

Railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

No 66 December 1995

90p



An InterCity power car arrives at Plymouth after three days on the road

Picture: Mike Cox (courtesy of Plymouth Evening Herald)

It's a mad world

This high-speed train was transported to Plymouth by road after repairs at Crewe. It took the 125-miles-per-hour power car three days to travel 250 miles!

But it was still "cheaper" than taking it by rail because Railtrack's charges were higher than the road haulier's. The real costs were hidden - and paid by unknowing taxpayers.

No-one told them that police money was wasted because outriders from seven separate police forces had to escort it.

And no-one can calculate the cost of the chaos which this extraordinary load caused on its journey.

It has become increasingly common to see trains on the road and it highlights the stupidity and unfairness of the financial structure which the Government has

imposed on the railways and which gives road hauliers a comparatively free ride.

As Railtrack demands its pound of flesh for access to the rail network, there is no equivalent 'Roadtrack' to recoup the enormous cost of providing road infrastructure.

All the top-heavy structure introduced with rail privatisation looks ridiculous in a case like this. What can the chairman of Railtrack say? What about the Rail Regulator? What about the Franchise Director? What about the director of Great Western Railways?

Whatever they say will not help because they are trapped in a straitjacket put on by the Government.

Plymouth MP David Jamieson said the episode was "plain loco" and he would be demanding an explanation. But he had

already decided the cause. "Here is another example of the break-up of the rail network under privatisation," he said.

BR would not have sent an HST by road but the unfair treatment of road and rail that existed before privatisation has been worsened by the armies of accountants and consultants now let loose on the railway.

Previous governments were content to allow this unfair treatment to continue - while at the same time closing rail lines on spurious financial grounds.

But the current Government has done nothing to improve the unfair financial treatment of rail. A month after this train went by road, Transport Secretary Sir George Young boasted that Britain stands at the dawn of a new era in rail travel.

Is this what he means?

Truth behind the statistics

The road lobby is delighted to be able to report that "only 5% of UK freight now goes by road".

However the road propagandists are, as usual, being economical with the truth.

The tragedy of their argument is that freight is indeed being diverted away from a safe, environmentally friendly, low pollution, safe mode like rail on to anarchic roads where regulations are routinely ignored.

One result is an annual death toll on the roads of around 3,500, while on rail, in several recent years, not one passenger has been killed. And this is only part of the story. What about that 5%? The official figure is actually 6%.

But that percentage figure encompasses every single tonne of freight, including milk carts and bread vans, markets where rail will never compete.

In the markets where rail can offer a serious alternative, such as bulk commodities and/or long distance, rail experts believe the percentage is nearer 20% overall. If you

strip out pipelines and coastal shipping and concentrate on land transport, the rail share is probably around 30%. Hardly irrelevant in UK transport terms.

Together, BR's freight companies keep an estimated 10 million lorry journeys off the road each year.

Transrail reckons it keeps over one million lorries off the M4 in South Wales each year. That is equal to a lorry every 40 seconds through the week, day and night, Saturday and Sunday included.

In the Peak District national park, Transrail keeps half a million lorries off the roads.

Transrail is also keen to explode the myth that rail can compete only over long distances. Transrail has viable bulk commodity hauls as short as two miles.

A more normal contract for Transrail is to move steel from South Wales into the West Midlands, which involves off-loading the product at a railhead and delivery by road on a just-in-time basis to the final customer.

Last year Transrail moved 4.5 billion cans

of Spillers petfood. The factory is seven miles from the railhead at Paisley, near Glasgow.

Standard pallets of petfood are picked up by a normal curtain-sided lorry. At the railhead, they are forklifted, two pallets at a time, into a full side-access rail van, a process which takes 10 minutes per load.

The 31 vans are then trunk-hauled overnight to Cambridgeshire for onward distribution to shops and supermarkets throughout the South East.

The true costs associated with the heavy lorry are controversial. Road users overall may cover the direct cost of road infrastructure but they fall well short on total costs which include policing, accidents and environmental costs. Unlike rail, no rate of return is charged on road use.

Recent surveys have shown up to 70% of heavy goods vehicles failing roadside checks. Up to 30% are overloaded.

Railfreight is safe, fuel efficient, popular and law-abiding. Why do the politicians give aid and comfort to the wrong side?

A member recently resigned from the society on the grounds that we were campaigning too much for faster trains.

Another member wrote protesting that RDS was becoming "too anti-road". I defended the society's position on both counts.

We live in a world in which rail has to compete with road and, in some respects, with air and other modes of transport.

The opening of the A1/M1 link has made it quicker to drive from some parts of East Anglia to the Midlands than to go by train.

This was pointed out to a railway manager at a meeting which I attended in Bury St Edmunds. To his credit, he pointed out that if Railtrack enjoyed a level of investment comparable to that spent on this road link, the train journey from Bury to Birmingham could be a lot quicker.

The North Wales Coast line has to compete with the expensively upgraded A55 and other roads. RDS Wales has quite rightly campaigned for investment in the railway.

It is a pity the Department of Transport did not look at this alternative before slicing a new trunk road through Colwyn Bay, for example.

Now the Government is supporting the principle of European cash for the Felixstowe - Holyhead road upgrading (as part of the Trans European Transport Network) but is not giving comparable support for the roughly parallel rail route!

We in RDS cannot take this situation lying down. Otherwise we may as well disband. We have therefore supported the "Network Europe" consortium of local authorities and companies pressing for European cash for upgrading the rail links from the east coast to Holyhead and Liverpool.

Of course speed is not the only factor that will attract business to rail. On the Cambrian Coast line, the selling point is scenery rather than speed, and similarly with the

TREVOR

GARROD'S

VIEW



Railways and the competition

Settle and Carlisle. Neither route is among RDS priorities for electrification - whereas Crewe-Holyhead definitely is.

Our London and Home Counties branch has produced two attractive leaflets on rail alternatives to widening the M25, one dealing with the South West segment and the other the North East.

It plans further issues in 1996, using money raised from our National Draw. The opening of Chafford Hundred station is an important step in the right direction, for Essex Man and Woman do not necessarily need to drive to Lakeside to do their shopping.

Through trains from Stansted Airport via Harlow, Stratford and Romford would also enable rail to compete more effectively with the M11 and the A12 for this business.

Our new Essex Metro leaflet puts this case graphically. The railways have to compete with operators whose safety record can be questionable. My train to work in the morning is also used by a substantial number of school and college students whose season tickets are, in many cases, paid for by the local authority. Bus and coach operators also derive a lot of revenue from such traffic.

On 2 October, a spot check of 12 school coaches in Norfolk revealed that nine of them were defective. Three were immediately banned from carrying passengers. Similar checks in Suffolk have revealed a disturbing level of unsafe vehi-

cles, presumably resulting from cost-cutting to win contracts.

From time to time we hear of safety scares in the Channel Tunnel. A few years ago I travelled from Zeebrugge to Felixstowe on a vessel operated by one of Eurotunnel's competitors.

I shared a cabin with a man in considerable back pain following an accident on the Continent.

When he went to the pursar's office he was told there was no doctor on board and no first aid available and was advised to buy a few whiskeys in the bar to kill the pain.

Can one imagine the synthetic indignation among some politicians and media persons if a sick passenger on a Eurostar train was given similar advice?

RDS has been collecting reports of instances where road operators flout safety standards with, for example, overloaded or unsafe vehicles, which may be cheaper to run but provide unfair competition to the railways.

Dave Sallery (77 Ffordisaf, Prestatyn, Clwyd, LL19 8DY) has taken over from George Boyle the task of compiling such information.

We treat our sources in confidence if necessary, but hope to use such information to strengthen our pro-rail lobbying. The playing field on which the railways have to compete is not yet even.

Victory for rail users

Rail users in the South East won a victory – one week after a crucial emergency resolution was passed at the Rail Users Conference in October.

The conference was warned that Bedfordshire County Council was considering ditching an earlier decision to reopen the railway between Luton and Dunstable.

Councillors were to be urged at their meeting on Thursday to build a guided busway even though most of the railway was still intact.

The conference was alerted to the problem by Harry Maughan who lives at Linslade and

wants the line extended beyond Dunstable to link up with the West Coast main line at Leighton Buzzard.

His resolution, which urged the council to abandon the idea of a busway between Luton and Dunstable and get on with reopening the railway, was approved by the conference, with no-one voting against.

The resolution was sent to the county council's chief executive with a request that it be read to the council before any decision was taken.

A fact sheet entitled *Misguided* was quickly produced and circulated to the local press and a few key people.

