving the whole country, as per telephones and the Post Office.

I wish people would stop going on about British Rail's monopoly. Consumers have no alternative source for gas, electricity and water. Even before hostile ministers and the anti-rail lobby, railways had to compete against other forms of transport, often at a disadvantage.

*Joe Barr, 72 Kings Road, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG1 5JR*

## Personal timetables please

Although the BR timetable is comprehensive, a useful service could be where one could order a personalised timetable between two or more stations, for example Norbury - Purley. Norbury is on Network SouthEast's table 36 and Purley is on table 42. But if people could order

personalised timetables, then all the trains between the two stations could be on one sheet. This would encourage greater use of the trains.

With all timetables on computer, it would not be that difficult. People could pay the booking office staff and the personal timetable could be posted direct to the customer.

*S G Aselford, 6 Rodern Gardens, Croydon CRO 2DQ*

## Commuter ticket plea

BR should introduce a commuter ticket which would be valid from any station in outer London (or even outside Greater London) to any one specified station in central London. The cost could be based on five times the cost of a day return ticket, less 25 per cent and with a seven-day validity as a bonus.

This could attract many motorists back to rail for journeys to work. At the same time, there could be a review of car parking facilities at outer London stations.

*Brian Druce, 141 Convent Way, Heston, Southall, Middx UB2 5UF*

## Opposition is essential

I find the gist of Mr T L Davis's letter (Railwatch 55) that members should not mix their ferocious ardour with politics is absolutely naive.

RDS would take the same stand as it does now if it were the Labour Party hell bent to destroy the railways. We are surely against such an eventuality coming from any government of whatever complexion.

The truth is however that this Government wishes for reasons of dogma to get anything and everything off the back of the public purse simply to enhance its tax-lowering record and thereby improve its attraction as a party to vote for.

If we invert Mr MacGregor's frequent assertion that less than 10 per cent of freight and passengers go by rail, he is also saying in effect that the road industry has only 90 per cent of surface movements in its grasp.

The road industry is out to get that final 10 per cent, to give it 100 per cent in its pocket.

Almost all Tory MPs are board members of financial trusts etcetera, money lenders in other words.

Money is to be made out of the road industry far more easily and quickly than investment in the railways. Money is lent on everything from AA membership to zebra crossings so the volume is incredible.

Any policy that puts railways at an advantage over roads is doomed to failure. The dice will remain loaded against the railways so that short term get-rich-quick desires will triumph over more important environmental matters. The money-making fraternity does not care about that.

Moving freight from road to rail is in the interests of the environment but what do we see? The cheapest possible route is devised for the Channel Tunnel fast link while no expense is spared at the same time to put in an eight-lane motorway to the Channel Tunnel.

The money lenders will make a fortune out of that regardless of the pollution it will bring, the impact on people living next to it and the deaths and injuries that will arise from the cowboy use of it. A government that ignores the public well-being deserves opposition.

*G S J Lankenau, Minafon Number two, Rhos-y-Gwaliau, Bala, Gwynedd, Wales LL23 3EY*

**Editor's note: Letters may have to be shortened for publication. Writers are requested to give both their first and surnames.**

## Envelope re-use labels

RDS envelope re-use labels are available with the slogan: For Cleaner Air, Go by Rail.

£1.80 per 100 post free from RDS Sales, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN. Cheques payable to Railway Development Society.

## Cock-eyed

Three current examples of the cock-eyed way in which our rail network is funded and administered:

1 The Cotswold line: New three-car Turbo trains introduced from 17 May but they can't stop at four stations which have platforms long enough for only two-car trains. BR does not have money to extend the platforms, so the service at Combe, Finstock, Ascott-under-Wychwood and Shipton stations is cut to one Sprinter each way daily.

2 Tilbury Riverside: Direct rail link to ferry closed down in November. Now it rusts away, replaced by a minibus shuttling to and fro between the pier and Tilbury Town (for how long, one wonders). Ferry usage is reported down by half since the railways closed so how long will that last? Similar story about to be repeated at Dover Western Docks.

3 Barking-Gospel Oak: Currently worked by unreliable, wheezing diesel multiple units pensioned off from other lines. BR plans to electrify and upgrade the route but these plans have had to be shelved because of the recession.

One of these days, maybe our Government will realise that this is no way to fund a public transport system, and will follow the rest of Europe in giving rail the investment and resources it desperately needs instead of wasting time on irrelevancies like the privatisation plans. How much of the network will be left by the time they wake up?

Graham Larkbey, 61 Hornsey Lane Gardens, London N6

## Inspiration needed

I am encouraged that the Welsh Office is actively considering a body to oversee transport provision in South Wales.

We need a comprehensive transport strategy controlled by a transport authority within Wales if substantial areas are not to be deprived of effectively co-ordinated public transport. I fully support the idea of establishing a Welsh Passenger Transport Authority which the Secretary of State for Wales is empowered (under CMND 3930) to create for all or any part of Wales.

Priority must be given to electrification of our main lines in Wales with direct lines to the Channel Tunnel. I am encouraged that a joint bid for electrification of the Great Western routes to both Fishguard and Penzance will be launched at a meeting this month of the Standing Conference on Regional Policy in South Wales and the Somerset-based South West of England equivalent.

Cardiff Wales airport could become the main air/rail gateway to Wales - with services on the Vale of Glamorgan line.

The redundant Neath and Brecon line could be restored with limited passenger services from Neath to Penwyllt (Craig-y-Nos) station as part of an ambitious plan to bring tourists to the area. This scenic line with intermediate stations/halts at Pensecyner (wildlife park) Cefn Coed (colliery museum), Crynant (Henrhyd waterfalls), Coelbren and Penwyllt station with the Prima Donna restored private waiting room, together with visits to Dan yr Ogof show caves and Craig-y-Nos castle.

All this could ameliorate the advance of unemployment caused by our heavy traditional industries falling into decline.

We must be more inspiring by revitalising these older industrial regions.

Mervyn Matthews, Welsh Railways Action Group, 6 Mill Park, Conbridge, South Glamorgan, CF7 7BG

# Robert Adley - a railway champion

Robert Adley, a self confessed railway fanatic and an outspoken critic of the Government's rail privatisation plans, died in a London hospital on 13 May, following a heart attack.

The Conservative MP for Christchurch once described railways as "the last civilised means of transport known to man" and rail privatisation "a poll tax on wheels."

Born in London in 1934, his father Harry was involved in the early days of the Pearl and Dean advertising company. He was a hotelier and Lloyd's underwriter before winning a seat on Slough council. In 1966 he contested the solidly Labour seat of Birkenhead before entering Parliament by winning Bristol North East in 1970.

On boundary reorganisation in 1974, he took Christchurch and Lymington, and retained his seat for Christchurch by a majority of 23,015 at the last election, the third safest Conservative seat.

Adley, married in 1961 to Jane Pople, was never afraid to speak his mind, and often courted controversy. He was against the poll tax, bus deregulation and once accused Sir Michael Edwards, then running British Leyland, of "bullying tactics" towards the workforce.

He was not ashamed to admit his mistakes or change his views. He was a supporter of Margaret Thatcher's bid for the Conservative party leadership in the '70s, but his last words to describe her were "a fishwife from Finchley."

