

Railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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Bonjour Europe

A lifetime's dream came true for RDS members in December when they travelled by Eurostar and said hello not only to Paris, but to rail campaigners in France.

The opening of through rail services to Europe via the Tunnel has been long awaited and should be the start of tremendous growth for international rail travel.

"What a joy to cross the Channel in 20 minutes," said Graham Tolliday "and to touch 187 mph on land for the first time."

But he added: "The three-hour journey was so smooth, quiet and efficient, it was almost boring."

However he recalls a 10-day visit to Paris from Chester in 1947 which cost £10! Not surprisingly, he is looking forward to the time when railcard discounts are given on Eurostar journeys.

RDS general secretary Trevor Garrod was also impressed with the smoothness and simplicity of the journey.

"The Channel Tunnel is a superlative civil engineering achievement," he said. "Eurostar trains, running on three different electric systems in three countries with no change of crew, are among the most technically sophisticated in the world."

"It seems almost churlish to voice criticisms. But we did send a few suggestions to European Passenger Services."

RDS hopes to organise at least one more group trip for RDS members and friends. Peter Cannon has taken over the organisation from Roland White, and would be pleased to send details to any members. Please send a SAE to him at 6 Garrett Crescent, Leiston, Suffolk, IP16 4LB.

We have seen the future – and it works or as the French say: *On a vu l'avenir – et ça marche.*

Entente Cordiale: A Eurostar train under the impressive roof at Waterloo International and below, British and French rail campaigners toast the success of the Channel Tunnel during a reception for RDS at Paris Gare du Nord. General secretary Trevor Garrod is on the right, with the French public transport federation vice president Jean Macheras, centre. Simone Bigorne is at the centre in the rear. Picture by Jean Crighton



Allies in our battle for rail

By Malcolm Goodall

Do you ever feel you're on your own when pursuing transport issues? Do you wonder why environmental groups don't take any interest in transport matters?

In fact, you are not on your own. There are many groups taking an active interest in transport planning and policies.

Exchanging ideas and information can be mutually beneficial, but keeping in contact with other organisations can also be difficult and time-consuming.

Recognising this, the Council for the Protection of Rural England has set up a number of Transport Campaign Groups in English counties, from Cornwall to the Lake District.

These groups are informal gatherings of local people who meet at intervals to report

on their activities, and alert others to new issues and problems.

The Nottinghamshire group is made up of representatives from 20 local groups such as RDS, Transport 2000, Pedals, Friends of the Earth, and others involved with particular interests and localities. It meets every two months.

The group formulated a co-ordinated response to the Department of Transport's *Moving into the Nineties* pamphlet, emphasising the need for a more balanced transport policy.

Members had useful discussions to help with their submissions on the Nottinghamshire Structure Plan Review, and the subsequent examination in public.

One of the most hotly debated issues was the Nottingham Northern and Eastern Orbital Road proposal, which promised to

engulf a large swathe of land in new low-density development, while making no provision for public transport.

The strength of opposition eventually persuaded the county council to drop this plan.

However, its southern end met the contentious fourth Trent crossing. This new road bridge would feed even more traffic into the congested city centre, but the county is still determined to build it instead of providing public transport alternatives.

RDS branches have much to contribute to Transport Campaign Groups, and could also gain valuable information and contacts. Do you belong to the group in your county? If not, contact the local CPRE branch, or telephone me on 01623 871522 for further information.

■ CPRE is organising a one-day seminar, *A Campaigner's Guide to Transport Proposals*, at Newark Town Hall, Notts, on Saturday April. Cost: £15. Details: Joanne Cross 01623 976 6433

TREVOR
GARROD'S
VIEW



Doom and gloom or rays of hope

During a recent London radio interview, the presenter was keen for me to predict which lines were in danger of closing through lack of cash. The emphasis of the questioning, as often on such occasions, was on doom and gloom.

In my reply, I said that yes, indeed, secondary services, suburban routes and cross-country lines might suffer cutbacks or complete closure if present Government policies continued. But I also pointed out that this was not inevitable.

Ten years ago, the Settle-Carlisle line was saved because thousands of people, including many RDS members, lodged objections and campaigned for its retention.

In October, the Bedford-Bletchley line was threatened with complete shutdown for seven weeks because of alleged staff shortages. Yet protests from RDS, the Bedford-Bletchley Rail Users' Association and local authorities forced a compromise.

I mentioned both examples in the radio interview to show that action against threatened cuts can be successful.

In another interview on BBC Radio Suffolk following similar "doom and gloom" predictions, I acknowledged the problems but pointed out that the East Suffolk Line currently has its most frequent Sunday service since the 1960s. One reason why it has enjoyed an all-year Sunday morning service and late evening service since 1987 is that members of the East Suffolk Travelers Association did not sit around bemoaning the lack of trains but conducted a survey of passengers to demonstrate the demand for extra services.

Not long ago RDS published a report advocating better use of the Marylebone-

Banbury route, including London-Birmingham services to compete with the M40. There are now hourly Turbo trains between the two cities on this route.

I regularly remind the doom and gloom merchants that over 250 new stations have been added to the BR network since 1970. The stations listed in our *A-Z of Rail Reopenings* resulted from pressure by local campaigners and councils. They represent over 250 rays of hope.

It is part of our job in RDS to generate and nurture these rays of hope. That is why we have just published *A New Station - What Might it Cost?* with detailed guidance based on experience.

Big projects have also had to be fought for. Who now remembers Flexilink? Yet this consortium of vested interests tried to prevent the Channel Tunnel being built. Our opponents are not invincible.

Another new RDS book is in preparation, featuring the activities of 20 of our affiliated rail users' groups plus the first-ever directory of all such groups. It will be a campaigning handbook which should make the pro-rail lobby even stronger and more effective, as we learn from each others' achievements. The new book, provisionally entitled *Local Lines* should be out by the end of the summer.

RDS and its associated local users' groups are increasingly regarded as a body of independent people who know what they are talking about and actually do things. Our continued growth is also a sign of hope.

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

Inside story

Former rail manager Peter Rayner will be telling RDS members what he has discovered after casting a sceptical eye over the privatisation process.

You can hear what he has to say at the society's annual general meeting on 29 April.

Mr Rayner was London Midland regional operating manager for many years, and then worked at BR headquarters before his retirement in 1992.

Enclosed with this *Railwatch* is a booklet giving full details of the Exeter AGM.

This is the first time the national AGM has been held in the South West branch's area.

The afternoon session will be opened with a short talk by Liberal Democrat transport spokesman Paul Tyler who is MP for North Cornwall. We have invited him in recognition of the strength of his party in the South West, where it has several MPs and a large number of local councillors.

Book fair

Hardbacks, vgc, 1979-88: *Walking Old Railways* (Somerville), *The Railway Builders* (Joby), *History of Steam Classics* (Westwood). £17 post free or £7 singly. Wanted: *Summit Tunnel - A Survivor*, Parry 1985. Angell 01562 68209.

History of Trains Deluxe (G Behrend) Hardback. Signed. Limited edition 232 pp. Offers. Peter Gray 01302 785410.

Transport book sales: Railway books and journals, tramway magazines/journals. SAE for lists. TBS, 141 Convent Way, Southall, Middx UB2 5UF.

Advertise Do you have second-hand railway books or railwayana to sell? Then why don't you advertise them in *Railwatch*? Small ads are available at 20p per word for members (30p for others). Send your adverts with remittance in advance to *Railwatch*, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU. Make cheques payable to RDS.

Ouch! How I became a statistic

By Clara Zilahi

On a dark, wet Sunday evening in late October I became a statistic - one of the six-figure number injured annually on Britain's roads.

I was cycling towards Ely station after visiting a friend in a nearby village. I rarely cycle on a main road after dark, but this was such a short distance! I had dynamo lighting, plus a detachable front light, a booster rear light battery, and I wore a reflective harness.

Suddenly I heard a loud crash, and thought, momentarily, that my cycle had "exploded". A second later the pain from my obviously broken ankle reached my consciousness. By then I was sitting in the road, the cycle lying in front of me, with the rear light on. Realising the risk of being run over by another vehicle, I crawled the foot or so to the verge.

I vividly recall the relief at touching grass in the pitch dark. Momentary illumination by headlights showed my front lamp within reach, and I began flashing it. While trying to recall the Morse for SOS, I found a young man beside me offering help. I expressed concern about my cycle, but he gently explained that I was more important. A lady, with a child, also stopped. They took

RDS member Clara Zilahi had cycled all her life until a car smashed into her. Now she's using crutches and can just about walk even though it takes her 30 minutes to cover the distance which used to take her 10 minutes. Luckily she is still able to use the train and bravely insists she can get about "without too much difficulty".



Can you believe it? 3,814 people were killed on the roads in 1993. 45,009 were seriously injured and 257,197 were slightly injured. By contrast, only 41 were killed on the railways, 484 seriously hurt and 10,379 slightly hurt.

over the organising, for which I was thankful, and helped me out of the rain into her car to await the ambulance.

Having for many years been involved with road accidents through my hospital work, I had sometimes wondered what it felt like to be a victim.

Now I knew and strange to say, derived some comfort from experiencing it first hand - both then and later, while being processed in casualty.

From later information, the noise must have been caused by jam jars shattering in my pannier, and my right ankle and pedal had been hit by the car's nearside wing, which was dented.

The driver had not seen me. I

was in the ambulance when he looked in, a cigarette in his mouth, to enquire after me.

I realised he too must feel shocked and managed to avoid saying I felt wretched enough without the nausea caused by his cigarette.

The Ely RAF Hospital (which served also a large civilian population) having been closed as part of the Defence Cuts, I was taken to Addenbrooke's in Cambridge, nearly 40 miles from home, where I spent nine days. Through the window I could, sometimes tearfully, watch toy-sized trains passing south of Cambridge - near the site where we hope a halt may be built.

When I left hospital, my ankle plated and screwed, I was able

only to hop on crutches. But I insisted my outpatient visit two weeks later must be by train. The gap between train and platform, never even noticed before, was too wide, and the step too steep, for me to hop so I used the simple if unorthodox method of sitting on the step and hauling myself up on to the nearest seat.

Lessons learned included the need for really bright lights - flashing rear lights are now available - and the checking of the reflective quality of a safety harness. I plan also to get a helmet, though my head remained intact without. My reason for not wearing one - that it might interfere with hearing approaching vehicles - does not apply in heavy traffic.

Despite my initial concern for the bike, and its relative lack of damage, I have decided to buy a new one, on which I am still hoping to take part in the 1995 RDS sponsored ride. Given my slow progress towards normal mobility, two months after the accident, some doubt remains on this score.

***** Thug transport

A huge lorry thundering along the A10 near Ely was spotted with this professionally painted sign on it: "I'm too big to argue with."

80mph rural railway

By Chris Magner

The rail line through the middle of Wales has been given a programme of key investments which should reverse years of decline.

