

# Railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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90p



## CrossRail scandal

Treasury Chief Secretary Michael Portillo was probably delighted when the CrossRail Bill flopped in May.

Mr Portillo, who travels by official car the few hundred yards from his Pimlico flat to Westminster, had been trying to get the project ditched for months.

Four backbench MPs who were scrutinising the Bill in its committee stage finally did the dirty work for him.

Unbelievably they refused to give their reasons chanting the arcane mantra "we are a quasi judicial body and we don't need to explain".

After some ritual wringing of hands in public, it seems the Government is now happy to see what was the most important public transport project in London die.

It had prevaricated for years over CrossRail. But in the last few months, after businessmen, politicians, transport experts

and rail travellers had spelled out in detail why CrossRail was essential, Prime Minister John Major and Transport Secretary John MacGregor had both SAID they supported the scheme.

CrossRail must be brought back with even better specifications than before.

There is certainly plenty of money being spent.

Government subsidies to rail lines are being doubled! But don't rejoice. The extra costs are merely to pay for privatisation.

The Treasury - after years of starving British Rail and watching services cut and stations de-staffed - has quietly agreed to increase the 1993-94 total of £900 million to £1,825 million in 1994-95.

The increase has been at the expense of a sharp reduction in capital spending. No surprise therefore that there is dismay and redundancy among train

builders. Labour's Brian Wilson revealed leaked documents from the Department of Transport spelling out that the privatisation reorganisation has already cost £649 million.

That money is about equal to the investment needed to upgrade the entire West Coast main line.

The Government claims that privatisation will bring benefits to the passenger. We're waiting.

RDS chairman Steve Wilkinson pointed out: "Not one item of new rolling stock has been bought since privatisation."

The cost of operating the East Coast main line alone has doubled to £170 million because of privatisation.

Over the last 20 years, the real cost of rail travel has gone up by 39% while the real cost of motoring has increased by only 2%. The Government is to blame by constantly favouring road building rather than public transport.

*"The best tram in the world" is now operating in Sheffield, after the £240 million project was opened by Princess Anne in May.*

*The German-built Supertram interchanges with main line rail services at Meadowhall shopping centre and should be a sure-fire success.*

*This is one of the few public transport schemes for which Government money has been made available.*

*Manchester's Metrolink trams have already proved highly successful in persuading people to leave their cars at home. But the Government is still refusing funding for Birmingham's £112 million Metro phase one and the £140 million Croydon Tram Link.*

*A light rail system is also being considered for both the Bristol and Cheltenham and Gloucester areas.*

*Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown has called for £4,400 million of motorway widening money to be diverted into tram schemes and mainline rail electrification.*



Recently a senior railway manager wrote to me about RDS activity and how "this tendency to talk down the industry serves only to depress the level of businesses and becomes somewhat self-fulfilling".

His words do point to a dilemma facing organisations like ours.

We want to see more use of rail but do we discourage it when we criticise services or warn of the negative effects of Government policies?

If we issue leaflets or appear in the media criticising high fares, overcrowded or unreliable trains, are we not driving away passengers and playing into the hands of the road lobby?

In fact much of our effort has been devoted to "talking up" the industry, spelling out the advantages of rail transport and pointing to BR's successes in introducing new services.

Our leaflets *Railways and the Environment* and *Rail Investment Equals Jobs* were aimed at opinion formers and decision takers.

Our *By Rail* books have promoted services throughout Britain and our new book *Europe beyond the Tunnel* promotes rail services to Europe.

Last summer, our *Sprint across England* leaflet promoted the improved services between East Anglia, the Midlands and the North West and strengthened the hand of BR management when the Department of Transport wanted to break up this group of services.

When there are problems on the railways, or question marks hanging over services and facilities, we must explain the reasons and apportion blame.

We can then direct our campaigning in the most effective way. Sometimes it is the fault of management, but not always.

If fares are high, or station access made more difficult by a property development, we can explain how this results from Government insistence that new investment comes from increasing fares and selling off railway land.

We can then tell people - as our delegation to Brussels discovered in February - that ours is the only Government in the European Union that has not put forward any rail schemes for community funding!

If a train is cancelled because of staff shortages, sickness or because a mechanical fault cannot be repaired in time, who is to blame?

BR has been forced to take on 1,000 extra office staff just to handle the run-up to privatisation, and incurred £50 million extra costs last year, expected to rise to at least £120 million in 1994-5.

Could not that money have been better spent employing more operating and maintenance staff? My own (right-wing Conservative) MP attacked BR last year for

being overstaffed, saying they employed (horror of horrors) 31,000 engineers!

He has not so far as I am aware, protested at the costs of additional clerical workers, lawyers and accountants imposed by privatisation.

I have recently had reports from members of less flexible ticketing arrangements as a result of splitting BR into shadow franchises.

I have advised them to complain to local management and also, more importantly, to their MPs. If the MP is Conservative, he or she almost certainly voted for this set-up and is responsible for the extra hassle being suffered by the public.

If the MP is from one of the opposition parties, such information will be valuable in helping to change things.

Meanwhile in accentuating the positive, we must remind the public of the many useful Saver, Apex, Ranger and other tickets still available, and to take every opportunity to argue for their retention.

The media also play a key role in our work. Some years ago, a TV producer told me he did not want to know of points on which I agreed with the local railway manager, only those on which I disagreed with him.

In my experience, media handling of rail issues has become somewhat fairer and better-informed since then, no doubt partly thanks to our work.

However, criticism of BR still makes an easy headline and some journalists cannot resist it.

As I pointed out to the BR manager quoted above, I have often defended him and his colleagues against ill-informed media reporting, even if my comments failed to get into the headlines.

In March, a TV interviewer wanted me to talk about the threat of closures under privatisation.

I said there was indeed a danger of cuts and closures brought about by a short-sighted Government or private companies with no experience of running trains, or companies obtaining a monopoly of public transport in an area.

However we are keen to work with present managers and staff to promote services and improve them.

A nationwide rail network run by experienced and well-qualified professionals, confident of backing from a Government which appreciates their worth, can gain new business and play an increased role in our social and economic fabric.

That is what we in RDS want to see.

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

## Reopen our rail lines

By Trevor Garrod

RDS is fighting for rail reopenings in a variety of ways.

A play called *Reopen the Line* is being staged by the Oxon and Bucks Rail Action Committee with help from money raised by RDS's 1993 national draw.

Performances were held at Leighton Buzzard and Winslow in May and June. Further performances are planned for Aylesbury, Oxford, Bletchley, Bicester, Woburn Sands and Bedford.

For more details, send an SAE to OBRAC's Chris Wright at 83 Blackmoor Gate, Furzton, Milton Keynes MK4 1DD.

The Bicester-Bletchley gap is one of the most glaring in the network and one which could be plugged quickly if the political will was stiffened by a well-informed public.

Rebuilding a link between Bedford and the East Coast main line would take longer but the concept continues to be raised by Transport 2000 Bedfordshire which is affiliated to RDS.

RDS members attended and addressed the T2000 conference on East-West links in March. Ring roads and bypasses have failed to solve Oxford's traffic problems. Now the county council's Dick Helling said it was supporting restoration of a rail passenger service to Bicester and beyond.

The conference applauded steps taken by Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire to reopen lines and urged Bedfordshire County Council to assist the restoration of an East-West rail link.

A new East-West Rail Links Committee, under the auspices of RDS, has been set up. If you would like to help, contact Richard Pill, 4 Rowlandson Way, Manton Heights, Bedford MK41 7LT.

The society's reopenings and new railways committee has also produced a paper called *Route Protection - Implications for Local Action*. Written by Gerard Duddridge, it explains how to argue for protection. For a copy, send an SAE to Gerard at 67 Higher Exwick Hill, Exwick, Exeter EX4 2AW. He wants feedback from members.

Gerard has also done detailed work on trackbeds in the South West and has worked with David Henshaw author of *The Great Railway Conspiracy*, on compiling information about the state of trackbeds.

David is planning a new book *Where's My Line?* which will look at abandoned routes around the country. This new book will serve as a guide and a warning of the many routes which have been lost.

□ This year's national draw is to raise money for rail improvement and reopenings. Send in your returns.

# Time to stop the rot

*Cambridge has been choked by traffic for years and there have been desperate, flailing attempts to solve the problem. Environmentally friendly cycles have been banned along with cars in the centre! Expensive "bypasses" have been toyed with, but the traffic fumes remain. The benefits of reopening the rail line to St Ives have been largely ignored.*

*Now at last the topsy-turvy turmoil of privatisation has changed things. Because Railtrack would not take over the trackbed, local minds were at last concentrated by fears of the land being sold off. Chris Burton and Nick Dibben outline the story so far.*

After intense pressure, very much RDS led, the county council transportation committee voted in March to buy the trackbed of the former Cambridge to St Ives line in order to reserve it as a public transport corridor.

Councillors from all the major political parties now want to reopen the route, and provide a through service from St Ives to London.

Extending existing London to Cambridge services, an idea first mooted five years ago in the RDS report *Making Tracks for St Ives*, will give St Ives a huge boost.

Council studies have shown that electrification would be cheaper than buying new diesel trains.

Competing with this is a proposal for a guided busway. Not only is it nearly twice the price of the railway project, it also carries considerable uncertainty as to how this concept might be married to the city's narrow streets. It would also be more polluting.

Although passenger trains from St Ives ceased in 1970, 90% of the line continued to be used by a daily sand train from Fen Drayton.

When this too stopped operating in 1992, there was widespread fear that the track would be removed and the land quickly sold off as part of the prelude to privatisation.

At that time, little interest was evident within the county council for reopening the line. Councillors cited a previous



Years of neglect: But the line is still in situ at Oakington station on the Cambridge-St Ives route. Picture: Nick Dibben

study which labelled the reopening as uneconomic and instead were showing greater interest in new studies assessing the route's potential for light rail and as a busway.

However, the high cost of these schemes, coupled with a new RDS leaflet and a petition signed by over 2,500 people helped bring the railway option back into focus.

A new study was authorised in January 1993 and a deal was also reached with British Rail to stop it removing the track.

Our Government, despite knowing of the proposals, failed to include the line in the rail network to be handed over to Railtrack.

So now the county will have to buy the trackbed, a case of local taxpayers having to pay for what they already own.

Always critical of the previous report carried out in 1988, the RDS produced its own cost estimate, around £9 million, plus a list of potential passenger business flows.

Everyone was amazed therefore when the subsequent preliminary report, issued in October 1993, blandly asserted the cost of re-opening to be £22 million! The report suggested a mere 1,300 passengers a day

would use the line, not enough for it to break even. Close scrutiny by the RDS revealed that cost had been based on provision of new track and a new electrical sub-station, neither of which were needed.

Councillors rejected this scheme and instructed officials to carry out further cost studies, the results of which were to be submitted for British Rail assessment.

RDS also discovered that the number of users did not include important London or cross-city journeys. RDS set about spreading enlightenment among councillors and officials.

In March this year, reopening costs were assessed at £15m and the number of daily users at 3,600. On this basis, annual revenue would exceed operating costs by £¼ million.

The new report was able to identify non-user benefits to the tune of £600,000 a year accrued from reduced road accidents and traffic congestion.

Nearly half the operating cost derives from expected £350,000 annual leasing charges on each of two four-car electric units.

RDS met with BR's West Anglia and Great Northern Train Operating Company

which felt that one extra unit might suffice, especially if a new platform at Cambridge station was forthcoming.