When the council met on the Thursday following the conference, councillors rejected plans to build a busway.

The local campaigning group ADAPT – which is affiliated to RDS – had also circulated detailed briefings to councillors before the meeting.

Now the battle moves on to finding the cash for the railway to reopen.

The other emergency resolution passed by the conference was to urge the reopening of the Brunel tunnel on the East London line over which English Heritage and London Underground are in dispute.

While a decision is awaited, rail users are having to make do with replacement buses.

Glenda's appeal

The guest speaker at the conference, Labour transport campaigns coordinator Glenda Jackson, attacked rail privatisation as farcical. She reminded delegates that this was the first year since nationalisation that BR had not ordered any new



Rail Users Conference 1995 London

rolling stock even though £1½ billion had been spent on privatisation.

The money had gone on lawyers' and consultants' fees and the destruction of our integrated railway system even though 86% of the people were against it.

She said railways should be the central spine of an integrated public transport network.

The country's economic wellbeing depended on good railways.

"You would think that the Government would have learned from their privatisation of the bus industry which has left vast areas of the country without any kind of public transport," she said.

In answer to a question about the Government's private finance initiative, she said it had not really worked to the benefit of the railways.

But she said we needed to get investment from more than just the public purse. There would have to be combinations of private and public enterprise.

She reiterated Labour's official stance that the railways should be under public control.

And she warned that under the franchise arrangements, even the PSR services are not guaranteed, because the franchise holder could renegotiate.

Work of fiction

The rail users conference was opened by RDS chairman Steve Wilkinson who joked that the current Railtrack timetable would now be found in the public libraries' fiction section. He said the world of "access charges" was a nightmare for the railways. He pointed out

how insurance and safety demands were making it ever more difficult for freight to switch from road to rail.

And he urged delegates to study Nahum chapter 3, verses 3 and 4 as well as Jonah chapter 4, verse 11, for early references to "road rage".

More victories

General secretary Trevor Garrod reminded the conference that RDS had scored two significant victories over the year.

The idea of core stations had been defeated because hundreds of us – and others – wrote to the Rail Regulator pointing out what a short-sighted idea it was.

We had also won a victory on the West Highland sleeper, thanks to the power of the media and the Scottish courts.

Trevor then pointed out the likely battlegrounds in the coming year.

We have already printed 2,000 leaflets highlighting the dangers of a Franchise Director initiative to limit the freedom of choice on cross country journeys.

It is also rumoured that Rover tickets are the next target for interference and may even have to be withdrawn when they cut across more than one franchise.

There will be continuing pressure to reduce the numbers of 05

Service cuts will be allowed by the new passenger sector requirements. Model franchises produced by RDS branches or rail user groups are one way of combating the cuts. Trevor also urged branch officials and user group representatives to improve relations with train

operating companies and even with the Franchise Director

Roger Salmon. Mr Salmon refused an invitation to address the rail users conference last year and kept our president waiting for months for a half-hour "audience".

"But let's be nice to Mr Salmon," said Trevor. "Let's convince him that his latest wheeze won't work either."

"He wants to limit the number of standing passengers and have trains run straight through stations if the trains are already full."

"Mr Salmon is trying to tackle the symptoms when the cause of all these problems is lack of rolling stock and, in some cases, lack of staff."

Trevor also urged branches and rail user groups to start now on lobbying MPs and prospective candidates. "It's no use waiting until three weeks before the general election. Our relationship with politicians needs to be nurtured."

Robin Hood venue

The next RDS AGM will be held on Saturday 4 May in the Queensway Suite, Cooperative House, Mansfield, starting at 1100. The venue has been chosen to celebrate the Robin Hood reopening and the speaker will be David MacIntosh of Regional Railways Central, who was one of the prime movers of this scheme.

Protecting the Network

The new RDS report about the problems of fragmentation of the network.

£1.50 including postage from Martin Ball, 89 North Wallington, Fareham, Hants PO16 8TJ. Make cheques payable to RDS.

Cross country winner

The Class 325 four-car trains, featured in *Railwatch 65* could form the basis of a very good cross-country train set.

They are dual-voltage and can also be hauled by locomotives. Thus they are able to reach every part of the British Rail network. Have ABB and one or two of the leasing companies enough courage to share the costs of building a couple of sets to demonstrate such a possibility before it is too late?

My personal preference for the interior layout would be that the trains should contain a compartment or two for first class passengers, a combination of "airline" seats plus those arranged around tables for standard class passengers, a "facilities area" where there could be a telephone and conductor's office, space for trolley services, toilet(s) and very importantly an area for parcels and bicycles.

*Don Fifer, Withnell Station
Abbey Village, Chorley, Lancs*

Too much paper

I would like to know why *Railwatch* has gone from 12 to 16 pages with the inevitable rise in costs and squandering of money that involves. The world is drowning in a sea of largely unwanted and mostly unrecycled paper. People are

being overwhelmed by a mass of information and opinion they simply cannot absorb. Either revert to 12 page issues or, if the cost-saving is higher, despatch three 16-page editions a year.

Secondly, the wholesale (and valid) condemnation of the 11 Tory Transport Secretaries we have had since 1979 (*Railwatch 65*) does have to be modified in respect of Paul Channon. He refused the closure of the Settle-Carlisle line which I think is the only closure proposal refused since the advent of the Thatcher regime. He must be given credit for that.

*Henry Bull, 106 Oaktree Lane,
Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6HY*

Bridport reopening

I read recently in *Swanage Railway News* about the restoration of West Bay Station at Bridport, by West Dorset district council. The Swanage Railway was also involved, laying a length of track, and supplying two carriages as a curiosity for tourists. But would it not be better if the railway line to Bridport was reopened?

The trackbed from Maiden Newton to Bridport is still intact with no obstacles to prevent its rebuilding.

There is some interest in this line among some members of the Swanage Railway Project.

Is there any interest within RDS? The first step could be the formation of a preservation group in the Bridport area.

*Brian D Druce, 26 Johnson Road,
Heston, Middlesex TW5 9LQ*

Hack watch

People who live in glass houses should not throw stones. Before Peter Rayner slaps off Sir Bob Reid about damaging the railway, it is worth recalling that he was responsible for the totally idiotic decision to close the Nuneaton flyover which RDS is trying to get reinstated. Rayner has done his fair share of hacking.

*Norman Liszewski, 109 Burton
Road, Woodville, Swadlincote,
Derbyshire DE11 7JW*

Peter Rayner replies: Not Guilty M'Lud. Pressure to close the flyover did not come from me.

Problems arose when the Birmingham to East Anglia service wanted to connect with the West Coast main line at Nuneaton Trent Valley, rather than just "flying" over it. I wanted to avoid flat junctions for obvious reasons, so the last thing I wanted was to close it.

But in the end only a few freights were using the flyover because parcels trains also stopped using it. The

inevitable then happened. What your correspondent Ian Brown (elsewhere in the letters page) calls an advantage, the identification of responsibility, became easier.

I was faced with business pressure to close. Instead of one railway owning the flyover, the already fragmenting BR became inward-looking and I had no case for retention apart from my instinct.

As Regional Operating Manager I delayed the decision as long as possible and asked for alternatives to be examined. But I could not get business support for either alternative.

To the extent that my name was on the bottom of both the timetable and the engineering notices, Peter Rayner was responsible.

I made several idiotic decisions in 41 years but Nuneaton cannot really be blamed on me.

High speed safety

I'm amazed by the amount of articles and letters in *Railwatch* written by members in favour of very high speed trains. I see no need for such trains. I'm happy with 80 mph. Surely, we must consider safety along with high speeds.

*Margaret Bruce, 2 Everett Court,
Aldbrough Close, Manchester
M20 3DT*

Rayner's Review



Running out of time

The railway timetable is now a muddle as I and a few others warned it would be.

Back in the 1960s, I was timetable production officer at Crewe and we produced the Great Britain Timetable with input from other professional offices at Waterloo, Swindon, York, Liverpool Street and Glasgow.

Timetable knowledge, even with the old BR, was a specialist skill understood by only a few. It was a very professional job.

This winter's fiasco may yet be used as an excuse not to print the book in future. We must be vigilant.

Just what will appear in next year's timetable is also a moot point, because decisions have not yet been made about which operators will be given which franchises.

Franchises are supposed to be awarded according to the financial package AND the

would-be operator's suggested timetable. So how do the successful franchise bidders get their timetables in the book? Proposals for changes to the summer timetable close around February but decisions as to who wins the first franchises will be taken AFTER that date. The task is therefore surely impossible. It is so sad to see a once great industry brought down in this way.