In 1968, he supported Enoch Powell on immigration. But in 1985, on returning from a visit to South Africa as a guest of the authorities, he became a strong critic of apartheid, asking the Thatcher government to support the "legitimate views" of the black majority, and later calling for talks with the African National Congress.

But he will be remembered mostly for his love and knowledge of railways. He admitted that he once diverted an entire parliamentary delegation in China to view a steam engine. And, at one select committee hearing, a company boss said he would order his train drivers to drive faster, to which Adley responded: "And overtake the one in front?"

He has been a vice president of RDS since it was founded 15 years ago, was chairman of the Conservative Transport Committee from 1991-93 and became chairman of the Select Committee on Transport, charged with reporting on the Government's railway privatisation plans, in 1992. Transport Secretary John MacGregor, who clashed regularly with Adley over privatisation, said: "He fought the causes he believed in with great passion."

Prime Minister John Major said: "Robert Adley was a man of principle who was never afraid to speak his mind. He was persistent in championing the causes in which he believed. He was independent, brave and forthright. He fought ferociously for his constituency and Parliament will be poorer without him."

Labour transport spokesman Brian Wilson added: "He was a man of great courage and integrity with a tremendous passion for railways."

The loss of such a railway supporter in the Government ranks was highlighted by Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown: "He will be sorely missed by those who believe that a modern Britain must have an efficient and effective railway system."

BR chairman Sir Bob Reid added: "He combined his passion with a vision of the contribution a modern railway can make to the nation's quality of life."

His enthusiasm lives on in books such as *British Steam in Cameracolor 1962-68*, *In Search Of Steam*, *The Call Of Steam*, *In Praise Of Steam*, and *Wheels, Out Of Steam*, published in 1990, was his treatise on railway expansion, while his final book, *Countdown to 1968* on the last days of steam, will be published in July.

He is survived by his wife and two sons.

Another RDS vice president, Liberal Democrat Lord Ross of Newport, died on 10 May, aged 66.

The former Isle of Wight MP had been an RDS vice president for eight years.

One of his first roles in the society was presenting an anti-Serpell petition to No. 10 Downing Street in 1983.

He was a keen supporter of the Channel Tunnel and, since moving to Knucklas, near Knighton, Powys, he joined the Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association in their battle to safeguard the Shrewsbury to Swansea rail service, even manning the refreshment trolley in an effort to attract more passengers.

Steven Ross was educated at Bedford School and joined the Royal Navy in 1944, serving four years on the lower deck where his interest in politics was founded.

He worked for his uncle's auctioneering firm in Kidderminster on demobilisation, and qualified as a chartered surveyor, moving to the Isle of Wight in 1953.

After joining the Liberal party in 1961, he came third in the 1966 election, but gained a seat on the local council a year later.

He failed in his bid for Parliament again in 1970 and was only persuaded to stand in 1974 after receiving assurances of more help . . . and overturned a Tory majority of 17,326 to win by more than 7,000.

Ross, who was his party's spokesman on transport throughout his Westminster career and called for a coalition with Labour soon after his election, suffered a reduced majority in 1979, but increased it to 3,503 in 1983 when Virginia Bottomley was his opponent and odds-on favourite to regain the seat for the Conservatives.

He had resigned his council seat on becoming an MP, but returned to local office in 1981, saying he could achieve more there than at Westminster. He retired from the Commons in 1987 and became a life peer soon after.

He suffered from health problems throughout his parliamentary career, receiving treatment for cancer, having a heart bypass operation in 1982 and further heart surgery last year.

He is survived by his wife of 44 years, Brenda Hughes and their two sons and two daughters.

## The slow link

The Government gave yet another "go-ahead" for a rail project in March – the £2.5 billion high speed link from the Channel Tunnel to London. But as ever the go-ahead raised even more questions than it answered.

The future of a big redevelopment at King's Cross is in doubt with the appearance of St Pancras as the Government's favourite option for the terminal.

The Government has though promised "substantial public sector support" for a joint venture between the public and private sectors led by Union Railways. But it is also talking about "transferring the project to the private sector".

There is a series public consultations organised by Union Railways throughout the summer.

The Labour-controlled London Borough of Hackney is opposed to the scheme. It is particularly worried by the road traffic congestion likely to be caused by an international station at Stratford. But the Government has paid scant attention to Hackney's problems in the past. It is one of the poorest areas of Britain with few friends in high places.

Union Railways is making great play of the advantage of the link in reducing congestion on Kent's existing lines and in the possibilities for new inter-regional services, especially in conjunction with CrossRail.

Meanwhile the French were laughing at Britain's puny performance when the TGV Nord from Paris to Lille opened in May. The complete line from Paris to Calais will be ready BEFORE the Channel Tunnel opens.

The French also gave the go-ahead (a real go-ahead) to the £2.3 billion TGV Est from Paris to Reims, Metz and Strasbourg. The Government will provide £415 million, the regions £415 million and the European Community £300 million.

\* The British Government announced that work will start on Ashford International station in October.

"Bids are being sought from the private sector to finance and construct the station in return for the right to raise revenues such as parking fee and receive a payment from the international train operator based on the number of passengers using the station," according to the Department of Transport.

**A personal view from Malcolm Goodall:** I was very disappointed to see the Union Rail plans for a high-speed link. It demonstrates all the worst characteristics of a classic British compromise; it's neither cheap nor effective. It will give a minimal improvement in journey times to the Waterloo terminal, and fails to deliver commuters to either the West End or the City (unless CrossRail gets built, but existing Liverpool Street services would saturate this route anyway). The amount of tunnelling required from Barking is equal to that needed by the previously-planned southern approach; the slightly cheaper St Pancras terminal option has all trains describing an arc around London, only to end up facing the wrong way for travel further north. Associated developments along the Thames estuary are likely to be environmentally damaging, and flood-prone.

As an interim measure, why not build the Ashford International-Medway bridge section first, coupled with Thameslink improvements and the King's Cross low level station? This would give extra Network SouthEast capacity across the Thames (especially if that short-sighted twin-track bottleneck at St Paul's were widened), and allow Eurotunnel direct through running to the north. NSE could offer commuters a range of destinations in central London, including interchange with a Blackfriars station on the underutilised Waterloo and City line (how much longer do we have to wait before it's extended to Liverpool Street to form another cross-London route?)

Don't say it can't be done. Infilling of the 'missing link' from Medway to King's Cross could proceed in stages, as motorways do. And, of course, to give our railways a future, all new lines should be constructed to a generous UIC loading gauge, and not restricted to the penny-pinching dimensions perpetrated in present "improvements".

# Light at end of

## Ashford 93

RDS annual meeting 1 May

following year with daytime through services to the British regions, probably in 1996.

He said that although 70 per cent of customers are expected to be British, 70 per cent of Eurotunnel's shareholders are French.

The shuttle trains, the largest passenger rolling stock in the world, will run every 15 minutes in peak periods.

Car passengers will be able to stay in the vehicles if they want to but lorry drivers, carried in separate shuttle trains, will have to leave their vehicles and travel in a club car based on an Italian Railways first class coach.

The Brush shuttle locomotives were due to go to Czechoslovakia for testing before they went into service in the tunnel.