In the fortnight prior to the council decision, more than 300 enthusiastic supporters packed a public meeting in St Ives. East Anglian branch secretary Nick Dibben and councillors from the main political parties spoke up for the scheme.

There were letters of support from Labour MP Anne Campbell and Tory MP James Paice who were unable to attend. A letter from the Prime Minister, whose constituency includes St Ives unfortunately did not arrive until after the meeting but indicated great interest in the project.

Local firms along the route such as Anglian Water, Barclays Bank and Knapp Laboratories also registered their support for the reopening and recognised the potential benefits to their employees.

RDS has suggested 1997 as a target for reopening, to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the opening.

The main question though is left unanswered: Who is to fund the project? Any reopening scheme will be dependent on a Government Section 56 grant.

An application will have to go through snares laid by the Department of Transport, the Treasury and Franchise Director Roger Salmon.

As a first move, Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman has been invited to visit the area.

Last year the Minister said he wanted to be remembered for reopening railways. Let us hope recent Government statements about the need to shift away from dependence on road transport means something.

The profile of RDS has been immeasurably enhanced through the extensive campaign coverage via press, radio and television.

The line should of course also be extended to Godmanchester and Huntingdon where it could make a connection with the East Coast main line. With a 10-mile piece of rebuilt track from Sandy to Bedford, this reopening could become part of a strategic rail route from the East Coast to Oxford and the West. *The battle continues!*

## PLATFORM For your views on the present and future of rail

### Ignorance kills

I have followed with interest the items and letters concerning lorry speeds in recent issues of Railwatch.

Having been involved in road safety training, I know that speed plays a large part in most road accidents

The replies Mr Burton received from his MP Gillian Shephard and Transport Secretary John MacGregor about lorries travelling at 60 mph on the single carriageway A134 King's Lynn-Thetford road beggar belief. Mr MacGregor said the road was "unrestricted" and lorries were subject to the national speed limit of 60 mph.

Mr MacGregor does not seem to know that all our roads are restricted, though from drivers' behaviour you would not think so. The speed limits for lorries are contained in the latest Highway Code. Let's hope Mr MacGregor's chauffeur at least knows what is in it.

Goods vehicles over 7.5 tonnes are restricted to 40 mph on single carriageway roads, 50 mph on dual carriageways and 60 mph on motorways.

Until there is observance of these limits, we will continue to have carnage on the roads.

Clearly Mr MacGregor knows little of road safety.

P B Jovett, 8 Deepdale Drive,  
Leasingham, Sleaford, Lincs  
NG34 8LR

### Spending priorities

Despite being a lifelong rail enthusiast and a reluctant supporter of European unity, I cannot get excited about the Channel Tunnel. For the billions it has cost, the benefit to most people will be surprisingly little. Direct services for holidaymakers is hardly a priority market. The same goes for the fast link to the tunnel.

Of course if every penny came from the private sector, it would be churlish to look a gift horse in the mouth. But it won't. Railwatch 59 tells us that the British Government has decided to contribute a "considerable amount" of the £2-3 billion needed.

I'd rather see the money spent on track improvements throughout the network. London and the South East gets a favoured deal as it is. Those of us in the North are seeing cuts. The closure of Elsham and Brocklesby stations, along with the axing of Sunday services from

Grimsby to Lincoln, spring to mind, rather than talk of vast new investment.

Grandiose schemes have always been given priority over "bread and butter" spending, even though the latter would produce a greater tangible return to the ordinary rail customer who is suffering a plague of speed restrictions.

Tim Mickleburgh, 101 Scartho  
Road, Grimsby, Lincolnshire  
DN33 2AE

### It's our money anyway

Although I agree with the sentiments in the article The Dunces of Europe (Railwatch April 1994), namely that our road-lobby dominated Government is not seeking to invest in the railways, it should be pointed out that the European Commission "loans" and "grants" which might be used to fund such investment is only our own money anyway. We are the biggest net contributor to the European budget, apart from Germany. We are not talking about a "generous" European Commission anxious to help out its satellites.

Martin R Burck, 24 Camelot  
Court, Arthur Road, Ifield,  
Crawley, West Sussex RH11 0PB

**Editor's note:** During a visit to Brussels in February, RDS was told that the European Union is aiming to spend 80% of its transport budget on public transport with 20% on roads, compared to the British Government which spends more than 80% of its transport budget on new roads.

### We must go further

I am grateful to David Hollis for his excellent article on the myth of road taxes. I very much enjoyed his arguments on how RDS should challenge the Department of Transport on the reasons for spending money on road building.

This is excellent material for use by RDS members in campaigning - writing letters to newspapers, councillors and MPs. But why not also remember these arguments to quote in the pub or on the train when anyone moans about the state of the roads.

I would not include the £15 billion costs of road congestion because this congestion is borne almost wholly by road users. But the total figures underestimate the costs of the roads because no allowance is taken for making a return on the value of the road network. If an 8% return is expected, in

common with the planned future return for Railtrack, that would add another £25 billion. That, plus the £7 billion spent on roads and the hidden costs such as policing, dealing with motoring offences in the courts and car crimes, raises the total to over £50 billion.

I would also argue that a large proportion of the £20 billion road income quoted contains a large proportion of fixed costs which are paid equally by motorists and those of us who regularly use rail for longer journeys. A more accurate comparison with other forms of transport which are paid on demand would give a figure of £12 to £15 million paid by road users.

It would be very helpful if a full and accurate costing for road transport was researched and published so we all have a better picture, because the more thorough the research, the stronger the argument against road building and hence the stronger the case for rail.

The truth though is obvious. Road transport is more heavily subsidised than rail and probably was equally heavily subsidised when Dr Beeching presented his reports which led to so many lines being closed.

Graham Nulty, chairman RDS  
North Midlands, 6 Mill Close,  
Borrowash, Derby DE27 3GU

David Hollis writes: I agree that the costs of the road system ought to include an element covering a return on the capital value of the network. Paymaster General Sir John Cope told the House of Commons on 9 February that the Government was aware of this. So perhaps we shall see a move in this direction.

However you work them out, the costs of motorisation on society vastly exceed the revenue from road taxes. New roads are a cost to the general taxpayer, not something the road user has already paid for. This is why, in the assessment of a scheme for a new road, taking user benefits (which is largely based on time savings for motorists) into account is so disreputable.

### A folding future

I would like to draw your attention to The Folding Society which represents owners of folding bikes. We see our rôle as campaigning for better cycle facilities in towns and cities, with particular emphasis on links to and from

railway stations, for those carrying their bikes by train.

In our newsletter, we take a hard line on the road lobby and will continue to argue for a bit of sanity in British transport planning.

The Folding Society caters for owners of Bromptons, Moultons, Dahons, Bickertons and all other folding or demountable machines.

The Folder magazine is produced bi-monthly and contains news, technical information and gossip from the folding bike world.

We are soon sending out a press release comparing the cost of running a car with travel by folding bike and train.

Folding Society membership costs £2.50 per year. Please send a cheque or postal order to me. We expect to increase the membership fee in August but it will be kept down to £2.50 until the end of 1994 for RDS members.

David Henshaw, The Folding  
Society, 19 West Park, Castle  
Cary, Somerset BA7 7DB

### Wrong again

Sir David Mitchell has a point when in Railwatch 59 he calls for "less emotive language". Certainly I'm as guilty as the next man, having been on record as describing the current method of rail privatisation as "crackpot".

However, Sir David is wrong when he implies earlier privatisations have all been an outstanding success. Just ask the customers of Yorkshire Water!

Moreover, his words would carry more weight had they not come from someone whose Government's track record for getting it wrong - the Poll Tax, the ERM, and reorganisation of ITV to name but three - takes some beating.

James Towler, chairman Yorkshire  
RDS, 25 Moseley Wood Lane,  
Leeds LS16 7ER

### I'll eat my words!

Sir David Mitchell MP suggests that opponents of previous privatisations have had to eat their words. Privatisation of public services has brought no advantages whatever that could not have been secured in other ways. Some have had disastrous consequences. Bus deregulation has stopped local authorities pursuing integrated transport policies just as the shire counties were starting to show an interest in doing so.

Electricity privatisation has killed our coal industry with knock-on effects on rail freight. I am happy to offer to eat my words publicly if rail privatisation is shown to have helped public transport users provided he will do the same if it's shown to have caused damage.

In another Railwatch article, the cost of road transport as evaluated by David Hollis is an underestimate according to Robert Davis's *Death on the Streets*. Important items in Davis's book are the time of parents who have to escort children through traffic and the revenue loss on public transport which has contributed to its rundown. His median total is nearly twice that of Mr Hollis.

Simon Norton, 6 Hertford Street,  
Cambridge CB4 3AG

### Dogma and reality

David Mitchell MP shows all the characteristics of a politician who knows nothing about the subject upon which he lectures.

If public ownership is always bad and private ownership always good, then all previous privatisations might have been a good thing. Sadly, the real world is a trifle more complicated.

I am torn between the cock-up theory and the conspiracy theory about what is being done to our railways.

Perhaps of course, the Government does not want this privatisation to work. Then it can try to kill off the railways so it will have to build lots more lovely new roads. Why change the habit of a generation?

Yet I am consoled by the history of the Poll Tax. This was pushed through an acquiescent Parliament. Dogma was right and all the experts were wrong. Just like now. I doubt if David Mitchell has apologised to his constituents for the cost of that debacle and I suspect he will not apologise for the cost of this stupid attempt to sell off our railways. Neither of course will he apologise to the editor of this rare island of informed sanity.

Barry Reeves, 23 Windsor  
Road, Harrow Weald,  
Middlesex HA3 5PT

### Twyford Down

Alan Cooke would do well to follow his own advice and back up his argument "with facts collected from other sources"

before lecturing us about the M3. (Platform Railwatch 59). The only time anyone asked the people of Winchester what they thought about building the road through Twyford Down was in 1988 when a survey for the M3 Joint Action Group found 90% in favour of an alternative route to that proposed by the Department of Transport.

The reality is that people from all over Winchester were themselves protesters and large numbers of people, from all over the area, gave help and moral support.

More recently, at an exhibition in Eastleigh, where the public was asked to leave comments anonymously, two thirds were against the motorway going through the down.

All those supporting the department's route mistakenly assumed the protest was against the M3 being built at all.

Like Mr Cooke, they seemed unaware that the protesters were opposing the route through the down and across the water meadows on a high-level embankment, not the extension of the motorway per se.

It is incredible that Mr Cooke considers himself able to inform Railwatch readers about the issue when he appears to know no more about it than the average reader of the local tabloids. Hitting the headlines by breaking the law was the only way to get the issue discussed as an issue of national importance. It is certainly no trivial decision to risk a criminal record or the loss of a home to pay legal costs.

Ultimately we are faced with the choice of accepting large scale environmental destruction or showing we care.

The alternative may be to sit and wait obediently "until such time as car drivers are priced off the roads" but I would not hold my breath.

Mike Franklin, 33 Peshurst  
Way, Boyatt Wood, Eastleigh,  
Hants SO5 4RH

### Bluebell extension

The Bluebell Railway opened its extension to Kingscote in April bringing it nearer to connecting with British Rail at East Grinstead.

As a Bluebell Railway and RDS member, it was good to see the optimistic outlook among the volunteers there. It is difficult

to predict when the line will be extended to East Grinstead where the BR station has signs saying "change here for the Bluebell Railway". A bus service provides the connection to Kingscote.