Remember none of this is an accident. There has been a successful campaign for many years to destroy the old system which was portrayed as antiquated and traditional.

Now a well-tryed and tested set-up has been replaced with a dangerous and inadequate alternative.

I could go on at length about the safety risks inherent in the many interfaces of the sad and

muddled railway that exists today. Bolts fall from railway bridges and Railtrack talks of its contractors!

There is a dangerous accident at Chingford caused by conditions similar to those which led to the Clapham disaster. Dreadful consequences were only avoided by a second fault in the cabling which kept the signal to "one yellow". The track is owned by Railtrack, the maintenance staff belong to someone else, the driver to yet another organisation. Day after day the potential for another disaster is revealed.

When I attended the RDS annual general meeting in Exeter earlier this year, I spoke of my nightmare that we would have a strongly anti-rail Government in power at the end of the century.

Since then it has been sug-

gested that the need for high revenues to attract investors in Railtrack would ensure lines were kept open.

However I have had another nightmare. My latest fear is that National Heritage Secretary Virginia Bottomley will use the massive amount of money her department will get from the National Lottery to buy closed railway lines from Railtrack so they can be converted into a bridleway, cycle way and footpath network.

Such a venture would appear to have great environmental benefits while also giving Railtrack investors a pay-off on their investment.

The real environmental effect however would be to increase the use of cars and other damaging forms of transport.

I hope my fears are unfounded but we must fight if there is any hint of closures, and we must resist every attempt to reduce services.

Peter Rayner

Motorail appeal

I am very disappointed on reading *Railwatch* to find no mention of Motorail. I joined RDS as I was particularly concerned about the disappearance of Motorail which I have used almost since its inception to travel to Scotland, the Outer Hebrides in particular. I have written many letters to MPs, Scottish Tourist Boards and others in protest and have found much support for its retention. Surely RDS should mount a campaign to get this service reinstated with the support of a vigorous advertising campaign, which the service has sadly lacked in recent years. It has been increasingly difficult to get any information about it in this area and travel agents seemed to have no idea it even existed. No wonder it has been deemed unnecessary.

From Exeter it was possible to take an afternoon train to join a friend with a car in London, or to drive in four hours from Exeter to London, catch Motorail to Fort William or Inverness within 24 hours. Now the journey entails a night's stay near the Scottish border and an arrival tired after a 800-mile drive. The service was popular with those who knew about it. The result of its discontinuance is that this year I could not get as far as the Outer Isles and wasted three days in dreary driving.

The effect on tourism in the remoter parts of Scotland must be bad. A really efficient, well-promoted service could bring great benefits to those areas and remove cars from overcrowded motorways. Please mount a campaign to get Motorail reinstated and extended. It used to be a real pleasure to use and was not as expensive as many thought when the savings in car mileage and nights' accommodation were taken into account.

Miss P J Hall, 2 Bernardo Road,
Exeter EX2 4NZ

Motorail potential

In May 1995 the UK's Motorail services came to an end. The Fort William sleeper was also to have died, but was saved by pressure applied by a variety of interests. In spite of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, I heard nobody say a word in defence of Motorail, and the MPs I wrote to seemed to regard me as a crank.

Maybe the continued existence of Motorail would have been

an inconvenient obstacle to privatisation.

Surely Motorail made environmental and social sense, just as Le Shuttle now does. Its use may have been in decline, but that decline could surely have been reversed. Has RDS (or anyone) studied what lessons need to be learned from that decline, and what proposals could realistically be made for a new and more successful Motorail, both for internal routes and for integration with Le Shuttle?

Years ago there were Motorail terminals on out-of-town sites, but these were abandoned in favour of terminals at city stations. Was this step in the right or the wrong direction?

It was the long-distance overnight services linking Scotland with London and Bristol that I found attractive, though with the sleeper fares they were not cheap. But the long-distance day services made much sense too.

Is there also scope for medium-distance services, if the "check-in" times can be shortened? And for "special needs" services, for example linking Cornwall and Devon with London and the north at summer weekends?

C A Thornton, Phoenix Cottage
Cassington, Witney, Oxon OX8
IDL

Rail information

I was interested to note the plea in *Railwatch* for the National Trust to provide public transport information. In fact their handbook has provided this information for some years. After each entry for houses (but not always open spaces) details of the nearest station are given, along with bus services, names of operators and a telephone contact where available. This information is provided by rail-bus expert Barry Doe.

The shuttle bus initiative is very welcome because one of the problems of visiting NT properties without a car is that they often have very long driveways, even if the bus goes past the entrance. I certainly hope more shuttle buses to the doors can be organised - but it is quite expensive and BR in this area does not seem keen on such ventures.

The Shrewsbury-Wolverhampton Rail Users Association wants an intermodal ticket to give rail/bus access to the countryside from the West Midlands, but BR is not encouraging. It wants rail level

type fares from the total proceeds it seems!

G F Atkinson, Chairman,
Shrewsbury-Wolverhampton Rail
Users Association, Chevin,
Kemberton, Shifnal, Shropshire

Money is not enough

The RDS view that the rail system should not be broken up is misguided, particularly since it inevitably leads to one set of management ideas being dominant. Accepting the RDS view, however, makes it doubly important that we stop pretending that all would be well if the Government spent more. We need to campaign against bad management from whatever quarter. Spending millions on new trains for services to Salisbury and Exeter is not enough help if managers can't do better than 26% productive use of driver time. The cost of rail travel remains too high.

What the current divisions of responsibility are doing is making the identification of responsibility easier. In the longer term this can only be good. Many of the problems apparent on BR are not about the money except in the sense that unlimited amounts would solve them in the short term. The efficiency gains made by Mendip Rail, with limited freedom from BR, are not about reduced services or higher investment. They are about better management. More diversity of management should produce more of the same.

Ian Brown, 4 Langham Road,
Raunds, Wellingborough,
Northants NN9 6LD

Safety fears

I am concerned about safety procedures following the railway's break-up into smaller companies. We must ensure that the highest standard of railway operation is maintained, and I am pleased that the Inspectorate part of the Health and Safety Executive will now inspect Railtrack's

track and signalling when it employs outside contractors to maintain and renew equipment. I sincerely hope it will also look at traction maintenance and all rewiring projects undertaken by non-rail employees.

Finally, I am pleased that in addition to the autumn safety review, Railtrack plans next spring to publish a revised version of the safety guidelines it issues to contractors.

Mervyn Matthews, Welsh Railways
Action Committee, Stone-
walls, 5a Broadway, Cowbridge,
South Glamorgan CF71 7ER

East-west routes

Thank you for the October copy of *Railwatch* which is getting better and better. I am particularly interested in the East-West links.

If one does not think it was just incompetence and stupidity, one might think it was almost deliberate policy to destroy East-West routes.

It is possible for me to get to Oxford or Cambridge by rail - but via London!

To travel to Swindon, Bristol or the West Country is expensive and long-winded, especially for me, somewhat disabled.

I find the Euston-Paddington Tube journeys very difficult. So I have long hoped for the Bletchley-Oxford route to be restored not as a slow route but as part of a major route to the West from Milton Keynes.

However, the latest move by Stagecoach, the coach operator, could pose a threat to this restoration. They have introduced a quality coach service between Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge, 14 coaches a day at very convenient times. It would seem to make expenditure on the Bletchley-Oxford line hard to justify because this service should allow me to travel West by a combination of coach and rail.

M P Smith, OBE, BA, 5 Rylstone
Close, Heelands, Milton Keynes

Rail guides Some RDS railguides are now sold out but the following are available for £1 each: Scotland, North East, Yorkshire, Lancs and Cumbria, Peaks and Plains, Lincs/Notts/Derbyshire, East Anglia, In and Around London, Thames and Downs, and Kent and East Sussex.

RDS reports *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 costs £2.90 post free. *A New Station* - RDS report on the costs and how to campaign. £1.80 post free. *It's a Shambles* - The first hiccups of privatisation. £1.25 post free.

All the above are available from Martin Ball, 89 North Wallington, Fareham, Hants PO16 8TJ. Cheques payable to RDS.

Fighting on freight front

While the British Government was forcing British Rail to shed freight on to our overcrowded roads, more freight was going by rail in mainland Europe.

Swap body traffic using French railways boomed by 21% in 1994 while the overall volume of freight traffic grew by 8% in freight tonne terms.

The growth in swap body traffic was partly thanks to £37 million of French state aid specifically to encourage this type of traffic. The national railway SNCF, road hauliers and combi operators all have a say in how this government money is spent.