The line to Aberystwyth, famous for the old Great Western Railway's Cambrian Coast Express, has had its line speed raised to 80mph.

This means that half an hour has been cut from timings of Birmingham to Aberystwyth trains. The most significant improvements have been between Shrewsbury and Talerigg.

Former manager Merrick Rookroft, who played a decisive role in achieving earlier improvements, attended a ceremony to unveil a plaque at Newtown station, commemorating the £1.7 million investment which was shared by 13 bodies, including the European Commission, Railtrack, the Rural Wales

Development Board and local councils.

Mr Rookroft brought in Sprinter trains and radio signalling in the mid 1980s.

The Cambrian Line Users who meet each Saturday morning at Newtown station want further improvements, particularly telephones at unstaffed stations.

Details from Peter Crompton, Bettnewydd, Llandinam, Powys SY17 5AA.

Readers are urged to travel on the Cambrian and see what can be done to transform a rural railway.

Climbing up the bank out of Welshpool at over 70mph and through Mid Wales at 80 mph has to be experienced and is a tribute to Railtrack and Regional Railways Central.

It is now faster on the Cambrian than the "main" line which runs between Wolverhampton and Chester.

Focus on hospital cash

Railman Derek Haynes gives Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge the credit for saving his life. He spent six months there after a brain operation left him in a coma for six weeks.

As a result of his illness, he had to retire from his job in railway administration.

Derek had to learn to walk, eat and do basic tasks following his operation and he still suffers problems with his balance.

But Derek and his wife Phyl who live in March were determined to thank the hospital - and raised £1,200 by making a rail video.

Linking their love of filming with Derek's passion for the railway, they produced Joint Line 92 which contains 100 minutes of nostalgia along the Spalding to March line which closed 10 years ago.

Steam, diesel and interviews with railmen and views of Whitmoor yard in its

heyday are included on the video.

Now the couple have produced a new video of the March to St Ives and Cambridge line part of which RDS is campaigning to have reopened. The video features a shot of RDS chairman Steve Wilkinson who lives near the line at Histon. It is already selling well in local shops.

The videos are available for £11.99 each, post free from Derek Haynes, 32 Brewin Avenue, March, Cambs PE15 9SL. Make cheques payable to Mr C J D Haynes.

Missed opportunity

The Rail Regulator looks set to approve plans by Railtrack to implement a flexible charging scheme for freight which would be specifically designed NOT to give rail freight a pricing advantage over road. If only public servants could do what the public wants: PUT FREIGHT BACK ON RAIL!

PLATFORM For your views on the present and future of rail

Report challenged

I must express my very considerable concern at the reporting in the December edition of Railwatch of my presentation and answers to questions at the National Conference of Rail Users in October.

The whole tone of the article is set by the heading which is extremely tendentious and negative. In conjunction with the first paragraph it would appear that the problem is the future of secondary and branch lines and I cannot relate that to anything that was said either in my presentation or in the subsequent questions and answers.

Your presentation of my comments about "Cinderella" services is extremely misleading. The comments you quote from me were in relation to a question on Railtrack's support for the opening of new routes or stations whereas the article appears to suggest that I was talking about continuing support for existing routes and stations.

Similarly the paragraph about Derek Potter's question was, in my recollection, about the opening of new stations on the line.

While you have accurately quoted my comments about resignalling branch lines you have stated it in a way that suggests that there is a threat to the future of these lines.

My answer made clear that we could continue to operate these with existing mechanical signalling quite satisfactorily.

The comments about the Midland Main Line are similarly distorted. The article says nothing about my comment that it would be preferable to invest in line speed improvements which were more likely to give the journey time benefits required than electrification itself. That may not encourage Mr Durrant but it should encourage people who take an objective view about the needs of users of the line.

Your article completely ignores the positive messages I gave about the focus of Railtrack on the maintenance and improvement of the infrastructure and on the opportunities for improving the availability of investment funding.

Instead it presents a wholly negative and unjustified perception to readers of

continuing threats to the secondary lines.

While I appreciate that many of the user groups are focused on ensuring the preservation and development of individual branch lines I feel that you have given your readers an unnecessarily alarmist impression of the future for the railway network.

In view of this, while it is not my normal practice to ask for corrections to be printed in publications, I feel I am justified to request one on this occasion.

John Ellis, Director, Production, Railtrack plc, 40 Bernard Street, London WC1N 1BY

Campaigning aid

May I recommend a useful publication known as *Transport Report*, which sets out each year the Department of Transport's objectives and spending plans.

A "family tree" of the DoT will show you who best to write to and much ammunition can be gained from the objectives set out in the report.

For example, did you know that the Franchising Director's objectives require him, among other things, to "secure an improved overall service for passengers" and "protect the interests of passengers"?

Perhaps users of services threatened with cuts should write and remind him of these objectives. I have!

Transport Report is published by HMSO and the 1994 version costs £13.60 but if you have a friendly MP, he or she may be able to obtain a copy for you.

John Bourn, 122 Brighton Road, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE8 4QA

Public policy

How could a Labour government bring Railtrack back into public ownership? It's easy!

A sensible transport policy would tax polluting and congested road transport. The proceeds would go to non-polluting public transport like light rail. Existing rail routes could be electrified and new routes built.

If public money, derived from road users, provides the funds, public control should go with it.

The Government should be repaid in Railtrack shares for the investment in Railtrack.

Unless private transport users pay the full costs of their

activities so that the true costs of rail become transparently less than for roads, private investors will never build an adequate system.

E G Matthews, 20 Brookside Road, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 2BL

Absurd delay

The absurdities of privatisation are getting worse. I was waiting at Woking station on 6 January for the 1930 train to Poole when we were informed it was delayed.

We were told the defective five-car unit would be removed allowing the rest of the train to continue to Poole.

When it arrived, the entire train was stopped at Woking and the platform on which it stood was closed.

We were told the reason for this was that South West Trains did not want to incur extra charges to Railtrack by having the defective five-car unit pulled into a siding.

The result was that all down trains to Portsmouth, Southampton, Salisbury etcetera were delayed, because only one down platform was open.

Passengers for Poole had to leave their train and wait for up to an hour for a following train.

So much for privatisation improving services and encouraging more people to travel by train.

I am also getting the impression that the number of train breakdowns is increasing because of maintenance cutbacks. Do other members have information about this?

Dr Tony Chaffer, 56 Bath Road, Southsea, Hampshire PO4 0HT

Steam dream

As a member of the Friends of the Settle to Carlisle line and RDS I have read with interest your progress report on the reopening of the Clitheroe section of line.

With the rebuilding of Hellfield station and with development in mind, and the closing of Upperby shed and depot, would this be a good time to build a steam and diesel depot at Hellfield to service the Settle-Carlisle and bring more trains from Preston via Lostock Hall?

I am sure there are many enthusiasts who would be prepared to buy shares in a bid to raise money for such a project. Also there may be local

sponsorship for such a project. At present I feel that this is just a dream, but sometimes dreams come true.

AWR Chilton, 239 Whitton Dene, Isleworth, Middx TW7 7NJ

Blatant omission

I was appalled to see Darlington omitted from the proposed list of stations offering through booking of train tickets.

Darlington is the only main line station serving Cleveland and a wide swathe of the Yorkshire Dales.

I have already written to my MP, Mr Tim Devlin asking him to raise the issue with Rail Regulator John Swift.

Railwatch readers in other areas may wish to point out other blatant omissions.

Pamela Christy, 7 Mowbray Grove, Bishopsgarth, Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland TS19 8XA

Real progress

I have never travelled by train overseas, unless one counts Southern Ireland, but over the past 20 years, I have been a regular rail user in our own country.

I feel I must say to Euro enthusiasts, stop knocking Britain's railways.

Yes they are under-funded and yes, I deplore cuts in services.

However, look at some of the positive developments that have taken place in our life time.

The old Great Western routes have InterCity 125 high speed trains, as did the East Coast main line before electrification brought the 140mph class 91s.

High speed trains run North East to South West services, as well as on the Midland main line.

There is the Tyne and Wear Metro, Manchester's Metrolink and the initial stages of Sheffield Supertram.

The Glasgow and Liverpool areas have seen improved services. Birmingham was enhanced by the modern Snow Hill station and the Jewellery line is just round the corner.

Of course there always seems to be something new in London, from the Moorgate electrics to the Docklands Light railway and Waterloo's Channel Tunnel terminus.

Elsewhere there have been new and reopened stations.

So please, let's not give the powerful road lobby invaluable ammunition by

disparaging what we already have. It might be politic if you are pressing for improvements, but not if it puts off potential passengers who are hard enough to convince about the merits of rail as it is.

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

Striking conclusion

I write concerning last year's rail strike. RMT's Jimmy Knapp clearly realised that the network would remain in the hands of the people in whose hands it should be, BR, if "interested private parties" were to be put off buying. The strike has indeed had just that effect. To this effect, Peter Field of South West Trains said that the strike was what he wanted as it drove the opposition away, leaving only SWT to bid for the franchise.

Mr Knapp has thus done all rail users and supporters a great service and should be praised for it, not condemned.

In the last Railwatch a correspondent asked what is meant by "laissez-faire capitalism" and state control. Laissez-faire capitalism means the Government does not interfere in the capitalist system, something which this Government preaches, but does not practise when it suits its own interests. RMT and Railtrack found that out didn't they? State control means the ownership of the means of production and public services by the state, on behalf of you and me; the people. Yes, such words do indeed have a place in RDS material.

Kevin Smith, 36 York Street, Coives PO31 7BS

Wunderbahn?

Michael Weinberg's most interesting article telling of the pleasures of rail travel in Germany leaves an unanswered question. How is the excellent service financed?

Germany has its own economic problems mainly stemming from reunification, at least as great as this country's.

Yet seemingly it has ample cash to spare for public transport. Are the Germans taxed at levels that would be unacceptable here?

T N Parker, 11 Springbanks Way, East Hunsbury, Northampton NN4 0QA

German lessons

I was particularly interested in the Railwatch 62 article about Germany. It would be

interesting to learn about how they perform financially, what privatisation plans they have and how fares compare with ours.

Their plans place the poor efforts here well and truly in the shade.

There are now announcements of further possible cutbacks in the network instead of a policy of expansion.

Will the Government never learn from the lessons of the Beeching era? Rail must be a public service and be well-subsidised if necessary.

Perhaps this aim can only be achieved with a change of government.

H C Wilkins, Chusa, 38 Burstead Road, Great Shelford, Cambridge CB2 5EJ

Fast facts

I read comparisons with German railways and much gnashing of teeth by other contributors over the declining state of our "system" in Railwatch 62.

As the Eurostar service slowly gathers momentum, thousands of travellers a day, from far and wide, will see how the British Government condemned British Rail to run a modern high speed train over a souped-up tram line through Kent. This is not a political issue, it is a fact. To and from Waterloo, before or after the fast section in France, such comparisons will be unavoidable and consistently unfavourable.