In the other direction, hopes of a railway connection to Uckfield look problematical thanks to sales of former railway land.

Simon Prudence, 14 Basset Road,  
Ladbroke Grove, London W10 6JJ

**Editor's note:** Small amounts of grant money from the public (the Government) could allow many successful private steam railways to expand and provide both a public transport and leisure function. In some areas, private shops and hotels do well out of the customers attracted to these lines. Government, Railtrack, BR and local authorities have a responsibility not to sell off parts of linear routes painstakingly created by our Victorian forebears.

### Eye strain

Usually I enjoy Railwatch and read it from cover to cover. Unfortunately with the April issue, I found my eyes got too tired before I had even read half way so reluctantly I have had to "consider it as read", like the minutes at the AGM. Please could we revert to larger type?

Michael Lewis, 19 Brangwyn  
Square, Worle, Weston-Super-  
Mare BS22 0HU

**Editor's note:** Apologies. My problem of course is trying to get a quart into a pint pot but this 16-page issue allows me a little more latitude to experiment with larger type.

### Disabled action

RDS is worried that disabled rail customers should be adequately cared for on train journeys - particularly in the new regime following privatisation. We question whether station facilities, such as access arrangements, lifts and toilets are good enough.

If you are disabled or have strong opinions on travel for the disabled, help us to identify current problems.

We want to set out a programme for priority action and identify sources of funding.

Please write to: Peter Lawrence, RDS disabled officer, 75 Marl Pit Lane, Norwich NR5 8XN

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## Thanks Alan

Sales officer Alan Harwood received a round of applause at the annual general meeting, standing down after a six-year stint in the "job".

He sorted out many inherited problems and built up a substantial sales department, bringing in titles from other publishers as well as marketing RDS own-label books.

He has made a major contribution to the expansion of RDS in recent years and we hope he will find another key role in the society at a future date.

Tony Smale was elected to succeed Alan. Tony of Broadbeath, Fishers Hill, Catisfield, Fareham, Hants PO15 5QY, will concentrate on marketing and future planning.

Distribution will now be handled by Martin and Karen Ball of 89 North Wallington, Fareham, Hants PO16 8TJ. Send them your orders for books.

■ RDS started the New Year with over 3,150 members. We hope to recruit many more this year as the opening of the Channel Tunnel highlights rail's enormous environmental and safety advantages

■ National Conference of Rail Users: Well established as the major representative gathering of rail users nationwide, this important RDS Conference will be held on Saturday 8 October at Friends House, Euston Road, London, from 11.00 am to 4.30 pm. Guest speaker will be John Ellis, an experienced railway manager who is now Director, Production, of the new authority, Railtrack.

■ Private pockets: A single ticket from Paddington to Heathrow airport via the new private Heathrow Express will cost £9. The peak BR fare to nearby Slough costs £4.70.

■ "Safety is paramount": The reality is that BR has been told to cancel trials on automatic train protection. Very convenient for private operators.

# Still a long way to go

By JOHN DAVISON

A major conference attempting to get to grips with a transport strategy for the whole of the South East highlighted yet again the failure of local authorities to escape their preoccupation with roads.

A series of speakers described how tinkering with the road network MIGHT address some of the appalling traffic problems which beset our country.

But the democratic servants of the electorate revealed just how lacking was their understanding of both the operation and need for a viable public transport network.

After attending this SERPLAN conference I worried about the continued fragmentation of local government. Even now with larger councils, local government lacks the expertise to conceive or implement public transport solutions to congestion.

Most councillors and planners are still marginalised by the size and secrecy of the trunk road programme spilling increasingly unmanageable traffic on to locally funded streets.

They are slowly switching from demanding new roads to considering how they might ration use of the existing tarmac.

They have a major intellectual jump yet to make - realising that the solution to mobility and congestion problems lies with the public transport network. And vast improvements are needed.

SERPLAN is a voluntary combination of local authorities in the South East which offers both its members, and anyone else prepared to listen, regional planning advice. It has no statutory power and no apparent budgetary influence.

SERPLAN is a major talking shop but at the moment it's the best regional forum travellers can turn to.

One of the few speakers at the conference who did appear to recognise the volume of problems facing the South East was Minister of Transport in London Steven Norris.

Addressing the large audience in Westminster, Mr Norris stressed central government's crucial role in rail investment.

He said a ten-year railway investment programme has been demanded of Railtrack. One of his intentions is to decrease people's reliance on cars by

encouraging greater use of public transport. This will support his department's other important aims - respect for our environment, safer travel for all and improved mobility for disabled people and those without access to cars.

He admitted that without clear views being expressed by SERPLAN and other regional interests, he did not think central government "could hope to achieve an appropriate mix of policies".

Brian Cox of Stagecoach Holdings (geography graduate, bus operator and ex-transport co-ordinator for Cambridgeshire) also referred to a new realism emerging from Marsham Towers, such that integration is no longer utterly taboo.

Local authorities needed to get their acts together, said Leeds engineering professor Tony May. Land use, transport and facility patterns were too frequently planned in isolation from one another. He added that integrated planning was no longer the socialists' preserve.

"The people screaming loudest for it are developers, bankers and motor manufacturers - the natural supporters of the current government".

Civic Trust Director Martin Bradshaw said the damage done to Newcastle's Metro by bus deregulation is a clear sign of British ineptitude.

Fiona Reynolds of the Council for the Protection of Rural England advocated the abandonment of trunk road classification - except for the "most strategic" of roads. Local perspectives might then prevail over through traffic demand.

She spoke of RingRail, CrossRail and Thameslink 2000 as valid alternatives to the widening of London's orbital motorway, and of better land-use decisions.

Even motoring organisations were adding their voices to the pleas for longer term, comprehensive transport planning and expressed the view that the Department of Transport "remains strangely isolated as the world around it calls for a proper transport policy."

According to another speaker, the Department of the Environment is pedalling faster towards planetary harmony.

John Davison is editor of RDS's London and Home Counties branch newsletter RAILONDON.

## We need your help

By MALCOLM JEVONS

In campaigning for rail, RDS is up against many groups arguing for more roads and bigger lorries. We cannot hope to match their expenditure so it is vital we make best use of our other resources.

RDS needs to draw more on the talents of its members. We have HelpLine to record information on members' special interests, knowledge and skills which might be of benefit to the society.

Until about a year ago this information was recorded manually; now it is on a computer database. This makes it easy to extract information in various forms to suit the specific requirements of national or branch officers. For instance, it is a simple task to obtain a list of members in the south-west who are lawyers or those in Scotland with photographic expertise.

Ideally, every member would be on this database but that is not the case at the moment. If you receive a form, please complete it; your experience may be valuable to RDS one day. The information remains within the society and is used only for society purposes.

Over the years, RDS campaigning has become more effective because we have identified people in key institutions who are likely to be sympathetic to our cause.

For instance we have built up a list of pro-rail MPs and peers. They receive *Railwatch* and other publications and as a result we see our arguments quoted in Parliament and at public meetings.

Now we want to target pro-rail journalists. If you know of sensible writers who can see that there is more to reporting rail issues than repeating 30-year-old jokes about BR sandwiches, let us know. Send any suitable names to David Pickersgill, 171 Lower Oxford Street, Castleford, Yorkshire WF10 4AQ with the paper or magazine they write for and if possible, its address.

The new Rail Users Consultative Committees are following in the tracks of the pretty feeble Transport Users Consultative Committees they replace. Few have representatives from user groups or from RDS. One committee is reported to have a representative who is there because she is a friend of Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman's wife. Sounds like a great qualification! Send your nominations to the Rail Regulator (1 Waterhouse Square, Holborn Bars, 138-142 Holborn EC1N 2SU) who is now responsible for appointing members of the RUCCs.

Europeans show the right track forward

The Swiss government is planning to raise £607 million a year after 1996 from a new tax on fuels that emit carbon dioxide. In Britain, the Government is NOT considering a carbon tax. Nor is it considering reducing the speed limit to 50 mph which could have a significant impact on car use and pollution. ★ The Spanish high speed train line from Madrid to Seville which cuts journeys times by three hours to two hours 40 minutes has broken even financially in its first full year of service. The line was paid for by the Spanish Department of Transport! Imagine that in Britain. By contrast Railtrack has been saddled with £2 billion of BR debt. Spain meanwhile is preparing to build its second high speed line. ★ The supervisory board of German railways includes nine employee members. Imagine that in Britain. ★ Most of the Government's £1 billion Transport Supplementary Grant to local authorities is spent on road building. Only 11 per cent goes to public transport.

# Friends Down Under

By JOHN BARFIELD

Rail campaigners in Australia are rolling back a decade of boustitution - inspired by the success of the Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line in Britain.

New trains are coming back to the Northern Railway after local people banded together to demand them.

The revolution began in Armidale, New South Wales, where father of two Matthew Tierney lives along with 23,000 permanent residents, boosted by a student population of 6,000 a year.

He trained as a civil engineer for a while in Britain and was impressed by the success of the Friends.

When he returned Down Under, he helped to form the Friends of the Northern Railway. It was so successful that 2,000 people attended one public meeting.

Hard work began to bear fruit last year when a new breed of diesel multiple units called Xplorers began running to Armidale. They are attracting plenty of passengers. The day service is regularly full.

The two and three-car stainless-steel units built by ABB are now whisking travellers from Sydney to the national capital of Canberra as well as Tamworth, Moree, and Armidale.

One of their big advantages is that the train from Sydney can divide at Werris Creek junction with one part going off to Moree and the other to Tamworth and Armidale. The trains also have a buffet.

The popularity of the trains was such that 300 people turned up at Walcha Road station when a demonstration unit arrived.

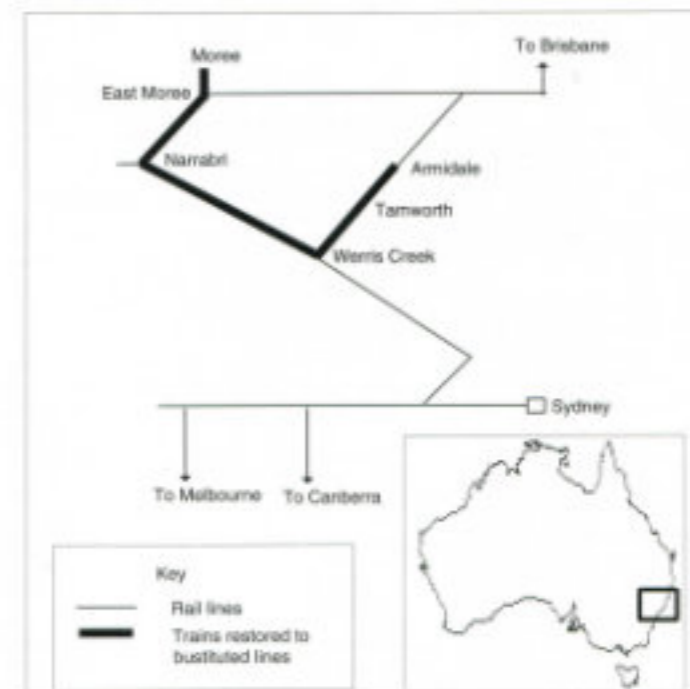
On the route from Sydney to Melbourne, 1993 also saw a sleeper service using XPT units which are very similar to our own InterCity 125 trains but with a top speed of 100 mph. This train replaced the existing locomotive-hauled Express, and reduced the journey time from 13 hours to 10.

