

Railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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50p

All aboard the Eurostar

Eurostar trains should be leaving Waterloo International for France and Belgium this summer after the official opening of the Channel Tunnel by the Queen and President Mitterrand on 6 May.

But the high-speed trains will not sweep into the fast link terminus of St Pancras until well after the year 2000.

The "final" route of the 180mph link from the Channel Tunnel to London was announced by Ian MacGregor in January when he ditched the ambitious plans for a new international station beneath King's Cross.

The Government's eight-year "thinking time" means the fast link will be completed at least 10 years after the French equivalent from Paris to Calais.

The British Government is still trying to put together a financial package for the link and has now decided to contribute a considerable amount of the £2 to £3 billion needed to build the 68-mile line to Folkestone.

Transport Secretary John MacGregor said: "At this stage we cannot say what the split between Government and private finance will be."

Nor has it been decided yet whether to build a station at Stratford (London), Rainham (Essex) or Ebbsfleet (Kent).

At least some sort of decision has emerged from the murky corridors of Whitehall and Westminster.

And the Government is being more realistic about the role of the private sector in such a complicated and political venture.

It may well have to commit itself to more expenditure before the project gets under way. The money is certainly available. It can be diverted from the present anti-social, money-wasting and polluting road building policy.

The Government claims to have shifted some of its massive and wasteful spending on roads to public transport so that the financial split is now 60-40 in favour of roads. It still has a long way to go. A more reasonable share-out would be to provide 80% for public transport and 20% to roads.

If that were done, there would be plenty of money for a fast link, upgrading the West Coast main line, a programme of electrification and many other cost-effective and environment-friendly schemes.

Meanwhile for the Channel Tunnel link, the Government must prepare a hybrid Bill for the autumn after all the loose ends are tied up. It could take two years to go through Parliament and the link itself will take five years to build.

Meanwhile privatisation is proceeding with some predicted effects. The cost of operating



A victory for the environment

This was the trial run for a service which will help prevent more than 35,000 lorry journeys a year on Britain's roads. The run cleared the way for regular freight trains to make a comeback in January on the Settle-Carlisle line that only a few years ago was threatened with closure. It is great news for the environment in more ways than one, because it was feared lorries would be used in what was supposed to be an exercise in improving the environment. But common sense eventually prevailed.

Now 600,000 tonnes of limestone each year will be taken by train from Buxton, Derbyshire, to Europe's biggest coal-fired power station at Drax near Selby, Yorkshire, where it is used to remove sulphur dioxide from the emissions and emerges as 700,000 tonnes of gypsum. Gypsum is then taken by train over the Settle-Carlisle line to British Gypsum's plant at Kirkby Thore, Cumbria, and two other plants in Sussex and Leicestershire where it is used to make plaster board. A new passing loop discharge line has been built at Kirkby Thore.

National Power has bought a General Motors class 59 diesel locomotive from Canada and a fleet of Powell Duffryn 102-tonne hopper wagons to carry the limestone to Drax. The gypsum trains from Drax will be operated by Trainload Freight.

The Settle-Carlisle line was saved after a massive nationwide campaign and the passenger service is probably the best it has ever been. Pete Shaw's picture shows 60005 at Culgaith on 10 December. Regular workings began on 18 January. By 1995 there will be two daily trains from Drax over the line with the possibility of another from Aberdeen.

trains in Britain has increased by 50% as a direct result of privatisation, it emerged when Railtrack announced its charges in mid February.

The extra cost will be met by increased subsidies from the Treasury! Transport Secretary John MacGregor said the new charges would have no adverse effect on the level of fares, services or investment, while Labour's Brian Wilson predicted that in a few years time those subsidies will be cut.

Gatwick Express immediately lost 10% of its passengers to Network SouthEast when it began operating as a shadow franchise and BR will have sacked 10% of its 120,000 workforce in 15 months, cut services and destaffed

stations. The Government has made no guarantees about the interavailability of discounted tickets so there was a scare about massive surcharging of people using "the wrong sort of train" to Gatwick.

Then there were rumours that people using the wrong sort of ticket would not be able to switch between InterCity, Regional and NSE trains on the West Coast main line.

This year, the discount tickets will remain interavailable. But once West Coast InterCity becomes a shadow franchise, they may not. We must ensure that the Franchise Director makes it a condition of franchises that discounted tickets are accepted on trains run by different operators.

The myth of road taxes

By DAVID HOLLIS

New research confirms what we in RDS have long argued: the total revenue collected from road users fails to cover the costs road users impose on the community.

Drivers have convinced themselves after years of road lobby propaganda that they pay more than they should. They say that road tax and vehicle excise amount to about £20 billion a year but that only about £7 billion a

year is spent on the road system. However, the road lobby chooses to ignore other enormous costs of road use. These costs (in £million): Congestion (CBI estimate) 15,000, accidents (DoT estimate) 10,160, company car subsidy (uncollected tax) 1,500, air pollution 2,500, noise 2,100, global warming 657.

This alone adds up to around £32 billion and we have excluded certain difficult-to-quantify costs, such as loss of mobility for non-motorists, severance of communities, damage to

landscape and amenity. These could add significantly to the overall costs of road use if they were evaluated.

The largest item is congestion. This is a cost imposed by road users on each other, with great disbenefits for the community at large. About 80% of road users travel in non-work time, and congestion would be only a minor problem if they chose to go by bus, train, cycle or on foot.

The tax collected from road users is thus in fact much less than all the costs of road use, and so it becomes obvious that the cost of building new roads is not met out of road taxes, but from general taxation.

It is government policy that rail investment can be given grants from public funds only if it can be shown to have non-user benefits, such as relief of road congestion. User benefits, such as a faster or more frequent service are paid for out of fare revenue. There is no reason to suppose Government policy will be any different towards a privatised railway.

The Department of Transport states clearly in its pamphlet *The Role of Investment Appraisal in Road and Rail Transport*, that time savings by users account for 85% to 90% of the gross benefits of trunk road schemes. The values placed on time savings are based on estimates of what road users would be willing to pay for them if there were a genuine market, with travel in non-work time, including to and from work, valued less than travel in work time.

There are at least four reasons why RDS should challenge the DoT about this:

- It is entirely inappropriate that grants from public funds should be paid out on this lavish scale simply for individual benefit.
- It is bogus to put a monetary value on drivers' time without showing that the time saved could be reallocated in some productive way.
- People spend as much, or even more, time travelling now as in the past. So the reality is that wider faster roads allow them to go further in the same time, and what masquerades as saving of time is in fact squandering of space.
- Modern roads are designed for faster cars so that apparent time savings can be mostly due to drivers exceeding the legal speed limit.

Two conclusions follow from this: Elimination of the fictional user benefits of time savings from the cost/benefit appraisal of road schemes will mean that the majority will fail. A public transport solution to the transport problem will then stand a chance of proving itself the best value for money.

The DoT will be obliged to put a monetary value on other so-far unquantifiable benefits of a bypass road, in order for the benefits to exceed the costs. This can be turned to advantage, because these are the very things (severance, loss of amenity, hazard etc) which are a cost of road use, but are not evaluated.

Information in this article was gathered from a report by Earth Resources Research and the Cyclists Touring Club as well as a paper by the Environmental Transport Association.

VAT threat: The Chancellor decide not to impose Value Added Tax on rail fares partly as a result of RDS lobbying. Ever mindful that there is always another year, we remain on guard.

TREVOR
GARROD'S
VIEW



Asking the
right
question

One reason for most of us joining RDS was to campaign for the rail alternative to congested roads and pollution. From time to time the media report surveys on this issue.

These regularly that most people agree that there are too many cars on the road. Then they are asked if they would give up their car. The majority answer, "No". Such replies are then used by politicians like John MacGregor to claim that, "99% of people want more roads".

The question is the wrong one. The key issue is usage rather than ownership. The question should have been, Can you use your car less? or Can you make yourself less dependent on the motor vehicle?

The overwhelming majority of the population no doubt could, and it is our task, working with like-minded bodies, to promote the rail alternative.

We need to ask: Could your car journey have been made wholly or partly by other means, at comparable convenience and cost? Would you use your car less for journeys of, say, 20 miles or more if the train service was more frequent, faster or more reliable?

Recent months have seen the cancellation of the proposed road through Oxleas Wood in South East London, the M1 - M26 scheme in Yorkshire and Stage 2 of the Greater Manchester Western and Northern Relief Road.

That gives us in RDS a window of opportunity to argue for rail investment in a new cross-Thames link and improvements to Trans-Pennine routes. We can seek the support of motoring organisations for this. After all, the AA now claims to support "increased investment in public transport", so we should at least call its bluff!

Protests against new roads at Twyford Down and Wanstead, East London, have recently hit the headlines. That again gives us the chance to put the rail alternative.

Where local authorities commission studies of the potential for rail expansion, as Suffolk County Council is now doing, they must be encouraged. That is one

reason why RDS and Transport 2000 have argued against spending £10 million on a new A146 road parallel to the railway between Lowestoft and Beccles, at least until the results of the Suffolk Rail Policy Study are known.

RDS regularly takes part in transport activists' round table meetings with Transport 2000, Friends of the Earth, ALARM UK (a national alliance of groups campaigning against road schemes) and similar bodies. One project resulting from this is to be a Day of Action on Saturday 21 May, aimed at lobbying county councils. For details contact: Don Mathew, 38 Reeve Street, Lowestoft.

The Family Railcard has attracted families out of their cars, on occasion, by making rail travel cheaper. If enough Conservative MPs had threatened to rebel against John MacGregor in the autumn, the Railcard's future might have been secured. As it is, we must press hard for this or a similar facility to be retained so that rail continues to be an alternative open to families.

At a local level, public transport must be as user-friendly, or convenient, as possible. That means as much information and through ticketing as reasonably possible. Ipswich Buses (with good connections to trains) have recently launched a scheme whereby a rail traveller from, say, Bury St Edmunds or Saxmundham, can buy a train ticket that also includes a bus journey in the town.