SNCF Fret is developing a system which constantly monitors cargo as it is in transit, aiming to give its customers an ever more reliable service.

In Germany where there is already a large percentage of freight traffic on rail, overall growth in rail freight was 3.5% while swap body traffic increased by 4%.

Germany sends 35% of its freight by rail compared to Britain's minuscule 7%.

Despite the hurdles put up by the British Government, international rail links are developing. At least one road freight company was considering switching 50% of its

Spanish traffic to swap bodies via the Channel Tunnel, partly to get round continental bans on Sunday lorry operations.

In Britain, RDS has been joined in recent years by the Rail Freight Group in campaigning for a proper transport policy.

RFG, which represents companies who already use rail, is asking for RDS co-operation in identifying rail bottlenecks which will prevent an expansion of rail freight.

RFG secretary Chris Nichols who is also an RDS member, asks people to contact him with details of gauge constraints, missing chords and crossovers, routes closed to freight, signalling inadequacies and any other things which can then be costed and dealt with under a freight-related investment programme. Write to Chris at 26 Squitchey Lane, Oxford OX2 7LD.

News from RDS freight committee

★ Mars is planning to open a distribution centre at Bicester Park with a view to sending more of its products by rail.

★ Transrail is hoping to carry lorry semi trailers by rail between London and Scotland next year on its overnight Enterprise service. It is waiting for new spine wagons to be delivered and tested before targeting

the 242,000 trailers which at present go every year by road! Until Railtrack carries out minor infrastructure improvements on the West Coast main line, however, full-height trailers will have to continue to go by road.

★ The Department of Transport has refused to give a rail freight grant to the Post Office to extend the Post Office railway to its new distribution centre at Wembley even though it would save an enormous amount of road traffic movements in an area already badly affected by traffic pollution and noise. Another ridiculous decision from the Department of Roads.

★ The Transport and General Workers Union appears to have stopped "blacking" the transfer of freight from road to rail.



The freight committee is chaired by Steve Wilkinson, 52 Manor Park, Histon, Cambridge CB4 4JT. Steve, pictured left, is also national chairman of RDS.

A fare answer from Anglia

By Jonathan Denby

Public Relations Manager

Anglia Railways

Howard Thomas's article 'Anglia declares UDF' in the last *Railwatch* was misleading and contained a number of inaccuracies.

First, we always give out impartial information at Bury St Edmunds to those travelling to London and other destinations.

We have asked West Anglia and Great Northern to show connections to Newmarket and Bury in their timetables but with no positive response as yet. We are also happy to display their timetables at Bury.

Information is provided by our staff on the best possible route, depending on the time of day that travellers are making their journey. They recommend the most appropriate option for customers and will

continue to do so. Second, Mr Thomas markedly omits to point out that Cheap Day Returns and Network Awaybreaks are not valid now on InterCity services leaving Paddington between 1600 and 1900 - a restriction which does not apply on our InterCity services out of Liverpool Street.

The savings available with Network cards are not as wide ranging as he implies and the fact remains that the Network Card was not attracting travellers to our InterCity services.

This is probably not surprising since it was set up specifically to increase patronage of the then Network SouthEast routes at off-peak times, when they have much more spare capacity than InterCity routes.

InterCity routes have a broader market base which includes business and leisure passengers in addition to commuters. We are looking at other ways of attracting new travellers to our InterCity trains.

The withdrawal of the SuperSaver fare for journeys from Norwich and Ipswich to London and the South West has not had any of the negative effects mentioned.

Passenger numbers are increasing and revenue is up, with many travellers taking advantage of the SuperAdvance Return fare, which is cheaper than the old SuperSaver fare was. This is fact, not speculation or a political statement.

In addition the London Day Out fare which is targeted specifically at day trippers to the Capital and is cheaper than either SuperAdvance or SuperSaver has,

since its launch in 1992, grown into a £¼ million a year business and is still growing. Finally, Mr Thomas complains about local autonomy. It should be noted straight away that all major fare charges are approved by the British Railways Board within guidelines given by the Rail Regulator.

However, it is our own local initiative for local travellers that has brought the development of our new Anglia Plus tickets which are proving extremely popular with passengers in Suffolk and Norfolk, and it is our own local initiative, with the support of the East Anglian branch of the RDS, that has seen the production of a map, promoting cross-country services from East Anglia, which is not branded and illustrates routes operated by Anglia Railways, Central Trains and West Anglia Great Northern.

As train operators our role is not about politics, or deciding the national framework for the railway industry - it is to run the best possible service for travellers, irrespective of the rail industry's structure. We are fulfilling this role with some success.

At Anglia Railways we encourage and receive constructive comments and ideas from the East Anglian branch of RDS to the benefit of both organisations and, more importantly, rail travellers.

It is unfortunate that this positive and effective approach was not pursued by Mr Thomas, whose piece does nothing to further the cause of our railways and those who travel by train.

A Wapping gift for your Seven Sisters

Turnham Green with envy about your knowledge of the Tube.

What's In A Name? is a delightful little paperback explaining how the stations on the Underground got their names, with brief historical details and other points of interest. At only £3.40 including postage, it's available from Martin Ball, 89 North Wallington, Fareham, Hants PO16 8TJ. Cheques payable to RDS.

Just who is subsidised?

A surprisingly large number of motorists believe – wrongly of course – that they are subsidising public spending. Jim Yearsley explains that they are ignorant of, or choose to disregard, how the fiscal system works in Britain.

Revenues from motoring are not pledged to any one area of spending but go into a general fund alongside other excise duties.

It is pointless relating motoring taxes to road spending. You might as well argue that taxes on drink should go towards the provision of pubs.

Apart from the problem of evaluating the benefit from the use of expensive highway infrastructure it is impossible to quantify the hidden costs imposed by the road vehicle.

The pressure on urban and rural land space is critical but how do you accurately cost the parking of a road vehicle?

However on the allied subject of congestion, the Freight Transport Association estimated that jams now cost £20 billion a year. This works out at over £800 per vehicle.

At the moment, a typical motorist probably pays around £600 in all taxes annually, assuming a 70% tax element on petrol, an average consumption of 40 miles per gallon and an annual mileage of 10,000.

It is clear that, even taking only congestion costs into account, the motorist is not paying his dues.

There are a number of adversities facing the modern motorist but having to subsidise everything else is not one of them.

Assessing the total cost of highway use, even if it could be done accurately, is a complicated academic exercise. Requiring motoring taxes to cover such costs would price off the road all but the well-heeled.

The Government now knows this. Independent research published in November confirms what RDS has been saying for years – that cars and lorries cost Britain at least £50 billion a year in pollution, congestion and accidents. That is three times the amount collected in road taxes.

RDS member David Hollis estimated in a report last year that the figure was £52 billion.

The new findings justify a mas-



Keeping trains running

This picture proves that RDS members get their hands dirty to make sure the trains keep running. Pictured centre is Railwatch assistant editor Janice Uphill who is a steam engine driver at the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre. Mrs Uphill, the only passed-out female at Quainton so far, is flanked by, left, fireman Mrs Marie Saville and, right, fireman Mrs Judith Emmerson. All three were pictured at the July Ladies Day at Quainton, near Aylesbury. Mrs Uphill jokingly refers to the picture as *The Three Fat Graces*.

In the background is ex-London Transport pannier tank engine L99 which was built by Kerr Stuart in 1930 and started work as Great Western 7715. It is now owned by the Quainton Railway Centre but has worked on several occasions on London Underground's Steam on the Met. Mrs Uphill who recently retired from working as a secretary with the National Health Service has also spent 13 years helping with the Quainton Railway Society's administration.

Picture by E R Uphill

sive increase in train subsidies and cycle routes purely on health grounds. Air pollution alone kills up to 6,500 people a year, according to the study by Professor David Pearce of University College, London.

His report puts a price on global warming, noise pollution, congestion, road damage and accidents.

His *Blueprint 5: The True Cost of Road Transport* was compiled with help from six economists in four countries.

"We have allowed a steady drift to the motor car to develop without a true understanding of what we have done and what it has cost us and our descendants," he said.

"There is no way that anyone can argue any more that road users are paying the true costs of travel."

World Wide network

The Internet can be a valuable tool for rail campaigners.

In America, the Delaware Valley Association of Railroad Passengers already has a World Wide Web site for its magazine, together with Amtrak and commuter timetables for most of America. The address is <http://libertynet.org/~dvarp/dvarp.html>

We have tentative plans to get

Railwatch on the Web but we would like your help in identifying other sites which might be useful for rail travellers and campaigners. Please contact the editor. For instance, do you know how to access other foreign timetables?