XPTs provide the service from Sydney (NSW) north to Brisbane (Queensland) and south to Melbourne (Victoria) and have been operating in New South Wales since 1981.

A new much-needed daily XPT



One man and his train: Matthew Tierney, president of the Friends of the Northern Railway, at Sydney Central station with the new stainless-steel-bodied diesel engine Xplorer train which is bringing rail services back to some lucky areas of New South Wales



was also introduced from Sydney to Grafton on the NSW north coast.

The blue and white XPTs and the Xplorers operate under the name of Countrylink. Two more of the £28 million XPTs are now being built by ABB Transportation at their Dandenong factory in Victoria where

the Xplorers were also built. Countrylink's general manager Kim Finnimore explained how the renaissance started. With increasing boustitution in the 1980s, the New South Wales government appointed consultants to report on the viability of the remainder of the system. They recommended further extensive

boustitution. But at Armidale, the Friends rebelled against the idea. They said: "The advantages of rail compared with the inefficiency and dangers of the roads are now more widely perceived by thousands who have heard from us."

"Our opponents in government and the State Railway Authority have to answer our criticisms and justify their actions."

Once local politicians, led by Transport Minister Bruce Baird, accepted that further railway closures would be large vote losers, funding for the trains was quickly secured.

£60 million came from the state government to upgrade the system and rolling stock with an additional £24 million from the national government. A further £5 million was spent on improving stations and signalling.

Countrylink now operates 22 trains a day and has three dedicated platforms at Sydney Central. It has its own logo, information counter and other amenities.

Hopes of running a daytime XPT service from Sydney to Melbourne were dashed by the Victorian government's refusal to provide funds. The train from Sydney terminates at Albury on the border between the two states.

Countrylink does not see itself as competing with the airlines but filling a gap in the medium distance field.

NSW Railways do however operate one 2,000 mile train, the coast-to-coast Indian Pacific from Sydney to Perth in Western Australia.

Sydney is also considering a Mitsubishi-built £1.5 billion automated light metro system which would include two tracks over the Harbour Bridge.

The French and Italians are hoping to build a new high speed rail line from Lyon to Turin, with a new 33-mile long tunnel under the Alps, by 2020.

Double-deck 12-car high speed train services begin this month from Tokyo to Oyama, Utsunomiya, Kumagaya and Takasaki.

Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands have agreed on a special tax on lorries which carry more than 12 tonnes.

# An open letter to the AA

From Michael Weinberg

I have been a member of the AA since buying my first car in 1963. I am now writing to explain why we must part company when my membership price next comes up for renewal.

I believe your role should increasingly be to help motorists understand that in future years they will be unable to drive their cars when and where they like. The Government already recognises this with its proposals for road pricing.

You should also be reminding motorists that every driver who uses public transport is saving space on the roads for someone else and that this should be reflected in cheaper subsidised fares; that 1,000 people on one train or 4,000 tons of freight behind one locomotive is a better deal for the country both economically and environmentally, than 1,000 cars and 400 lorries.

Traffic congestion in and around towns and cities is now endemic in Britain, and this cannot be solved by building more roads and knocking down the very places people are trying to reach. The costs of unfettered road transport are too much for this nation to bear. Your constant bleating about motorists' taxes and money spent on roads is clouding your judgment. You never include accident costs: 4000 people killed and hundreds of thousands injured EVERY YEAR - a terrible price to pay in human and economic terms. The cost of car related crime and its tremendous drain on police time, which could be better spent in other areas, and the clogging up of the judicial system, again you ignore.

The opportunity costs of road building in terms of the houses, hospitals, schools, etcetera, which could be provided instead, does not enter your calculations.

The list of motoring costs is endless - balance of payments, environmental damage, physical and mental blight caused by road schemes or the threat of them; the aggression and anger engendered in car drivers by the whole 'boy racer' ethos promoted by advertising, magazines and organisations such as yourselves; the company car syndrome which costs everyone else billions of pounds each year and distorts the whole economics of transport in Britain.

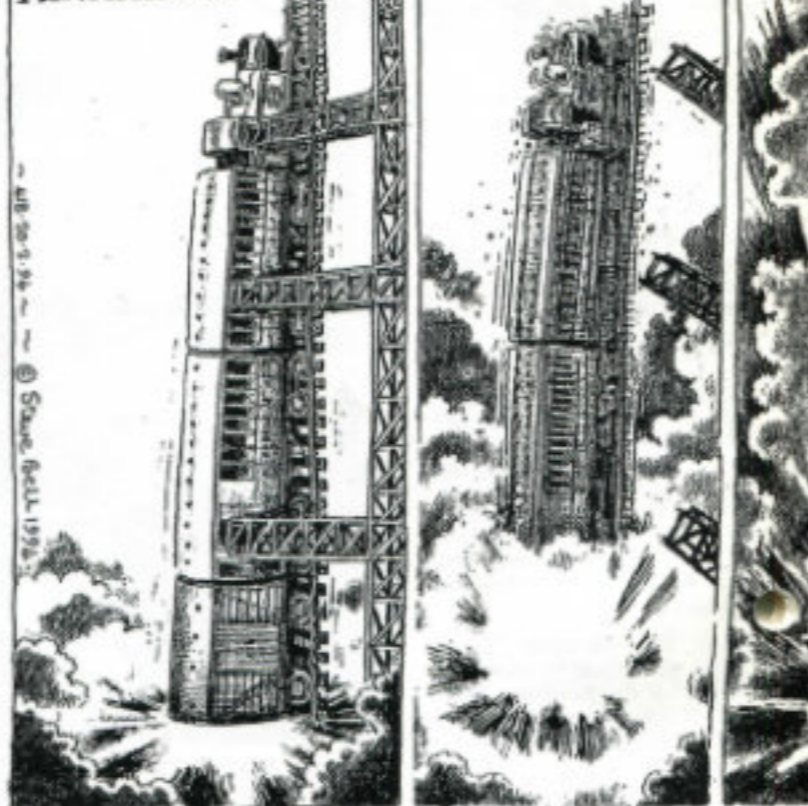
Do you really believe the planet can sustain the enormous depletion of raw materials for ever? What happens as the billions of people in the developing world aspire to the same levels of car ownership as we do - there would hardly be room on the earth for them, let alone finding space for roads to drive them on.

But the AA in its wisdom ignores all this. A £24 billion road programme is 'not enough'. Heaven help future generations if this madness continues. Already no city, town, village or hamlet in Britain has escaped the tyranny of the private car. Virtually nowhere can you escape from the noise of roads. What we need is a halt to the road programme and the money spent on public transport systems instead. That way everyone will enjoy enhanced mobility and not just car drivers.

I realise, of course, that you, like oil and construction companies, vehicle manufacturers and haulage firms etcetera, have a vested interest in ever increasing car production - that is what feeds demand for roads. That is why many of you contribute to Tory party funds and the party responds by sanctioning a ludicrous roads policy.

But I for one, want no part of it. I'm a 'motorist' but you certainly don't speak for me and, I suspect, there are many more like me. Since I joined all those years ago the AA has turned into just another part of the scandalous road lobby which, if unchecked, will render this once green and pleasant land, a horrific and motorised nightmare.

COUNTDOWN TO PRIVATISATION



# Taken for a ride by the road lobby

An open letter to Jeffrey Rose, chairman of the RAC

From John Singleton  
(RAC membership M04898571)

There are times over the last 20 years when I have been deeply grateful for being a member of the RAC. They were the times when your breakdown service was swiftly on the scene.

But what I profoundly resent is the way in which the RAC has consistently allied itself with a powerful road lobby which sees the future of Britain's transport infrastructure solely as a proliferation of more, longer and wider roads.

This stance is a disservice to your members and a complete misrepresentation of the views of drivers like myself who believe that road and rail should compete fairly within an integrated system.

Drivers like me try to practise this in our own lives, particularly in using cars as "feeders" to railway stations. But to read some RAC literature - including maps - you would think that, apart from preserved steam lines, there was no rail system in Britain at all.

Surely the job of the RAC is to rescue vehicles and to concentrate on lowering the appalling rate of accidents on Britain's roads. That's why I joined the RAC - not to hear you, our unelected chairman, espousing views reminiscent of the British

Road Federation and all vested interests.

And why do you keep hedging your bets - first saying on environmental considerations something that sounds positive and then proceeding to knock it down?

Thus in one breath you say "strong case for getting as far as possible distance freight as possible by rail" and, in the next, "we succeeded in doubling the rail freight, an enormous task which makes little impact in the tonnage being moved by road".

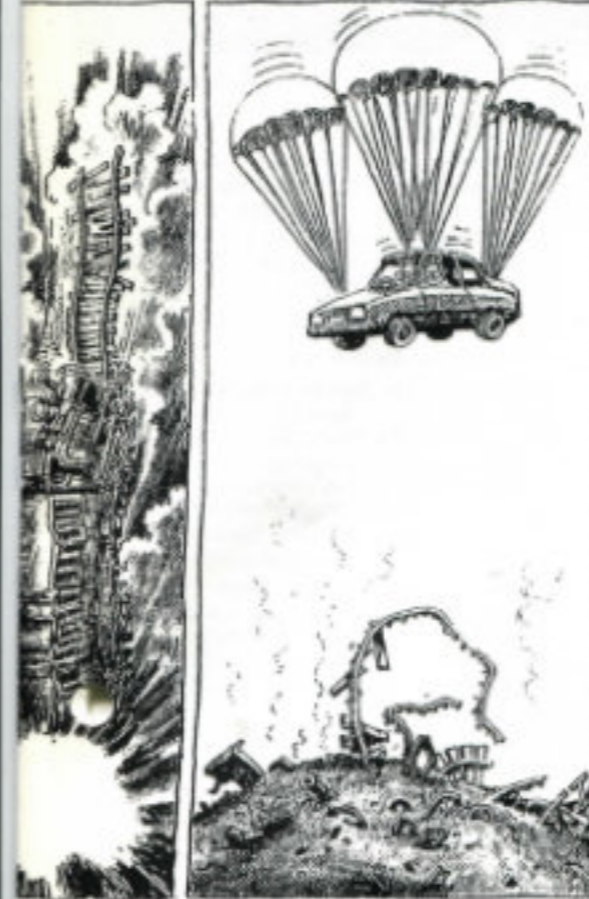
Again, you are on record in saying we should address environmental issues "rigorously" and that you are concerned to minimise the impact of new roads on the countryside.

But then you ask us to rely on the "utter dependence of this country upon an effective road transport system as the most vital component of an integrated transport infrastructure".

So what's your idea of a transport infrastructure, Jeffrey, over the entire UK presumably?

In a brilliant piece of creativity you tell us that the Department is spending 56% of its roads and 44% on public transport.

"So 44% of the budget goes to 10% of the journeys; a proportion already hugely disproportionate



of-rail and bus". What you ignore of course is the horrifying annual cost of road accidents to the emergency services and the health service of this country.

And you don't actually say whether you agree with this ratio of Department of Transport spending or not. Personally as a fellow RAC member, I welcome it and wish it was weighted even more in favour of public transport.

Finally can I refer you to the National Trust, a conservative, respected organisation that relies on road transport for visitors to many of its historic properties.

Their policy research co-ordinator, Iain Wilson, says the Trust is questioning the Government about its road strategy.

"There is an undoubted need for rationalisation of the roads network, but the Trust believes that this should be considered as part of the strategy for the country's transport requirements as a whole," he wrote in the National Trust Magazine.