The Eurostar trains which will operate the through passenger services have begun to emerge from the GEC-Alsthom factory at Belfort in France and were being tested. They will be able to operate on four different

The passenger railway service through the Channel Tunnel will be a great success when it starts next year, the Railway Development Society's annual meeting was told.

But Eurotunnel's commercial director Christopher Garnett conceded that there were worries about the freight side.

On the passenger side, he said that a three-hour train journey to Paris would always beat a competing one-hour service by air.

The passenger would be able to settle back into a train seat at London and arrive refreshed in Paris after being able to read, work or chat.

By comparison, he described a typical journey by air, being hustled along and rarely being given an unbroken half hour of peace.

He described how the tunnel had a capacity to accept a train travelling at 90 miles per hour every three minutes.

"We are not thinking of building a second tunnel yet," he joked.

It was hoped that passenger trains would be running in the first half of next year, if the dispute with the builders could be resolved.

Night services from Edinburgh, Glasgow, South Wales and Cornwall would begin the

# Beware the railway ass

Asset strippers and privateers should not be allowed to plunder the rail system, RDS chairman Steve Wilkinson told the annual meeting.

He warned that the sell-off was under way with Transmark – BR's international consultancy – being sold for only £5 million to Halcrow.

Mr Wilkinson questioned whether that was an adequate price for a company which made £1.2 million profit last year on a turnover of £10 million.

Uncertainty about the future of rail arising from the privatisation proposals has led the Private Wagon Federation and the Railway Industry Association to warn the Government that there is little work on the order books after the end of 1993.

Powell Duffryn Standard had already closed its Cardiff factory and Hunslet Barclay has made 126 workers at Kilmarnock redundant with the threat of more economies to come. Mr Wilkin-

son said a determined drive is needed to stimulate the rail businesses.

He warned that cuts and fare increases leave fewer and fewer people paying higher and higher infrastructure costs.

He said that now even many peak hour services had spare capacity while railcard restriction remained.

He warned that an intimidating environment has been created, especially for the occasional traveller.

Fares and station car parking charges have gone up, stations have been "de-staffed", barrier checks and on-train staff have been withdrawn. Penalty fares schemes and "ordin" passes have been introduced.

Hundreds of people meanwhile are getting free travel because no-one is checking tickets on trains. And the recession is still a problem. At Northampton just before Christmas, 600 season-

# Women helping to take your s

The new national executive will have two women members following the vote at the annual meeting of the society in Ashford on 1 May.

Shirley Dex who describes herself as a frequent traveller throughout Britain for both work and pleasure, will join Elisabeth Jordan on the executive. Shirley who was born in Burnley and is a graduate of Durham University, has spent most of her career in educational administration in Manchester and Cambridge. She is also a member of the Church of England General Synod.

Shirley received 63 votes in the election. The other national executive members are Peter Wakefield, 69 votes, Mike Crowhurst, 68, Alan Bevan, 63, Trevor Jones, 61, Peter Lawrence, 58, Don MacPhee, 50, Malcolm Goodall, 50, Simon Martin, 44 and Ian Murray, 40. The

three unsuccessful candidates were Dave Sclery, Chris Holtby and Malcolm Corway who was thanked by chairman Steve Wilkinson for his previous work on the executive.

Elected unopposed were chairman Steve Wilkinson, vice-chairman Ray King, general secretary Trevor Garrod, treasurer David Birch, membership secretary Elisabeth Jordan and sales officer Alan Harwood.

Frank Hastlow is retiring as members' secretary and is replaced by Elisabeth Jordan

RDS membership is now over 2,900, nearly three times higher than it was 10 years ago. With your help, we could push it over the 3,000 mark. Please do all you can to recruit a friend.

During the last six months, RDS has had 100 play adverts in Scotland on Sunday, 100 in the Guardian, Independent on Sunday, Daily T

# tunnel

voltages. He compared the different approaches in France and Britain.

In Lille, mixed public and private sector funding was creating massive new infrastructure, including a station which would give cross-platform changes on to high-speed rail services throughout Europe.

In Britain, 1956 BR Mk 1 trains were still operating most Kent services and Ashford was still waiting for its international station. The fast link to London was still a line on a map.

Sir Alastair Morton, who was unable to attend the conference, has called for an overall strategic plan for British transport to fit within the European framework.

He also urges that road and rail are treated equally, for charging users, investment, safety and choice.

He says that privatisation must help the process of opening both public and private finance to be used in infrastructure investment. And he warns: "The railways must be nurtured and encouraged during this interim period, rather than decimated."

The provisional date for the official opening of the Channel Tunnel is 6 May 1994.

# et strippers

tickets were cashed in before expiry by people who had lost their jobs.

The Government's privatisation proposals were dismissed as "despicable" by steam photographer Colin Garratt who presented the audio visual show Britain's railways at the society's annual meeting.

He claimed the plans were bordering on treason and were "absolutely disgraceful" and would be an unmitigated disaster.

**JOB:** A report compiled for York city council has also warned that the town could lose 3,800 jobs as a result of rail privatisation.

A report by York University suggests that 15 non-rail jobs would disappear as a result of every 100 rail jobs lost.

"We are talking about hoteliers, shopkeepers, double-glazing salesmen and hairdressers," said the city's MP Hugh Bayley.

# ciety forward

graph and Mail on Sunday as well as the Brighton Evening Argus, Eastern Daily Press and Newbury Weekly News.

These have cost us £4,500 of which about £600 was donated by members in November. Over 1,000 replies have been received. Welcome to all the new members who have joined as a result of this advertising. It will continue as resources permit.

**Reminder:** Please remember to return tickets or the society's reopenings draw. Send them as soon as possible to Reg Snow, 48 The Park, Great Bookham, Leatherhead, Surrey KT23 1LS and certainly no later than 24 July.

**Passenger falls from train doors** - Report of a health and Safety Executive investigation is available from HMSO £7.50.

SBN 0 11 882125 3.

## LOCAL ACTION

### Severnside

The final report of the Strategic Avon Rail Study states that, if accepted, Avon County Council should:

1 Start talks with Regional Railways to reserve paths for the future.

2 Start talks with InterCity and the Ministry of Defence for new peak-hour trains in 1995 between London and the proposed new Filton South station for 1,000 employees. The existing Filton station's future may have to be reviewed.

3 Seek to acquire diesel multiple units from Regional Railways, new class 157 Sprinters or new class 144 Pacers - for either purchase or lease.

4 Seek expert advice in preparing to apply for a section 56 grant.

By the completion of phase three in 1999, 12 new units will be needed to operate as follows:

Two trains hourly between Bathampton and Filton South, with one an hour from Chippenham to Gloucester.

Three trains an hour from Weston-super-Mare to Bristol Temple Meads with at least one an hour extended to Filton South. Some Weymouth trains may be extended to Filton South using Filton West junction line for reversal.

There may be more frequent InterCity trains from South Wales and Bristol Temple Meads to London.

Reopening of Ashley Hill station has been approved but Horfield is no longer being considered.

Bristol Development Corporation's plans to reopen St Anne's Park have been shelved because of signalling inadequacies.