The road lobby propaganda is already on the Internet, together with half truths about rail. We must respond.

Europe Beyond the Tunnel

Plan your 1996 holidays with our 130-page guide to rail travel in France, Germany and the Benelux countries. Illustrated with colour and monochrome pictures, this book was written by RDS members and published by Leading Edge as part of their RailTrail series. £8.50 including postage from Martin Ball, 89 North Wallington, Fareham, Hants PO16 8TJ. Make cheques payable to RDS.

Rail-sea link is still needed

By Peter Cannon

The closure of the Felixstowe-Zeebrugge passenger ferry in October will have great repercussions on business and tourism in East Anglia.

It seems that neither the port of Felixstowe nor the ferry operator are interested in promoting and upgrading what was a heavily used route by freight, coach and foot passenger traffic.

But the service could be switched to provide a Harwich-Oostende service, using only one ship on a rolling schedule.

Both ports are rail connected, and there are good rail services from Harwich to Ipswich (hourly by Great Eastern) and regular services to all other parts of East Anglia by Anglia Railways, together with good London connections.

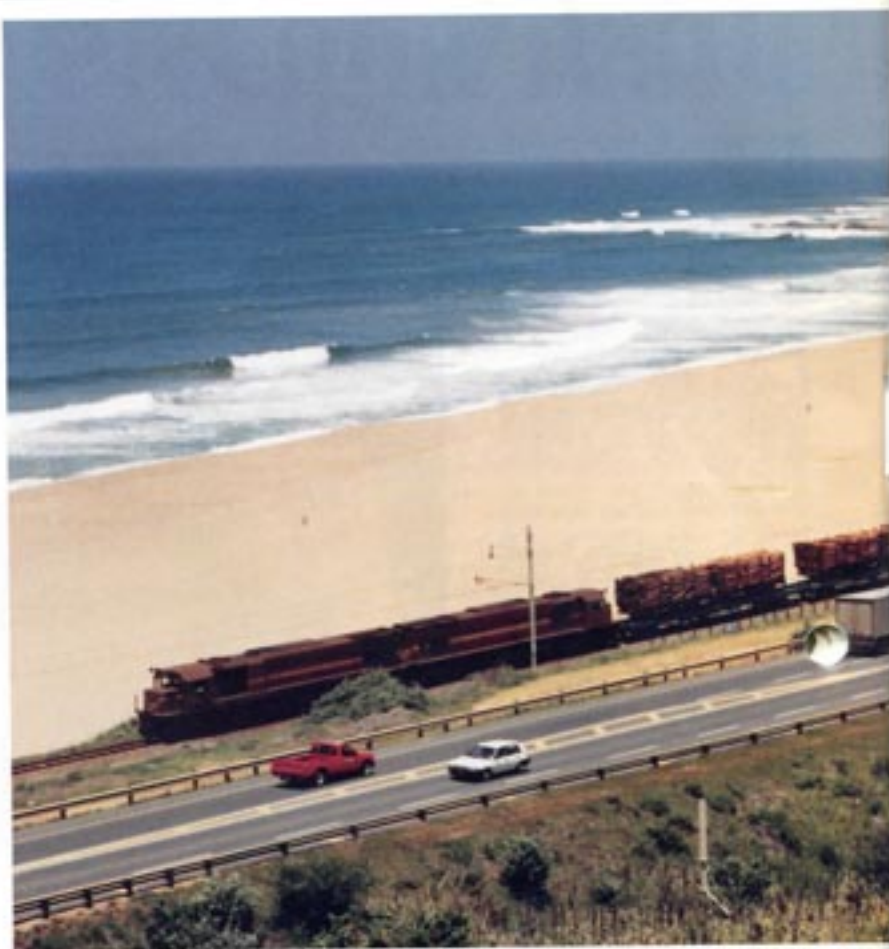
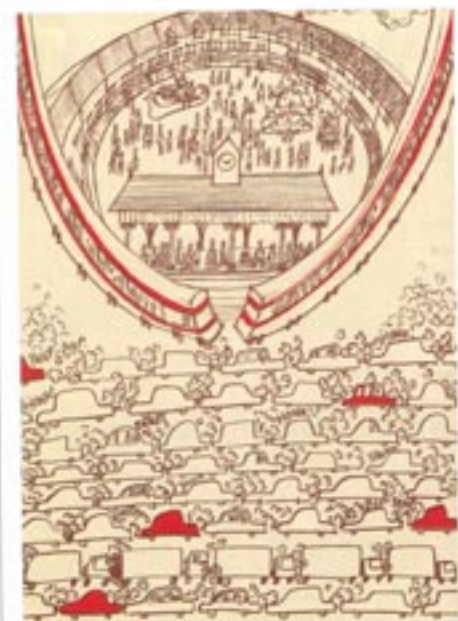
Oostende still has good rail connections to most of Europe, with hourly services to Brugge, Brussels, Liege, Antwerp and Koln and connections to almost all of Germany.

This Harwich-Oostende route could prove popular for leisure or business travel to Belgium and Europe from East Anglia, the Midlands and the north of England.

Happy Christmas

Colour Christmas cards specially commissioned for RDS are available this year. A sample is printed below and right. Please order immediately and we will despatch promptly. The text inside the card is Season's Greetings. The three designs by Diana Powell of Bristol are Communities Need Stations, Take the Train for a Whiter Christmas, and the Privatised Train Set.

The price (post free) for six cards (two of three different designs) with envelopes is £2.45. Please send your order, with cheques made payable to RDS, to Martin Ball, 89 North Wallington, Fareham, Hants PO16 8TJ.



PIGGYBACK: Narrow-gauge wagons loaded with timber are carried away from Po

Sun shines on

One private railway is responding to the challenge to maximise its revenue.

Alfred County Railway in Natal has negotiated a deal with South African Railways for its narrow-gauge wagons to be carried piggyback to their final destination.

Our picture shows the inaugural train leaving Port Shepstone and heading north beside the Indian Ocean towards Durban.

The timber traffic originates from Harding, 80 miles inland, and is carried by ACR on its 2ft gauge line to Port Shepstone where the wagons are run on to main line (3ft 6in) wagons for onward despatch to paper mills at Umkomaas.

The ACR runs Banana Express tourist trains every week with 1950s-built Beyer-Garrett steam locomotives which also haul some freights.

The 2ft-gauge trains now haul 120,000 tonnes of freight a year including timber, stone, bricks and even standard containers.

South African Railways, which trades as Spoornet, abandoned the line because it could not make it pay.

Enthusiasts took it over and attracted investment from Europe, America and

Japan - and friendly co-operation from the main line authorities.

Ironically Spoornet has lost much of its domestic freight traffic to the 61-tonne lorries rampaging around the country since deregulation.

Observers are worried that the financial position of rural and secondary railways is getting desperate and that this crisis has risen because of subsidised road competition.

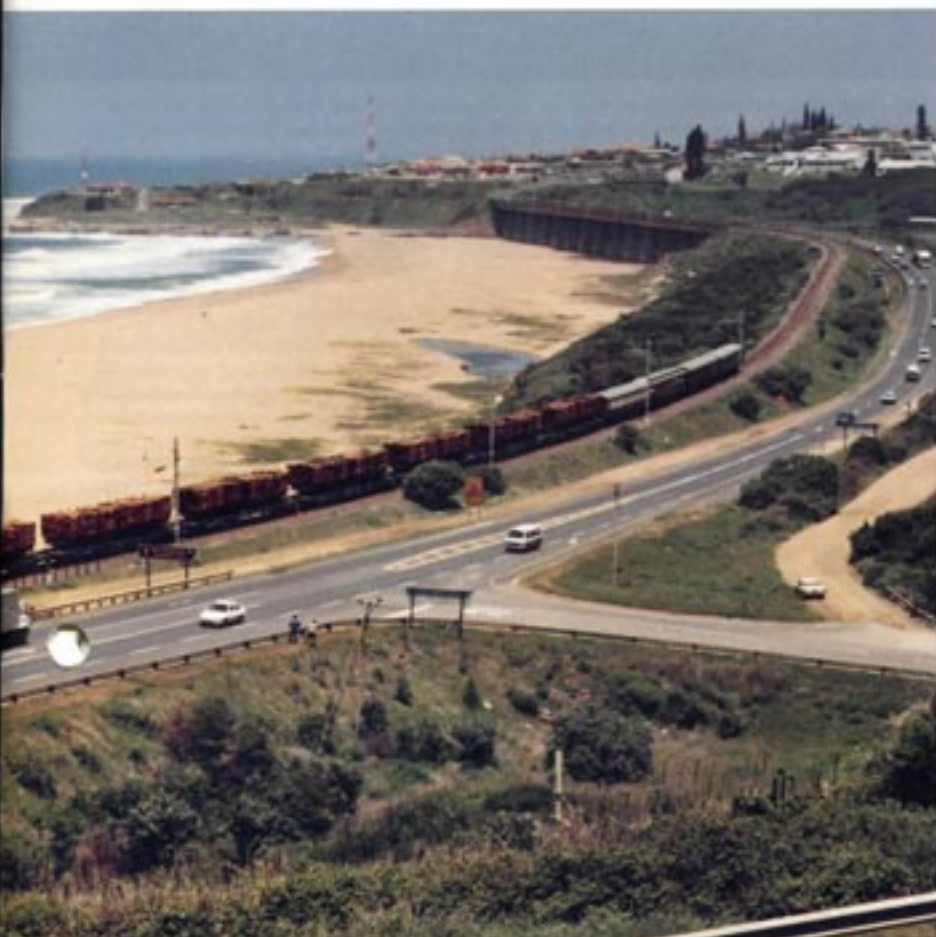
No official attempt is being made to quantify the vast road building and maintenance expenditure which will be necessary if freight continues to switch from rail to road.