"This is so that the expected growth in car traffic into the next century can be better managed and alternative forms of transport provided wherever possible."

So it's over to you, Jeffrey. Why don't you come out of the pocket of the road lobby? Develop independent policies on rail/road infrastructure instead, encourage your members to travel more by public transport and really start representing their interests.

# Is this the best alternative?

The alternative to the motor clubs is the Environmental Transport Association, which will come to your rescue if your car breaks down.

It will also help you as a cyclist, pedestrian, rail traveller - and citizen.

The ETA gives you a national breakdown service while campaigning for a sound and sustainable transport system in Britain.

It points out that the AA, RAC and National Breakdown are all members of the British Road Federation, the main co-ordinating body for the United Kingdom's all-too-powerful road lobby.

The ETA believes that if you are a member of these organisations, you are indirectly giving your support to bulldozing the country for more roads, in turn creating more noise, more pollution and more accidents.

Ordinary membership entitles you to a 24-hour helpline if you run into trouble on a journey, legal help and personal accident insurance even when travelling "as a pedestrian".

Then there are the optional road rescue services for cars and motorbikes, cycle recovery, routefinder help for journeys by car or public transport and discounted car rental.

The ETA was set up in 1990 by Transport 2000 with financial help from the World Wide Fund for Nature as well as backing from Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Council for the Protection of Rural England, Cyclists Touring Club, London Cycling Campaign, Pedestrians Association and the Youth Hostels Association.

It says public transport and links between different modes of transport must be improved and calls for priority to be given to more environmentally friendly forms of transport: walking, cycling, trains and buses.

The ETA is also keen to see "affordable" rail fares and bikes on trains. It produces a fact sheet which points out that people who travel less than 2,000 miles per year are better off selling their cars and going by taxi, train and bus.

It also publishes a four-page fact sheet explaining why rail is environmentally friendly, pointing out the land use, fuel efficiency, safety and low-pollution advantages of trains.

Every quarter, the ETA also sends its magazine Going Green to members.

If you would like information about joining the ETA, please write to The Old Post House, Heath Road, Weybridge KT13 8RS or phone 0932 828882.

It costs £30 to join, with rescue services costing extra, varying from £20 to £104 depending on the exact requirements.

# Holiday tips

★ Continental tickets and passes, including those for Channel Tunnel trains, can be bought over the phone from The Rail Shop which is run by French Railways in London. It can be phoned on 0345 300003 (local rates). Train enquiries however are dealt with on another number, 0891 515477, with calls being charged at 36p per minute off-peak and 48p per minute at other times.

★ Detailed timetables for European countries can be bought from VOT, 19 Beachfield Road, Sandown, Isle of Wight PO36 8LR (tel: 0983 407918). Timetables are also available for India and the USA.

★ Cyclists recommend that a reliable way of obtaining details of train services which carry cycles in France, is to write (in French) to the Regional SNCF offices in France. Enclose a couple of international reply coupons, obtainable from Post Offices. For details of summer services, write after mid-May, when the new timetables start.

★ TGVs now run from Lille (connections to London) to Lyon via the new Paris Interconnexion line.

★ Infrarail 94 is to be staged at the G-Mex exhibition centre in Manchester from 6-8 September. Information: 0707 275641.

★ Freightconnection 94 show in London Docklands is 4-6 October. Information from 0543 419600.

★ A conference called Transport Solutions for Sustainable Cities is being staged at Oxford 12-14 July. Information: 0524 849494.

★ The Government's Criminal Justice Bill which is aimed at criminalising gypsies, squatters, rave parties, trespass and peaceful direct action could have an impact on RDS, rail user groups and those opposing road schemes. The Bill makes it illegal to collect or hold information which could be useful to terrorists. The onus would be on the information gatherers to prove their innocence!

★ Chris Green and Mike Vincent have produced the lavishly illustrated *InterCity Story* which describes how British Rail people created one of the country's most successful businesses. The £15.99 book is published by Oxford Publishing.

★ The Americans are fascinated by the success of European railways. A new book *Europe's High Speed Trains* by Mitchell Strohl correctly identifies the "constant postponement of financial decisions in Britain" by politicians who are more interested in short-term political expediency. The £49.95 book is published by Praeger and distributed in Britain by Eurospan.

★ 1.5 million schooldays are lost annually in Britain through asthma. Car fumes are to blame.

## LOCAL ACTION

### South West

By Gerard Duddridge

**Sleep easily:** Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman has reprieved, at least until 1995, the Paddington-Penzance sleeper after pressure from local MPs.

**'Secure' future:** Mr Freeman has insisted the Exeter-Barnstaple line has an assured future but attempts to gain funding for flood protection work have not yet been successful. £3 million is needed to put concrete jackets round the foundations of 17 bridges.

**Flood fight:** Stafford Bridge on the Exeter-Taunton line has been strengthened to help avoid disruption during flooding.

**Anniversary trains:** The freight-only Fowey Valley line (Lostwithiel-Carne Point) has seen special trains running some weekends to mark its 125th anniversary. Further trains are planned on Sundays 24 July and 4 September. Information from Lostwithiel tourist information centre on 0208 872207.

**Sunday hopes:** Devon County Council wanted to run special summer Sunday trains on the Exeter-Okehampton line but cash problems prevented it this year. Implications of the sale of Meldon Quarry to English China Clays are as yet unclear.

**Moor progress:** Walkers will have rail access to the southern flank of Dartmoor following the opening of the new station at Ivybridge. Platforms were nearing completion in April but there were fears the footbridge, with disabled access, would not be ready for 1 June.

**Branch boost:** Progress on the new Exe Vale station, on the Exmouth branch, was slowed by problems of works access and the provision of a foot and cycle bridge over the Sidmouth road.

### Yorkshire

By James Towler

**Ask a silly question:** I wrote to Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman after reports that several Yorkshire rail services faced the axe as a result of increased track costs following privatisation.

I sought an assurance that the passenger transport executives will continue to receive sufficient funds to enable them to maintain existing levels of services for the foreseeable future and continue the successful policy of expansion, providing new stations and reopening freight lines to passengers.

Duncan Henderson of "Railways 3" at the Department of Transport replied: "The Government has made it clear that it sees a continuing role of the PTAs and PTEs in specifying and paying for local passenger rail services in their areas but railway geo-

## 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 Martin Ball, 89 North Wallington, Fareham, Hants PO16 8TJ. Make cheques payable to RDS.

graphy does not fit neatly into local authority boundaries.

"It must be possible for the franchising director to offer a group of services that cover an area beyond any single PTA's boundary although PTAs will continue to set the policy for local rail services in their areas.

"The services will continue to be jointly involved with the franchising director in specifying and letting any franchise contract covering services for which they are responsible."

So now you know! Note, too, that he completely evades my question regarding funding. I suppose it's just another case of "If you ask a silly question..."

We must remain on the alert should a new round of closures appear on the horizon. If Huddersfield-Sheffield comes up for closure, it will be the third attempt to cut this vital link since 1980. We shall fight.

In the meantime, it's all aboard the Privatisation Hype Express as the PR people reassure us that we have nothing to worry about. Time will tell.

### London & Home Counties

By Keith Dwyall and John Barfield

**Success:** After many years of hard campaigning we have the sweet smell of success. Trains on the West London line run again for the summer timetable. An all-day service runs from Willesden Junction to Clapham Junction calling at Kensington Olympia on the way. There are plans for opening further stations on the route but only if sufficient traffic can be generated to justify the service. Reopened under the Speller Act, it is a case of use it or lose it. Even the BR posters announcing the new service state this. There is a danger that the potential of this link will not be realised because people are not aware of it. Please tell your friends.

**Division:** The London & Home Counties branch has an interest in over 70 tables in the national timetable book without considering InterCity. We are forming divisional sub-committees to look after groups of lines with the main branch committee in a co-ordinating role. This keeps the task manageable and allows us to speak with one voice for the whole London area. We are hoping to have enough volunteers to complete the formation of divisions within the next few months.

**Strategies:** We are also starting to work on a rail strategy document for London and the South East and we hope to have the consultative draft out in the summer. The branch is preparing a strategy for the whole area plus more detailed local studies. The eastern division has already drafted a Rail Strategy for East London and Essex. We have identified areas that need improvement and call for a new through service from Liverpool Street to Upminster and Grays. We are also urging the reopening of Tilbury Riverside to provide a proper link with the ferry to Gravesend. Since its closure, contrary to the recommendations of the Transport Users Consultative Committee, the replacement bus service has been totally unacceptable. The line needs boosting and Essex County Council

is helping by supporting the need for a new station at South Stifford to serve Lakeside Thurrock shopping centre.

At a meeting with Railtrack East Anglia, we were told the zone was sponsoring a scheme to build a rail link under the Thames at North Woolwich. We also raised our worries about the future of the Barking - Gospel Oak line.

### Lincolnshire

By Paul Jowett

**Freight line:** The Barnetby-Brigg-Gainsborough line which was distinguished by having only one train, the Saturday only 153 class passenger service, gained a six-days-a-week freight working from 5 April. The oil trains from Immingham to Colwick were transferred from the Market Rasen-Lincoln-Newark-Nottingham route.

**Canal diversion:** Freight trains will be diverted and possibly some of the Brigg-routed Cleethorpes-Manchester 158 Express services later this year when there is a three-month rebuild of Keadby canal swing bridge.

**Lincoln links:** There is a very real danger that Lincoln will lose its London connections which were provided by 158 Express trains to Newark, following Lincoln's loss of its InterCity services last year.

**Airways:** There have been media reports that the operators of Humberside airport want to introduce a businessmen's shuttle train to London City airport.

**Double capacity:** Grantham-Skegness services are now normally operated by two-car 156s rather than the single-car 153s which are now restricted to Lincoln-Skegness services. There were rumours that Butlins were hoping to charter InterCity trains to provide extra services on summer Saturdays from Grantham to Skegness with buses going on to their holiday park.

**Responsibility:** Contact has been established with the new Eastern Rail User Consultative Committee by Paul Jowett who is worried about the way responsibility is being divided between so many new bodies. Barnetby campaigner Dr Don Peacock is worried that closure procedures are now in the hands of the Franchise Director.

**Gala weekend:** Branch chairman Brian Hastings has been asked to provide six stewards to help organise the Steam Railway Gala at British Steel's Scunthorpe works on 3-4 September. There will also be an RDS sales stand. If you would like to help, ring 0724 710528 (evenings).

### Wales

By Rod Fairley and Guy Hardy

**Speed-up:** Work on improving the track between Wrexham and Dee Marsh has cleared the way for the restoration of an hourly all-stations service to Bidston. Railfreight, which has three daily steel coil trains into Dee Marsh as well as timber trains on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, made a financial contribution. A package deal to electrify about four miles of the line from Bidston to a new station at Prenton/Woodchurch is being considered.

**Summer shake-up:** Services are being recast on the North Wales line with good

connections with the Irish ferries, particularly the Seacats.

**Stations:** Rhyd station is being refurbished with a bus interchange on the forecourt. Rhyd, Cobwyn Bay and Bangor stations do not have staff after 2115 even though two loco-hauled trains call after that time.

**Planning for roads:** Delyn borough council is to spend £2.4 million on a road bridge over the North Wales line at Greenfield (Holywell junction). The bridge is to link two industrial estates and will include room for a future dual carriageway road.