Our only hope is that the Eurostar passengers who - unashamedly - live and vote here will look out from the train in Picardy and make their own judgement on the governance they have enjoyed of late.

D A A Fagandini, 6 Allevin Park, Dulwich, London SE21 8AE

Secret agenda

In the Government's own publication (*The Ozone Layer*), it has agreed to reduce carbon dioxide levels to the 1990 level by 2000.

This means that 5 million cars must be removed from our roads by 2000.

Why has the public been left in the dark?

Within months 17½% VAT will be put on car insurance, 17½% on tyres, 17½% on MOT test certificates and vehicle excise duty will go up to £135.

These increases will mean that it will cost about £450 to keep a

car by the curb. How many pensioners can afford this? Is this how the Government is to remove 5 million cars?

The Government will remove 5 million cars and be able to say "We did not stop you using your car".

About three years ago the chairman of BR stated that he was short of £450 million on off-peak travel. If pensioners were allowed to buy off-peak "go anywhere" season tickets for £200 a year the railway would get in over twice the off-peak loss.

By 2000, over 10 million will not be able to afford a car but there will not be enough stock or track to carry the extra passengers.

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

Carry on working

Trevor Garrod's reflections on strikes are most thought-provoking, with his almost nostalgic plea for the retention of the right to strike together with his conclusions that the loser following the recent series of strikes was the railway system - whose development and expansion is to the benefit of all railwaymen.

A key requirement for a railway system to be acceptable to the public is reliability, and in failing the public over this the unions have shown no evidence of having advanced since the days of steam engines.

It is not the public that the unions should target, but the accountants. The unions must have the public on their side. How better to do that than to have publicly announced that there would be a new pattern one-day 'strike' on a given date. They would run all trains on that day but would insist that the public travel free?

Such action would have concentrated the minds of the accountants and their masters wonderfully: the public would look forward to the next 'strike' such that there would be enormous pressure to settle with the common sense that was markedly absent during the nasty saga which actually took place.

Much of the trouble in contemporary life can be put down to the worship of accountancy: I should go so far as to say that whereas in 1940 the enemy was Nazism, today the enemy is accountancy.

Our rail track, which on nationalisation belonged to the

people of this country, is in danger of being sold to private companies for the purpose of making money.

Many of our tracks have been singled "to save money": we can say with certainty that the Cowden accident would never have happened if each train involved had had its own track.

Union power should be particularly effective against accountants: if an individual opposes the accountants he is in trouble; if all do, the accountants are in trouble.

Dr Henry Tribe, 196 Gilbert Road, Cambridge CB4 3PB

Motorail for Europe

Reading about the lorry trains over the Erzgebirge in the "Wunderbahn" article, I was reminded of an idea which I put forward in a letter to "South Eastern Rambler" in 1986.

I proposed loading points for vehicles in the London area and other places even further from the Cheriton terminal. This would save drivers having to make the long trip to the coast to connect with the Tunnel trains, and relieve the roads of Kent from all that traffic.

It would have made sense, and been easy, to make it financially advantageous to entrain near London rather than at Cheriton.

In the event, Eurotunnel's road-vehicle carrying trains have an exceptional loading gauge and must be a great deal slower than the high speed passenger-only trains on the proposed Channel Tunnel rail link. So even if that route between London and Cheriton were built to the wider (and higher?) loading gauge, shared use would produce problems.

Ideally, both high speed and "piggyback" rail routes should eventually have links to other parts of the country, and the route to London should allow for this.

On the French side, most motorists crossing the Channel do not terminate their journeys in north-eastern France, but drive on for hundreds of miles.

Obviously, similar trains could run from termini near London and other centres, to take motorists and their cars to Paris, the Riviera (St Raphael), Milan, Innsbruck and other popular destinations.

R A Wiersma, Pontresina, Broomhall Lane, Woking GU21 4AN

Why yes means no for Metro

By Alan Bevan

The Government "green light" in December for line one of the Midland Metro was not quite what it seemed.

It was actually a "no, crudely disguised as a yes", said Richard Worrall, chairman of the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority.

The authority has been waiting for years for the Government to approve the line from Birmingham Snow Hill to Wolverhampton.

Then in December, Transport Secretary Brian Mawhinney said he had set aside funding and work could start in 1995.

He announced: "The Midland Metro is excellent news for travellers in the West Midlands; it will be good for the environment and provide motorists with an alternative form of transport in a congested transport corridor."

But he also said: "My agreement to Midland Metro is conditional on a significant proportion of its total costs being found locally." What he really wants is for the seven



One step nearer? How the Midland Metro could look

councils, (including Labour-controlled Birmingham City Council) which own the airport to sell off their interests.

Mr Mawhinney told the Metro proposers that the £60 million proceeds of the airport sale could be spent on the Metro.

The Government is keen to see all municipally controlled airports privatised. But a Birmingham airport shareholders' forum has unanimously rejected the idea

saying that it is essential that all funds raised are available for re-investment in the airport.

The Passenger Transport Authority had carefully put together a financial package which sought £52 million from the Government, £25 million from the European Union, £9.2 million from Altram, with the PTE borrowing £52 million and contributing £9 million from its own funds, some of which had come from the proceeds of the

sale of its buses, W M Travel. The leaders of the Midlands councils pointed out that neither Manchester nor Sheffield were required to find local funding for their tram projects.

Midland Metro line one will be 12-miles long and is intended to contribute to the regeneration of the Black Country. It will run through West Bromwich and Wednesbury, serving areas "suffering urban deprivation" according to the Government.

Proposals to extend Manchester's Metrolink from Trafford Bar to Manchester airport via Wythenshawe are to go to a public inquiry which means no decision will be made until the end of next year.

Closed books

The Department of Transport has admitted that it has 25 files labelled top secret and 1,200 secret. The staggering number was given to Labour MP Stephen Byers in a Commons written answer. So much for open government.

Trains to keep towns and cities green

By John Davison

The importance of trains and buses in urban areas are emphasised by the Department of the Environment in new planning guidance.

Planning Policy Guidance note 2 (PPG2) which deals with the green belt round our towns and cities takes a tougher line against "greenfield" development.

The need to reduce car use and encourage more environmentally friendly transport has already been stressed by the department in its PPG13, published last year, and officially endorsed by the Department of Transport. The

new way forward is also shown in draft Regional Planning Guidance which the department has just issued for the West Midlands that stresses the importance of an integrated approach to transport and land use.

Borough councils in the area have already shown a readiness to work well together, using a package approach taking into account all modes including cycling and walking.

But the dangers are also obvious in the area. The out-of-town Merry Hill Centre near Dudley has drawn trade from traditional town centres and the customers are largely car-borne. Now councils

seeking land for major projects are told to study "corridors well served by public transport" and to seek out "spare public transport capacity".

The encouragement of gradual growth of smaller villages could, says the DoE, merely incite car-borne commuting.

Instead, development sites should be sought the railways linking Worcester to Oxford, Tamworth to New Street, Lichfield to Redditch and Kidderminster to Leamington. Through trains from Leamington to Nuneaton are recommended.

The M40 motorway is, on the other hand, frowned upon as a magnet for development and the A38 cannot withstand more industrial expansion in east Staffordshire.

Councils are asked not to allocate too much car parking land and to concentrate building where there are train services.

Councils are told to harmonise their parking policies within an overall policy of car restraint.

The guidance note also

explicitly welcomes "the principle of improving the co-ordination of public transport" in the cities' hinterland.

Planners in the West Midlands are asked to implement park-and-ride schemes and to monitor the reducing need to travel which the DoE hopes to prompt.

This DoE draft guidance note has at last recognised what many politicians, estate agents, valuers and planning practitioners have been preaching - and applying - for years.

It would be nice to report that British Rail and other public utilities have played their part in promoting reasonable growth strategies for our major cities.

It is however good to see a Conservative administration talking about restoring humanity and eco-sanity to the hearts and arteries of towns and cities. Now all we need to see is some more positive ACTION.

The draft RPG for the West Midlands is published by the Government Office for the West Midlands at Five Ways Tower, Edgbaston B15 1SJ.

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Main agenda for the Midlands

By Darryl Taylor-Smith

The potential of the Midland main line between Bedford and Nottingham is highlighted in a new booklet.

The *Shires Line* has been sent to councillors along the line in a bid to persuade them to promote an energy-efficient and environmentally friendly rail service as an alternative to heavily congested roads.

The line provides enormous scope for fast inter-urban and commuter travel by the simple and cost-effective means of providing new stations and a new local rail service.

At present InterCity 125 trains stop only at Bedford, Wellingborough, Kettering, Market Harborough, Leicester, Loughborough and Nottingham.

But if five new stations were opened at Oakley in Bedfordshire, Desborough in Northamptonshire, Kibworth and Wigston Main Line in Leicestershire and Kegworth in Nottinghamshire, an hourly 90mph 158 service could be introduced which could also stop at the new Ivanhoe stations of Syston, Barrow and Sileby as well as InterCity stations.

Campaigners say it is a cost-effective, value-for-money scheme which would boost public transport throughout the East Midlands.

They highlight the time savings of rail travel. For instance, Oakley to Bedford would take 6 minutes by train, compared to 25 minutes by car at peak times.

The booklet, entitled *The Shires Line - A Line for All Reasons*, also suggests that park and ride facilities could be provided at Oakley and Sharnbrook (Bedfordshire), Desborough, Kibworth and Wigston Main Line.

The line has enormous potential for commuting, shopping, business and leisure.

It would also enhance existing journey opportunities by providing connections with InterCity, Thameslink and cross-country Regional rail services.

The scheme would need four 158 diesel units and would cost only £6.75 million. By contrast widening 3 miles of the M1 is costing £15 million - while also worsening pollution and traffic problems. The Leicester Western bypass is costing £46 million.

The booklet is produced by the



Leicestershire and Northants Rail Action Committee.

LANRAC hopes the county councils will agree on a joint approach but is also urging members to contact their MPs, calling for the rail scheme to be implemented.

The secretary of LANRAC is Darryl Taylor-Smith of 4 Linden Avenue, Countesthorpe, Leicestershire LE8 5PG. Tel 01533 772990

Over the top

By Malcolm Goodall

The Government's plan for trans-Pennine transport is definitely over the top. It's largely about building roads.

The Council for the Protection of Rural England was disturbed enough to publish a leaflet outlining the Department of Transport's ambitious plans for roadbuilding in the Pennines.

CPRE warned of the serious environmental consequences of more road building, which only seems to generate yet more traffic.

It put forward other ideas to create a more sustainable transport policy. The key features included public transport improvements by road and rail, managing existing road capacity, and incentives to modify personal travel habits.

Four RDS branches contributed to a response which was sent to the CPRE. For most of the major road schemes, there is a less-damaging rail alternative to cater for movement growth. For example, the A69 has been designated a Euro-route, but the parallel Newcastle to Carlisle railway services could be improved, perhaps by faster tilting diesel multiple units as used on the continent. North west of Leeds, roads through the Aire valley and beyond

could be relieved by more frequent services on the Leeds to Lancaster railway, through trains to the Lake District, and extension of the new Clitheroe trains to the interchange at Hellifield.