At Norwich, in contrast, I recently arrived by train, headed for the bus stops opposite the station and found no timetables at all! That hardly encourages public transport usage.

Finally, let us show people that it is possible for rail and bus travel to be fun! One way is to sell them our book *Life Beyond Cars*, available from our Sales Officer, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 0DN at £2.25 (including p&ep). Perhaps it could be a birthday present from you to a car-bound friend or relative?

□ Trevor Garrod is general secretary of RDS and writes a column every four weeks in the magazine *RAIL*.

I'll still go by rail

By PAMELA CHRISTY



The climate has changed but I am sure there is still work for RDS members to do to assure a good railway system in the UK.

I'll still go by train. As a widow of more than seventy, I like to keep in personal touch with my far-flung family. They are all busy people so I do the travelling. It means making a choice between going by coach or train.

In my experience coaches are infrequent and unpunctual and many of their stopping places lack the basic comfort of a shelter and seat. They are exposed to the hazards of traffic congestion which probably explains their delays.

I prefer to travel by train. My Senior Railcard and my freedom to time my journeys within the restrictions of a Saver ticket help me with the extra cost. I feel safe in the modern open-plan carriages with a roving

conductor on hand if I have a difficulty. Since my nearest main-line station, Darlington, is a £10 taxi ride from my home in Bishopsgarth, Stockton-on-Tees, I use a local station, Thornaby. Its only amenities are a perspex shelter with tip-up seats and a phone box - very useful to call a taxi on my return.

The advantage is that I can buy a ticket to any destination in the UK from the on-board conductor. A bonus is that my ticket to Chatham in Kent is valid on the Thameslink service between King's Cross and Bromley South. It

means I can avoid using the Underground to cross London, something that is dreaded by old ladies from the provinces.

The introduction of a trolley service for refreshments is very welcome. I have used it on the Trans-Pennine and Kent Coast trains and more recently on the 225s out of King's Cross. I do not enjoy staggering along to the buffet car when the train is travelling in excess of 100 mph.

The privatisation of British Rail is now a fact, but I shall continue to use trains. The new managements may cost me some lack of convenience and a bit more money, but if I and like-minded folk do not persevere, we will lose the trains. We cannot allow this efficient and environmentally friendly system for moving people and goods over long distances, to be ousted by the road lobby.

The trains are coming back

Regular passenger trains start running in May over Whalley Arches, the impressive Lancashire viaduct which for years has seen only occasional freight and charter trains.

There will be an hourly Manchester to Clitheroe service operated by Regional Railways over 10 miles of the former Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway route from Blackburn.

The service is a major achievement for Ribbles Valley Rail campaigners and a tribute to the support of Lancashire County Council.

A financial package with contributions from the county council, Ribbles Valley Borough Council, the European Regional Development Fund, the Rural Development Commission, and BR's Community Unit has been painstakingly put together to get the trains back. Clitheroe therefore is an ideal venue for RDS's Third National Conference on Rail Reopenings on Saturday 4 June. The conference will be held in the council chamber of this attractive town from 12 noon and there will be speakers from both Regional Railways and

the county council. If you would like to attend, send £5 (includes a buffet lunch) to Malcolm Richardson, 135 Bramtree Road, Mereside, Blackpool, Lancs FY4 4SR. Make cheque payable to RDS.

The first stage of another big reopening, the Ivanhoe line in Leicestershire, is also opening in May. Most of the money is coming from the county council.

Despite the Government's ambivalent and penny-pinching attitude to rail, ordinary people are winning their battle to bring back the trains. National executive member Alan Bevan who wrote the RDS guide to reopenings has provided this updated list:

New stations in 1994: Camelon, Central Region; Prestwick Airport, Strathclyde; Sandquhar, Dumfries & Galloway; Wallyford, Lothian; Clitheroe, Ramsgrave & Wilpsire, Whalley, Langho, Lancashire; Eastham Rake, Merseyside; Stanley Green, Greater Manchester; Bulwell, Notts; Willington, Derbyshire; Barrow-on-Soar, Sileby, Syston, Leicestershire; Dudley Zoo and Dudley Port LL, Great Bridge, Wednesbury, Brunswick Park, West Midlands; Cam and Dursley, Gloucestershire; Pentre, Mid-Glamorgan; Digby, Ivybridge, Devon.

New stations in 1995: Dawsholm, Strathclyde; Yarm, Cleveland; Low Moor, Elland, Brighouse, West Yorkshire; Mansfield Woodhouse, Mansfield Town, Kirkby Town, Kirkby Hardwick, Notts; Castle Gresley, Derbyshire; Moira, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Swannington, Coalville, Bagworth, Desworth, Kirkby Muxloe, Leicester Forest East, Park Rise, Ranciliffe Crescent, Bede Island, Leicestershire; Galton Bridge High & Low, The Hawthorns, Vyse Street, Ladywood Arena, Longford, Holbrooks, Coundon Road, West Midlands; Rushwick, Worcestershire; Rossett, Clwyd; Whittington, Shropshire; Pyle, Mid-Glamorgan; Briton Ferry, Skewen, Llansamlet, Baglan, West Glamorgan; Filton Abbeywood, Newsbridge, Avon; Paulsgrove, Hampshire; Seasalter, Kent.

Trying to promote railway development? PLANNING PASSENGER RAILWAYS

could be the book to help

Edited by Nigel G Harris and Ernest Godward, the book contains papers from acknowledged experts on subjects such as estimating the demand for new lines and stations, assessing civil engineering works, costing the operation, accounting for environmental effects and appraising the project. Examples include the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, Docklands Light Railway and CrossRail.

The book is available from PPR, 43a Palace Square, Crystal Palace, London SE19 2LT. The cost is £26.50 including post and packing. Please make cheques payable to

E W Godward and N G Harris

Funding questions

I recently received *Railwatch*, December '93 and note the rapidly improving standard of your publication. One of the interesting articles is that giving details of the companies who are members of the British Roads Federation. What couldn't you achieve if you had the same resources? Seriously, have you considered approaching the same companies, who are often major users of rail, and asking why they don't provide similar funds to the more efficient form of transport? A few guilty conversions would make a big difference to your rail promotions!

However, the more important reason for writing was to discuss George Boyle's article on the UK loading gauge. This debate shows how difficult it is to be certain of your facts, or how easy it is to delude yourself with figures.

But, have we really got to the facts of this matter yet? If you take the higher estimate of £4 billion and guesstimate the number of bridges between London and Scotland (say 400?), you get a figure of £10 million per bridge. I would have thought that would be too much by a factor of 100. Either there are some very big costs in addition to bridges in that £4 billion, or someone is pulling the wool over someone's eyes.

Another aspect of this matter which intrigues me is why there is no mention of lowering the track. As we are talking of a small vertical distance, I would think that rather than disturb the more expensive bridges it might be cheaper to lower even a long section of track. Perhaps someone could shed light on the implications of track lowering, which appears to be an acceptable approach in some tunnel projects.

Finally, on a different topic, I have to report that the woeful disease of privatisation has spread to Victoria where the right-wing Government has leapt at the opportunity to offload State rail assets willy nilly. While some lines have been completely closed, two have been leased to private companies to operate, using equipment leased from, or bought from the State. So far, timetables and fares remain unaltered and there is little obvious change apart from staff uniforms. However, all Government staff have been withdrawn from stations, and only the larger stations are staffed part-time by the company or franchisees. Tickets can be booked through the Government system, and can be used on Government services using the same tracks. It will be interesting to see how this experiment develops, as it is ahead of events in Britain.

Robin C Spragg, 112 Prospect Road, Newtown, Geelong, Victoria 3220, Australia

Our true aim

I admit to having long had reservations concerning the Channel Tunnel, though my loyalty to RDS prevented me from airing them in public. I tried honestly to focus on the potential benefits as far as possible when talking to its more fervent opponents. The chief of these benefits, so completely taken for granted by pro-rail groups that it has received little overt mention in recent times, is that it would divert traffic - freight and passenger - from road to rail on a large scale.

Though in one sense an objective of the RDS has been achieved, we should not be feeling triumphant, but rather intensify the campaign to attain what must be our true aim, as defined above. So far, the media and the

'average person' (who today travels by private car rather than on the Clapham Omnibus) seem to know only of Le Shuttle which will take cars and lorries across to France rather more speedily than the ferries. The only clear benefit is to the road hauliers, and to those motorists who wish to save an hour or two on the journey. If this is all, the environmental and financial cost has been too great, with the added likelihood of a deterioration in ferry services and the planned closure, so far, of at least one major rail terminus - Dover Western Docks.

The current attitude was brought home to me when confronted, as part of an adult education French class, by the instruction leaflet handed out at an exhibition, which concentrated on the use of the shuttle, with only the slightest mention of access by rail. A faster journey to rail passengers may be a benefit to some; others may prefer the 'mini-cruise' provided by the ferry. We should be campaigning, as strongly as we did for the building of the tunnel to make it rail rather than road-oriented. This involves not only the fast rail link, but a moratorium on any plans for massive access road expansion. Last but not least, it should attract those who currently travel by air. If air traffic continues to expand, congestion could soon be even more serious than that on the roads. The tunnel should be marketed as one way of avoiding such a disaster.

Clara Zilahi, 31 Wimbotsham Road, Downham Market, Norfolk

Privatisation prophecy

May I be allowed to echo the plea of a correspondent in your December issue for less emotive language?

The difficulty I see for the editor of *Railwatch* is that, having forecast doom and disaster to follow rail privatisation, he will be left with egg on his face - and have damaged the reputation of the magazine - when his prophecies are not fulfilled.

Just a shade of humility, just a suggestion of willingness to reserve judgement, would have saved the opponents of earlier privatisations from the embarrassment of having to eat their words - or wishing that they had been forgotten.