**Heritage line:** A rail development officer has been appointed for the Conwy Valley line which this summer will be operated by a three-car Heritage unit, repainted in green. There will be good connections with the Ffestiniog Railway. The Gwynedd Sunday shuttles will again operate on six peak Sundays in the summer.

**Moving ahead:** Chester station is being refurbished as a much-needed half-hourly service to Crewe is introduced.

**Park and ride:** Bus interchange facilities for Wrexham are being provided on the site of the old Rossett station on the Chester-Shrewsbury line, paid for by Clwyd and Cheshire County Councils.

**Cambrian Coaster:** A £100,000 publicity drive is aimed at increasing use of the Cambrian Coast line.

**Worries:** Concern is mounting over the Heart of Wales line which could be at risk next year when its high costs are revealed. Will members please support the 1994 Rambler Sunday specials from 17 July to 19 September. Trains leave Shrewsbury at 1020 and Swansea at 0940. For details of the service and bus connections send an SAE to Chris Magner, 25 Dunval Road, Bridgnorth, Shropshire WV16 4NA.

**InterCity improvements:** Railtrack and InterCity Great Western are to spend £250,000 on improvements at Cardiff Central station. InterCity's 125 diesel trains will also be refurbished, starting in 1996.

**Reopening:** Enthusiastic moves to reopen part of the Maenclog railway in Pembrokeshire are being held up by road access problems.

**Land use bonus:** Planning permission for a 500-home village near Rhos makes a Vale of Glamorgan reopening more likely, although a service to the Cardiff airport is not recommended by a study commissioned by South Glamorgan County Council.

**Opencast block:** The Margam-Tondu-Ogmore Vale line will be breached and closed as a through route between Port Talbot and Bridgend because of British Coal's opencast development at Parc Slip. The branch is protesting to Railtrack.

### North East

By Gordon Barclay

**Coasting along:** A study commissioned by Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive and various local authorities has recommended improved services on the Durham Coast line. It recommends new stations and extending more TransPennine services to Sunderland.

**Station move:** Cramlington station may be

relocated to a new site as a result of Northumberland's initiative to improve rail services in the south east of the county. A £15,000 contract has been awarded to consultants to produce recommendations.

**Small is beautiful:** RDS's smallest branch heard how the society should handle links with the new rail bodies created following privatisation. Trevor Garrod was guest speaker at the branch annual meeting.

### Scotland

By Douglas Smart

**Districts and regions:** The break-up of four Regions into 30 relatively small unitary authorities is likely to be bad for the railways. So we sent a memorandum to all members of the House of Commons committee scrutinising the Local Government (Scotland) Bill.

We suggested that the whole of Scotland should be covered by six autonomous transport authorities or failing that, joint boards formed out of the new authorities. We particularly want a passenger transport authority for the whole of the Edinburgh travel-to-work area.

We also called for a national campaign to save pensioners' concessionary fares which would be endangered because the new authorities would not have the resources or large enough areas to safeguard the existing arrangements.

Sadly we had only one telephone call from an MP. After completing its committee stage, the Bill emerged worse, with even smaller authorities. We look set to end up now with voluntary joint committees which are unlikely to produce the investment and co-ordination so desperately needed. We hope the Lords injects some element of common sense into the Bill.

**Strategy:** The branch also produced a strategy for future ScotRail franchises in which we went through the timetable indicating the sort of improved services we felt were necessary. For example, we demanded an hourly service between Aberdeen and Inverness, a much improved commuter service between Edinburgh and Dunbar with a new station at East Linton, and commuter services in the Aberdeen area. We pointed out the opportunities available for local and national services with a cross-rail line in Glasgow linked to the new station at Prestwick airport.

We also reiterated our demand for the Dornoch crossing and listed a number of longer term reopenings such as St Andrews and Galashiels. We insisted that all the present benefits of the rail network must be retained and made it clear that any cuts would be strongly resisted.

We argued that our demands are not just for the benefit of rail users but to give motorists an alternative.

The only known potential private operators interested in ScotRail (both bus companies) sent non-committal replies. But one said it was unlikely any franchise would include the increases in services we are looking for. But privatisation is claimed to be bringing "improvements". Our documents were used as the basis for campaigning at the regional and European elections.

Alloa reopening has been given a high

priority with the return of Chris Green to ScotRail as its new director. Central Region said it has set aside £1.2 million for the project but the high number of level crossings on the route will push up costs.

### Severnside

By Eric Barbery

**Canal link:** Plans to renovate the Stroud-water canal could provide a boost for the idea of a new station at Ebley Mill, two miles west of Stroud on the line to Gloucester. RDS corporate member Cainscross parish council is keen for a station there, as it could serve the large Foxmoor estate, the villages of Ruscombe and Randwick and Stroud district council offices.

**Freight:** A major rail freight depot has been proposed for Swindon, with funding from Germany and the Far East. The depot could be built on a 60-acre site between Honda's car factory at South Marston and the Great Western main line.

### North Midlands

By Malcolm Goodall

**Rail forum:** The Midland Main Line Consortium of local authorities has been reconstituted as the East Midlands Rail Forum, now including Lincolnshire. Its remit has been widened to include all post-privatisation aspects of rail services, the branch annual meeting in March was told by Geoff Carlile, vice chairman of Derbyshire County Council's highways and transports committee. The Midland main line moves to the forefront with the selection of St Pancras for the terminus of the Union Railways high speed line to the continent. Electrification of the Bedford to Sheffield line would be excellent value for money at £200 million, compared with the £84 million required to widen just seven miles of the M1 motorway between junctions 23A and 25.

**Robin Hood Line:** The most gratifying sight in the area is the civil engineering work at Kirkby-in-Ashfield, where Birse Construction are excavating Kirkby tunnel and constructing the "missing link" in the line to Mansfield. Discussion has started on funding stage three of the Robin Hood Line, which will extend into Derbyshire after stage two is opened to Mansfield Woodhouse in May 1994. Willington station will open this summer, to be served initially by Derby-Birmingham trains, until stage two of the Ivanhoe line is opened from Leicester to Burton-on-Trent to enable a through service to run from Loughborough via Leicester, Coalville and Burton to Derby. New trains are urgently required for both Robin Hood and Ivanhoe line expansion, but the Government has so far failed to break the investment log-jam.

**Nottingham:** An initial feasibility study on the Greater Nottingham rail development strategy has proved encouraging.

**Trans-Pennine:** Hope Valley line patronage continues to grow. Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive is considering a New Mills Parkway station, to be served by the fast Sheffield-Stockport-Manchester trains. Consultants are to study road traffic on the Matlock to Buxton corridor, and the feasibility of reopening the railway for regular services. Peak Rail

## LOCAL ACTION

has already opened Matlock to Darley Dale for tourist trains, and hopes to obtain access to Matlock BR station this summer. There are possibilities for rail-based park-and-ride services into Sheffield.

**Learning curve:** After the AGM, members walked to Long Eaton Junction to see where a reinstated curve would allow local trains from Nottingham to call at a Long Eaton town centre station on their way up the Erewash valley. Considerable local press publicity resulted.

**Derby-Sinfin:** British Rail's last line closure? In March, BR published a preliminary closure notice for the Sinfin branch. The line was reopened in 1976 as the first stage of a Derbyshire County Council scheme to promote rail alternatives to congested road travel in Derby, allowing Matlock line commuters to travel direct to factories in the south of the city. The second stage, involving a reopened station nearer the city centre at Nottingham Road, and a southwards extension to Sinfin South/Chellaston, was never implemented. In a classic case of "closure by stealth", the advertised service has been run down to vanishing point. The few remaining regular travellers have to finish their journey by taxi, as no trains now run down the branch "because Sprinter trains are incompatible with the line's signalling system". The branch is to lodge a formal objection with the Rail Users Consultative Committee for the Midlands, citing the line's potential for carrying park-and-ride traffic from the new Derby Southern Bypass road by means of a new station at Chellaston.

**M1 widening:** The Department of Transport's motorway widening unit intend to spend £85 million to widen just six miles of the M1 on the Leicestershire/Derbyshire border, from Junction 23A on the A42 to Junction 25 on the A52. From Junction 23A to a new Junction 24A on the proposed Derby Southern Bypass, there will be a

spaghetti-like mess up to 16 lanes wide! Branch chairman Graham Nalty has formed an independent group to co-ordinate opposition to the road plans, and press for rail improvements instead, starting with a local service from Derby to Loughborough. His address is 6 Mill Close, Borrowash, Derby DE72 3GU, tel. 0332 674929.

**Power station pollution reduced - road pollution and danger increased:** Ratcliffe on Soar power station will receive limestone by rail. The limestone removes sulphur dioxide from the station's emissions and produces gypsum as a by-product of the process. The gypsum will be transported to the British Plaster Board factory at East Leake by road!

### East Anglia

By Nick Dibben and Trevor Garrod

**Applause:** Members at the Branch AGM applauded Regional Railways manager David McIntosh when he said his aim was to open lines and make Dr Beeching turn in his grave. Mr McIntosh also noted that through trains between East Anglia and the Midlands would continue thanks to efforts by the RDS to convince civil servants that the needs of passengers should overrule convenience for accountants who wanted to break the route up. He said that the new timetable from May 1994 would provide a more regular service and better connections. Arrangements had been made with the Anglia Train Operating Company to allow the continuation of through cross-country services to Yarmouth and Lowestoft.

**Meet the new team:** The branch, along with representatives of local users groups, have met the new managers of the Anglia TOC. Director Andy Cooper outlined plans for the company including better connections between local and main line services and new special ticket offers on trips to London. He added that work was under way to improve toilet and waiting facilities for passengers at stations following a recent user survey. Mr Cooper accepted an invitation to speak at the branch meeting in the Assembly House, Norwich on 25 June at 1400.

**Chaos:** Problems with the overhead lines on the East Coast main line at Wood Green in April posed the simple question: who is responsible? Is it Railtrack which owns the wires, the rolling stock company which owns the locomotive that brought them down, or the train operating company which provided the driver? According to some railway staff, no one was quite sure, resulting in longer delays to passengers than was necessary.

**Emerging shadows:** The new shadow franchise, Anglia Train Operating Company, gave a presentation in Ipswich to members of RDS and local users groups in March. It was an excellent opportunity to discuss the prospects and problems of lines in Norfolk and Suffolk.

**The First 150:** The branch produced a booklet *The First 150 Years* to mark the anniversary of the first railway in Norfolk - from Norwich to Yarmouth via Reedham. It is available from Trevor Garrod (cheques

for £1.50 to RDS) 15 Clapham Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 1RQ.

### North West

By Robert Cummings

**Closure threats:** Once again the branch is fighting more closure proposals. This time three stations on the East of Manchester are the targets. The first of these, Park, had 20 trains per day in 1988. Now it has just five and, needless to say, usage has declined dramatically. Even with this paltry service, the station almost covers its 1992-93 costs of £1,320 with revenue of £1,163 (source: RUCC NW Heads of Information). Even allowing for the extra stopping costs, one can imagine that this station would easily cover its costs if it had its 1988 service level. BR claims stopping costs for the five trains per day are £300 per annum. Park needs £14,000 worth of renewals over the next five years but it is difficult to see how this figure could not be surpassed given a reasonable service.

Miles Platting, however, generates less income for its five trains because it is on a major road into the city centre and has a very frequent bus service. Miles Platting costs £3,360 and earns just £459. However, the remaining train service is geared entirely towards Manchester Victoria and takes no account of the fact that it could provide a reasonable service to other centres within Greater Manchester: Rochdale, Ashton-under-Lyne, Stalybridge, Eccles, Salford and Bolton. Miles Platting is one of the most deprived areas in Manchester with very high unemployment and low car ownership. A decent train service would improve mobility and help people find work further afield.