Restoration of Marsh Junction to Brislington and Whitchurch has been deemed too expensive because of houses blocking the route. This route had been a major feature of the original Avon Metro plan.

If commercial aircraft are permitted to use Filton in the near future, reopening North Filton station - which adjoins the airfield - will become a priority.

*Eric Barbary*

### Lincolnshire

**Shabby treatment:** Steel imports through Boston docks ceased going on rail in January. There had been trains most nights loaded to 20 wagons but alas all has now been decanted to road with the resultant calls for expensive road programmes in the Boston and Grantham areas. Consultants suggest the importer was already being overcharged by BR even before it jacked up the price again AND demanded increases in tonnage. The pro-rail importers were obviously not able to guarantee that in a recession. It is difficult to see how freight customers, however loyal to rail, would return, even with new section 8 grants, having been treated so shabbily.

**Showtime:** The branch will have a stall at Grantham Rail Show pointing out the advantages of line and station reopenings. The show will be at Central School on 10 and 11 July.

**Out of line:** Paul Jowett has been surveying council tourist leaflets since 1991 and has found some of them poor when it comes to rail or public transport information. Many even omit rail lines from maps. He has written to most district councils and Lincolnshire County Council to urge improvements.

**Joint action:** The Doncaster-Spalding-Peterborough line is to have a new hourly service using class 153 Sprinters following an agreement between Regional Railways and Lincolnshire County Council last year. The Sleaford-Spalding section will be resignalled, and have newly automated level crossings as well as two new stations at Pinchbeck and Donington. Plans for this section to be singled have thankfully been abandoned. If they had been imple-

mented, there would have been no passing loops, no scope for any additional trains, and enormous potential for disruption from any late running.

**Diversion:** Trackwork on the East Coast main line at Easter meant that trains were diverted via Stamford, Syston and Erewash Valley.

**Tune in:** A very good railway programme which has featured RDS is broadcast on the first Tuesday of each month on BBC Radio Lincolnshire.

**Specials:** Regional Railways is now co-operating with Crowle Village Hall, near Scunthorpe, to provide excursion trains. The 1993 programme includes trains from Scunthorpe and Crowle over the Settle-Carlisle line, to the Severn Valley Railway, to Coventry and Worcester, to the North York Moors Railway, to Manchester and to Norwich and the Broads. For full details, send an SAE to Brian Hastings, 312 Wharf Road, Ealand, Scunthorpe, South Humberside DN17 4JW.

**Freight:** The branch line to Roxby Gullet, near Scunthorpe, is being relaid to enable two bulk trains a day of waste from Immingham to be dumped in a former iron ore quarry. At least 40 lorries a day will be kept off the roads.

**Marketing:** The county council and Regional Railways have agreed to improve the marketing of Lincolnshire's railways, particularly the Skegness line because of its importance to tourism and the economic future of the area.

**Cuts:** The May timetable saw the 0559 train from Spalding to Peterborough withdrawn. The county council is providing a minibus as a substitute on a trial basis so as to maintain the early morning link to London and pending talks with Regional to reinstate the train.

**People needed:** The county council has persuaded Regional to review its staffing levels in the wake of recent cuts.

**Steam:** The reintroduction of steam-hauled charters to Skegness assisted by the South East Lincs Travellers Association seems to have been a great success.

**Seaside specials:** Great efforts are going into promoting trains to Skegness which boasts a half-hourly service. There are trains every hour from Grantham and from Nottingham, plus through trains with reserved seats from Birmingham, Crewe, Derby, Leicester and Sheffield via Nottingham.

**Rumour:** Uncertainty caused by the Government's privatisation plans brings rumour which helps no-one. Clarification was sought about reports of early and late trains being cut along with the winter Sunday service into Skegness which had proved valuable to the resort and is well used, particularly at October school half term, weekends and at Christmas and New Year, to such an extent that on occasions buses had to be run to relieve overcrowding.

*Paul Jowett*

## Birdwatching by Train

A new 128-page guide to finding birds with the help of trains is now available. The book by A & N Harris costs £6.70 post free (not £9 as stated in the last *Railwatch*).

It is available from RDS sales officer Alan Harwood, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN. Make cheques payable to RDS.

## Scotland

**Media:** The battle has intensified against the Government's privatisation proposals which will break up our railways. RDS took part in the Scottish TUC's Save Our Railways campaign. We have had letters in at least a dozen newspapers in Scotland urging people to join us in the fight.

**Legal tangle:** The Sheriff conducting the Newton rail crash fatal accident inquiry criticised the track layout and accepted that the driver had driven through a red signal. ScotRail, accepting responsibility for all aspects of running the railway, has already paid out compensation. It raises the question of what would happen under privatisation. Railtrack would try to blame the operator and vice versa. An injured passenger might have to sue both, with the likelihood of years of litigation.

**Heavy haulage:** The branch has told a public inquiry that barytes from a mine near Aberfeldy, Perthshire, should be transported on the Highland line to Aberdeen for export. We have questioned whether it is possible adequately to police lorry movements.

*Douglas Smart*

The consortium of local authorities which now owns Prestwick airport is assembling a £2 million package to provide a new airport railway station in May next year. Air travellers will also be given free rail travel throughout Scotland on the day of their arrival and departure.

## East Anglia

**Suffolk Rail Strategy:** The first stage of a strategic rail plan for Suffolk has been published by the county council. The report is a "shopping list" of possible improvements to passenger services along with the estimated increase in traffic which would result. A second stage will consider a number of schemes which show the greatest potential. These are:

\* Increased frequencies on the Ipswich-Lowestoft and Ipswich-Cambridge lines.

\* Electrification of Ipswich-Felixstowe and Ipswich-Cambridge lines.

\* New stations at Felixstowe Dock, Bramford, Great Comard, Leiston, Moreton Hall (part of Bury St Edmunds) and a Parkway station south of Ipswich.

The East Anglian Branch has welcomed the report, especially as many of the proposals appear in its Rail Strategy for East Anglia.

**RDS objection forces Government to reconsider road scheme:** The branch, along with Transport 2000 and many others, objected to plans for the A428 Bedford southern bypass as the route would cut across the trackbed of the Bedford to Sandy railway. RDS considers that it is essential to protect this route if the prospect of an East-West rail link is to become reality. The Department of Transport stated that since BR was not interested in reopening the line it could not justify providing a bridge over the trackbed. The RDS response was to point out the department itself claimed that after privatisation there would be many firms wanting to operate new

services. Bedford-Sandy perhaps? Following the objections, the department has now put forward an alternative scheme which includes a bridge over the former railway. This will be suggested at the inquiry. The result should be known later this year.

*Nick Dibben*

**Let's talk trains:** RDS members were guests for a trip from Ipswich to Lowestoft, Yarmouth and Cromer when a new class 153 Sprinter train was introduced to the area on 5 April.

Trevor Garrod, Albert Godfrey, Charles Taylor and James Apsey were glad to take part in what was essentially a BR public relations exercise, to promote their newest trains which are appearing on local services throughout East Anglia.

But the RDS members also took advantage of the opportunity to discuss rail issues with managers, councillors and media people.

However as Trevor pointed out in a TV interview on the train, there are not enough of the new Sprinters for all the business on offer.