Costly widening of the Leeds - Manchester M62 motorway could be avoided by investment in electrifying the parallel railway line.

There are long-standing plans to widen the difficult A628 Manchester to Sheffield road to dual carriageway but half-hourly fast trains on the Hope Valley railway are already attracting more customers, and restoration of the Woodhead rail route has been suggested for both passengers and container freight trains.

Towards the southern end of the Pennines, Derbyshire County Council is studying the potential for commercial services on the Matlock to Buxton railway route.

In fact, the only corridor where a major rail improvement seems unlikely is the A66 Darlington to Brough axis. Here, the answer might be a bus, linking railway stations at Darlington, Kirkby Stephen, and Oxenholme or Penrith in the Lake District.

Clearly, there is much work to do in lobbying the Department of Transport, and the county councils on their Transport Policies and Programmes.

A new conspiracy

GOVERNMENT nostalgia for a mythical "golden age" of Britain's railways before nationalisation has left the network facing a crisis that holds uncanny parallels with the worst days of the axe-wielding Dr Beeching.

This is the warning from author and RDS member David Henshaw in a hard-hitting new edition of his

controversial book, *The Great Railway Conspiracy*. In an extensive new chapter, Henshaw argues that the political climate that spawned the controversial 1993 Railways Act resembles the era that led to the Beeching closure programme.

Beeching slashed the national rail network in the 1960s - without any positive benefit in terms of savings in the subsidy required by British Rail.

"Similarities with the events of 1963-64 are quite striking," says Henshaw. "There is a long-in-the-tooth Tory Government, a powerful and influential road lobby, and a new legislative framework for the railway industry, tailor-made to weed out the weakest lines for closure."

The revised *Great Railway Conspiracy*, published by Leading Edge, is available for £10.99 post free from Martin Ball, RDS Sales, 89 North Wallington, Fareham, Hants PO16 8TJ. Make cheques payable to RDS.

Lottery winners

RDS lottery winners for November:

Chris Rose, Perton, near Wolverhampton £53, Peter Kearney, Tewkesbury £33.12, Bernard Eyre, Norwich £19.88, R J Worthington, Stalybridge £13.24, F G Challis, Cambridge £6.63, John Mitchell, Birkenhead £6.63.

December: Nanci Denley, Bromsgrove £53.80, James Macnair, London £33.62, Brian Hastings, Scunthorpe £20.18, J D Shemilt, Ashbourne £13.44, Roger White, North Harrow £6.73, Stanley Simms, Walsall £6.73.

January: Max Burgess, York £53.80, S E Williams, Stourbridge £33.62, J E Duddridge, Frome £20.18, John Page, Cambridge £13.44, Alan Maitland, Durham £6.73, Ray King, London £6.73.

Capital plan fo

Thameslink 2000 is an ambitious but cost-effective scheme to provide a cross-London rail network ideally suited to the next century. It builds on the success of the existing Thameslink which was one of British Rail's finest achievements. Here, *Nick Richardson* of Bedfordshire County Council describes what needs to be done and the advantages. Bedfordshire is leading a consortium of local authorities in urging investment in Thameslink 2000.

Thameslink 2000 builds on the success of the existing Thameslink service that goes through the middle of London.

Thameslink already connects Brighton with Luton and Bedford and means that people can travel without changing trains in London.

It does away with the chore of arriving at a London terminus and changing to the Underground to gain access to another terminus.

Thameslink was made possible by the opening of Snow Hill tunnel — less than a mile — that links Blackfriars and Farringdon. But it also links railways to the north and south of London.

Such has been its success that Thameslink services are at capacity in the peak hours and nearly so off-peak. It attracts both leisure and business travel.

Within a year, cross-London travel grew by 300%.

Until recently, many described Thameslink as "the best kept rail secret."

It is the only cross-London direct regional service, unlike in Paris which has three semi-fast lines crossing the capital and two more being built.

There are however restraining factors on developing Thameslink.

There is a limit of six trains an hour in each direction through the Snow Hill tunnel.

The demand for peak services from Kent means that London Bridge station is congested and cannot easily be served by Thameslink trains until 10am.

At evening peak times King's Cross Thameslink station becomes crowded and on occasions needs to be closed for safety reasons because it has narrow platforms which cannot cope with the crush of people.

Developing Thameslink would need action to unscramble the

bottlenecks that occur between trains serving Kent and Sussex and the Thameslink services that need to cross or join those lines.

There are three bottlenecks — at New Cross Gate and South Bermondsey where rail flyovers are planned, and Borough Market where separating Thameslink 2000 from Charing Cross services by a new flyover south of London Bridge, means London Bridge gets an extra platform and two tracks. The result should also mean greater reliability on both routes.

Longer trains and more of them would put a strain on the existing electricity supply in the tunnel section.

Signalling systems would also need to be upgraded.

Blackfriars, King's Cross, Farringdon and other stations have platforms that can only take 8-car trains. Thameslink 2000 would use 12-car trains.

Thameslink 2000 would give the Great Northern routes from Peterborough, Cambridge and King's Lynn access to the south via Thameslink. A host of new stations could be served.

The improvement in services would be substantial. The number of stations on the Thameslink network would virtually treble to 150, with the number of train miles increasing four-fold.

Most important, the train frequency through central London would go up from 6 to 24 trains per hour in each direction.

The potential capacity would rise six times because of the effect of more and longer trains.

To achieve Thameslink 2000, work is needed at four main sites.

There are the two flyovers south of London Bridge, widening of the bridges at Borough Market Junction and a new viaduct there to take the extra track through



Congestion buster: A 319 electric unit crosses the River Thames overhead wires. At this point where a new Blackfriars station could be built, the 319 can be used for a range of exciting "link-in" services around London if it is used, in theory, to be used for a local stopping service from

London Bridge. There would be a new Blackfriars station — extended right across the Thames to provide an additional entrance on the south side in Southwark.

That entrance would provide Southwark with a new railway station to serve the growing business and residential community there.

It would also open up the South Bank, with its walkways, leisure and arts interests.

At Farringdon, there will be an improved Underground interchange and changes to track and platform layouts to allow for longer Thameslink 2000 trains.

At King's Cross, the present slightly off-centre Thameslink station would be closed and a new one built beneath St Pancras as part of the proposed Channel Tunnel rail link work — it will

provide easy access to King's Cross Underground and main line rail services too.

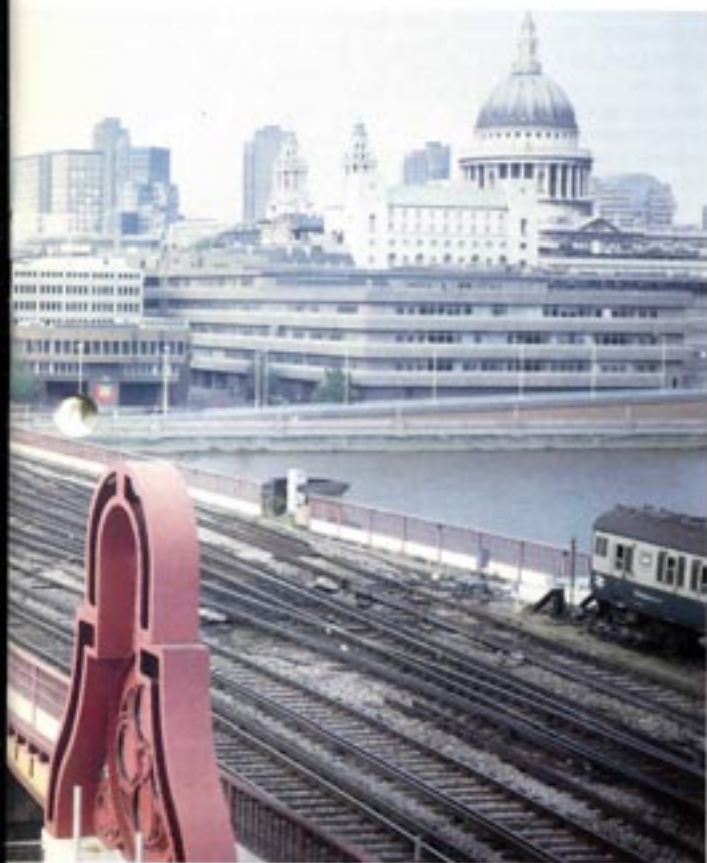
A parliamentary bill will have to approve the works at King's Cross and the necessary junction to link with Great Northern routes.

All the other works for Thameslink 2000 will be covered by a Transport and Works Act Order under the new procedure which is similar to a planning inquiry.

The infrastructure changes are relatively simple for a railway scheme that delivers so many benefits.

The number of destinations served will rise substantially. Around 1.4 million people have access to Thameslink services now. With Thameslink 2000, that rises to 5.5 million — four times as many. It will also provide a connection to the Channel

for next century



...ing travelled from Bedford, picking up a 25kV AC supply from the Jubilee line straddling the river, the train is powered by the 750 Volts DC supply available virtually anywhere on Britain's electrified network and could be used wherever it was there. One has even travelled through the Channel Tunnel from London to Lille, to complement the high-speed Eurostars

...Tanner high speed rail link, the Jubilee Line extension, CrossRail and even the Chelsea-Hackney proposal, in fact with all the major rail projects being built or planned.

It could mean an integrated rail network!

Farringdon is pivotal, particularly for linking three of the region's main airports.

Simply by adding CrossRail to Thameslink 2000, half the population of London and the South East will be within one rail interchange of each other.

That is accessibility and connectivity, with absolute flexibility - the Thameslink 2000 cornerstones.

Rail developments such as Thameslink 2000 bring other benefits too.

In economic terms, greater access means more people being able to

reach main employment centres easily - not just to reach business customers, but also in terms of attracting the right sorts of labour.

Tourists could be attracted to Cambridge or St Albans from Surrey and Sussex on journeys that previously would have been much more of a hassle.

The environment will benefit greatly. The Royal Commission on Pollution report in October showed concern about growing car use and promoted new rail investment such as Thameslink 2000 as a means of helping to switch from road to rail.

Thameslink 2000 makes using the M25 unnecessary for many people.

Fewer cars means fewer calls on social services such as police and ambulances and less demand for more or wider roads. Using the train rather than cars reduces

pollution levels significantly. It is a similar story for energy conservation. Road transport uses up some 80% of the total transport sector energy consumption.

There would be none of the disruption normally associated with major projects.

This project turns on upgrading existing infrastructure and enhancing what is there. In all, it involves less than one mile of new track.

Once the core area at the centre, crossing London, is in place, the final destination of services, or development of new services north and south, can be finalised.

People have suggested all manner of other locations that might also get through-London services via Thameslink 2000 - encouraging because it demonstrates a belief in the level of future rail demand.

The Millennium can provide a spur for rail developments, bringing together a strategic network.