David Mitchell, MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Vital projects

At long last some vital rail schemes are being taken more seriously by Scotland management. The north-south link across Glasgow via the St Enoch's bridge and further electrification in central Scotland, notably the Edinburgh to Glasgow line have been seriously assessed. Both are worthy of substantial, cost effective investment. One further extension of a very busy rail service would be from Ayr, south to Alloway and Greenan. This would extend the electric services by around three miles, most of it along disused trackbed. The scheme would benefit residents in an upmarket district of Ayr where car ownership is high. The high traffic flows of tourists in summer to Robert Burns's birthplace at Alloway and especially to Butlin's Wonderworld would mean very substantial revenues accruing to the passenger side of the rail operation.

Initial cost of over £5m is the main drawback, but just consider the potential traffic on such a line which may soon be joined to the north Clyde network giving possible services like Airdrie-Glasgow-Ayr-Greenan. Anyone

wishing to lobby for such an investment should write to: Strathclyde PTE, 12 West George Street, Glasgow G2 1HN.

Can you also suggest that people approach their libraries to ask them to subscribe to rail magazines, notably *Railnews*, very cheap at £8 per annum delivered, or *Rail* in which Trevor Garrod writes? Libraries have loads of road-biased material so it should now be time to redress the balance.

Graham Lund, 179 Dalrymple Street, Girvan, KA26 9BG

Speeding lorries

There appears to be an erroneous notion around, of which I was a victim, and which was expressed in *Railwatch* 58 by Peter Spencer following on from a comment in the October issue.

This concerns the speed limit for heavy goods vehicles. I had the experience, common to many who drive, of travelling at the legal limit for cars of 60mph on a single carriage-way road (A134 Kings Lynn - Thetford) and of a 38 tonne container vehicle attempting to overtake, only being prevented from so doing by opposing traffic. I had believed that a speed limit for HGVs on that road was 40mph.

As this is not an uncommon experience, I wrote to my MP, Gillian Shephard, giving the details including the registration number.

She replied with a letter from Transport Secretary John MacGregor pointing out that the stretch of road is 'unrestricted' so lorries are allowed to travel along it at 60mph.

No doubt many will be as surprised as I was to learn of the current situation, as I recall no announcement advertising the change. Even the traffic department of the county police confirmed my original notion, but this was subsequently changed on enquiry at headquarters.

The fact of 38 tonne and soon 44 tonne HGVs travelling at these speeds on any road is horrendous, only underlined by the daily accident reports heard on radio traffic bulletins.

K C Burton, 23 Abbeygate, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 1L

Funding for trams

The caption to the Strasbourg tram on the front page of *Railwatch* 58 is in my view rather damning to the cities in Britain who have studied the possibility of returning trams to their streets.

I would say that more than 'a few' have light rail projects, but are not taking them forward very fast purely because they know that they will not get vital central government funding from the present anti-public transport administration to get construction started.

Well-developed plans for light rail exist, for example, in Glasgow, Birmingham, Leeds, Croydon, Portsmouth, Nottingham, Cardiff, Chester. Given that Manchester, Sheffield and Newcastle already have systems in place, this represents a significant proportion of Britain's major centres. Another major city scheme in Bristol failed only because it seemed necessary to set up a purely private sector venture to avoid the problem of lack of central government subsidy.

Gordon Wiseman, Eaton Road, Sutton, Surrey SM2 5EE

Sensible arguments

I was not the only RDS member in the Winchester area to be startled by the fierce tone of your editorial footnote at the end of my letter about the M3 Motorway.

May I remind you of what another correspondent said to you in the same issue: "You should use sensible and well-balanced argument and back it up with facts collected from other sources." Firstly, most people in Winchester did NOT support the protesters' direct action. Secondly, a few local people in Compton and Shawford probably did contribute some money and food to the protesters but this was not general. The protesters kept on hitting the headlines because they insisted on breaking the law.

In case you think I support road-building per se, I can assure you I am not keen on a further £12 billion being spent on roads instead of being channelled into rail, light rail schemes, etc. Notwithstanding this, do you really believe that the best thing for the nation was to leave the M3 terminating at Winchester, and restarting at Compton? Your remarks seem to imply that trailers should ride piggy-back from Winchester to Eastleigh, by rail.

Until such time as car drivers are priced off the roads, then inevitably car traffic will increase whether we like it or not, and in consequence some new roads and by-passes may be necessary.

Alan Cooke, 3 Bere Close, Winchester, Hants SO22 5H

Make it bigger

In reply to your note about the difficulty some members have in reading *Railwatch*, may I suggest that a great many of us do not need the special facilities you are thoughtfully offering, but merely very slightly larger print.

There are probably many elderly people like me who can read a newspaper with the greatest of ease, but find the tiny, cramped print of *Railwatch* sufficient of a strain to discourage them from bothering to read what is a very interesting journal.

Surely one extra page would allow you to increase the size of the print that small amount and give all your members easy reading?

Mary P English, 8 Springfield House, Cotham Road, Bristol BS6 6DQ

Cash priorities

I too had my cheque book ready to contribute to the Whittington Station Appeal. But then I read Andrew McCracken's excellent letter in *Railwatch* 58. I have torn the cheque up now.

The case for a new station at Whittington does not appear that strong. I am sure every RDS member has a personal favourite station as a candidate for reopening. Mine would be Caerleon on the Newport to Hereford line.

Surely, it makes sense to target for one reopening in a concerted campaign. However, the one project to be selected must be democratically determined at our AGM in Lincoln on 30 April. Nothing less will do.

On a separate subject, the *Rail Investment* Creates Jobs briefing was excellent overall. However, I found one significant flaw that will be poorly received here in Wales. The document called for electrification between Paddington and Cardiff. However, the current InterCity service is Paddington to Swansea. There have been persistent

rumours to the effect that InterCity status will be withdrawn on the Cardiff to Swansea section. I think that RDS has unintentionally helped downgrade the importance of the Swansea section. I trust the error can be rectified upon reprint of the document.

Stephen H King, 9 Railway Terrace, Caerphilly, Wales CF8 1HX

Wensleydale way forward

Readers concerned that local railway lines may be under threat as a result of the forthcoming privatisation of British Rail, will be pleased to know that some community groups are organising themselves into potential transport operators.

One such group is the Wensleydale Railway Association which was established in 1990 to investigate the possible reinstatement of a passenger rail link between Garsdale on the Settle-Carlisle line and Northallerton on the East Coast main line.

The only remaining track on the 40-mile route is 22 miles linking the ECML with a railhead at Redmire. The association is seeking to purchase this section from British Rail, following its closure at the end of 1992.

It is attempting to do this by gaining enough funds via the sale of track units at £15 each for a nominal yard of track. If the association is not able to purchase the line, the money will be returned to the donors. Currently the WRA has over £80,000 but would like to raise at least another £20,000 to put it into a reasonable negotiating position.

For those of us who choose to travel by rail whenever possible, and who all too often find that a place one wishes to go to has ceased to be connected to the railway network, the WRA provides a positive sign for the future.

Should any RDS members wish to know more about the WRA, or would be interested in purchasing track units, they can be contacted via membership secretary Keith Cameron, Red Hatch, St John's Road, Ascot, Berkshire, SL5 7HN.

Simon Greening, 30 Leghorn Road, Plumstead, London SE18 1SZ

Editor's note: The line has now been withdrawn from sale by BR because the Army wants to use it to transport tanks from Germany back to Catterick. Wensleydale Railway Company chairman Stan Abbott says the decision is a step forward. Money raised now can be used to develop the line, extending it from Redmire towards Hawes and eventually making a connection with the Settle-Carlisle at Garsdale.

Levelling the field

We may have campaigned vigorously against it, but now it is here, we must adapt quickly to fighting for rail in a competitive market economy. There is some comfort to be drawn from the fact that the road lobby is bemoaning the introduction of a pay-as-you-drive regime. We should insist that motorway tolls are set at a realistic level for both passenger vehicles and freight.

Years ago when I worked for the Post Office in their telecom headquarters, we would compare the costs of new microwave links versus new landlines whenever congestion threatened to overwhelm a trunk route - the cheapest scheme won the day. So it should be for a congested transport corridor. RDS should call for the net benefits of a substantial investment in Railtrack to be assessed against Roadtrack improvements. Private rail operators can justifiably claim unfair

competition if disproportionate amounts of Treasury money are allocated to road schemes.

When somebody moves the goal posts, we must learn to play by new rules. At least the playing field is levelling out!

Tony Smale, Sales Officer, Wessex Branch, Broadheath, Fishers Hill, Catisfield, Fareham, Hants PO15 5QY

Leading articles

I was delighted to see that our local paper has quoted the recent edition of *Railwatch*. I was also pleased to see that RDS managed to get a spot on Radio 4.

I have not been too impressed with RDS's impact or presence in the national debate on rail privatisation and have said so. If we cannot succeed in putting our point through the national media, we are not going to amount to much in the eyes of the authorities we challenge with our views.

In my view this recent debate was the high point of all that RDS stands for. Now it has passed and we could be right in feeling that we have lost the battle. What do we stand for now? What is RDS's new platform?

Are we for the environment, just one small part of the general pressure?

Are we going to prepare to inveigh against the methodology of the private railway?

Are we going to campaign for re-nationalisation? What will be the new standpoint?

On another point: In producing *Railwatch* you should go in for larger type - not just for the visually impaired but also for the MPs, journalists and commentators who won't see what you're talking about!

My *Independent* correspondent says that he never reads anything but faxes! And in case it's too difficult for RDS to find out the fax number of *The Independent*, it is: 071-956 1435. I rather think the RDS "board" thinks that faxes "are not meant for people like us". *Railwatch* is excellent.

Terry Lankenau, Minfon Number Two, Rhos-y-Gwiliem, Bala, Gwynedd LL23 3EY

Shareholders needs

I fully agree with the view of Kenneth Bryant in *Railwatch* 58 that the Government's present railway policy is 'misguided, inept and stupid'.

Unfortunately I believe this will continue until such time as the Government abandons its dogmatic principle that privatisation makes for efficient business.