Both Miles Platting and Park are in areas which the city council has identified as in desperate need of urban renewal. Closure of railway stations in these areas contributes to further decline. Good railway services should go hand in hand with urban regeneration.

The third station, Godley East, was largely replaced by Godley station in the mid-1980s. Godley East was sited on a junction which no longer exists and it is less convenient than the newer station. However, Godley station was constructed under the Speller Amendment which allows new stations to be opened experimentally and the branch would like to see this station awarded Godley East's permanence when the latter is closed.

The branch will be representing RDS at the Metrolink open day at the Queens Road depot on Sunday 5 June. RDS literature and publications will be available and we are hoping to recruit more members.

Future branch meetings will be held on Saturday 2 July at the County Hotel, Preston, Saturday 24 September at the Town Crier, Chester (venue to be confirmed) and Saturday 26 November at the Station Hotel, Carnforth.

■ Public £135m wasted: Transport Minister Roger Freeman has admitted in a Commons answer that BR has spent £135 million on parts of the Channel Tunnel high-speed rail link which will not now go ahead.

# Reality is stranger than satire

Reality outdoes the satirist in the case of railway privatisation, said Labour's Brian Wilson at the launch of the RDS-backed book *Thomas the Privatised Tank Engine*.

"Nobody could aspire to the lunacies of what is being done to the railways," he said in April.

"But with this book, serious points are made more effectively with humour."

Mr Wilson joked that Railtrack chairman Bob Horton was unable to make it to the launch because it was not one of the three days he works.

*Thomas the Privatised Tank Engine* first appeared in the pages of *Private Eye* in January 1993 and rapidly established itself as a childish classic, according to editor Ian Hislop.

"It was based on an absurdly simple idea. What if the Government was stupid enough to privatise the railways? It could never happen of course, but children love the unbelievable. Incredible stories always become their favourites," he says in the introduction to the book.

"Such are the delightful tales of incompetence, shortsightedness and greed that make up this collection. They will transport you to another world - unlike the privatised trains which won't transport you anywhere.

"And while you're waiting for these trains not to arrive, you'll find *Thomas* the ideal book to while away those long hours (Surely 'days'? Ed.) in the unheated cus-



Commons touch: Illustrator Nick Clark (centre) with Labour transport spokesman Brian Wilson (left) and shadow employment spokesman John Prescott (right) among other guests at the launch

tom service lounge. So join *Thomas* and his friends on their journey downhill fast. Let the Grey Controller turn the clock back to the Victorian age and revel in the nostalgic feel of the nineteenth century railways of tomorrow. Next stop ... er there are no stops.

"So bravo *Thomas*! Let's wave the flag, ring the bell and blow the whistle on the Government."

The failure of transport planning in Britain

## Rail's vital role for the future

### LINCOLN 94

#### RDS annual meeting

Rail could be the firm plank with which to start building an integrated public transport system, the society's annual general meeting was told in May.

Conservative councillor Jim Dodsworth said he regretted the fact that we in Britain had not had the good sense to create an integrated system.

Bus deregulation had been a disaster and similar portents were there for rail privatisation.

Mr Dodsworth, chairman of Lincolnshire County Council planning and transport committee, praised RDS for its work.

He said the council had put around £4-5 million into boosting railway services.

He was pleased the Government had agreed to establish a Rail Forum which will be chaired by Lincoln's Tory MP Kenneth Carlisle but it needed the involvement of "people who control the purse strings" at national level.

RDS president Michael Caton took up this theme. He said: "Local authorities rather than central government are leading the way, particularly with a co-ordinated transport policy. I wish there was a desire for one at national level."

He said that in talks with government officials, the new fashionable phrase was "cross-modal elasticity" which meant the scope for moving traffic from road to rail.

was highlighted at the book launch by Labour's John Prescott who said he went to New York by Concorde, only to find the journey from Westminster to Heathrow took him longer than the flight.

Mr Prescott laughingly pointed out that former Tory Transport Secretary Cecil Parkinson now wants public subsidies to help his group build the Channel Tunnel fast link.

He quipped: "It's easy to be confused by these Tories. Are they wearing their public or private hats?"

But a solution was proffered by RDS president Michael Caton who urged the Government to commission a study into how many transport problems could be solved by diverting just 20% of the £23 billion road building budget into railways.

"We are 10 years behind with the Channel Tunnel fast link," he said. "We can't afford to wait another three years while privatisation is implemented before there is proper investment in the railways."

"They are crying out for investment now. Privatisation has deflected us away from the central problem of investment."

There is lots of enlightenment as well as amusement in *Thomas the Privatised Tank Engine*.

You can order your copy for £5.50 including post and packing from Martin Ball, 89 North Wallington, Fareham, Hants PO16 8JT. Make cheques payable to Railway Development Society.

robust as necessary particularly because Badgerline has said it wants to concrete over branch lines in the West Country.

■ RDS will be keeping an eagle eye on changes as a result of privatisation. Branches and user groups are asked to report any significant changes to services year by year to Eric Barber, Poplar View, Foxmoor Lane, Ebley, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 4QQ.

■ Monthly lottery results: February: T J Jolley, Wigan £55.20, J Gardiner, Welwyn Garden City £34.50, C J Mann, Croydon £20.70, A J Boulton, Edgware £13.80, A P Koolman, Bromley £6.90, W Emmerson, Belfast £6.90.

March: J D Smith, Rye £54.60, J D Shemilt, Ashbourne £34.13, Paul Martin, Coventry £20.48, D R Reeve, Norwich £13.65, Nigel Perkins, Harrow £6.82, J E Wilson, Timperley £6.82.

April: Paul Worrall, Solihull £55.40, Donald Graham, Worksop £34.63, Paul Martin, Coventry £20.78, John Eddleston, Ash £13.85, David Stocks, Sheffield £6.92, J G Willis, East Barnet £6.92.

If you would like to join the lottery for one year, send £12 to Dave Finch, 28 Neville Avenue, Kidderminster, Worcs DY11 7AL.

Make cheques payable to RDS and include your RDS membership number if possible.

## 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 Martin Ball, 89 North Wallington, Fareham, Hants PO16 8JT.

# WESTMINSTER

## Compensation

The increased use of the West London line for rail freight was raised by **Clive Soley** (Labour Hammersmith) on 21 February. He said the proposal to increase usage of the line to about one train every eight minutes, day and night, is seen as unacceptable in a residential area.

He wanted compensation for residents when trains pass "within a few feet of their windows." Public Transport Minister **Roger Freeman** said he was asking Railtrack to "examine the case for providing an alternative route for Channel Tunnel freight trains avoiding central London."

Questioned about the road budget by **Alan Duncan** (Conservative Rutland & Melton), Transport Secretary **John MacGregor** expected roads to account for just over 50% of the annual budget and public transport about 40%.

**Nick Harvey** (Liberal Democrat North Devon) wanted the minister to bear in mind "the growing evidence of the connection between vehicle emissions and respiratory allergies". He wanted to know what steps the minister was taking to toughen standards for vehicle emissions in urban areas and to increase spending on public transport as an alternative to the private car.

Transport Secretary **John MacGregor** mentioned catalytic converters, improvements in vehicle emission standards, and road building.

**Brian Wilson** (Lab Cunninghame) asked for confirmation that the access charges announced by Railtrack would mean every part of the BR network would require subsidy by the taxpayer. He said the railway system will appear to be more heavily subsidised than it really is, and was facing a bigger threat to the network than Beeching.

Mr MacGregor replied: "We are having the access charges accurately costed to reflect the

cost of running the infrastructure. Until now this has not been done. It would take account of depreciation and the proper return on capital so that investment in infrastructure can be obtained. "We are giving the system a proper commercial structure so that decisions can take account of the cost of different parts of the system."

## London lorry ban

**Harry Greenway** (Con Ealing North) asked about the London lorry ban. He said: "Will Minister of Transport for London **Steven Norris** confirm that the ban will remain in place? What compensation arrangements can be made for people living near the A40 in my constituency and small roads, whose houses are rattled by heavy lorries? Their numbers are increasing and this is of great concern to my constituents."

Mr Norris said: "As to the A40, I am afraid I have to tell Mr Greenway that compensation arrangements do not generally take account of the increased use of an existing road."

## Train Speeds

**Nigel Griffiths** (Lab Edinburgh South) asked about the speed of inter-city rail travel in Britain compared to France. Mr Freeman reported the fastest in Britain as 107 mph between Doncaster and Grantham compared to 153 mph between Massy and St Pierre.

Mr Griffiths asked: "What benefits of the British system would the minister commend to the French?" Mr Freeman said that all BR InterCity trains, diesel or electric, are designed to run at fast speeds over 90 mph. France operates a two-tier service - TGVs which are excellent, and the rest which are not.

Labour's transport spokesman **Frank Dobson** (Holborn & St Pancras) said: "If Channel Tunnel trains ran the same speed all the

way as on the British system, the overall journey time would be five hours 25 minutes instead of three hours!"

## Privatisation

**David Martin** (Con Portsmouth South), who has a majority of only 242, asked: "What benefits does the minister expect to see for passengers as a result of privatisation?"

Mr MacGregor said: "Better services, run more efficiently; better targeted to markets and hence to what passengers want and to which they will respond." Mr Martin: "Will the minister confirm that there will be through ticketing and through timetabling under the new arrangements?"

Mr MacGregor: "Yes. We have given a clear commitment that through ticketing will continue. The Regulator will have a statutory duty to promote it. Railtrack will be responsible for producing a working national timetable, and will be required in its licence to make arrangements for the publication of the timetable, if it would not otherwise be published by another party."

In a written answer to **Sir John Stanley** (Con Tonbridge & Malling) asking about the maximum speed of Channel Tunnel rail link passenger trains under Blue Bell hill in Kent, Mr Freeman said the assumed maximum timetabled speed of trains between the Channel Tunnel and London is 140 mph. Freight and commuter services may operate more slowly than international passenger trains.

In response to questions from Nottinghamshire Labour MPs **Simon Tipping** and **Joe Ashton** concerning phases 2 and 3 of the Robin Hood line, Mr Freeman said that £6.5 million is being made available for phase 2, under sections 53 & 54 of the 1989 Local Government and Housing Act. An application by Nottinghamshire County Council for grant under section 56 of the 1968 Transport Act is still being considered.

He was not yet satisfied with the case for phase 3 and the Department of Transport is discussing with the county council the further work needed on the appraisal. If they wish to bid for resources for phase 3, they will need to indicate in a future policies and programme submission, how it fits into their overall strategy and priorities.

During a debate on the railways/ rateable value amendment order on 29 March, the following snippet came to light:-

**Bob Cryer** (Lab Bradford South) highlighted the "ignorance of the Minister for Public Transport and his department who mistakenly thought that Menwith Hill spy listening station was a BR station."

**Nicholas Hawkins** (Con Blackpool South) asked on 27 March what steps the Secretary of State was taking "to encourage freight by rail rather than road".

Mr MacGregor said: "From April, we are introducing an enhanced rail freight grant regime. This, together with privatisation, open access for new operators and substantial investment in infrastructure, freight terminals and rolling stock for Channel Tunnel service amounting to £450 million, will provide a significant boost for the rail freight industry."