Heathrow Express is on course for a 1998 introduction with dedicated services from the airport to Paddington.

The Jubilee line extension also starts operation in 1998, linking Docklands and significant areas of South London to London Bridge, Waterloo and the West End.

Thameslink 2000 is expected to be in service by 2001, in time for the Channel Tunnel rail link from Folkestone to St Pancras. Up to 12 domestic trains an hour in the peak will use the terminal and Thameslink 2000 plays a key role in helping to reduce congestion on underground services at King's Cross which would otherwise be heightened by the traffic from Kent and international travellers.

CrossRail is already going for a Transport & Works Act Order using the new planning inquiry process and it is expected it will come into use in 2003, completing the main elements of the strategic regional network.

Railtrack chairman Bob Horton has the Thameslink 2000 project, along with the West Coast main line, as his two top priorities in objectives set by the Secretary of State for Transport.

Thameslink 2000 would then

open in 2001 in time for the Channel Tunnel international rail link and domestic services in the following year.

For international travellers, the new Thameslink service will provide a fast, modern and comfortable interchange to the City or to London Bridge, for connection via the Jubilee Line to Docklands, for example.

The price is not high as rail infrastructure schemes go - the cost of £550m compares with just 25 miles of an extra lane on the M1 motorway, for example. CrossRail will cost £2 billion plus.

The benefits to arise from the project - in terms of reduced road use, faster travelling times, greater number of areas served, and so on - is around three times greater than the cost, as measured by the DoT formula.

No real account is taken of the economic benefits that can follow, environmental benefits, nor greater reliability benefits which might result. The present evaluation system does not allow for it.

As things stand, it will be up to the private sector to fund most of the project and the indications seem good.

It will be the private sector therefore, in conjunction with the Franchising Director, that decides exactly what service pattern will be provided.

More than 120 organisations, mainly district councils, support the Thameslink 2000 Consortium which also includes the Association of British Chambers of Commerce and the Confederation of British Industry. Bedfordshire County Council is the lead authority.

It is the first time so many local councils of all political composition have combined to press for the upgrading of a rail route to meet the needs of the 21st century.

The project is jointly promoted by Railtrack and BR's London Rail Development team.

The consortium's supporters are pleased by the progress made so far but are well aware that there are still problems to be overcome.

And there is also growing concern that Government inertia will delay the scheme.

LOCAL ACTION

Lincolnshire

By Brian Hastings and Paul Jowett

Rail gateway To save three minutes, Regional Railways NE wants to cut out the Habrough stops on its Manchester-Cleethorpes 158 service. But Habrough, on the Doncaster-Cleethorpes line, is the rail-head for Immingham. It should have an hourly service and positive marketing with, perhaps a new name, to reflect its proximity to Immingham. We have already urged upping the line speed so the 158s can exploit speeds nearer their 90mph maximum instead of the present 55/60mph. Then both the Habrough stops and a time saving could be achieved.

Through ticketing Even if you get on a train at one of Lincolnshire's 14 unstaffed stations or South Humberside's 3 unstaffed stations, you can still buy a through ticket from the on-train Sportis-equipped conductor-guard. The staffed stations of course have Apts machines which, likewise, can issue in one transaction one ticket for a complicated journey. The branch is writing to the regulator to insist that this ease of ticketing must continue.

New Express links Regional Railways Central is to launch a 158 service from Grimsby to Nottingham, Loughborough, Leicester and Coventry. Given good publicity, it should attract new business. Product manager Colin Robey told branch members in February how he is hoping to persuade rail travellers from Market Rasen and Lincoln to travel to London on Regional trains to Nottingham and then via the Midland main line. Off-peak travellers from Lincoln to London will be encouraged to travel via Sleaford, Spalding and Peterborough. Meanwhile Grimsby travellers are being encouraged to travel via Doncaster, rather than Newark, to London.

Private enterprise needed Staff are sadly being withdrawn from Market Rasen in April so Regional Railways is hoping to see a local entrepreneur come forward to run a business, including a ticket agency, from the temporary building at the station.

Clear way Freight tracks are being restored on the Bracklesby-Barnetby line, reversing the 1989 action in reducing the four tracks to two, and clearing the way for

Cleethorpes-Manchester 158 Expresses. Railtrack may also soon be asked to put double track back on sections of the Skegness line which were singled in the 1970s. Timekeeping would be improved and more train paths would be made available.

Holiday trains Butlins Red Coats will travel on some trains from Grantham, welcoming holidaymakers travelling to Skegness. One coach will be reserved as a Butlins "club car".

VAT threat Reports are circulating that "leisure" travel on volunteer-run railways like the Keighley and Worth Valley could be made liable for VAT. This would be a dangerous precedent which could be extended to off-peak travel generally.

Useful economy Railtrack is planning to downgrade the level crossing at Swinedyke on the Gainsborough-Barnetby line from a road to a footpath. Additional savings could be achieved by converting the staffed Bonsall Lane crossing to light controlled.

Scotland

By Douglas Smart



Privatisation cuts A furore has broken out in Scotland over the reduction in sleeper services and complete closure of the motorail services. The tourist industry is slowly waking up to the disastrous effects of privatisation. The break-up of BR is now being seen as crazy as we warned it would be. The break-up of InterCity and loss of cross-subsidisation of the sleepers is particularly perverse. This of course will directly put more traffic on our roads.

Sadly letters from us to all the Scottish Tory MPs on privatisation remain unanswered. A further effect of privatisation has been the prepared closure of the Thurso depot with the result that Wick trains will have to reverse back from Thurso adding 30 minutes to the journey time, already grossly uncompetitive. This is further justification for the Dornoch bridge project. Fears, so far discounted by Railtrack about the state of the Forth Bridge have also been expressed and a Government minister has had the cheek to tell Railtrack to spend more money on paint. ScotRail has expressed fears of many more cuts in services linked to cuts in their budget, imposed by the Government.

The effect of these cuts are now becoming all too apparent, while grandiose road building goes on at a steady pace with roads proposed which would never see the light of day in the new situation in England. Sadly the Labour party is almost as culpable on this issue as the Tories with Strathclyde Region proposing yet another motorway slicing through Glasgow. We cannot get an answer from the Scottish Labour party as to whether or not their excellent document In Trust for Tomorrow applies to Scotland. It certainly does not apply to the road builders in Strathclyde.

South West

By Gerard Duddridge

Investment needed Winter flooding has yet again given rise to intermittent closure of the Barnstaple branch, although the main line at Stafford Bridge just north of Exeter has escaped closure despite river levels being as high as a year ago. New procedures of running under caution at 5mph and a man on duty at the bridge are letting the trains through, but the real answer for both lines can only be investment in bridge strengthening and perhaps work on the river channels. Investment in rolling stock is also badly needed as bus substitution on the Newquay and St Ives branches seems to have been a weekly winter occurrence. The problem is simply a lack of spare trains to cover breakdowns. The branch lines lose their train even if the failure is on the main line. Regular users have had the added problem of replacement bus or taxi services missing out intermediate stations and a decline in the numbers of regular passengers has been noted.

Helping the environment The Secretary of State for Transport has approved the Light Railway Order, permitting the Bodmin and Wenford Railway to relay the track to Wenford clay dries from Boscarne Junction. Although this is still some way off, the first major hurdle in this environmentally friendly scheme which will transfer china clay freight from road to rail has been passed. This overturns a recommendation of the Department of Transport that the order be refused. It also follows a favourable report by Travers Morgan that the scheme would be financially viable.

One step forward Regional Railways and Devon County Council have taken steps to promote the use of Ivybridge station with a new leaflet showing train times, road routes to the station and bus information. The timetable is particularly useful compared to the all-systems timetable in showing the through journey opportunities to stations in Cornwall and to Paignton plus connections to London.

Transport cash The Government has approved three of Devon's four bids for transport package funding:

The Plymouth package has been awarded £1 million (£3 million requested) and Exeter £0.65 million (£1.4 million requested). We await the results of a council meeting to see if any of the planned rail projects go forward this year. We hope for a start on the new Cullompton railway station and initial work for the Tavistock line reopening.

Rejection of the Torbay package suggests work to restore the former up platform at Goodrington, as a new terminus for Torbay line trains, will be delayed.

However, £110,000 - 57% of Devon's requested Dartmoor package - must bring the reopening of the Exeter to Okehampton line forward, though it now seems unlikely that the necessary £150,000 funding will be available within the 1996 to 1998 transport programme.

Ticket confusion Problems arose in spring 1994 when InterCity Saver and Super Saver

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tickets from Exeter to London ceased to be valid on the Waterloo route. However, the national fares manual suggests passengers with tickets from Crediton, Newton Abbot or Plymouth still have the choice of routes. We have been in correspondence with InterCity Great Western over this matter, but this has not yet reached a satisfactory conclusion.

Planning ahead The branch has responded to Cornwall's draft structure plan and the East Devon local plan. The former mentions new stations east of Truro at Grampond Road, St Dennis on the Newquay line diversion and the Trerulefoot park-and-ride station between Liskeard and Plymouth. We have stressed the need for other new stations, most important being Carn Brea (between Camborne and Redruth) and Marazion to be served by extending St Ives to St Erth trains to Penzance. We have stressed the need for route preservation and refer to the desirability of restoring services between Perranporth and Truro and to Launceston. For East Devon we concentrated on the case for preserving the Sidmouth to Feniton route for commuter services to Exeter.

Model franchise The branch has published its model franchise of what we consider to be the minimum level of service for Devon and Cornwall. This is available from the secretary, 149 Polwithen Drive, Carbis Bay, St Ives, Cornwall. TR26 2SW (please enclose an SAE).

Yorkshire

By James Towler

Goodbye Brightside and Attercliffe Road Brightside and Attercliffe Road stations closed on January 28, following the Transport Secretary's consent.

While few tears need be shed for Brightside, which had become superfluous with the advent of Meadowhall, we urged the TUCC (now RUCC) for NE England to recommend retention of Attercliffe Road, which it did in a well-argued report.

Even the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive, which had initiated closure by withdrawing support, appeared to have second thoughts as it subsequently requested the structure of the station be maintained for possible reopening. A case of looking both ways at once?

We put it to the PTE that, as the savings on maintaining the closed station would be minimal, they might as well have kept it open.

The PTE responded that closure had nothing to do with the cost of maintenance; the main reasons being minimal usage (understandable given the paucity of service), its failure to meet current access, security and passenger standards, and its restriction on the operational capacity of key sections of the line for a multitude of PTE and non-PTE services.

Given the level of service, the last reason appears spurious to say the least. While the PTE maintains the station was not paying its way, it added that "its true cost in network terms is unquantifiable." So we shall never know.

But all is not lost. Through discussions with the Sheffield Development Corporation,

the PTE hopes that in the longer term there may be future demand for a station in the area. Who knows, Attercliffe Road may one day rise from the ashes.