The Government needs to understand two simple points:

1 This country needs a properly integrated transport policy, balancing public and private needs.

2 This strategy needs to be properly managed, effectively running our public transport network in the best interests of the "shareholders" - the tax-paying public.

Neil Henderson, 6 Crop Common, Hatfield, Herts

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.

Clearing the way for piggyback

Mike Garratt was disturbed by George Boyle's loading gauge article in the last *Railwatch*. Mr Garratt puts his point of view:

The *Railwatch* article argued that the costs of developing a handful of piggyback rail routes in the UK would be £3-4 billion, and not the £200m which a 'recent report ... alleges'. The article argued that 'a crucial error' led to the reduction in the estimate, and laid the blame for this error on the 'consultants'.

George Boyle stated that "the consultants have assumed that all bridges rebuilt for electrification purposes were built to the Department of Transport's new works structure gauge" and that "This would have meant that all bridges and tunnels from London to Glasgow and Edinburgh would have been suitable for the proposed 'piggyback gauge' without further work."

It is unfortunate that Mr Boyle did not talk to the consultants, MDS Transmodal before he wrote his article. Had he done so, I would have pointed out the following:

● Generally speaking, new bridges rebuilt for electrification have been to DoT standards.

● A large proportion of tunnels and bridges did not need to be rebuilt to permit electrification. It is these structures where any problems lie. DoT regulations only require new structures to be built to 'Blue Book' standards. If electrification can be achieved without rebuilding, the existing structure can be left in place.

● The 'piggyback gauge' has to be defined in any documentation. In all our recent work, it has been defined as that free-profile which would allow a standard European trailer of 4m height and 2.5m width over the highway to be carried on a 'recess' rail wagon, providing that the trailer is equipped with air suspension to reduce its height to about 3.8m when immobilised.

● The figure of £3-4 billion quoted was calculated by British Rail. It is important to recognise that that offered no more useful 'free profile' for intermodal business than does 'our' piggyback gauge. It represents the cost of rebuilding the rail route to GB + gauge (a UIC standard) plus the standard DoT margins between the kinematic envelope and fixed lineside structures. That, in itself, double counts safety margins. However, the crucial dimension, the height and width at cant rail level (top corners), is almost identical to the 'piggyback gauge'. The extra profile offered by GB + is the characteristic 'arch' of a UIC gauge (irrelevant for flat-topped trailers) and the extra width which UIC gauge offers (3.13m) as compared with the BR W6 gauge (2.82m). Containers and trailers, however, are only 2.5m wide; the extra width is also irrelevant. Continental piggyback wagons are built with principal steel members 'outside' the rubber tyre width to use that extra space. In the UK those steel members could be positioned between the rubber tyres of the road trailer.

● The cost of providing this unnecessary and extra space within the free profile is, however, enormous. The extra width involves the rebuilding of station platforms and of overbridges, and even underbridges to allow for an increase in width of the railbed itself. The 'arch' above the cant rail would foul the overhead electrification equipment, even if 'all bridges and tunnels' had been rebuilt to full DoT standards.

In fact, a new grouping was formed in autumn 1993 called the 'Piggyback Consortium' which includes Railtrack, Eurotunnel, RFD, CTL and many other organisations to develop the piggyback concept and gauge. This consortium is extensively funded by the EC and has employed MDS Transmodal to study the opportunity in greater depth.

□ Mr Garratt is a partner in MDS Transmodal, Transport Consultants, 5-6 Hunters Walk, Canal Street, Chester CH1 4EB

George Boyle writes: Since the publication of various letters and articles, I have spoken to Mike Garratt in an attempt to clear up any misunderstandings about the piggyback loading gauge issue. While I was correct in my assertion that bridges rebuilt for electrification did not take full advantage of the DoT new works construction gauge, Mr Garratt assures me that a physical run of the OLGA gauging train has been made over the proposed route involving the West Coast main line.

This has demonstrated that about £60 million of work would be required to clear a route from the Channel Tunnel to Glasgow. On that basis, I am very happy to withdraw my objections to the scheme and I will fully support efforts to open this route up and obtain European Community money to do so.

Who WILL run our railway?

By TREVOR GARROD

The Government may have won its battle to get railway privatisation approved by Parliament. But four months on, it is still not clear who is or will be running OUR railway.

Five years ago, RDS published a booklet *Who Should Run Our Railways?* We examined the fortunes of Britain's rail network and those of some other countries under both private and public ownership.

We concluded that the system should stay as a national network in the public sector unless really convincing evidence was presented to the contrary.

But we agreed there was also a role for private firms, for example in supplementing core services or sponsoring experiments. We used the term 'partnership' between the public and private sectors.

Interestingly, Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman used the same term when he addressed an RDS seminar in April 1993. However, the Government of which Mr Freeman is a member subsequently forced through the legislation which enables private firms to take over train services and Transport Secretary John MacGregor has stated his wish to see the tracks and other infrastructure also privately owned in due course.

Our detailed correspondence with Mr Freeman on these issues is ongoing. Mr MacGregor rarely seems to reply to letters.

Over the past four months, however, our society has also been busy forging links with the managers due to take over Railtrack which will own most of the infrastructure and the train operating companies.

We have also done our best to make contact with those firms who, we are led to believe, will be competing with them.

In the autumn, RDS produced a quality four page leaflet *Questions to Private Rail Operators*. National Executive member Simon Martin and a small group of others, handed it out at two conferences held in November and December for would-be private operators. As your general secretary, I sent the leaflet to 14 firms, with a letter seeking information on their future plans and assurances that they would maintain existing standards.

Twelve replies were received. They can be summarised as follows:

British Bus: Because of lack of Government information, it has simply registered its interest in running trains; a meeting with RDS would be appropriate if it decides to go ahead.

Burlington Northern Railroad: It will not commit itself until it sees some shadow franchises in operation. It "appreciates and understands" our concerns.

West Midland Travel: It has "not considered in any detail" involvement in passenger services.

MTL Trust (Merseyside): It is "merely seeking information" about possible franchises. It would welcome a meeting with RDS if it proceeds further, and has regular dialogue with the National Federation of Bus Users.

EYMS Group (Hull): Some interest in the Hull-Scarborough line but unclear about "ground rules" and therefore unable to give detailed answers. However, its subsidiary East Yorkshire Travel Limited, operates charter trains.



Two key privatisation players: Franchise Director Roger Salmon, left, and Rail Regulator John Swift

Midland Bluebird (Scotland subsidiary of Grampian Regional Transport): No firm proposals at present; awaiting experience of shadow franchises and "requirements of franchising". Would be willing to meet RDS representatives.

Badgerline Group: "We are far from clear what we will process as a bidder," concerned to provide a "quality service" if it is ahead and would, in that case, be prepared to meet with RDS representatives.

Canadian Pacific: Despite early reports, "at this time our company has not expressed an interest in running rail franchises".

Sea Containers: Unable to answer detailed questions yet, but "our general principals (sic!) will be based on making the railways profitable".

Stagecoach: Sent us a paper by chairman Brian Cox, expressing interest in franchising, warning that bus deregulation has caused problems and stressing the need for investment and flexibility.

Go Ahead Northern: It is intended in "urban operation" but unable to discuss serious planning until the Franchise Director can provide more information. As bus company its "record speaks for itself" on multi-operator ticketing schemes, concessionary fares, off-peak services and timetable innovation. This was one of the more detailed replies.

Southern Vectis: The "stated" and the only one expressing plans for rail expansion, with additional stations and infrastructure on the Isle of Wight - though these will "depend on the availability of public funds" (so much for ministerial promises that private cash will come forth to expand the rail network! TG). There is, however, dispute at the time of writing over through ticketing between the island and the mainland, and that does not bode well.

Yorkshire Rider and Richardson's Virgin Group did not reply.

Replies have been sent to see would-be operators stressing the importance, in our view, of consultation with railers and local authorities when plans are drawn up.

If any reader knows of another interested in bidding to run trains, I shall be pleased to write to them.

Meanwhile, cynics may say the nine bus and coach companies in the above list are only interested in taking over the rail competition. Those of a more charitable disposition may prefer to keep an open mind. Much may depend on what one considers to be the Government's true motives creating this

upheaval. At least, we have established what could be a productive relationship with Railtrack. On 17 January our president Michael Caton and vice-chairman Ray King had a meeting with Railtrack chairman Robert Horton.

Former BP chief Mr Horton stressed the continuity of the change from BR to Railtrack and said: "We hope to put right some of the degradations of the last few years."

"We must argue the benefits of rail investment: its potential as part of an industrial strategy, its environmental advantage."

"We are fighting to get rail schemes properly assessed."

"All rail's benefits can be costed. Rail can be very important in achieving the Rio cuts in pollution."

Our branches have been asked to open dialogue with Railtrack's zonal directors.

The Wessex Branch was quick off the mark by inviting a Railtrack manager to address its AGM on 26 February. On Saturday 8 October we shall welcome Railtrack's production director John Ellis, to address our National Conference of Rail Users in London.

We are also collaborating with Transport 2000 and the union-funded Save Our Railways campaign on a national exercise of monitoring passenger services.

Less fruitful have been our approaches to the Franchising Director Roger Salmon, a Rothschild director for the past 12 years. He has declined to address a meeting of users and to meet RDS representatives in private.

Our member John Bourn phoned him to seek information on proposed ticketing arrangements and experienced what sounded like the phone being slammed down on him.

However, he was subsequently assured by a spokesperson of the Franchising Director that there was a fault on the telephone line.

Members wishing to voice their concerns to Mr Salmon may, therefore, prefer to write to him at: OPRAF, 26 Old Queen Street, London SW1H 9HP.

The third key figure in the new set-up is Rail Regulator John Swift, an Oxford-educated Queen's Counsel.

He has warned: "The benefits expected from the new structure cannot be achieved immediately. They depend upon all the new players striving to improve upon the existing performance of British Rail."

Finally - while most of this article has dealt with our relations with rail operators and other transport professionals - let us not forget that responsibility for problems associated with this unnecessary upheaval lies with those MPs who voted for it in November. Parliamentary lobbying, therefore, remains a vital part of our work.