So while there is a welcome increase in evening peak trains from Ipswich to Lowestoft, this has to be balanced against an unwelcome cut in peak services between Norwich and Sheringham.

**Half way there:** Lowestoft station refurbishment is now complete. Passengers arriving at the most easterly point in the BR network are now confronted by an attractive shelter where the rather gloomy concourse used to be.

The booking hall and waiting room is much brighter and BR has backed down from earlier threats to lock this up in the evening. Provided there is no vandalism, it will remain open.

Local managers have described the recently completed work as stage one and so local campaigners are now drawing up a list of suggestions for stage two which includes toilets and more cover for passengers.

*Trevor Garrod*

## London and Home Counties

**Kent cuts:** The May timetable cut Kent Link Sunday trains from a half-hourly to an hourly service. Late evening services were also curtailed with London-bound suburban services generally leaving before 2200 and outbound trains generally leaving Charing Cross before 2300. The last London-bound train from Dartford on a Sunday leaves at 2132 while the last train to Dartford leaves Charing Cross at 2232.

The cuts represent a dangerous trend. Kent Link services have tended to be among the best patronised Network Southeast suburban services south of the Thames. Late trains were similarly cut in 1981 when the 2330 was the last train from Charing Cross. It took two years to get these cuts reversed.

**Clash of interests:** These cuts could well be part of the softening-up process which will be taking place before the 1994 timetable in order to make these services attractive to potential franchisees. It is evident that what will be attractive to franchisees will not be attractive to customers. So much for quality and the Passenger's Charter. The branch is making strenuous efforts to secure the reinstatement of late evening trains on the Kent Link Sunday services.

*Howard Thomas*

## North West

**John says yes:** Following the closure hearing held in Morecambe in October 1992 at which the branch gave evidence, the Transport Users Consultative Committee for North West England recommended closure and relocation of Morecambe station. This recommendation was

subject to a number of sensible conditions which included: 1 Extended platforms for excursions; 2 Adequate covered waiting and toilet facilities; 3 No reduction in staffing levels; 4 Increased capacity on the line to Morecambe and the Heysham branch; 5 Consideration of electrification and other service improvements.

Unfortunately Secretary of State John MacGregor chose to ignore the committee's recommendations and gave unconditional consent to the closure. It is disturbing Mr MacGregor chose to disregard completely the advice of a TUCC and it does not bode well for the future. So much for the Passenger's Charter.

**Hidden assets:** The branch also objected to the proposed closure of Ditton station on the Liverpool-Crewe line. A strong case was put forward by us and our affiliated member, the North Cheshire Rail Users Group at the hearing held in Widnes. We were encouraged by the support of Halton Borough and Cheshire County Councils with the latter stating that if a station did not exist on the site, it would consider building one. The station has suffered a complete lack of publicity for many years with local residents under the impression that it was already closed! The service has been peak-hour only since 1978 - surely a case of closure by stealth. At present the North West TUCC's report on the closure is awaited and we very much hope it will recommend retention of the station.

**Enforced holiday:** News that many lines in the North West are subject to a maintenance "holiday" with only essential work carried out is causing much concern among users. Such action can only lead to a slower, less reliable railway. It questions the long-term future of a number of routes, notably Camforth to Skipton, and sets an unfortunate precedent for Railtrack.

**On offer:** The branch's Rail Strategy for the North West is now available at the reduced rate of £1.80 post free. Send cheque payable to RDS to me at 37 Houghton Street, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 1QW

*Robert Cummings*

## Wales

**Slimming down:** Loco-hauled trains will cease on the Cambrian Coast line in October when the summer Saturday service between Birmingham and Pwllheli ceases running. To save on costs, BR will reduce the route to Sprinter-only operation. Next summer, the Pwllheli working will be a six-car Sprinter instead of the eight-coach train now hauled by two 31 class diesel locomotives.

**Takeover bid:** The Conwy Valley line has an improved service this summer with better connections. The Ffestiniog Railway has opened negotiations with the Department of Transport to see if it is possible to obtain the franchise for the route following privatisation.

**Oily roads:** Shell's Aberystwyth-Stanlow oil trains stopped running at the end of April despite widespread opposition, particularly in mid Wales.

**Hearty congratulations:** The Heart of Wales line celebrates 125 years as a through route this summer. A special exhibition is being held in Llandrindod during the Victorian week in August. The special Heart of Wales Rambler service will run again from 18 July to 26 September. A connecting bus service will be provided from Llandrindod Wells to the Elan Valley. A free walk booklet will be given to all passengers. Details of the trains which run from both Swansea and Shrewsbury from Chris Magner (tel: 0746 761124). Support for this service is vital as the route has been badly hit by the recession. To make matters worse, speed

## Life Beyond Cars

A new booklet published to coincide with Green Transport Week explains how your lifestyle does not have to be dominated by the infernal combustion engine machine.

£2.45 post free from Alan Harwood, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx. Make cheques payable to RDS.



# Hello, Minister

restrictions imposed because of Department of Transport rulings on unguarded crossings resulted in the loss of the line's last train connection at Llanelli on to the Paddington to Milford Haven InterCity 125 service.

**Spurred into action:** This summer could be the last for the Llandudno-Liverpool Saturdays-only service as BR wants to close the Frodsham junction to Halton junction spur line. The North Cheshire Rail Users Group is urging every possible use of the trains as it is fighting to keep the line open and campaigning for a Liverpool-Llandudno express service.

*Chris Magner*

**Coasting along:** Punctuality and reliability of the 156 and 158 trains have been impressive on the North Wales coast line and have helped boost patronage and revenue. The May timetable saw trains from Llandudno going into Manchester Oxford Road giving better connections into Regional Railways cross-country services. May also saw the introduction of class 37 diesel loco-hauled boat trains, the Irish Mancunian from Manchester Victoria and the Emerald Isle Express from Birmingham International.

InterCity has changed its services, with no early morning boat train to London. But the Pullman is retimed to leave Holyhead at 0524, doing two trips to London, and clocking up over 1,000 miles a day.

Chester General station is being refurbished, with a new booking office on the concourse which is being retiled. The buffet will become a French style cafe and the old booking office will be a walk-through bookshop.

The Hooton-Chester electrification is on schedule for an October opening with the third rail laid half way to Chester by the beginning of May.

**Yellow warning:** Failure of 153s has affected services on the Wrexham-Bidston line, so much so that in one week, it saw heritage units and classes 142, 153, 150/1 and 156. Class 60s now haul the steel coil trains from South Wales. We have protested to MPs that the line has slipped into the yellow zone - being given no maintenance. BR chairman Sir Bob Reid assures us that there are no plans for closure at present and a feasibility study is under way on the possible electrification to a new station at Prenton/Woodchurch.

The introduction of 158s on the Chester-Shrewsbury line has seen patronage and revenue go up, despite the reversion to a two-hourly service. Unfortunately the last train from Shrewsbury terminates at Gobowen so Clwyd County Council provides a bus to Wrexham. The first train of the day starts from Wrexham and

travels empty stock from Shrewsbury. Not very good planning.