Yorkshire Rail Review 1994 Once again David Pickersgill and his team of contributors have come up with a comprehensive evaluation of the county's rail services as perceived by the users themselves.

Overall, 1994 was a disappointing year for timekeeping, especially on InterCity services where performance - with the honourable exception of the Midland Main Line - was down on 1993. Much of the decline took place during the second half of the year.

Regional Railways Express fared somewhat better, largely due to improved reliability of Cleethorpes-Manchester services on the South Trans-Pennine route. However, performance of PTE and local services plummeted during the autumn.

While the signalling dispute contributed to the poor results, delays due to track and signalling problems, unit failures and the all too frequently encountered "operating difficulties" had far more impact on overall timekeeping than the dispute.

Indeed, given the distractions of privatisation, it was something of a miracle that the railway performed as well as it did. This owed much to the efforts of the staff who are as bewitched, bothered and bewildered about the changes as the rest of us.

Wessex

By David Stevenson



Reopening cash The Eastleigh-Romsey line which was closed to passengers in 1969 may reopen after Hampshire County Council's decision to include a bid for £5 million towards the cost of reopening Chandlers Ford station in its transport policy programme for 1996/7.

Threat to late trains The train crew depot at Weymouth is to close. We are worried at the trend for South West Trains to withdraw from outlying depots. When SWT took similar action at Exeter last year, it resulted in the loss of early and late trains on the western end of the Waterloo-Exeter line.

What price protection? Isle of Wight County Council has adopted the welcome policy of protecting the formations of closed lines between Shanklin and Ventnor, Wootton and Newport, and Newport and Cowes. Now this policy has been challenged by two planning applications on the Cowes route. We have objected to the proposals and await the outcome with interest.

North West

By Robert Cummings

Carry on waiting The worthwhile Salford Crescent electrification scheme has been

delayed and the road scheme which generated the proposal has also been put back. Meanwhile the estimated cost of electrification of just under 1½ miles of railway has doubled since Railtrack got its hands on the project.

Frozen assets Eighteen peak-time services into Manchester when frosty weather disabled the new class 323 which are appearing in greater numbers in the area. The whole fleet was confined to the depot because on-board computers were unable to handle frost on the overhead line.

Demand takes off Work progresses on the Manchester Airport southern spur and operators are queuing up to take advantage of the new link which is expected to open in May next year. The likelihood is that when open, the airport will be served by direct trains to the East and West Midlands and even South Wales.

Private operator Blackburn-based Statesman Limited is proposing to run a direct service from Blackpool North to London Euston via Manchester in October, three years after InterCity withdrew from Blackpool in 1992. Unconfirmed reports suggest the company will be offering some form of ticket interchangeability with InterCity. One current obstacle faced by the company, however, is Railtrack's refusal to allow the train to stop at Preston or Manchester Piccadilly, probably the two biggest potential sources of income! The company is proposing to use the old Manchester Pullman carriages for the train which will make just one return journey between Blackpool North and London Euston per day. The route via Manchester and the likelihood of diesel haulage throughout will mean that the service will probably be slower than that offered by InterCity which requires a change of train at Preston. It will however be convenient for travellers from Blackpool who do not enjoy changing trains. The branch, while welcoming a direct service from Blackpool to London, is concerned about the potential for "creaming off" the lucrative business income from InterCity and the knock-on effect it might have. The branch has established contact with the company and will monitor the situation.

Wales

By Rod Fairley and Chris Magner

Speed-up Considerable investment is being made in upgrading Chester-Bangor for 90 mph running from May 96. New welded rail, some laid on steel sleepers is being installed while at other locations the existing jointed track is being welded up. On these sections the old joints are re-sleepered with new baseplates and Pandrol clips. On Anglesey the last sections of bullhead track on the main line (laid by the LMS) are finally being replaced. This will lead to lifting the long 30 mph slack past RAF Valley.

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Fast ferry The disused Freightliner terminal at Holyhead has disappeared to make way for a vehicle park in connection with the introduction of the giant new Stena Sea-Lynx fast ferry. This vessel should arrive in October 1995 and will reduce the crossing time to Dun Laoghaire to 99 minutes. The station will be remodelled with direct access to the new ferry from the eastern side (Platforms 2, 3 and 4). Additional boat trains and the re-introduction of first class are being investigated.

Enterprise A conference in Llandudno in March was hosted by Transrail and Gwynedd County Council to gauge interest in the extension of Transrail's Enterprise service to North Wales. Several potential flows of new traffic have been identified for the 50 tonnes minimum service. North Wales has suffered particularly badly from the retreat of Railfreight and this initiative is to be welcomed.

Spring into summer The rebuilding of Rhyl station proceeds apace with completion planned for early summer.

Forced out Yet more road building, the third Dee Crossing, has forced the closure of Rockcliffe Hall signalbox. In its place is a Portakabin! But at least the railway has also been resignalled with colour lights.

Good looking An improved service is planned for the Conwy Valley line for the summer, with meals on the trains, selective pruning of trees to improve the views at the most scenic sections and possible steam excursions. This all results from the appointment of a community liaison officer. Railtrack acted with commendable speed to reopen the line following flood damage near Llanrwst in December. 9000 tonnes of stone were used to repair washed-away embankments.

Staff shock Abergele station is to lose its staff during the winter months.

Planning progress Birkenhead Conway station is to be built following Merseyside's successful £12.9 million "package bid". Three miles of track will also be electrified and a new station built at Prenton/Woodchurch on the Wrexham-Bidston line. Bidston station will also be refurbished and get park-and-ride facilities. All this was possible because of the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance 13 (PPG13). The southern section of the line will not benefit from this package bid approach because the Welsh Office, headed by John Redwood, refuses to implement a similar scheme. It claims its public transport policy is centred on bus priority schemes. The weakness of this argument is exposed when you know that the total bus priority grant for Wales amounted to only £500,000. It still likes to boast however of building new roads.

Roof off A double decker bus was flagged down because it was a "danger to other

traffic". Its roof was hanging off! Three miles back it had the rail bridge at Cefn-y-Bedd on the Wrexham-Bidston line.

Roof on The grade 2 station at Wrexham General is to get its canopy restored as part of a major overhaul, paid for by grants from Railtrack, local councils, Railway Heritage, the Welsh Development Agency and the European Union's regional funds.

Private enterprise Bodorgan, the most decrepit station in North Wales, is being restored by its new owner, a private resident.

MP on platform Chester MP Giles Brandreth unveiled a plaque to mark the completion of the refurbishment of the city's station.

Midlands

By Alan Bevan



Stratford RDS has objected to the district council plans to obliterate the station's large car park and demolish a bridge to make way for a new road! The road would cut right across the station frontage and along the track bed south of the station. We told the public inquiry that enforced relocation of the loco run-round would require £5 million to be spent on a revised track layout. We urged instead that the trackbed should be protected to allow a reopened rail link to the south. Settle-Carlisle campaigner Edward Alburn and Professor Bill Bradshaw who was formerly general manager of BR Western Region argued that protecting the line would allow reopening for both steam trains and a faster service from Paddington via Oxford, Moreton, Stratford and Solihull to Birmingham. Meanwhile Warwickshire County Council is seeking funds for a study into the potential for rail services at Stratford, which is the magnet for 2½ million visitors a year.

New approaches Spending £4 million to revise the layout of Proof House junction would enable Birmingham New Street station to handle more trains without extensive remodelling of the station layout, according to a new study by Halcrow, Fox and Partners. They say "sorting" the trains there would enable better use of New Street platforms, increase train speeds from 20 to 30 mph and increase capacity from 12 to 17 trains per hour.

Jewels Park and ride facilities are to be provided at the new Hawthorns station on the Jewellery line at a cost of £543,375. Trains are expected to start running on the reopened line in September.

Penalty fares Most lines in the West Midlands will this year be introducing an £10 instant fine for people who do not have a ticket following the scheme's introduction on the Snow Hill lines in November.

Airport The Passenger Transport Authority is calling for rail links to Birmingham airport to be improved and for better transfer facilities from train to plane. At the

moment, only 7% of air passengers use the train and the PTA is keen to see a modal shift from cars to public transport. RDS is keen to have views and suggestions from members on how to improve things at the airport. Please send your ideas to Ken Russell, 38 Somerset Road, Walsall WS4 2DP.

Coventry links A new hourly train service could be introduced between Nuneaton and Leamington which would give Coventry better north-south links. New stations could be built at Kenilworth, Hollbrooks, and Foleshill. Both Warwickshire County Council and the PTA are keen to see improvements but differ on details.

Merry Hill The owners of Merry Hill shopping complex near Dudley want to increase the number of car spaces to 13,250! The owners are offering £1.5 million to Dudley council to upgrade the A4036 and £6.7 million for other projects. RDS has objected and urged that investment should go to providing new rail facilities on the Walsall-Dudley-Stourbridge line. The PTA also wants better public transport access to Merry Hill.

London & Home Counties

By Keith Dyal and Simon Martin

Trains not buses! Our new leaflet calling for the reopening of the Luton to Dunstable line has been distributed with help from the Association for Dunstable Area Passenger Trains. We have sent copies to all members of Bedfordshire County Council and Luton Town Council. County council officers have put forward a proposal to convert the existing but disused rail link between the two towns into a busway and have produced a consultation document and questionnaire which is virtually impossible to fill in without indicating support for the busway. The proposed busway will have a number of single "track" sections. Dunstable is the largest town in the South East without rail connections. No busway will cure this.

Forward not back Our Great Eastern division has completed A Rail Strategy for East London and Essex should be useful as a foil to Great Eastern's strategy which seems to be to cut services.

Passing the buck Train operators and Railtrack are blaming each other for delays to services. This was one of the effects we warned about in our opposition to the Railways Bill.

Another delay! Work to clear the way for Eurostar trains to travel north of London

The Ups and Downs of Regional Railways

A new RDS report looks at the performance of branch and secondary lines from 1922 to the present day. This 24-page A4 publication is available for £2.90 post free from Martin Ball, 89 North Wallington, Fareham, Hants PO16 8TJ. Make cheques payable to RDS.

Life Beyond Cars

This booklet explains how your lifestyle does not have to be dominated by the infernal combustion engine machine. £2.25 post free from Martin Ball, 89 North Wallington, Fareham, Hants PO16 8TJ. Make cheques payable to RDS.

via the North London line has been delayed and may be cancelled. It should have involved repairs to Hampstead tunnel and 25kV electrification between North Pole junction and the East Coast main line. Improvements to North London line services were also dependant on this work being completed.

Another "Thameslink" North London Railways seems to be having more success with its services between Willesden Junction and Clapham Junction via Kensington Olympia. Local newspapers have reported that money has been made available for intermediate stations. But plans to use South Central dual-voltage 319 units between Brighton and Watford Junction via Gatwick and Kensington may have fallen through.