Transport Secretary John MacGregor and Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman have retained for themselves wide powers to intervene.

Unfortunately early indications from watching their performance in the House of Commons suggest they will welcome the opportunity to hive off responsibility for awkward decisions.

MPs asking pertinent questions have already been brushed off with "That's a matter for Railtrack" replies.

Farewell James

Rail campaigner James Apsey died in January after nearly 20 years fighting for better services in Britain - and particularly in his home county of Norfolk.

A one-time member of the RDS national executive, he was also chairman of the East Norfolk Travellers Association for most of its 16-year existence.

"James fought for improvements to local rail services on the Acle to Norwich line, and the Reedham route," said Peter Warner, secretary of ENTA.

But James was prepared to take action further afield. He objected to the 1987 proposed closure of the Lenton-Radford-Trowell line and took the trouble to speak at the Nottingham public enquiry.

Now the whole line has hourly trains each way as part of the Liverpool-East Anglia service and hourly each way on the Lenton-Radford section in addition.

James's objection helped to delay proceedings until BR decided it did not want to close the line after all.

Most local authorities did not attend the hearing despite its relevance to their planning and transport proposals. It was left to individuals like James and voluntary groups like RDS to make a detailed analysis of the implications.

James had moved back to his home town of Acle after ill health forced him to give up his job in the City of London.

While he lived in London, his home in the historic heart of Spitalfields, nicknamed the Dog Kennel, was also 'home' for the *Railwatch* team of which he was a key member for 10 years, until his death.

James, a fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, was only 46 when he died. He had travelled by train to school in Norwich as a boy and was later a regular user of the Great Eastern main line to London.

Acle Parish Church was crowded on 12 January for his funeral which was attended by several RDS members including John Barfield from the *Railwatch* editorial board. A donation in James's memory has been sent on behalf of RDS to the British Epilepsy Association.

Annual Draw

A book of draw tickets is enclosed. More are available if you can sell them. We realise that some people do not like to receive these tickets and we do try to see that their wishes are respected. If you are a member who has objected, yet receive tickets, we do apologise. Difficulties do arise in what has become a massive job in despatching *Railwatch*.

Money raised will enable us to back campaigns AGAINST cuts and FOR reopenings and service improvements. We foresee even greater demands on our resources as privatisation comes into effect. The more we raise from the Annual Draw, the more we can fight.

Lincs link-up

This year's RDS national AGM is being held on Saturday 30 April in Lincoln, one of the most impressive of British cathedral cities, with a wealth of things to

see and do for members who would like to spend a weekend there. For a list of accommodation in various price ranges, with some hotels and guest houses giving special offers, send an SAE to: David Soames, 158 Atherstone Avenue, Peterborough, PE3 6UN. The Tourist Information Centre at: 9 Castle Hill, Lincoln, LN1 3AA (Tel: 0522 529828) will send you further information.

Lincolnshire County Council has established a reputation for investing in its railways. We shall welcome as guest speaker, Councillor Jim Dodsworth, chairman of the council's planning and transport committee, and look forward to hearing him speak of past achievements and future challenges. With the future of local government in the melting pot, it is especially relevant for us to have such a speaker this year.

Special train: People going to the AGM can use a charter train which is being run to Lincoln and Skegness from Chester, picking up at stations to Stockport. Details from Andrew Macfarlane of the Mid Cheshire Rail Users on 061 928 9394 or 061 941 1447 (evenings).

Prize idea: An idea adopted by last year's AGM from RDS member Richard Macqueen for better rail links to Ireland has won *The Guardian's* European Business Competition.

National Conference of Rail Users

This RDS Conference will be held on Saturday 8 October at Friends House, Euston Road, London from 11am to 4.30pm. Guest speaker will be John Ellis, an experienced railway manager who is now Director, Production, for Railtrack.

RDS lottery winners

November: Paul Burton, Horsham £57.40, Mrs C A Jones, Spalding £35.88, P Warren, Birmingham £21.52, Nick Lander, Pershore £14.36, Brian Balmain, Isle of Bute £7.17, H R Fowler, Littlehampton £7.17, December: G P Bolam, Alvechurch £55.80, Mark Edgell, Rotherham £34.89, Paul Worrall, Solihull £20.92, R Burrows, Hassocks £13.95, Andrew Bull, Macclesfield £6.97, A J Macbeath, Grange-over-Sands £6.97.

January: H R F Mills, Cheshunt £56.20, Robert Cummings, Hyde £35.12, Alan Maitland, Durham £21.08, John Mitchell, Birkenhead £14.06, David Miles, Sheffield £7.02, Paul Burton, Horsham £7.02.

Work with RDS

RDS is seeking a fourth administrative assistant to strengthen its team. The post would suit an unwaged or recently retired member, preferably within fairly easy reach of London. The honorarium will be £250 per annum, paid monthly, plus normal expenses including travel to necessary meetings.

The remit would be mainly to act as administrator to the passenger committee, which meets three times a year, arrange meetings, distribute agendas, and write and distribute minutes.

If you are interested, contact general secretary Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ by 31 March. Tel: 0502 581721

LOCAL ACTION

North Midlands

By Malcolm Goodall

Reopenings: Bulwell station, five miles out of Nottingham on the Robin Hood line to Newstead, should open as a new two-platform halt in May. Willington station, on the Derby to Burton-on-Trent line, should open at the same time. It will initially be served by Nottingham-Birmingham trains until the Ivanhoe line is reopened from Leicester to Burton. The success of stage one of the Robin Hood line has enabled work to go ahead on stage 2 to Kirkby Hardwick (a park-and-ride station for Kirkby-in-Ashfield and Sutton-in-Ashfield), Mansfield Town, and Mansfield Woodhouse, with May 1995 as the target opening date. An additional station is likely to be provided in the centre of Kirkby.

Restorations: The Lincoln-Nottingham line will get its Sunday services back in May 1994.

Rehabilitation: Regional Railways have spent £10,000 on Newark Castle station providing new signs and a convenient new entrance from the municipal car park to the Lincoln-bound platform. The disused main station building still awaits an upturn in the property market, and a developer sympathetic to its architectural qualities.

Representations: Ilkeston Rail Action Group gained a positive response from officers from Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire County Council, when an early reopening of Ilkeston station was requested.

Reinventing the train: Local businessman David Merrick has a scheme for using ABB light rail technology and his firm's rail/road wheel transfer device to produce hybrid vehicles able to run on existing rail tracks and transfer to road running to cover gaps in the rail system and penetrate town centres.

Thames Valley

By Martin Smith

Strategy: The branch has recently produced an area Rail Passenger Strategy for the 90s and a leaflet, *Thames and Chilterns Needs More Railways* which highlights the need for new services and lines. While the future of freight traffic seems problematical, and the rundown of the coal industry means fewer coal trains to Didcot from the Midlands, new facilities have been installed to handle imported coal from Avonmouth. New loops have been put in between Challow and Wantage Road and the up loop between Stevenage and Didcot has been upgraded for passenger trains, so that it could also be used by the Bath to Oxford trains under consideration by Wiltshire and Oxfordshire County Councils.

Extra trains: The Marylebone to Birmingham service is reported to be doing well. Details have been announced of the new timetables to come into force in May, which will give extra trains between Marylebone and Snow Hill in the evenings, and an hourly service on Saturdays. The Thames Line will get four trains a day between the Thames Valley and Stratford-upon-Avon, with a late night return

Life Beyond Cars

This booklet explains how your lifestyle does not have to be dominated by the infernal combustion engine machine. £2.25 including post and packing from Alan Harwood, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN. Make cheques payable to RDS.

from Stratford at 23.15 for the benefit of theatre-goers.

Musical appeal: The Thames Valley branch is working closely with OBRAC to seek reopening of the Oxford-Bletchley line. A series of presentations with a musical show *Reopen the Line* is planned for mid-1994. Buckinghamshire County Council is making positive statements about the route and the need to make greater use of rail transport in its Structure Plan and Transport Strategy, but we are still waiting for positive action.

CrossRail: The branch is planning several meetings for 1994. The Branch AGM will be held at the Greyfriars Centre, Friar Street, Reading on 12 March at 2pm, with a guest speaker from the CrossRail Project Team. Other topics which we hope to study at future meetings include the M40 corridor transport survey and the Great Central project.

Lincolnshire

By Paul Jowett

Levelling the playing field: Lincolnshire County Council's investment during the 1980s in supporting the automation of level crossings on the Grantham-Skegness line has transformed it from the "weakest" line in the county to the "strongest". In spite of a 23% cut in subsidy, it was within budget in 1993. Total journey miles were reduced by only 3% to achieve this financial result. South East Lincolnshire Travellers Association heard at its annual meeting on 20 November. BR district manager D McKintosh said the line's future was secure in the short term but, as with any line in the long term, no guarantees could be given. It would be in the hands of the franchise. Steam charters may be repeated in 1994.

Waiting for Railtrack: Privatisation seems to have put in limbo the scheme to modernise the Sleaford-Spalding line and reopen Pinchbeck and Donington stations.

Roads: Plans for an M11 extension through the county may be receding although other north-south roads are being upgraded. A reinvigorated rail service from Doncaster to Peterborough via Sleaford and Spalding could take pressure off the roads.

London & Home Counties

By Keith Dyall

CrossRail: The news that CrossRail is to go ahead and that the Prime Minister has overruled Treasury objections has made the years of campaigning, the hours of manning a stall on Paddington Station and untold letters to people of "influence" all seem worthwhile. The campaigning is however still not over. We wish to see further extensions to the scheme implemented to ensure the fullest benefits to rail travellers. We wish to see LT&S and Stansted Express services using CrossRail together with Heathrow Express services in the West. We are also pressing for the Heathrow Branch and CrossRail to be extended a short distance to the South West lines at Feltham to greatly enhance travel options in that sector of London. This could relieve pressure on the M25 and is currently being looked at by the M25 sub-committee.