ACR director Charlie Lewis said: "I find it

RDS lott

August: P Warren, Birmingham £58, C O'Brien £21.45, Miss Joan Rustick, Whitehaven £14.50, F G Challis, Cambridge £7.25. **September:** Poole £36.50, C M G O'Dell, Earls Barton £14.50, Macfarlane, Timperley £7.30, Roger Dewhurst, Rotherham £58, P J Pitcher, Berkhamsted £14.50, Reading £14.50, D J McCutcheon, Portsmouth £14.50.

Join in: Lottery officer Dave Finch now Kidderminster DY11 6JX. If you would like a cheque, made payable to RDS, to Dave. Inc



Shepstone on South Africa's main line network

Picture: Peter F Bagshawe

privatisation

depressing that we are making the same mistakes in South Africa as Britain. A common misconception is that rail freight is subsidised and road freight pays its own way.

"We hope to show the public that their taxes are providing the road infrastructure which lorries use while rail freight pays for its own infrastructure.

"Road hauliers must in future pay their true infrastructure costs.

"But the road freight lobby is incredibly well organised and tenacious so the only way for us to succeed is to get the public on our side."

As in Britain, Mr Lewis warns that many road hauliers rely on speeding, overloading

winners

Ormskirk £36.25, John Mitchell, Birkenhead £7.25, Mrs B Osborne, Stratford-upon-Avon £7.25, John Gaylor, Eastleigh £58.40, Derek English, £11.90, A L Reid, Edinburgh £14.60, Andrew T, Southampton £7.30. **October:** Mark Edgell, £50, K C Burton, Thetford £21.45, H L Cook, £7.30, Alastair MacGregor, Oxted £7.30.

For a new address: 105 Meadow Hill Close, join the RDS lottery for one year, send a £12 and your RDS number if possible.

and dangerously long driver hours to make their profits.

Elsewhere in South Africa, attempts are being made to maintain the country's mainline steam heritage within a modern operating railway.

Steamnet 2000 is helping to preserve massive class 25NC 4-8-4 locomotives which used to operate the now dieselised Kimberley-De Aar line which is known to rail enthusiasts throughout the world as one of the last strongholds of mainline steam.

Steamnet has negotiated with the railway authorities to bring the giants of steam back every few months - to pull the normal service trains operating over the line.

The first week of such activity was in June and was attended by municipal and provincial dignitaries who are keen to stimulate tourist interest.

Another week of steam trains is planned on the main line as part of the annual Diamond Festival of Kimberley from 29 April.

★ Steamnet 2000 can be contacted at PO Box 2534, Kimberley 8300, South Africa.

★ Alfred County Railway is at PO Box 572, Port Shepstone 4240, South Africa.

Starlink turns a new page

Rail reopening campaigner Jane Liston won full-page coverage in *The Scotsman* in October to publicise her battle to take the railway back to St Andrews - Scotland's "most famous town".

And in April she was elected as a Liberal Democrat councillor on the new unitary Fife Council. She believes her success in the election was partly a result of her battle to bring the railway back.

She used the thousands of people who went to the town in the summer for the golf Open championships to highlight the need for trains.

But Starlink - the group she founded - also points out that, as a day trip centre, a university town and a commuter dormitory, St Andrews would benefit in many other ways from a rail service.

Fife Regional Council has conducted a St Andrews transportation study, but is shortly to be superseded by the unitary Fife Council.

Although this new council is an aggregation of three district and one regional councils, it is controlled by the same party as the current Region, which has so far refused to contribute to a feasibility study.

With Jane Ann on board, it is hoped the new council will have a different outlook. The local population is slowly but surely realising that a railway would be a great asset.

Even people in Leuchars, the present rail head for St Andrews, are realising that it would be nice for them to be able to get to St Andrews by train.

Trains bring jobs

The Highlands Region would lose more than 160,000 tourists and at least £30 million a year if rail routes were closed, says a report commissioned by Highlands and Islands Enterprise. 1,700 jobs are dependent on railways in the north of Scotland which could attract more than 25% more visitors if the network was improved with "flexibility and imagination". The report by Pidea and MDS Transmodal suggests that Motorail should be re-started and a railway development officer appointed.



LOCAL ACTION

East Midlands

By Tony Kay

Overcrowding There was dangerous overcrowding on the Bedford-Bletchley line when North London Railways provided a single-car railbus in September instead of the three-car unit needed for the school run to Bedford. NLR said the unit was delayed after going for refurbishment and arranged relief buses. The branch has protested to NLR, particularly after last year's partial closure of the line. Young people could be turned against rail travel for life.

Long way round The Midland main line will again be closed between Kettering and Leicester on several Sundays from January to March 1996. Diversions are along the freight line through Corby and over the Welland Viaduct to Manton Junction on the Peterborough-Leicester line. We will use the diversion as an opportunity to promote railways and RDS. A leaflet describing the history and features of interest on the diversionary line will be distributed. It is hoped that, as last year, there will be large crowds to make the journey over Britain's longest railway viaduct. The diversionary line remains single-line working, following a landslip and derailment.

Gunning for a station The East Midlands branch is backing a campaign to open a station at East Goscote on the site of an old ordnance factory near the Leicester-Melton Mowbray railway. We are hoping platforms and a footbridge can be built more cheaply than Railtrack believes. The land is owned by Charnwood borough council, which has safeguarded the site along with a site at Thurmaston (between Leicester and Syston).

Eurohub Progress is rapid on the Eurohub terminal for Channel Tunnel freight at Corby. New tracks have been laid for trains up to half a mile long, and it is expected that the first trains will be using the terminal by the end of this year. Companies using the terminal will include Gefco, distributors for Citroen and Peugeot cars.



Scotland

By Douglas Smart

Half a victory Congratulations to all those, particularly Highland Regional Council, who were responsible for saving the Fort William sleeper. But we have pointed out in the media that it was only a technicality which enabled the Court of Session to play a crucial role. The train was legally important because it was the only one using a short stretch of track. We have called for a sustained campaign for the restoration of all the other cuts which have already been implemented. Some of the cuts, such as Motorail, will have a much more serious effect than would the closure of one sleeper. The scandalous dropping of the overnight seats, largely ignored by the politicians, leaves travellers with a choice of expensive sleepers or cheap and nasty road coaches for overnight travel.

Labour sidetracked The branch joined dozens of other protesters at a consultation meeting organised by Glasgow District Council in connection with the M74 extension which would cut a swathe of concrete,

some of it on stilts, through the city. We and many others pointed out the lack of evidence for the much vaunted economic benefits of new roads and predicted that, if we are to believe what we are told, a future Labour government would scrap the scheme. It appears that while the Labour party is preaching concern for the environment and advocating a moratorium on new roads, one Labour-controlled council can apply to another Labour-controlled council for planning permission for a very damaging motorway costing £250 million. There is massive opposition mostly from Labour-controlled wards.

Environmental action The branch has made a submission to the Scottish Office and the Department of Transport on the "great debate on transport", *The Way Ahead*. Scotland is far behind England in the matter of links between road building, land use planning and concern for the environment. We called for greater public transport investment as an alternative to, not in addition to, road building.

Freight success Congratulations to those who have successfully restored freight traffic to the Far North Line.