**Freight:** There is great concern over the transfer of traffic to roads. Ocel is proposing to axe the tank trains between Amble and Ellesmere Port, with the result that highly toxic liquid chlorine and ethylene dibromide will be travelling by road. Ocel's transport manager attempted to play down the switch by saying that the railway ran through the middle of towns while the A55 is supposed to avoid them. He also said the rail tanks were at risk of damage while parked in the freight yard at Llandudno Junction. A few days later, a road tanker on the M56 crashed on to the West Coast main line at Preston Brook.

*Rod Fairley*

Fears of maintenance and service cuts abound in South Wales amid the Government's privatisation plans.

A survey is to be conducted to test the idea of reopening St Clears station, nine miles west of Carmarthen.

North Pembroke MP Cynog Dafis is enlisting the support of the West Wales Taskforce to help with a survey into the proposed reopening of Fishguard and Goodwick station.

Inadequate publicity led to problems when buses replaced trains between Haverfordwest and Milford Haven in March when there was engineering work on the line.

On the Pembroke-Tenby line, the level crossing gates which were operated manually by train crews have been replaced. This was probably the last piece of work before the emergencies-only maintenance regime was imposed.

Pembroke Rail Travellers Association is urging local authorities to adopt the positive Devon-style approach to publicising rail services.

West Wales services are attracting more people than expected by Regional Railways and the newly reopened Maesteg line has been a remarkable success.

Market research is being undertaken by South Glamorgan Council into reopening the Vale of Glamorgan line and the link to Cardiff airport. This project is now urgent because the local freight traffic is evaporating like butter in the sun.

Regional Railways is planning an initiative to boost off-peak travel on the Valley lines.

One of the features of the May timetable was a new Regional train from Milford Haven to Paddington which runs Monday to Thursday. It gives Cardiff residents the benefit of a late (0045) departure from Paddington, arriving in Cardiff at 0314.

*Guy Hardy*

An RDS delegation met Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman in April for an exchange of views about privatisation.

He saw the Railways Bill as a process towards partnership between the public and private sector and said there was no reason why rail services should not be provided by private firms.

Railtrack would not necessarily be required to obtain an eight per cent return on investment and it may be allowed to take both user and non-user benefits into account when considering rail schemes.

He said the Government would finance by grant the amount that is deemed to be for non-user benefit.

But he said the Government had taken on an immensely complicated "reform" but he said he wanted to make it a success.

He said he did not want to be a small footnote in a book written by one of our members as the man responsible for the destruction of the railways.

He insisted: "Our reforms will not lead to closures."

Asked about the chances of new services like Peterborough-Swindon ever appearing under privatisation, Mr Freeman said the franchising director would be able to subsidise new services but won't be a pushover. He will have limited funds.

But Mr Freeman remained silent when RDS president Michael Caton said the route was a national need and should have taxpayers money put into it.

Mr Freeman conceded there had been underinvestment in public transport for the past 30 years.

As someone who had Safeway loeries going past his front door, Mr Freeman said he wanted more freight on rail.

## Service saved

Attempts to wreck one of Regional Railways' most enterprising service initiatives to make way for second-rate privatisation proposals may have been thwarted by RDS.

The victim lined up for slaughter was the highly popular and useful Norwich to Liverpool Sprinter link which have been cut into two separate chunks more suitable for private operators.

Information reached RDS from various sources in February that the Department of Transport, and one civil servant in particular - whose name we have been given - was putting pressure on Regional Railways to cut the service from the May timetable.

The department wanted it replaced by shuttles from Nor-

wich to Peterborough and one or more shuttles west of Peterborough.

This would have prepared the network for piecemeal privatisation from May 1995 onwards.

Passengers would then have been decanted on to the already cramped platforms instead of enjoying the comfort and convenience of the through services from East Anglia to the North Midlands and the North West.

RDS immediately wrote to Transport Secretary John MacGregor and the local news media. Mr MacGregor did not have the grace to reply but one month later, and thanks to help from John Garrett, Labour MP for Norwich South, we finally received an answer Mr Freeman who said no pressure was being put on Regional Railways.

After further consultation with our sources, we are satisfied that suggestions to break up the network were indeed made in February but Regional Railways managers put up a robust defence of their achievements on the cross-country services.

The Minister's letter may therefore be interpreted as meaning that this destructive proposal has been nipped in the bud.

It illustrates yet again, the pressures on BR and that the price of retaining our rail network is eternal vigilance.

We say again: If we have a coherent rail network in five years time, it will be in spite of the Government - and because rail users have fought to maintain it.

**A fleet of luxury Jaguars and Rover Sterlings** is maintained for the use of Ministers at a cost of £50,000 per car, per year. Proposals to reorganise the car pool to save money were thrown out by the Cabinet in April.

A Police Federation spokesman reminded the Government in May: "You can't see every day problems from the back of a chauffeur-driven car."

## Summer offer

Save money with these packages.

*Package 1: Exploring Snowdonia by Rail and Foot PLUS Wales and the Marches by Rail £8.75*

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*Package 3: Who Should Run our Railways? PLUS Rail for the Future PLUS Bustration PLUS Fighting for Rail £5*

Order by 31 July 1993. All prices include post and packing. Make cheques payable to RDS.

Other books can be ordered through RDS. Send orders or an SAE for a list to Sales Officer, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN

# Devil in the detail

A 170-page report on rail privatisation is likely to be RDS vice-president Robert Adley's most lasting epitaph.

It was published the day after the MP for Christchurch was taken ill at the end of April.

Its lucid, knowledgeable and painstaking analysis of the present rail network and the likely effects of privatisation is in sharp contrast to the Government's woolly and half-baked offerings.

It identifies Railtrack as the body which will play a key role in the future and highlights the fact that it is not even mentioned in the Railways Bill!

Railtrack will be constrained by public sector financial rules just like BR and will be remote from its customers and subject to weak controls.

The report by the House of Commons Transport Committee - of which Mr Adley was chairman - will make it impossible for the Government to claim in future that it did not know what the effects of its privatisation policy would be.

The report warns that nowhere in the world is there an example of outright competition between rival passenger train operators sharing the same track.

It warns that the Government should continue to invest in the railways until the willingness of the private sector to do so on any significant scale is proven. The Government is currently cutting investment.

The Government is also urged to ensure that there is a satisfactory framework for planning investment projects. There is not.

It warns that the Government's scheme is novel, experimental and untested.

It warns that the onus is on the Government to prove its plans will provide a better service.

It warns that the Railways Bill is so vague that the Government should make its future intentions clear by specific amendments to the Bill.

The report calls for a clear period of evaluation of how successful the first franchisees are before a full scheme is implemented.

It urges that private railway companies should continue to be scrutinised by Parliament.

As the Railways Bill continues its way through Parliament, the committee plans to question the Regulator, the Director of Franchising and the Railtrack chairman on how they see their roles.

The committee also warns that current policies are driving freight on to the roads.

On franchising, the report warns that there must be strict service standards and controls over fares to protect passengers against the misuse of monopoly power.

The report exposes the Government's current policy which by keeping BR short of cash forces cuts in services so that in many instances franchisees will have to operate only a basic service. Franchises will be based on the 1994 timetable.

It says there must be arrangements for ensuring services continue if an operator defaults.

The committee warns that there must be more rigorous safeguards on franchising than have been offered so far.