Thameslink: Prospects for Thameslink, the other cross-London link which RDS played a major role in implementing look good. Although not on the Government's current "to do" list, rumours abound that private capital could be forthcoming to carry out the necessary improvements at Borough Market and Spa Road. The improved traffic receipts would be sufficient to cover repayments. If

BR had not been forbidden to do this sort of thing by the Treasury we could have had this and many other improvements long ago. We also understand that Network North (Watford & Northampton Lines) is considering running services into Thameslink via the proposed Union Railways West Hampstead link.

Croxley Link: Other good news is that our long campaign for the Croxley Link is nearing a successful conclusion and subject to its clearing the hurdle of the Transport and Public Works Act we could see Metropolitan Line trains at Watford Junction by early 1996.

Now for the bad news: The Midway valley line (Strood-Paddock Wood) is being considered for closure because Railtrack's onerous rate of return requirements mean that urgent renewals are unlikely to be carried out. Campaigners at the ready watch this space for details.

South West

By Gerard Duddridge

Bridge alert: Floods which closed the North Devon line at the start of the pre-Christmas week, had not abated enough by January for divers to check the many bridges over the River Taw and its tributaries. The first train to Barnstaple ran on 19 January, though towards the end of the previous week, services had been restored as far as Eggesford.

Information drought: Floods also closed the Great Western main line, two miles north of Exeter St Davids at Stafford Bridge, but it was reopened on 23 December. Some trains were diverted via Yeovil, but most were scheduled for normal times from Tiverton Parkway or Taunton with coach connections from Exeter. Principal criticism must be the lack of a published emergency timetable and difficulties created by the closure of Exeter's telephone enquiry bureau.

Sleeper threat: Concern continues about the London to Penzance sleeper service which is not guaranteed beyond October 1994. More definite losses from May include the 0645 Penzance-Paddington and the termination of the last Waterloo-Exeter service at Honiton.

Progress: £150,000 of local authority money will help station improvements at Dawlish Warren, Exmouth, Honiton, Newton St Cyres, Polsoe Bridge and Starcross. In South Devon construction work has begun at Ivybridge for the new station expected to open on 30 May. The new Exe Vale station at Digby and Sowton is also expected to open in May.

Route protection: Mid Devon District Council has been urged to preserve four miles of trackbed to allow the restoration of Tiverton to the network.

100,000 tonnes off the road: Surprises abound as illustrated by the opening in Bodmin on 11 January of a six-day public inquiry concerned with a Light Railway Order. Six miles of track would be restored between Wenford and Boscarne Junction, but this is now an extension of the Camel Trail and users are objecting. North Cornwall District Council owns the route, has granted planning permission and is joint applicant with the Bodmin and Wenford (Freight) Company for the LRO. If successful, china clay will be carried, after a break of only 11 years, to the docks at Fowey via Bodmin Parkway. If unsuccessful, up to 100,000 tonnes of china clay will continue to be carried each year on country roads and through the centre of Bodmin. The branch attended and submitted a two-page letter of support.

LOCAL ACTION

North West

By Robert Cummings

Reopening: Out of all the doom, gloom and uncertainty over privatisation, Regional Railways are forging ahead with a range of new services in the May 1994 timetable for which they should be congratulated. The highlight of the new service is the introduction of an hourly service to Clitheroe, with trains running all the way to Manchester. Buses to Pendle Hill will connect with trains on Saturdays.

Airport take-off: Most of the other improvements in the region originate from the successful Manchester Airport link, which has exceeded expectations and will gain an extra train per hour into Manchester. New services from the airport run to Glasgow (four trains per day), Windermere (five trains per day) and Liverpool (hourly, semi-fast service). In addition there will be a new two-hourly service from Liverpool to Morecambe, while the Roses link, the Blackpool-Leeds service, reintroduced in the mid-80s and which has gone from strength to strength with each passing year, is improved again with alternate trains running through to York and Scarborough.

The losers: Unfortunately, there are users who lose. Entwistle loses many daytime trains (the evening service is retained owing to popularity of adjacent pub!) as Regional tries to shave a couple of minutes off the Clitheroe-Manchester journey time. Far more time could be saved if Regional had the resources to carry out trackwork in Sough Tunnel, site of a 30mph limit for years, install barriers at a lightly used level crossing which forces trains to pass at just 10 mph and reduce, or even abolish, the single track between Bromley Cross and Darwin. Entwistle is a lightly used station. Time and money could be saved by making it a request stop, without inconveniencing the existing users, mainly ramblers and drinkers.

Losers: Rochdale is to lose its popular 15-minute off-peak frequency as the existing Blackburn-Manchester-Rochdale service will become Clitheroe-Manchester-Shaw (on the Oldham loop). In addition to losing this one train per hour, the Rochdale-Manchester stopping train will follow one of the Calder Valley semi-fasts, effectively giving Rochdale a half-hourly service (with three trains).

Driven away: Other losers include users of the Wilmslow-Styal-Manchester line, whose half-hourly service was decimated last year when the airport line opened. Giving an extra train to the airport robs Styal of its remaining hourly path and reduces it to a peak-hour only service. A south-facing curve off the airport line would go some way to rectifying the situation, but in the meantime, existing users are driven away.

Peaks and troughs: South Liverpool stations at Mossley Hill, Allerton and West Allerton, which were compensated for the rundown of the Liverpool-Crewe local service with a half hourly service to Warrington, find this service halved to release an extra path for the Manchester Airport-Liverpool semi-fast service. Other losers will be Hough Green, Halewood and Sankey. Stopping trains terminate at Irlam, leaving Glazebrook without any trains between the peaks. Other losers are Frodsham and Helsby, victims of an attempt to speed up the Manchester-North Wales train.

Road nuisance: More bad news looms on Fylde Coast where Blackpool borough council

draft local plan indicates a desire to build a link road across the existing railway near Blackpool South station. Trying to bridge the railway would result in an unacceptably steep road, so the council has suggested one option might be to truncate the railway, making Blackpool Pleasure Beach station the terminus. The branch and our affiliated group, the Blackpool and Fylde Rail Users Association, have been pushing to have the line extended towards its original terminus at Blackpool Central and will fight this scheme.

Last trains: Following the announcement from Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman consenting to the withdrawal of passenger services on the Phillips Park-Ashburys and Denton Junction-Ashton Moss Junction line, the last trains, which had been running just once a week in one direction, ran on 22 January. The branch had spoken at the TUCC hearings on these lines, arguing against the procedure which allows BR to reduce a service to a token presence, driving away users and making it difficult to object when it is later proposed for withdrawal. Both lines have future potential, though there is now nothing to stop BR or Railtrack closing the line and lifting the track when they please.

Annual meeting: The branch AGM will be held at the Civic Club, Mortimer Street, Birkhead, at 2 pm on Saturday 19 March.

Scotland

By Douglas Smart

Privatisation: Following the information contained in *Modern Railways* regarding problems with ticketing arrangements on the Gatwick routes and the substantial increase in staff levels on Gatwick Express, the branch wrote to Tory MPs in Scotland saying, more or less, "We told you so" and warning them of many more difficult years to come. In reply, Malcolm Rifkind told us there was no proposal to privatise the railways while a letter on behalf of his neighbouring MP and fellow minister, Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, told us privatisation was good news for railway passengers!

Resistance: The branch is now preparing a robust plan for future services in the ScotRail franchise. Any cuts in services will be met with strong resistance and we will demand improved services throughout the country with better frequency on many services, new stations and lines reopened.

Campaigns: RDS is taking part in two vital campaigns based respectively in Edinburgh and Glasgow. ForthRight Alliance has conducted a well-publicised campaign against the proposed privately funded Second Forth Road Bridge. It has put forward an alternative scheme of a toll-free Kincardine Bridge (which has to be replaced anyway), some modest road improvements and major improvements to the rail network, all at a fraction of the cost of a new bridge. There is massive public support for the FA scheme with many local and national bodies indicating approval. The local evening paper has contained messages of support from South Wales where the new Severn Bridge tolls are causing problems. Railtrack has also indicated support. If this means Railtrack is going to take a much more bullish attitude on road v rail issues than BR ever did, this may be a considerable consolation in the otherwise bleak prospect of privatisation.

Glasgow: Glasgow for People has organised a major campaign against motorway schemes, pointing out that the city is unique in Europe in the scale of its motorway plans. As in the

east, rail improvements are being promoted as a sustainable alternative to road building.

Reopenings: To its credit, Strathclyde Regional Council has reopened two lines in Glasgow. After 20 years of campaigning by RDS and many others, the region has finally agreed in principle to proceed with the St John's link to provide a north-south link across the city. Even here they have failed to do the sensible thing, to provide an interchange with the existing east-west route. RDS will be campaigning to ensure that it gets it right in the end.

Annual meeting: The branch's AGM on 19 March in Glasgow will be addressed by Ian Dick, secretary of the Transport Users' Consultative Committee for Scotland. Mr Dick has shown in his media appearances he is not afraid to speak his mind in defence of rail.

East Anglia

By Trevor Garrod

150 celebrations: RDS is closely involved in plans to mark the 150 anniversary of Norfolk's first railway. The Norwich-Reedham-Yarmouth line opened in 1844. The first week of May has been set aside for celebrations. For full details, or if you would like to help, please contact our member, Mike Taylor, Mariners' Tavern, 69 Howard Street South, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk NR30 1LN. Tel: 0493 332299.

Wessex

By Peter Argent

On track for the future: Railtrack's South West zone director Jim Morgan will address our AGM in Weymouth.

Regional boost: The University of Bristol is helping Regional Railways and local councils to come up with ways to boost use of the picturesque Weymouth-Westbury line.

Island fears: Summer services to the Isle of Wight could be affected by problems encountered during repair work at Portsmouth Harbour. A shortage of rolling stock, despite extra refurbished London Underground units, has affected the island.

Bargain Guides

The following By Rail guides are now available for only £1:

Kent and East Sussex, Five Shires, South West, Lancs and Cumbria, Yorkshire, Surrey and Sussex, Thames and Downs, Wales and the Marches.