Midlands

By Alan Bevan



Reopening gem The reopening of the four-mile Birmingham Snow Hill-Smethwick rail line in September represents a great reward for our tenacious efforts since 1967 when main line services ceased using Snow Hill. We urged improvement of the Snow Hill rail services when BR managers were doing the opposite, and fought closure at the TUCC hearing when the PTA of that day claimed taxis would suffice for passengers. Twenty years ago such RDS publications as *Overground* and *Speedrail* urged fast modern rail services through Snow Hill, and many lobby meetings were held. Twenty-five years of persistence has eventually secured the welcome Jewellery Line. RDS representatives enjoyed the day of fun, entertainment and publicity which marked a tremendous milestone for rail development in the Midlands.

Rotten roads Efforts to protect and reopen the ex-GWR route south of Stratford-upon-Avon continue to be frustrated by road schemes. Warwickshire County Council was expected in October to abandon plans both to demolish Alcester Road bridge over the railway at Stratford-upon-Avon and to use the rail route for a road. However, an alternative road is now planned which would obliterate the well-used station car park. On the southern edge of the town an access road to a new housing development would block the ex-GWR line with a new 15ft high embankment. RDS and other groups have objected and are lobbying councillors.

Branch threat The three-mile line to Hone-

ybourne is under threat as the Ministry of Defence has decided to close the Royal Engineers depot. In response to this and to promote the early reopening of the GWR route, a new Stratford and Birmingham Railway Society has been formed. The society already has 200 members and RDS members wishing to join will benefit from a reduced subscription of only £5. Write to SBRS, 30 Atherstone Close, Redditch B98 0BD or call Alan Bevan 0121 745 6001 for a leaflet.

Station costs Centro has commissioned the Tech Econ consultancy to assist in evaluating the need for and the cost of providing rail stations and services on the Birmingham-Tamworth and the Sutton Park line. Possible new stations will be considered for Heartlands Station site, Bromford, Chester Road, Home Hall, Kingsbury and Dorthill. The potential for park and ride will also be examined for most of these stations. There is interest in forming a rail user group for the Tamworth line and it is hoped to arrange a local meeting.

Planning guidelines In its latest Regional Planning Guidance (RPG 11) for the West Midlands, issued on 8 September, the Government is urging developments accessible to rail corridors. The guidance emphasises the need to encourage a shift from private to public transport, stimulating rail, bus, cycling and walking. "Rail services can play a valuable role in serving rural communities, providing commuter services into urban centres, and supporting recreation and tourism," it says. It asks authorities to consider whether there is potential to reopen lines.

At last Construction of the 13-mile £145m Metro Line 1 is due to begin this autumn from Birmingham Snow Hill to West Bromwich, Wednesbury and Wolverhampton. It should be complete in 1998. Metro services are expected to operate at six-minute intervals and a Snow Hill to Wolverhampton Midland Metro journey will take 30 minutes and serve 23 stops.

Investment Loadhaul, which moves 400,000 tonnes of steel a year by rail into Wolverhampton, is to invest £4m in handling equipment and warehousing. Three Loadhaul trains a day bring steel coil, slab and billet from Lockerby (Teesside), Scunthorpe and from Europe via East Coast ports.

Another reopening Although deferred from the current financial year, firm plans exist for reinstatement of the Walsall-Dudley railway during 1996/97 at a likely cost of £3.5m funded by capital receipts and a 50% contribution from the European Regional Development Fund.

South West

By Gerard Duddridge

Another station Digby and Sowton station on the Exmouth branch was officially opened in May and is being used by people working on the Sowton industrial estate. New houses may be built nearby but at present the area is isolated and this probably explains why the adjacent 500-place Digby car park has so far remained little used. The station is well placed for road links from East Devon and the A38 from

Buckfastleigh, Ashburton and Chudleigh via the M5 bridge, but is inadequately signed.

Bus and rail links David Mather, Manager, West of England, Regional Railways South Wales and West and Brian James, Divisional Manager, Cornwall, Western National Limited spoke to an RDS meeting in Truro on 23 September on bus and rail links in Cornwall. David Mather spoke on the need to develop frequent and reliable services such as on the Exmouth line. Local travel accounts for 70 to 80% of branch line custom and there is a need to work closely with local communities, as the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership has helped to do on the Valley line. Through ticketing has been developed for connecting buses to Plymouth City Centre and to the Bodmin and Wenford Railway. Brian James noted the contribution of the county in supporting evening buses. The 2125 Bodmin Parkway to Padstow bus will wait up to 20 minutes if necessary for the 1735 from Paddington. RDS has a seven-point strategy for improving integration in Cornwall which includes through ticketing and more timetable information.

Fares There was a national furore over the increase in fares in the Paignton area in October. In fact, the rail fare increases came AFTER the bus company running parallel services put up its fares, with the result that many passengers switched to rail. We have made our protest to Regional Railways South Wales and the West and the statutory Rail Users Consultative Committee. Elsewhere there was also fare trouble. With no prior warning the standard day return for journeys wholly within the St Erth to St Ives branch went up by 150% from 29 May 1995, and St Ives to Penzance by 31%. Elsewhere increases were only 3 to 4%. South Wales and West tries to justify the increases by saying that they have had to fund the refurbishment of the 1950s diesel units that work the branch.

London and Home Counties

By Simon Martin

Media The branch has been spurred on by increasing media interest in our activities.

Chiltern says No Despite lobbying, Chiltern is refusing to run trains to the Sudbury stations (north west London) in the morning peak but at least Chiltern has improved the evening service. The logic of this escapes us but we welcome the extra stops.

River crossings We have submitted a response to the Government's East London river crossing proposals arguing for improved rail devices before any more road crossings are built.

Metro The Essex Metro leaflet is causing great interest.

Airport links BAA is looking at bus links for an immediate improvement in public transport links while the debate on rail links goes on. The crucial part of this debate is to maintain the southern link route at Feltham.

Congratulations The South East London Transport Action Group's excellent survey shows the extent of work that needs to be done to make the rail network in south east London an attractive alternative to the car.

Future ideas 1 Next year the branch will be going into the twilight zone as we try to find out why some stations are less popular for travellers. Let me know your candidates, particularly ones outside London.

Future ideas 2 Look back in *Ordnance* will be launched in the autumn 1996. Where should London Underground be in the year 2000? What happened to the decently modern metro campaign? This is to be the branch's boldest publication to date and everyone who feels they can help is welcome. Please contact me in the first instance.

Dates East Kent division at the Victoria Hotel, Ashford on 2 December. South West division at Chessington College on 10 January 1996 at 1900. Branch AGM on 17 February in Tavistock Square.

North West

By Robert Cummings



Good news and bad Metal Box Traffic is back on the rails, courtesy of a block train to Warrington and a trip working to the depot at Westhaughton! The sidings, tarmacked over when the traffic was taken off rail, have returned. Unfortunately the Guinness traffic, from London to Ordsall Lane, Salford, was switched to road during the summer following a change in production and palletisation processes. Perhaps members with a taste for this brew may consider taking their business elsewhere!

Traffic at risk Also threatened is the limestone traffic from the Peak District to Brummer Mond's plant in Northwich. The company has said it will switch to road if the Government does not provide a grant for new equipment. The proposal could produce an extra 37,000 movements of the dreaded aggregates lorries - those poorly maintained, recklessly driven monsters that terrorise our overcrowded roads! Full marks to the BBC's Close Up North TV programme which continues to highlight the menace of these lorries.

Local Service Worries There are fears for local rail services following the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority's decision to withdraw from supporting local train services. This situation arose from the creation of Railtrack whose access charges have effectively doubled the cost of the Section 20 grant required. What will happen when these services revert to the Franchise Director is still unknown, even

though the changeover is less than six months away!

Uncertainty persists Plans to extend electrification in Manchester from Deansgate to Salford Crescent have also fallen victim to the continuing uncertainties surrounding investment in the local rail network. An original estimate of £2.4 million for the scheme, was revised following the creation of Railtrack, to between £4.1 million and £5.8 million. As a result discussions have taken place with a view to an alternative lower-cost scheme.

Footbridge saved The historic footbridge at Hale Station has been saved following a campaign by rail users.

Future branch meetings 25 November at Crewe Arms Hotel, Crewe (almost opposite Station). 27 January at Central Library, Manchester (adjacent to St Peter's Square Metrolink).