Underground The branch is pressing for extra stops to be made at New Cross and New Cross Gate stations during the temporary closure of the East London line to allow work on the Jubilee line extension and for refurbishment of the route. We would like to see South Eastern trains run to City Thameslink during this period. We condemn the Underground's decision to remove the London Connections map from its platforms. This can only make it more difficult for travellers to get about and plan journeys and is symptomatic of the disintegration of public transport in London.

Crowded Thameslink We have been in contact with the Thameslink management team to express concern that we are to have the fifth major change of route south of the river since the introduction of Thameslink services. The managers assure us that this is their last change and that the Wimbledon and Sutton route is the one that they have always wanted and that the peak hour services to and from Wimbledon are so popular they run with loadings up to 150%.

Rails for London The leaflet London Needs More Railways was being distributed to local councils and London MPs. We also hope to launch a campaign calling for greater investment in the Underground.

East Anglia

By Nick Dibben



Pressing ahead The free-travel days held by Anglia train operating unit on each of its lines between mid October and 3 December attracted hundreds of extra passengers who enjoyed a free journey if they collected tokens printed in the local press. RDS produced two special leaflets for the occasion.

Revival meeting RDS members have been instrumental in reviving the Breckland Line Users' Association, for the Norwich-Ely line.

The association is exploring how European cash could be attracted, to improve the route for both long-distance traffic and local passengers. Norfolk's new MEP Clive Needle spoke at the relaunch meeting in

Attleborough. For details of the association, please send a SAE to John Saunders, Sawyers Lane, Sutton, Wymondham, Norfolk, NR18 9JH.

Privatisation Commuters from Huntingdon in the Prime Minister's constituency have greeted rail privatisation plans with a great deal of cynicism according to a local paper. The general feeling is passengers will have little say in the future and that there will be no real benefit in services.

Service levels The branch has issued its minimum franchise service level report during a presentation to the Eastern England RUCC meeting in Norwich. Branch Secretary Nick Dibben told the meeting that any cuts would be inconsistent with the Government's claims of providing a better service and with the findings of the Royal Commission on Transport and the Environment. The report also suggests extra services linking the main regional centres to fill gaps in the timetable.

Euro links supported The Standing Conference of East Anglian Local Authorities (SCEALA) has given its backing for local rail improvements as part of the European Rail Network. Plans include upgrading freight links from Felixstowe and the possible re-introduction of rail freight to King's Lynn, Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth Docks. SCEALA is also meeting with members from other county councils to look at a possible new East-West rail link from Cambridge to Oxford.

Being positive The branch is producing a new leaflet called Let's be Positive about Rail. The aim is to counter the often negative but inaccurate image of the railways portrayed in the media and by some politicians. Unfortunately, some RDS members are prone to this as well. The branch believes such statements discourage people from using the railways and inhibits investment by local authorities and the private sector. The leaflet will highlight the improvements to the region's rail services in recent years such as new rolling stock, faster and more frequent service between London and Cambridge and better facilities for the disabled.

Thames Valley

By Martin Smith and Chris Wright

Cotswold Line In spring 1994, British Rail gave notice of intent to close Combe and Finstock stations on the grounds that the platforms are too short for three-car Turbo trains. The notice was withdrawn because of some legal irregularity, but in the meantime Oxfordshire County Council has instructed its officers to register a formal objection to any future application to close these two stations. The county council has been engaged in discussions for the past two years, first with Regional Railways Central and subsequently with Thames Trains, to secure an enhanced service to the four halts which at present have a service of only one train a day. The council is willing in principle to contribute towards the cost of extending the platforms at Combe and Finstock and of making improvements at Ascott and Shipton, as part of a package in return for Thames Trains providing a service of four-five calls per day (Mondays to Saturdays) in each direction. The need for an improved service for the Wych-

woods is even greater than for Combe and Finstock, as Ascott-, Shipton-, and Milton-under-Wychwood are substantial villages which do not have a daily bus service. In Great Western days, Shipton used to be advertised as the station for Burford, and could well be a convenient park-and-ride railhead for that town.

Kidlington Mr Dick Helling, the public transport officer for Oxfordshire County Council, gave a talk to the branch meeting on 22 October, and told us that the council has budgeted for the construction of the new station at Kidlington on the line to Banbury, Leamington and Birmingham. It could be built in the financial year 1996/97 on the Park Farm site near the A423 and the Oxford Canal. However, progress has been held up by the failure of Railtrack to produce any plans, delaying the application for planning permission. The county council had been negotiating with Thames Trains, but since 1 April 1994, Railtrack has become the body responsible for the future station.

Oxfordshire projects Mr Helling also told us that the county council is making progress with the joint project with Wiltshire to introduce a new service between Oxford and Chippenham/Bath, with new stations at Wantage Road and Wootton Bassett.

New links Several county councils are being asked to support a study into longer distance east-west services, for instance between Ipswich and Bristol. SCEALA - the Standing Conference of East Anglian Local Authorities - is interested in the feasibility of both freight and passenger services running via Milton Keynes. Buckinghamshire has already agreed to contribute up to £2000 to the study. North London Railways are discussing with councils how to improve the Bedford-Bletchley line and are reviewing the link from Bletchley to Oxford.

Oxford-Bicester The service hit the headlines when it emerged that services are slower than in 1851. Railtrack said funds were not available to remove the long-standing 10 mph limit near Bicester, but confirmed a commitment to maintain the line. Thames Trains also confirmed a desire for improvements and to retain the service.

Competition With the introduction of an hourly service to Birmingham, Chiltern Lines is challenging InterCity for some of the Birmingham to London traffic. It cannot compete on speed, but it should be able to capture some of the leisure market with cheaper fares - only £19 for a cheap day return, and £20.80 for a return which includes a one-day travelcard for London.

Sevenside

By Eric Barber

Reopening The five-mile long branch line to Tytherington, Avon, was reopened in February after two years of disuse, allowing ARC roadstone trains to resume. Mainline Freight has a contract to transport 300,000 tonnes of limestone a year, avoiding the need for 25,000 lorry journeys.

Joint approach Gloucestershire's Dr John Cordwell is chairman of the South West Region Rail Consortium of local councils. Its duty will be to keep the Franchise Director on the right track.

WESTMINSTER

Union Metro

"I implore the minister to look seriously at the public transport alternatives to the East Thames river crossing," said John Austin-Walker (Lab Woolwich) on **18 November**.

"A public transport river crossing would have advantages over a road crossing, less noise, less pollution, less disturbance during construction, less community severance, greater development potential, higher safety, less demolition and land acquisition and less harm to the local ecology."

He said the Woolwich rail crossing proposed for Union Metro would link the North London line to the North Kent line and could have a spur to give Thamesmead a rail connection. The idea was supported by the London Docklands Development Corporation, London Transport, BR, Railtrack, Union Rail and the local councils.

ABB at risk

Following concern by several MPs on **21 November** over the fate of the ABB works at York if no further orders were immediately forthcoming, Rail and Roads Minister John Watts replied: "I do not accept that there is a connection between the privatisation process and orders for rolling stock. If you look at the age profile of rolling stock, you will see why there would be some reduction in the flow of orders at this time."

(No mention of slam-door stock now likely to run well after the year 2000, clapped-out Mark II InterCity stock, and the hundreds of light-rail vehicles which would be needed if we had a half-way decent transport system.)

Farty Swamp

The proposed Ebbsfleet Station on the Channel Tunnel rail link, otherwise known as Farty Swamp, was mentioned by Mr Jacques Arnold (Con Gravesham). He said Ebbsfleet

was an ideal location for the whole South-East, being adjacent to the M25, and that a new station would have a major impact on thousands of new jobs in the immediate area, and on good commuting to London.

Tony Banks (Lab Newham NW) asked the Minister if he knew where Ebbsfleet was? He quoted The Guardian cartoonist as calling it Farty Swamp and argued the case for Stratford on regeneration, economic and social grounds.

Transport secretary Brian Mawhinney replied that he was meeting representatives from the Stratford promotional group. He hoped that Mr Banks would stop creating the impression that Stratford was off the map.

'Broadly'

Answering Thomas Graham (Lab Renfrew West and Inverclyde), Dr Mawhinney said: "The Franchise Director knows that I expect him to bring forward minimum service specifications broadly in line with the present timetable."

Through tickets

In reply to a question about through ticketing on **22 November**, Mr Watts announced that the continuation of this facility after privatisation "is ensured in section 4 of the Railways Act 1993".

"The Franchise Director will require franchisees to participate in multi-modal travel schemes such as the Travelcard, so long as he is satisfied that participation will result in no new net cost falling on his budget."

(This wasn't really an answer to the question, and subsequent events have shown that it is the Regulator, not the Franchise Director who is ultimately responsible for through ticketing arrangements.)

Eurostar route

Mark Fisher (Lab Stoke-on-Trent), asked on **1 December** when Railtrack would begin work

on enlarging Hampstead Tunnel and electrifying the line between Mitre Bridge Junction and Willesden High Level Junction. Mr Watts said the Secretary of State has instructed Railtrack to make sure the necessary infrastructure is completed to allow Eurostar rail services from the regions to begin by the start of 1996. The timing of individual works is a matter for Railtrack.

(This does not square with reports that alternative routes are being investigated for North of London services due to Railtrack's lack of funds)

In reply to another question from Mr Fisher, Mr Watts stated that Railtrack had decided that the North Downs line was not an option for Channel Tunnel freight trains. The scheme proposed would bring no operational or environmental benefits justifying the expense of upgrading the route.

Speed secrets

Gordon Prentice (Lab Pendle) wanted to know how many miles of railway track have speed restrictions imposed as a result of track defects or insufficient maintenance.

Mr Watts replied Railtrack did not keep a central record of track mileage bearing permanent way restrictions.

(Why?)

DLR extension

"Extending the DLR to Thamesmead by a single line tunnel would be good value for money," Nigel Spearing (Lab Newham S) told the Commons during Question Time exchanges on Thames crossings in East London on **19 December**.

"It would relieve traffic pressure on the Blackwall tunnel too." Mr Spearing said he opposed the proposed East London River Crossing by road unless it carried a DLR line as well, but a DLR tunnel under the Thames would be better.

Steven Norris, Minister for Transport in London, in reply said that this suggestion was appropriate, and referred to opposition from south of the river to a road crossing.

Commented Nigel Spearing: "The recent report demonstrating how new roads usually generate more traffic and congestion underlines the point."

"A DLR rail line from North Kent in the Thamesmead area would provide rapid public transport connections to all the

Dockland development areas north of the river. This would cut the increase in East London traffic which will otherwise occur."

Mr Spearing said: "Is the Minister aware that I have opposed the East London river crossing unless an extension of the Docklands Light Railway were to run across it? As for the objective that he has just outlined - joining two trunk roads - would it not be good value for money, in the light of today's report to extend the DLR by a single line tunnel under the Thames to relieve congestion at Blackwall and on the other road crossings, which are a second priority for east London at the moment?"

Mr Norris: "Without speculating on how the crossing might be achieved, I acknowledge the appropriateness of Mr Spearing's observation."