The following By Rail guides cost only £1.50:

East Anglia, North East, Lincs, Notts and Derbyshire, Peaks and Plains, Scotland.

In and Around London By Rail £2.50

Add 15% (minimum 50p) for post and packing.

The following books are available at post free prices:

The Line that Refused to Die £7.99

Birdwatching by Train £6.70

Make cheques payable to RDS. Send orders or an SAE for full sales list to Alan Harwood, RDS Sales Officer, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN

WESTMINSTER

Tunnel link route

Transport Secretary John MacGregor made a statement about the route of the Channel Tunnel link on 24 JANUARY.

He said: "The House will recall that in March 1993, I announced a preferred route and asked Union Railways to lead the consultation exercise on it. Union Railways reported to me in October and I am now able to announce the Government's final conclusions on the route.

"Union Railways' report confirms St Pancras is preferable to King's Cross as the terminus on environmental, operational and commercial grounds. I therefore confirm the choice of St Pancras as the London terminus. "BR will no longer need to continue seeking powers to build the King's Cross Low Level station and will be withdrawing the King's Cross Bill. Links from St Pancras will be provided to the East and West Coast main lines to facilitate through services to the Midlands, the North of England and Scotland; and Midland main line services will be retained at St Pancras.

"I propose to seek powers in the hybrid Bill for the advance works for a new Thameslink station under St Pancras at Midland Road. This would be the optimum location for any eventual new Thameslink station serving the King's Cross and St Pancras area. It is our intention that further improvements to Thameslink would be carried forward by the private sector. The use of any powers obtained will be a matter for the private sector promoters, not for the Government.

"I now turn to the route itself. The approach to St Pancras has been one of the most contentious issues in London. The surface route along the North London corridor would be difficult to construct and environmentally damaging. I considered the approach to St Pancras in combination with three other options recommended by Union Railways for operational reasons. I have accepted a package which

incorporates a tunnel, a grade-separated approach to the terminus, a short open concrete box at Stratford to allow for an emergency crossover, and advance works for a connection to Temple Mills.

"In Kent, there is no easy choice at Pepper Hill. The choice between a tunnel under Pepper Hill and an alignment around it cannot be made without more information. Before taking a final decision I shall hold further consultations with those concerned.

Reducing noise

"I confirm that there will be a short tunnel under the North Downs. I have accepted a 240-metre long tunnel at Hollingbourne to preserve the setting of the conservation area and reduce noise impacts; and a 170-metre long tunnel at Sandway under the Headcorn Road so as to reduce the impact on the conservation area.

"At Ashford, I have had to rule out the tunnel option to the west of Ashford on grounds of cost; but, at the request of Ashford Borough Council, I have asked Union Railways to consider urgently the relative merits of the present northerly preferred route and a central route through Ashford but then proceeding on the surface in a northwesterly direction. The new international station at Ashford is now proceeding and will serve passengers both before and after the construction of a new link.

"At the Dollands Moor freight inspection facility adjacent to Eurotunnel's terminal, the Bill will allow for possible realignment to improve operations, with the further possibility of allowing international freight trains to have direct access to the rail link, thus removing the need for an additional freight inspection facility at Westenhanger. I shall also provide in the Bill for two freight passing loops in Kent; to keep open the option of taking more freight trains if demand justifies it in the future.

"I turn now to intermediate

stations. The decision in October 1991 to route the rail link on an easterly approach into London was based in large part on the opportunities for regeneration. With that objective in mind, the Government's view remains that, subject to satisfactory finance, there should be at least one intermediate station between Ashford and London. Four possible locations - Stratford, Rainham, Ebbsfleet and Nashenden - have been looked at. The proposed domestic station at Nashenden has no private sector or local authority promoter or support. I have decided that it can be ruled out. That leaves Stratford, Rainham and Ebbsfleet. Ebbsfleet and Rainham are in direct competition, both being M25 parkway stations. On present information, a combined international and domestic station at the northern site at Ebbsfleet seems the better parkway station option, but a final decision will depend upon the provision of satisfactory financing by the promoting group.

Financial case

"The economic case for a station at Stratford has yet to be fully made. If the justification for one - in particular the financial case - improves before the hybrid Bill is introduced, powers could be sought to build a longer box than the one I referred to earlier.

"I intend to issue planning directions in the next few weeks to safeguard the route announced today. I want to make it clear that the decisions on safeguarding the route announced today are final. Any changes which may be proposed by the private sector partner who will eventually build and operate the new link must be within the area safeguarded. Furthermore any changes must not materially worsen the environmental impacts of the safeguarded route. The private sector will however have flexibility to decide on some operational features.

"I expect that the private sector will also want to consider carefully the phasing of the works. I recognise there is considerable concern about blight. Homes wholly or substantially required for building the railway, together with those seriously affected by the works or operation of the railway, will be included in the safeguarded zone and will be offered voluntary purchase. Any other homes that may be affected by operational noise above the proposed threshold for noise insulation will qualify for purchase in cases

of hardship. As I announced last November, the project will go ahead on the fastest possible timetable, with the private sector assuming full responsibility for construction and operation. "The Government is willing in principle to provide substantial public sector support, in recognition not only of the significant domestic transport and regeneration benefits from the new line, but also of some of the very large benefits to international passengers.

Government assistance will be provided partly through the transfer of European Passenger Services to the private sector partner as soon as the partner has been chosen. The total Government assistance to be provided will depend on the outcome of the competition to select the private sector partner, which will be launched soon.

"A hybrid Bill is being drafted on the basis of the safeguarded route. We aim to have it ready by this autumn for consideration by the private sector and for the Government to take forward thereafter. The timing of the Bill's introduction will depend on the parliamentary timetable and the private sector's views.

"This solution will provide a fast rail link between London and the Channel Tunnel. It achieves all the Government's objectives. People who live in Kent will get further improved rail services to London. Rail travellers will receive the extra capacity when it is needed around the turn of the century. It provides a new railway which is sensitive to the land and townscapes through which it passes. It establishes a joint venture in which both public and private sector play their roles.

"It is a further demonstration, coming on top of Dartford Bridge, the second Severn crossing, Heathrow Express and the Jubilee Line extension, all of which have been built or are under construction, that the private finance initiative is now moving ahead fast."

Following the statement, Labour transport spokesman Frank Dobson (St Pancras and Holborn) said the whole route had still not been fixed, there were doubts about intermediate stations, proper environmental protection had not been guaranteed to the satisfaction of the people affected, compensation terms were still not fair to all concerned, all the blight had not been lifted and the necessary funds have still not been found. He welcomed the choice of St Pancras as the terminal, the commitment to tunnelling

WATCH

through North London and Kent and the firming-up of most of the route. However, dither and blight remained. The link will not be completed for nine or 10 years. Until then, freight and passengers will face a 70-mile bottleneck from London to the tunnel, an inconvenience for London but a disaster for the rest of the country.

Trains will travel at 185mph in France, 85mph through the tunnel and 50mph through Kent. From Waterloo, passengers will have to lug their baggage across London to King's Cross, St Pancras, Euston or Paddington. "Is not that a national disgrace when the French link is already in place? Surely the Government had a strategic duty to ensure that the whole of Britain received the maximum benefits from the tunnel as soon as possible rather than just the South East?"

He welcomed the Government's change of heart over public funding, and added that the link would have been built by now if the conversion had come earlier.

Railtrack sale?

Before the Channel Tunnel announcement, Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman was asked by David Willetts (Con, Havant) whether Railtrack would be able to sell lines to operators. Mr Freeman answered: "Yes, but only in exceptional circumstances. We obviously wish to give Railtrack a national responsibility to maintain the rail network and invest in its improvement - particularly electrification - and a national responsibility for safety."

Labour's George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) asked: "Would it then be possible for Railtrack to sell all the track in Scotland to a privatised ScotRail?"

Mr Freeman said: "In theory, but that would be counter to our policy which is that there should be one body responsible for the whole of the rail infrastructure in Great Britain.

"That will benefit ease of access to the rail network by different operators. In cases where rail infrastructure is sold, not only will it be the responsibility of Railtrack to consider that, but there will have to be open competition to ensure that best value for money is obtained."

Labour's Brian Wilson (Cunninghame North) asked: "Will the Minister confirm that with two and a half months to go before shadow franchises, the Government has still not come up with a system for charging access to the tracks?"

"Will the minister also confirm that the Government has now accepted that it will not manage to privatise even the Gatwick Express in the current year?"

Tunnel benefit

Hugh Bayley (Lab, York) asked: "Which regions does the Minister expect will benefit most from rail traffic carried by the Channel Tunnel?" Mr Freeman responded: "All of them."

Jacqui Lait (Con, Hastings and Rye) asked: "Does Mr Freeman accept that the tourism industry of the South East will benefit greatly from traffic from the Channel Tunnel? Does he accept that the weak link in the south coast railway is the Hastings to Ashford line? What progress has been made towards its electrification?"

Mr Freeman said: "The electrification of that particular line will be studied by Railtrack and we will ask it to produce a 10-year investment plan. Doubtless it will reflect on the priority of electrification. I am glad that the local authorities have shown an interest in contributing to its costs."

Bruce Grocott (Lab, The Wrekin) enquired: "What plans has the Secretary of State to encourage the transfer of passengers and freight from road to rail?"

Mr MacGregor said: "Government policies are designed to encourage passengers and freight to transfer from road to rail where that makes economic and environmental sense. Ninety per cent of passenger and inland freight goes by road, but next year 40% of total transport expenditure will be used to improve public transport, so my department's expenditure is positively skewed to public transport."

David Lidington (Con, Aylesbury) asked: "Does Mr MacGregor agree that the completion of the CrossRail project would encourage many more passengers, including my constituents in Aylesbury, Wendover and Great Missenden, to switch from road to rail? Can he confirm the project will now go ahead as originally planned?" Mr MacGregor responded: "It is certainly true that in London and the South East where commuters predominate, public transport is more important. As for CrossRail, we have made the position clear. That means the Bill will be able to go ahead tomorrow."