It warns the Government to make more of an effort to preserve the present network benefits. Such matters as the universal availability of discounted fare schemes, cross-validity of tickets and the publication of a national timetable should be written into the Railways Bill.

The committee warns the Government AGAIN

**Sounds like a good idea doesn't it? Introduce private sector know-how and expertise into running the railways. But as the House of Commons Transport Committee reveals, the Government's privatisation plans run the risk of making matters much worse. The committee's report reveals the complexities of running British Rail, which is at last being recognised for some of its achievements over the past few years in the face of Government hostility and ill-informed criticism in the Press. It looks unlikely that private enterprise can do better except with the help of massive injections of public cash.**

that investment will be the key to whether the privatisation proposals succeed.

In the past, the Government's record has been appalling.

Despite its propaganda claims of record levels of investment, West Germany spent four times per capita more than Britain and France five times as much.

It calls on the Government to continue to fund renewals of rolling stock until it is clear the franchisees are ready to assume the responsibility.

Franchisees should be required to include in any bid an investment package which has been fully costed and linked to franchise length. Any bidder should co-operate with Railtrack to achieve major route modernisation, including electrification.

The Franchising Director should be under a legal duty to consult with rail user groups before choosing a franchisee.

The draft contract should also be available for public scrutiny.

The committee urges the Government to "give substance to its pledge" to provide funding for railway schemes which show a satisfactory cost-benefit return.

It urges the Government to co-ordinate coherent transport improvements across the country.

The committee also urges the Government to set a more realistic public service obligation grant if it wants to avoid service reductions and line closures. The committee notes the Department of Transport claims not to have a secret agenda to reduce the size of the rail network.

The committee urges that the Government's complex and unwieldy plans could be simplified by the merger of Railtrack and the Franchising Authority to form a single Rail Authority while maintaining the idea of an independent Regulator.

The Rail Authority could own the track and infrastructure, check operators' safety, give franchises where the operator can control despatching trains and day-to-day maintenance of track and signalling.

The authority could also maintain and co-ordinate network benefits, plan strategic investment, co-ordinate the timetable and allocate train paths and fix charges for freight operators and open access to passenger operators.

The Government does not appreciate or attempt to explain the role the railways should play in meeting general transport goals.

At present a question mark hangs over who will be responsible for conceiving, promoting and co-ordinating major new projects.

The committee warns that there is high risk of things going wrong with so many untested ideas and that the Government should proceed with caution.

It warns that Government hopes of cost savings may be unrealistic. Can it be cost effective to introduce a method of subsidy which entails payment of money by the Department of Transport to a public body (the Franchising Authority), for allocation to a private sector franchisee, to enable it to defray track charges imposed by a second public sector body (Railtrack)?

There will be at least six public sector bodies with a role in operating the new system: Railtrack, British Rail, the Regulator, the Franchising Authority, the Health and Safety Executive and the Department of Transport.

The Bill will prevent BR operating a service even if this is the cheapest option.

Public sector manpower will be increased by 300 posts as a result of the reorganisation.

Investment is vital if Britain's railways are to prosper but the committee is alarmed by the drop in non-Channel Tunnel investment by 55 per cent this year.

The prospect therefore is delays caused by signalling failures and speed restrictions imposed on worn-out track.

The report says it will be a miracle if there are not dramatic cuts in services and line closures if the Government's penny-pinching attitude continues.

The hiatus could also wipe out Britain's railway equipment industry, leading to the loss of tens of thousands of jobs in manufacturing.

Tourism could be badly hit by privatisation, if it means the end of the Britrail pass. British Rail International's foreign sales alone amount to £90 million. This could be wiped out completely unless the private operators agree to a similar pass.

Tourist areas will also suffer if discounted fares are not available nationally and the Government does not seem to appreciate this, even though it has been told so repeatedly.

The importance of railcards is not just for special interest groups. The report reveals that 80 per cent of BR passengers travel with some sort of discount.

Half of all rail journeys also already cross the boundaries of BR profit centres.

The committee warns that more grants may be diverted to private franchisees at the expense of socially useful lines which remain run by a dispirited BR.

Transport 2000 urged that if subsidies were to be subjected to periodic review, then cost-benefit analysis could be allowed.

The committee quotes Sir Peter Parker's warning: "It's a cat's cradle of contradictory commitments."

He also warned that the White Paper was a "railroad to hell paved with dangerous intentions."

Let's hope he is wrong.

# WESTMINSTER WATCH

## Tale of meanness

No full discussion of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link took place before the House adjourned for Easter. This was a tragedy, said *Andrew MacKinlay* (Labour, Thurrock) on **2 APRIL**, considering the achievement of the rail link under the Channel.

"The history of the matter is a sad tale of meanness, Government dogma, short-sightedness and political expediency. The UK would not only have a delayed London Channel link, it would not be the best either."

First, the southerly route was canvassed. It was the swiftest way from Dover to London and had logic.

However, the then Prime Minister laid down on tablets of stone that no public money should be available for the project. As a result, the Ministers who had to decide on the matter were caught between the choice of a cheap route which would cause enormous environmental damage in Kent and south-east London, or one that would have to be shifted because of the legitimate outrage of people whose homes, lives and businesses would be blighted or destroyed.

## An internal row

There was an internal political row in the Conservative party which decided that the swiftest and most logical route would not prevail. Instead a route to the east of London would have to be sought.

"I recognise that members of all parts of the House would champion the interests of their constituents in this manner. It would be hard to reach agreement on the best route. The Government had refused to test any of the route options at an independent inquiry. That is what should have happened," he said.

Mr MacKinlay added that after the Government's move to look for an easterly route, *Malcolm Rifkind* (then Transport Secretary), arriving at a Conservative party conference in October 1991, spoke "with much trumpeting" of an "historic" decision on the line of route.

Again everything changed "in a last-minute political pincer movement", largely because of the looming Gen-

eral Election. The new decision gave all the interested parties concerned — local authorities, residents, those promoting various Channel Tunnel projects — some certainty. There at last seemed to be a settlement of the issue, albeit inadequate.

## Major rethink

Some months later, keen newspaper readers discovered that the current President of the Board of Trade had managed to persuade the Cabinet that the route needed to be reviewed yet again! It emerged that a major rethink was underway.

It represented a betrayal by Ministers and the overturning of the former Secretary of State's decision — at enormous cost to the public and promoters of the Channel Tunnel projects.

The Public Transport Minister conceded that a further review of the route decided on was needed — "a local route variant within the broad route corridor".

On 22 March, Mr MacKinlay continued, the Government published a document, 'Channel Tunnel Rail Link. An Independent Review'. It was so independent, said Mr MacKinlay, that it was commissioned by the Department of Transport. It was clear that the profit motive had become the primary, not the secondary consideration.

The route would cross the Thames in a tunnel near Stoneness Point, pass beneath Thurrock power station and beneath the approach road to the Queen Elizabeth II bridge. In a breathtaking engineering exercise the line will come out of the ground and pass beneath the approach road to the bridge.

There would have to be one of the steepest rail gradients in Europe — 1 in 40. The wonderful fast trains will have to negotiate a massive hill on the way to London — "I suspect it is the product of the Government trying to rush the project for political reasons."

The line would then cross open land and later move in a westerly direction to merge with the London to Tilbury and Southend line.