Investment

On **19 December**, Mr Watts announced that investment in 1992/3 for Network SouthEast was £558 million, the highest since its creation in 1985. Ms Glenda Jackson, (Lab Hampstead and Highgate) wanted to know how long such investment would continue for lines that are "having difficulty becoming economically viable" in the Minister's words?

Railtrack's policy is that it will not support every route, and that it could not and should not take social issues into consideration. Who will be defining railway policy in the future?

Mr Watts replied that Railtrack and the rolling stock leasing companies would invest on business grounds and the franchising director would command the subsidy. *(We know that the amount allocated to the franchising director is not enough to maintain and develop all existing services which was the point of Ms Jackson's question)*

Airports

Alan Haselhurst (Con Saffron Walden) asked the minister to ensure that adequate capacity on the Liverpool Street to Stansted airport line was provided by adding a third track and resignalling in the next few years. Mr Watts replied that he was looking forward to the study being commissioned by the British Airports Authority into rail links to airports with great interest.



WATCH

Private line

Labour transport spokesman Henry McLeish, (Fife Central) wanted confirmation that 1994 is the first year since 1940 in which no new orders for rolling stock on Britain's railways have been placed. He wanted the minister to acknowledge that privatisation was tearing the heart out of the railways. It was affecting morale, service and routes and it will affect investment in every part of the country.

"We have a right to expect some humility and sanity from transport ministers after the drubbing at Dudley."

He said rail privatisation would lead to the humiliation of the Government provided by the poll tax, VAT on fuel and Post Office privatisation.

"Will they take action now to protect our railways well into the next century?"

Mr Watts replied: "Neither I nor the Secretary of State is complacent about investment in the railways." He went on: "£6 billion invested in the last five years, £1 billion in each year in the future, £750 million from the taxpayer plus £250 million from private sources."

"This is a very substantial and continuing investment programme." (British Rail told the Transport Select Committee in February that it would have only £30 million for capital investment in 1995 but needed to spend £1 billion every year)

Decline

Andrew Bennett (Lab Denton and Reddish) said there had been a decline in frequency in train services and safety standards due to removal of staff in the Greater Manchester area. He advocated investing in five or six new Metrolink routes to provide good public transport for the city. This provoked a predictably dusty response from Mr Norris, who accused the Labour party of wanting to "spray yet more hundreds of millions of pounds in spending commitments".

(Why is this attitude not taken when applied to road expenditure?) David Sumberg (Con Bury S maj. 788) suggested more money for public transport in Greater Manchester could be found by abandoning the "disastrous proposal for the M62 relief road." This would bring great relief to his constituents and end planning

blight existing as a result of the proposals.

Unviable roads

Labour transport spokesman Michael Meacher referred to the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment (SACTRA) report suggesting that many road building schemes were unviable, including widening of the M25 and M62.

Will these schemes be reconsidered and funds concentrated on extending Metrolink and the trans-pennine rail route?

Mr Norris implied that the Manchester authorities had brought forward plans for extension of Metrolink too late for funds to be allocated before 1996/7.

Furthermore the advice in the SACTRA report was "entirely consistent with a number of the principles that the department has been utilising for many years". (Really!)

The minister went on to contrast the general view of the Opposition calling for a moratorium on road building, with individual Labour MPs wanting road schemes in their constituencies.

Fare question

Sir Teddy Taylor (Con Southend East) asked which authority would have responsibility for reviewing fare levels once the Fenchurch Street line was franchised. Mr Watts said the franchising director may include provision to ensure the reasonableness of fares.

Sir Teddy, after referring to the route as the "misery line", wanted the minister to do all in his power to ensure privatisation brought real benefits, by attracting a wide range of bidders.

£83 million had been spent on major signalling works on the line and he hoped improvements in standards would now become



evident. Andrew MacKinlay (Lab Thurrock) wanted assurances that no stations would be closed, no trains shortened and the timetable kept the same after franchising.

Fast link

MPs gave an unopposed second reading to the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Bill on 20 January. An amendment calling for tunnelling around Boxley near Maidstone, Caledonian Road in Islington, Barking and Dagenham and around West Thurrock and Purfleet in Essex.

Dr Mawhinney insisted benefits of the link would "far outweigh" any detrimental impact. He told the House the measure provided powers for the line to be built to London St Pancras, building a new station at Ebbsfleet, and building of an "open box" which could possibly house a station at Stratford, east London. It also provided for widening the A2 and M2 roads.

The link would double the capacity for international passenger trains between Britain and the Continent.

It would also enable provision of entirely new express commuter services to several parts of Kent, boost regeneration of the Thames Gateway and East Kent, and enhance capacity for rail freight "from every part of the nation to the Continent". The new line would cut journey times from Paris to London by half an hour to 2½ hours. Dr Mawhinney said: "As with roads, nearly 68 miles of brand new railway cannot be built painlessly. However, considerable efforts have been made to identify a route which minimises environmental damage.

This objective had been achieved through careful route selection

and by design, with 21% of the route in tunnel. The link would be built, owned and maintained by private sector promoters. Four bidding consortiums shortlisted in June were now preparing tenders for submission on 14 March and he expected to announce the winner "in the latter half of this year".

"The benefits of the rail link for the whole country are manifest. Labour's Mr Meacher welcomed the Bill but attacked delay on agreeing the route.

He said it would not be ready until 2002 at the earliest. "This delay over the British link, which is a national disgrace, reflects the bungling and short-sightedness which is extreme even by this Government's standards," Mr Meacher said. "If the Government had not been so stubborn and prejudiced in the first place, the link could have been almost built by now and at much less cost.

He spoke of a £140 million cost of selling back property which had been bought at the height of the boom to prepare a route now discarded.

Mr Meacher stressed there was a "powerful" case for an international passenger terminus at Stratford.

Paul Tyler, for the Liberal Democrats, noted that progress on the link would coincide with the Government's attempts to sell Railtrack.

He said the Liberal Democrats would do "everything in our power to retain or reclaim a 51% golden share in Railtrack so that the rail network can provide a successful public service". He warned: "We believe that this project could well be derailed by dogmatic insistence on privatisation of the network."

MPs, their pay and their motoring perks

MPs voted themselves a £1482 pay rise in August last year, taking them to £33,169 a year. The pay rise was agreed with little fuss at a time when signal workers were being lambasted for having the effrontery to strike.

But MPs get more than just a salary. They also have an office allowance of £41,000, free stationery, post and telephone

calls from the House of Commons. They have unlimited free passes for travel by rail, air and sea, between the House of Commons, their homes and their constituencies.

They get a massive car allowance. If they have a car of more than 2301cc, they get 68.2 pence for the first 20,000 miles and 34.1 pence thereafter.

That means every time they drive 100 miles, they are awarded the sum of £68! A nice little earner.

As some MPs have cars provided free, it's not surprising that the road lobby has no shortage of allies in the House of Commons.

Mileage claims are paid by cheque but those who travel by train are given rail warrants.

The privatisation cuts

The public and RDS were repeatedly told that rail privatisation was designed to improve rail services. We were also told franchises would be based on the 1994 timetable.

But as we have learned over the years, politicians' promises should never be taken at face value. They are expert at being 'economical with the truth'.

Now we know that franchises being based 'broadly on the 1994 timetable' can mean requiring only 55% of the 1994 level of service. It can also mean chopping a third of Anglo-Scottish sleeper services and axing every motorail service in Britain to prepare services for franchising. Motorail at present carries 20,000 cars a year.

The shambolic progress of the Railways Act through Parliament is repeated in its implementation. Just part of the process was revealed when officials from the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising went to the London Regional Passengers Committee to explain the first draft franchises.

The Franchise Director had already announced he would only guarantee 55% of Gatwick Express trains and between 80 and 90% of trains on the London, Tilbury and Southend, South West Trains and Great Western.

The OPRAF officials were at least able to boast to LRPC watchdogs that each new operator would be required to have its timetable at each of its stations.

But when asked whether other operators' timetables or the national timetable would have to be available, there was much whispering among the five OPRAF representatives. Eventually, the verdict was given: "That's a matter for the Regulator."

The officials were also challenged that they were clearing the way for early and late trains to be cut. One member warned: "Cutting early and late trains undermines the whole marketability of rail and undermines people's ability to earn their living."

The Gatwick Express franchise requires a service only until 1900 although it runs at the moment until 2350. The reduced service will however be guaranteed by subsidy for the first time. But what if the Government decides to reduce the amount of public subsidy at some stage, they were asked.

Again, much consternation and conferring and a stated belief that because the franch-



This locomotive - one of nine - is helping to power America back into the new age of railways. Built by General Motors, the new "quiet and clean" locos are hauling double-deck passenger trains to boost California's inter-city services. Funds for the 110 mph locomotives and other public transport improvements were approved by Californian voters in a 1990 referendum which cleared the way for a £660 million bond issue. However, the national Republican election victory which brought power to Newt Gingrich last year threatens to put at risk improvements to America's national passenger network, Amtrak. Two million train miles are having to be cut immediately with more to come. Transportation Secretary Bud Shuster is being urged to "pull the plug" on Amtrak completely. Meanwhile the US government is pumping £13 billion into roads compared to £686 million into rail this year.

isees would have a contract with the Government, they would get their money.

With the new "blue-eyed boy" franchisees getting first call on the available cash, there is the risk that the rest of the network will be left to wither on the vine. It will also present politicians with a perfect opportunity to make cheap, cheating comparisons.

The Regulator, who is billed as the passengers' "friend" is also considering how many ticket offices can be axed. **Some friend!**

Despite the fact that 80% of the public were opposed to rail privatisation in the first place, and that 73% want the railways renationalised, the franchising process continues. **Some democracy!**

Trainwatch: Alan Bevan will be monitoring the consequences of rail privatisation - with YOUR help. He already has 15 examples of "ridiculous" practices resulting from the Railways Act. Send details of cuts and changes to Alan Bevan, 12 Morris Field Croft, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 0RN.

Bring back the trains now

The extent to which new and reopened rail services are patronised is usually under-assessed in government and other studies.

Officials have to be convinced by market research that people will use trains. But when there is a good service, people flock to use it.

For instance, market research suggested that 1,020 people would use a new rail station at Bulwell on the Robin Hood line.

When it was built, the actual figure was 3,700 per week, more than three times the estimate. One of the aims of the National Rail Reopening Conference on 17 June is to pool our expertise and to find more effective ways of campaigning for more reopenings.

The conference will be held at the Fairway Hotel, 2 Edinburgh Road, Bathgate, Scotland. The conference fee is only £2 including afternoon tea or coffee, or £7.50 including a buffet lunch which will be available from 1200. The conference proper runs from 1330 to 1700. Send bookings to David Soames, 158 Atherstone Avenue, Peterborough PE3 6DN.

Branches and other groups can help by sending summaries of reopening activity in their areas to John Busler, reopenings committee secretary, The Bungalow, Horton House Farm, Tilston, Malpas, SY14 7EX before the middle of May.

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