Nick Harvey (Lib Dem, North



Devon) asked: "Given the Secretary of State's recent conversion to the idea that road passenger traffic cannot grow unchecked, will he rethink his motorway policy?"

Mr MacGregor said motorway building was "essential on environmental grounds" and will have an important part to play for many decades.

Later Roads Minister Robert (I love my car) Key claimed "only 20% of the 1,500,000 new cars registered each year were 'additional' vehicles while the rest were replacements for vehicles scrapped.

Dafydd Wigley (Plaid Cymru, Caernarfon) pressed for electrification of the North Wales line from Crewe to Holyhead and immediate upgrading of the track for 90mph running. Mr Freeman said he would press Railtrack to look at this. Frank Dobson linked the Holyhead line with West Coast main line modernisation and asked when it would be carried out. Mr Freeman "could not say" and said private investment was "imminent". Gwyneth Davies (Lab, Crewe and Nantwich) said the £12 million cost of privatisation this year would have helped to modernise the North Wales line instead of being handed to bankers and accountants. Mr Freeman said £12 million in the context of £12 billion was a small price to pay for the best advice.

Thames crossings

Former Roads Minister Peter Bottomley (Con, Eltham) raised the need for a rail tunnel at Woolwich during a debate on transport in south-east London on 3 DECEMBER. He said: "There are fewer rail crossings over the Thames in east London than road crossings. A tunnel would make it possible for people to make connections with Network SouthEast lines as well as to Underground lines - a major improvement."

Nick Raynsford (Lab, Greenwich) said: "Investment in the rail service is crucial. There is an urgent need for increased investment, not just in rolling stock, but in improved signalling and track. The rail crossing at Woolwich would serve a very useful purpose, linking the Kent services with north London and, in the course of doing so, making it possible to run an orbital service around the whole of London. We hear about the

appalling congestion on the M25 but the link at Woolwich offers the opportunity of an orbital rail service."

He insisted that there should be a station on the proposed Jubilee line at North Greenwich and criticised the Government for trying to build the Docklands Light Railway extension to Lewisham on the cheap.

"It is an amazing comment on transport policy under this Government that the Department of the Environment is now responsible for the Docklands Light Railway. What a way to run a transport system."

He criticised the Government's privatisation policy. "Their policy is sell, sell, sell and, if the thing cannot be made to work, sell it to someone else. It is a deplorable surrender of responsibility.

"It is the product of political dogma seized on by a desperate Government who have failed lamentably to look after Londoners' transport interests. "Incidentally they have reneged disgracefully on their election pledges to provide desperately needed investment in London Underground, a point that the Opposition will continue to make in the months ahead."

He went on to stress the importance of the Travelcard and how it was still threatened despite Government 'assurances'. "It is all very well for Ministers to say that they will continue with the Travelcard, but can they guarantee that it will continue to be available on the same terms and at the same real cost, without a huge increase in price? Many of us are concerned that even if a token travel card continues to be available, a considerable increase in cost will take away a great deal of its value."

He warned of the dangers of traffic pollution. "It is no coincidence that there is an above-average incidence of asthma, especially among children in south-east London.

"Against that background it is worrying that the Government still seem preoccupied with road building and investment in new road infrastructure rather than improving and extending the public transport network." Answering questions about the possible privatisation of the Underground, Steven Norris, the Minister for Transport in London, said: "We have no plans, in the short or medium term, for Underground privatisation."



EDITED BY JACK ELLIS,

MICHAEL WEINBERG AND LLOYD BUTLER

The dunce of Europe

Railways throughout Europe are making ambitious bids to upgrade their conventional rail systems with help from European Commission loans and grants.

But Britain has put forward NONE – "because of the current reorganisation of the British railways".

Even Ireland submitted nine schemes, including a six-year programme to upgrade the 82-mile line between Dublin and Belfast with new track and signalling to allow for 110 mph running.

Germany, which has been struggling with the very real problem of uniting its two separate railway systems, has submitted 44 projects.

The German Government has re-formed DB and DR into a publicly owned company but nevertheless has found time to think seriously about expanding and improving the network.

France, which already has a superior network to Britain and is forging ahead with plans for future improvements, submitted 21 projects.

It wants to speed up freight trains, expand tunnels to UIC B+ gauge, electrify links to Switzerland and Italy, and improve Paris bypass routes.

Italy has put forward 15 schemes, including a new high-speed line linking Turin, Milan and Venice, and four-tracking Milan-Naples.

Portugal has put forward seven schemes, including electrification of the Lisbon-Porto line while Spain has the highest number of projects – 55 in all.

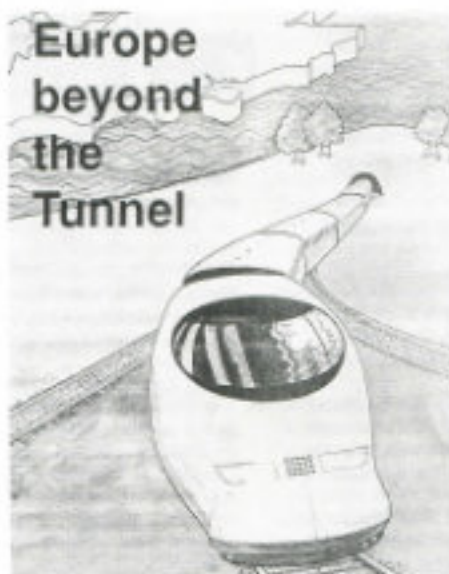
If Britain had all-round excellent rail services, perhaps there would be some excuse for this abysmal lack of forward planning. As it is, rail freight tonnage dropped by 7% between 1985 and 1991.

Yet with sensible planning policies, freight does not have to go by road. In Denmark, rail freight tonnage went up by 10% in the same period, in Italy by 15%, in Portugal by 44%, in Austria by 12%, and in Switzerland by 12%.

British Rail is to be congratulated on increasing the number of rail passengers in the same period by 8%, equalling the percentage figure for France, but in Spain, passenger numbers went up by 60% and in Ireland by 34%, in Italy by 20%, in the Netherlands by 47%, and in Switzerland by 20%.

These figures were provided for RDS by Brian Simpson, the Euro MP for Cheshire East who is the European socialist group transport spokesman. An RDS delegation of president Michael Caton, vice-chairman Ray King and international committee secretary John Barfield went to Brussels on 2 February.

Euro MP Alf Lomas arranged for us to have a



Positive action: The new guide book produced jointly by RDS and Leading Edge

meeting with the European Commission's top railway official Hugh Rees and Ken Collins, the president of the environment committee of the European Parliament.

While Britain does not seem to be interested in getting money from Europe for improving our neglected rail infrastructure, others are.

One project which is going ahead with help from the European Investment Bank is a new TGV rail line to Brussels. The bank is contributing £385 million for the 55-mile double track line from the Belgian capital to the French border where it will connect with the 185mph European TGV network and of course the Channel Tunnel.

The money will also provide four double Eurostar trains which can carry 800 people apiece, a new terminal at Brussels Midi and a maintenance depot.

In this country money from the European Investment Bank is being spent on the Jubilee line extension which is far from being the most important public transport project but suits the Government for political purposes.

In the capital, CrossRail and Thameslink 2000 should have been approved first. The West Coast main line is also crying out for investment while public money is still being wasted in massive quantities in Britain on road building.

The European Investment Bank has lent £31.5 million to Staffordshire County Council for

road schemes "to stimulate economic growth and improving traffic conditions in towns".

These spurious arguments are regularly trotted out by the British Government without any basis in fact. Spending on railways is a better way to stimulate the economy and, as everyone but the Government knows, building new roads merely attracts MORE traffic on ALL roads.

Into Europe with RDS!

By the end of January, nearly 500 RDS members showed they were keen to travel by special train through the Channel Tunnel this summer. As soon as dates and fares are known, full booking forms will be sent out.

We also hope to welcome to London a party from the French Federation National d'Usagers des Transports.

The RDS book *Europe Beyond the Tunnel* is our other major contribution to the commemoration of the opening.

The Eurostar train will whisk you from London to Lille in under two hours. There you can change to frequent local trains that enable you to explore historic Flanders. The RDS book is an essential and entertaining companion to Bruges, Ghent, Antwerp, Ypres and Furnes – their history, architecture, people, transport and gastronomy.

If the Rhine is more to your taste, our book takes you around Cologne and Bonn (only one change of train away from London) or by boat, bus, train and on foot around the vine-clad slopes of the Mosel Valley.

Scenic rides on the Paris Metro? A station turned into an art gallery? Delights of the Train Bleu buffet? EuroDisney or Parc Astérix? All is revealed in the Paris section of our 112-page illustrated book. It tells you about Maastricht, what to do with a Strippenkaart and how to get to Big-Bang-Schtroumpf!

This unique book, compiled by RDS members, is aimed at the general reader and is the first joint project by RDS and Leading Edge. The book is available at a special pre-publication price to RDS members. Save 20% by placing your order NOW. Send £5.60 which includes post and packing to RDS sales officer Alan Harwood (address in panel below left). The offer closes on 30 April when the usual price will be £7.95 including postage.

Thomas: Another book which RDS has facilitated is *Thomas the Privatized Tank Engine*, just published by Midland Publishing. You can get your copy for £5.50 post free from Alan Harwood. Make cheques payable to RDS which will benefit from royalties on the book.

Capital improvement: Members of RDS are invited to a CrossRail evening on Tuesday 19 April. Robert Mott, Mike Lampkin and David Warren from the BR/LU team will give an illustrated presentation and then answer questions. The meeting is at 7pm at the Free Church Federal Council, 27 Tavistock Square, London WC1 9HH. Light refreshments will be available. Entrance is free but donations will be welcome.

Conference: A one-day Transport 2000 conference with the Pedestrians Association's John Stewart as guest speaker is being held in Bedford on 26 March. There will be speakers from Oxfordshire County Council and RDS. The cost is only £5. Details from 0234 347039.

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