What help would have to be given for those who are blighted, and when would Parliament be told how the

project was to be funded? The Channel Tunnel rail link needed to be in place as quickly as possible, and it needed to be the best. Clearly, there would be enormous congestion on our railway network in decades to come, because of the Government's failure to realise the needs of the tunnel project on its way to London, from where it would give continental access to the rest of the UK. Replying, London Transport Minister *Steven Norris* said that formal consultation with the authorities would take place over the next six months, and authorities would wish to comment further. For the Government simply to have published all the options without stating a preference would not have been progress — it would have been going backwards.

## End the blight

The Government wanted to take the project forward and put an end to the blight that is the real enemy of the public interest in these circumstances. They wanted to bring about the benefits that would come with the construction of the railway. The easterly route corridor was selected by the Government in 1991 because it had less environmental impact than other options and it could foster regeneration in the east Thames corridor.

"I remind the House," he added, "that there was general support for this choice. Mr MacKinlay was quoted in his local paper as saying that the scheme would ruin 'the quality of life' for thousands of his constituents. I remind him that no homes will need to be demolished in Thurrock."

It was right to consider such matters during the consultation period. Residents in the area would find that their concerns were met. The same was true of the industrial estate, the aim being to relocate any jobs displaced.

Mr MacKinlay had given the idea that the whole exercise had been conducted without reference to public interest or concern. That was a false premise.

What proposals are being considered for the privatisation of the Slough to Windsor railway branch line? asked *John Watts* (Conservative, Slough). In a written reply on **21 APRIL**, Public Transport Minister *Roger Freeman* said it was intended that all British Rail's passenger services

would be franchised to private sector companies, including the Slough to Windsor branch line.

An announcement would be made within a few months about the form in which the remaining parts of the passenger line network would be prepared for franchising. Plans for development of the land area known as the railway triangle at Slough, would not preclude a franchise for the Slough to Windsor line.

## Stock transfer

*Michael Alison* (Con, Selby) asked the Public Transport Minister what conclusions he had reached on the provision of rolling stock, following the privatisation of BR.

In a written reply on **29 APRIL**, Mr Freeman replied that he would ask BR to establish rolling stock companies and to transfer its existing passenger rolling stock by 1 April 1994. There should be three rolling stock companies. Detailed work was in hand to determine how the fleet should be divided between the companies.

The intention was to transfer the companies to the private sector as soon as practicable. A number of ideas had been put forward for the early involvement of private sector expertise and capital.

## Rail privatisation

What protection did the Transport Secretary give to private passenger train franchise operators from take-overs, asked *Gwyneth Dumwoody* (Lab, Crewe & Nantwich) on **18 MAY**.

Public Transport minister *Roger Freeman* replied that the intention was that the franchising director would assess the suitability of bidders to become franchisees. The director would include terms in the franchise agreement that any change of ownership would require his consent.

Decisions about whether to use rail would be taken, as now, by the customers on the basis of price and quality of service.

*Harry Cohen* (Lab, Leyton) asked what the likely future of the London Underground line from Epping to Ongar was.

Mr Freeman said in a written reply that there had been two representations about plans for the future of the line. Objectors would be able to give their views to the London Regional Passenger Transport Committee.



# The rail way forward

By MALCOLM GOODALL

Passenger trains began regular running from Nottingham in May on the Robin Hood line, bringing some sunshine into the otherwise gloomy rail scene which is beset by Government-inspired uncertainty and confusion.

The people of Nottingham flocked to the trains a week before the full service started for a "fun day" preview, attended of course by Robin Hood and some of his merrie men, armed with bows and arrows.

They crowded on to inadequate 156 diesel multiple unit Sprinters for the 11-mile journey to Hucknall and Newstead.

The ride was so popular that officials were unable to move through the overloaded twin-car train.

With the beginning of the summer timetable on Monday 17 May, hourly class 156 diesel multiple unit trains began running over the existing double-track coal line from Radford to Bestwood Park Junction, and then the disused continuation to Newstead, which has been singled.

New single-platform stations are provided at Hucknall and Newstead, with shelters, brick platforms, and car parking.

Hucknall is to have bicycle stands and a dedicated bus feeder service.

The reopening has been financed by the Robin Hood consortium of local authorities, led by Labour-controlled Nottinghamshire County Council, without the help of a government grant.

While the Government looked on, the county council struggled to find £6.4 million from its diminishing resources.

The 32-mile line to Mansfield and Worksop closed in 1964, leaving a quarter of a million people without train services.

RDS and other groups campaigned unceasingly for reopening, by lobbying councillors, planners and MPs, writing to the press and British Rail, holding public meetings and a sponsored cycle ride; and generally keeping the issue alive.

Chronic road traffic congestion in Nottingham and unemployment caused by colliery closures eventually prompted local authorities to commission travel studies from Leeds University, which showed that a restored service would more than cover its direct operating costs and show considerable economic and social benefits.

Nottingham City Council now has loan approval to build a station at Bulwell for opening in Spring 1994.

And at last the Government is coming up with



**Funny old world:** After nearly 30 years, trains returned to Newstead and the Robin Hood Line for a fun day in May. People who refuse to be brainwashed by the car crazy propaganda of our political leaders flocked to welcome them. *Picture: Andrew Walker*

some cash. On 6 May, Transport Secretary John MacGregor announced that it would contribute £6.5 million in 1994/5 to the stage 2 extension to Mansfield, as coalfield aid.

(The Government is spending £175 million on the road network in the area.)

Stage 2 of the rail scheme will involve excavating the infilled Kirkby tunnel, and constructing a short new link line. Purchase of new diesel multiple units and completion of the link to Worksop by 1998 will take the total cost of the line to £19 million.

To get some idea of the magnificent value for money of this scheme, you only have to look at the cost of one new road which opened on the same day in London's Docklands.

The one-mile long Limehouse link road cost £255 million!

Reopenings is the topic for a conference organ-

ised by RDS on 26 June at Maesteg where another value-for-money rail scheme has already proved a tremendous success. The conference is at Maesteg Sports Centre from 1330 to 1700. Last-minute bookings (entry only £2, plus £3 for buffet lunch). Contact Ian Murray; 0656 783176.

It is 10 years since the launch of our Bring Back the Trains initiative. It is encouraging to note how many of the schemes we recommend have been implemented.

A new Bring Back the Trains leaflet has just been published with our new shortlist of key routes. These include feeder lines such as St Andrews-Leuchars and strategic links like Bedford to the East Coast main line.

It is important we persuade planning authorities to protect these valuable linear routes from any development which would interfere with reopening. That is why RDS objected to new road proposals at Bedford and Stratford-on-Avon.

The new leaflet is especially aimed at politicians and planners and is obtainable from Roland White, Latymer, The Drive, Belmont, Surrey SM2 7DJ.

On the same day as our reopenings conference in Maesteg, protesters will be carrying symbolic bags of money from the Department of Transport in Marsham Street to British Rail headquarters at Euston.

The idea is for the £20 billion earmarked for road building to be switched to public transport.

The assembly point is 2 Marsham Street, SW1 at 1130. The organisers are Alarm, the alliance against road building. Details from 071 737 6641.

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