**Gwyneth Dunwoody** (Lab Crewe & Nantwich) asked: "How can the minister seriously imagine that the imposition of astronomical charges on rolling stock and from Railtrack can improve any form of transport, let alone encourage anyone to use it?"

## Freight

**Nigel Evans** (Con Ribbles Valley) said: "As Mr MacGregor knows, Castle Cement, in my constituency, used to transport much of its freight by rail. Now, unfortunately, it has switched to roads, because they are more competitive. Will Mr MacGregor, give the people of Ribbles Valley some assurance that when the new system is in operation in 1995, there will be greater incentives to switch freight traffic back on to the railways?"

Mr MacGregor said: "There are some recent examples of freight going back on to rail. I believe that opportunities for open access, coupled with rail freight grants, allowing subsidies to meet Railtrack costs where there is environmental benefit to be gained, will encourage the switch back to rail."

**Brian Wilson** asked: "From April 1 railway subsidies will have to double to maintain existing services, solely because of the artificially inflated access charges that the Treasury has forced on Railtrack. The Government is seeking to create the impression of a highly subsidised railway-

# WATCH

twice as highly as before April 1. Is not the scene being set for the rundown of our railways?"

Mr McGregor: "Mr Wilson, by his question, shows that he does not understand how the new grant and access charging regimes will work."

## Stratford International

**Tony Banks** (Lab Newham NW) wanted the minister's assurance that no railway land would be sold in the Stratford area which would prejudice the building of an international station there when the Channel Tunnel rail link is built.

Mr Freeman replied that it was important that railway land from the southern extremities, close to Stratford station, all the way to Temple Mills, should remain in public hands.

Mr Dobson said an enormous contribution to the economic regeneration of East London would be made by the construction of the international station and that the value of CrossRail would be immeasurably increased if it had a connection with the CTRL at Stratford.

Mr Freeman: "We have not ruled out a connection between CrossRail and the Channel tunnel high speed rail link. There are powerful arguments in favour. Mr MacGregor merely ruled out one particular intersection! As to the importance of a station at Stratford, there is a difference between an international station and a domestic one. I hope the commuter group will argue the case for both."

## Traffic calming

**Andrew Bennett** (Lab Denton & Reddish) asked: "Does the minister accept that although traffic calming measures have been extremely successful, the key is to reduce the number of cars on the road? Does he accept that, particularly in Greater Manchester, the decision to take staff off the stations has frightened a large number of passengers away from those stations? Would not it be far better to ensure that public transport was effective in the area?"

Roads Minister **Robert Key** said: "More significant than the number of cars on the road is the number of journeys they make. That is something local authorities have the power to

influence through traffic calming schemes."

## Road planning

**Paul Flynn** (Lab Newport West) asked: "Has the Secretary of State seen the reports that there are 10,000 deaths every year from a previously unidentified source - particulate emission (PM 10) from motor vehicle exhausts? That is in addition to suffering caused by asthma and other health problems. Is not the insane rush for new roads being paid for by our children in premature deaths?"

Mr MacGregor: "There is no insane rush for new roads."

## Road building

**Nick Harvey** asked: "Does the minister agree with the Secretary of State for the Environment that we cannot continue to see the number of cars increasing so that life becomes dominated by them? Does he agree the car should be our servant, not our master? Does the honourable gentleman accept building roads leads to increased traffic? Will he introduce a comprehensive White Paper on all aspects of transport policy and use it as a foundation for a concerted transport policy?" Mr Key gave a protracted answer which boiled down to a "no" to all questions.

## Station staffing

**Bridget Prentice** (Lab Lewisham East) asked about unstaffed stations and the comparable figures for 1979. Mr Freeman: "There are approximately 1,000 stations in NSE and BR management say about 80% are unstaffed after 1800, 30% on Saturdays and 50% on Sundays. (No comparable figures for 1979 given).

Mrs Prentice: "Is it not an absolute disgrace that four out of five stations are unstaffed and that two assaults take place every day on NSE stations? Is Mr Freeman aware that at stations such as Lee in my constituency, women are frightened to travel on trains because there are no station staff, and that BR are losing money because there are no staff in the booking halls either." Mr Freeman: "Mrs Prentice is right. BR is losing revenue because of fear."

**Nick Raynsford** (Lab Greenwich) said: "After being in power for 15 years, during which time they have run down the staffing of so many stations, why



does not the Government now accept its responsibility in this area and get the staff back so as to ensure that the public are safe and can pay their fares, that NSE can increase its revenue and that we can have a better rail service now?" Mr Freeman: "That will happen under the principle of passenger rail franchising."

## Competition

**Mark Robinson** (Con Somerton & Frome) asked: "What effects does the minister expect the introduction of competition will have on improvements in rail services?" Mr Freeman: "We expect the introduction of competition to result in increased frequencies in response to more extensive marketing and lower fares for certain services."

**Bill Oler** (Lab Nuneaton) questioned how the West Coast main line could be improved by competition and without the Government putting money into the infrastructure? Mr Freeman said the private sector will do it quicker than the public sector.

**Paul Murphy** (Lab Torfaen) wanted to know on 22 March what progress has been made to modify the Reading, Redhill and Tonbridge railway line to carry Channel Tunnel freight.

Mr Freeman replied that the stretch between Redhill and Tonbridge had already been upgraded. Railtrack will be commencing its study of the route between Reading and Redhill next month.

**Nick Harvey** asked if the Government would introduce measures to provide for localised traffic bans to be imposed at times of high pollution incidence? Mr Key said the Government is "not yet convinced of the cost effectiveness of such measures." He said: "Local air quality will benefit from encouraging use of public transport, cycling and walking, and for the long term, congestion charging and the use of the planning system to reduce the need to travel by car."

## Privatisation

Mrs Dunwoody wanted a detailed breakdown of amounts and the recipients of the £1.6 million which will be spent by the office of the Rail Regulator in the

financial year 94/95 on external consultants for rail privatisation. She further wanted to know how the office of passenger rail franchising was going to spend £5.9 million in 94/95 plus how the £12 million was to be spent by the Department of Transport on external consultants for rail privatisation in 94/95.

Mr Freeman said the Regulator will be spending on economics, accounting and business efficiency consultants and legal advice. The £12 million spent by the Department of Transport will cover advice on legal issues, merchant banking, accountancy and taxation, marketing, access charges, freight issues and information systems.

## Engine emissions

The London Energy Study, funded jointly by the European Commission, London Electricity and the Department of the Environment has shown that road transport is responsible for the following percentages of pollutants over an area of 2,000 square miles in and around London: Carbon dioxide 33%, sulphur dioxide 22%, black smoke 96%, carbon monoxide 99%, Nitrogen oxides 76%, Volatile organic compounds 97%.

## £3m well spent

Public Transport Minister **Roger Freeman** opened a new rail distribution depot at Cross Green, Leeds, on 16 May built with the help of a £3 million Government freight facilities grant. It will avoid the need for 200 daily lorry movements. Tilcon is buying new 90-tonne wagons for limestone which will be hauled by Trainload Freight North East from Swinden in the Yorkshire Dales down the Grassington branch to Leeds and Hull. Grants help with the capital cost of rail schemes in cases where traffic would otherwise go by road. In 15 years the Government has paid out £63 million for 141 schemes. Much more needs to be spent.

## Fast link

On 28 April Mr MacGregor confirmed that the proposed Channel Tunnel fast link will take a central rather than bypass route at Ashford, Kent. He also said the line would be in a cut-and-cover tunnel under a housing estate at Pepper Hill, near Northfleet.



# Danger: Safety rules ahead

The stupid way new safety rules are being implemented on the railway is likely to lead to more – not fewer – lives being lost.

Rural stations are being threatened with closure following instructions from the Health and Safety Executive – because they are unlit.

If the stations do close, passengers will be forced to stop going by train – the safest way to travel – and rely on roads where more than 4,000 people die every year.

The frustrating situation was described at the annual general meeting of RDS at Lincoln on 1 May.

George Boyle said the stations had been providing a service for more than 100 years and that the net result would be people switching to buses which would drop them off at unlit locations on roads. The resultant danger would be infinitely greater.

By contrast, he said the road lobby successfully blocked road safety measures.

He described how a report had identified that lorry wheels were prone to failure because the fixing studs were not strong enough.

But the lorry industry had rejected the necessary expenditure on building lorries with stronger wheel studs and the Government merely accepted that stance.

By comparison vast amounts of money were having to be spent on supposed Channel Tunnel safety measures despite the fact that similar trains had been operated by Swiss railways under the Alps for years without accident and without excessive "safeguards".

The meeting passed a resolution that these unfair demands on rail operators should cease until it can be demonstrated that the major competitor to rail, the road system, has been brought up to a comparable safety standard.

In recent times, there have been years when no passengers have been killed on the railways. Usually the toll does not exceed double figures. By contrast the Government boasts about bringing down the road toll. Yet more than 4,000 people are killed each year.

In seconding the motion, John Saunders pointed out that the cost of providing automated level crossings – to provide a high level of safety – was delaying reopening of the line to Alloa.

In the meantime people are forced to travel



*Trains are helping to bring East and West together following the end of the Cold War. An entire American hospital was transported in April from Cambridgeshire to the former Soviet republic of Belarus. The order to "Provide Hope to Belarus" was given by President Clinton who during a visit to Minsk was shocked to find only minimal healthcare provision.*

*He agreed to send an entire US air force field hospital which had been kept on standby at RAF Upwood in the event of war in Europe. The 500-bed hospital included x-ray units, ventilators, blood freezing facilities and monitoring equipment. The three trains were the first to come out of the new intermodal depot at Willesden, London, which has been built to serve the Channel Tunnel. The trains – 130 Freightliner containers – went on this occasion by ferry. At Malaszewicze on the Polish border, the containers had to be transferred to be wide-gauge wagons.*

*The American State Department which paid for Operation Provide Hope asked Britain's Railfreight Distribution to deliver the "contingency hospital" to Minsk. "These three trains demonstrate what RID is already achieving – even before the Channel Tunnel is open," said managing director Ian Brown. Our picture shows a Polish electric loco hauling the British containers en route to Minsk.*

on highly dangerous roads which also has the effect of producing hazardous pollution.

The meeting also called for roads to be required to make a comparable financial rate of return to that required of Railtrack.

Graham Nalty warned: "At the moment, privatisation looks like a paper exercise to make the subsidy to rail look twice as much as necessary."

"The Highways Agency will not demand an 8% return on roads that Railtrack has to impose on rail."

Malcolm Goodall added: "Roads should

operate on a commercial basis, if rail is expected to."

Other motions included:

■ A demand that rail alternatives to M2 expansion should be considered. CrossRail could for instance be expanded into a long-distance route from East to West.

■ A call for a regional service through the Channel Tunnel from various points in Kent and Sussex to destinations like Calais, Boulogne, Lille and Amiens. Trevor Jones said: "Union Railways says there is as much demand for Brighton-Paris trains as a Manchester-Paris service." Linda Irvine warned: "As a foot passenger, I will not be able to use the Channel Tunnel to get from Folkestone to Calais."

■ Safeguards for discounted tickets to be inter-available on trains of all operators. John Davison reported that real rail fare costs had already gone up 39% over a 20-year period in which motoring costs had gone up by only 2%.

■ Statutory protection of abandoned railway routes and trackbeds, particularly after the recent Government display of dirty tricks which has forced the remaining traffic off many freight-only lines.

■ Introduction of minimum service levels to avoid closure of lines by stealth.

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