Shropshire and Mid Wales

By Chris Magner

Heart of Wales More passengers used the Heart of Wales Rambler special Sunday services from Shrewsbury to Llandrindod and Cardiff to Llandrindod. The Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association once again advertised the service, provided stewards and a Snacks on Tracks trolley service. HOWLTA also organised four scenic minibus trips to supplement the regular Elan Valley bus tour. An excellent colour newspaper promoting the line can be obtained from tourist information offices and main stations. Passengers had to be turned away from one Rambler train in August which was a single-car 153 set. This was the second time in a month that passengers could not get on a Heart of Wales Line train. Not enough accommodation was provided for the Royal Welsh Show week in July.

Cheap fares Regional Railways Central has introduced a cheap fares policy for the Cambrian Coast lines over the winter period. The maximum fare is £5! A survey of all bridges and viaducts is being carried out to see if overall journey times can be reduced by speeding up the service and so producing better connections at Machynlleth. There will be improvements to next summer's timetable.

Border line The Shrewsbury-Chester line still suffers from speed restrictions which are frustrating to regular users. Mooreton Hall School, which runs Gobowen Station, is moving to new accommodation in the main station.

Cambrian party We hope to celebrate the formation in 1971 of the Cambrian Coast Line Action Group which successfully fought off closure plans. That fight pro-

Products bearing the RDS logo

Pocket note pad. PVC holder with ruled-paper pad (refills available) for the special introductory price of 95p. Order the pad plus a refill for only £1.35.

High quality necktie with gold logo on either a maroon or royal blue background (please state preference) for only £6.75. A must for meetings and train trips.

Key ring with leather fob lettered Railway Development Society for 85p.

Order from Martin Ball, RDS Sales, 89 North Wallington, Fareham, Hants PO16 8TJ. Cheques payable to RDS. Prices include postage.

bably also saved the Conwy Valley Line and the Heart of Wales Line. I would like to bring together as many people as possible who have fought for the railway over the years. John Rogers, founder member of CCLAG, will probably attend. Anyone else who is interested in coming to the gathering and who could give support in organising the event, please contact me: Chris Magner, 21 Dunval Road, Bridgnorth, Shropshire WV16 4NA.



South Wales

By Peter Clark

Ebbw Rail We are campaigning for the reopening of the Newport-Ebbw Vale line with exhibitions and leafleting at libraries in support of the reopening. It incorporates the Ebbw Rail logo which we are using wherever possible, for instance at Newport Rail Gala in September - a particularly appropriate occasion as a special train made two trips up to Ebbw Vale on that day. The local Ebbw Vale newspaper did us proud with a double-page feature on the campaign. Support for the proposals was obtained from the Euro MP for the area, Glenys Kinnock and we are hoping to secure Millennium Commission funding.

Extra trains RDS pointed out, in a press release, that Pacer units being made redundant by the West Yorkshire electrification scheme could be used in South Wales to help relieve overcrowding. Regional Railways poured cold water on the idea. Instead it plans to charge higher fares to reduce the overcrowding.

Take your choice There are 11 versions of the Saturday timetable on the South Wales main line, some of which apply for one day only.

Model franchise Our model franchise for South Wales was launched in October. Prepared with the aid of user groups, it reflects the biggest consultation exercise carried out with rail passengers in the area - as opposed to consultation with rail managers in Swindon and other officials who hardly ever use the trains around Cardiff and Swansea. We hope our recommendations will be heeded by the Rail Regulator. We reminded him that rail cuts mean more traffic on the roads.

Rail guide *Wales and the Marches by Rail* is available at £1.25 post free from RDS South Wales, 84 North Street, Abergavenny, Gwent NP7 7ED.

North East

By Peter Atkinson

Reopenings Gateshead council asked us about reopenings following a written enquiry by RDS member, the Reverend N B Warner. Stations suggested for reopening include Bensham, Team Valley (new station), Birtley, Forest Hall and Killingworth. The branch awaits developments.

Alnmouth for Alnwick A group has been formed with the aim of restoring Alnwick's link to the East Coast main line. In addition to around 80 members, the group has also attracted support from the Duke of Northumberland who owns much of the trackbed of the line, which closed in 1968. Obstacles to overcome include a gas pipe line laid along part of the route, and a need

to bridge the dual carriageway A1. Could we see local commuter services to Chathill diverted to the much more populous Alnwick if the branch is restored?

Pegswood pepped up The stations at Pegswood and Widdrington have been refurbished by Railtrack over recent weeks. The work involved raising the height of the platform to modern standards. Widdrington continues to produce a small but loyal band of commuters despite its meagre train service, the rail journey times to Newcastle being a fraction of that by road and without the parking problems!

Victorian Saltburn A member of the local users group (membership 36 and rising) have been active all summer. They held a display at the Victorian Festival in the former station buildings, and organised excursions over the Boulby freight line (part of the old Saltburn-Whitby branch). They have established useful links with the Heritage Line Working Group which numbers among its membership local councillors, and the Saltburn "500" Group.

Yorkshire

By James Towler



Duped! We were not the only people to be caught out by the Franchise Director's pledge to safeguard all Saver fares which we read to mean all Saver and Super Saver fares. How wrong we were was shown when it subsequently became known that the Super Saver - the most popular fare for journeys over 50 miles - was not covered. As one senior local government officer put it: "I feel extremely bitter about what's gone on and think the discrepancy between the impression given by the press notice and the fine print now emerging verges on the dishonest." We have taken the matter up with the Franchising Director.

PSRs disappoint Remember all those Ministerial promises of how the new Passenger Service Requirements would be based on existing timetables, the only difference being that as a consequence of privatisation services would tend to get better? In the event the PSRs for Midland Main Line and InterCity East Coast offer scope for considerable cuts. The overriding worry must be that if train operating companies can make more money by running fewer trains, they will.

To be seen but not heard? Although the official rail watchdogs, the Central Rail Users Consultative Committee and the Regional Rail users Consultative Committees meet in public, little has changed. Complainants do not usually get the chance to appear in public and, in one instance, a complainant was specifically barred from speaking. But BR and train operating companies have the right to put their cases in public. We raised this with the Office of the Rail Regulator who replied: "Committees will need to ensure

their process is seen to be even handed and that the customer and the operator have equal opportunities to put the facts and their representative positions." In the meantime the RUCC for North Western England is to be complimented for incorporating an Open Forum for members of the public at its meetings.

Tunnel Vision 1 Member Peter Denbigh was among those who had the unfortunate experience of travelling on the 1422 Trans-Pennine Express from Liverpool to Leeds on September 23 which was delayed almost two hours in Standedge Tunnel because of defective brakes. Information was sparse and the train was in semi-darkness, while the air became "very unpleasant indeed." As Peter put it: "I use the service regularly and normally find it reliable and the staff helpful and courteous, but on this occasion there was a serious lapse of communications."

Tunnel Vision 2 The 0915 Leeds to Sheffield is a useful train, especially for those travelling to Meadowhall or connecting into the Midland Main Line at Sheffield. It used to be popular with Swinton users until the 0954 stop was deleted from the timetable, even though it still stops there (with doors firmly closed) to give priority to the 0826 Cleethorpes-Manchester Airport. We asked South Yorkshire PTE if they could reinstate the stop. Back came the reply that the train was not supported by the PTE and that "in the new world of commercial confidentiality and market forces we are not aware of other operators' changes until a very late stage". Moreover, they added, the 0954 stop "could have been screaming off some of our revenue." You know it makes sense!

Lincolnshire

By Brian Hastings and Paul Jowett

Rail is the answer As Lincoln city's traffic crawls to a halt through congestion, RDS has suggested to Regional Railways Central that more should be done to encourage rail commuting into Lincoln and other Lincolnshire towns. Regional North East has shown the way by adjusting timings of the Sheffield-Lincoln service, giving Gainsborough and Lincoln an 0833 arrival. But the Nottingham-Lincoln needs a stopping service into Lincoln from Collingham, Swinderby and Hykeham.

Strategy undermined The county council's new public transport strategy also wants trains used for commuting and shopping. But in May Regional Railways Central axed one Lincoln commuter train to "save stock". Season ticket holders and college students were left high and dry. The result: The county council now supports Lincolnshire Road Car to run in one direction only a new service Boston to Sleaford at 1710 Mondays to Fridays during term time. OK for students, no good for ordinary workers.

AGM The Branch AGM is on Saturday, 10 February at Church Hall, Market Rasen. (four minutes from station) at 1330.

Road lobby Even Humberside police apparently support, allegedly on safety grounds, a plea by the road haulage industry that local authorities should spend council tax payers' money on providing

road hauliers with secure lorry compounds where vehicles carrying toxic chemicals and gases can be parked safely. If acids and gases are to be transported, why not safely by rail on which all movements take place and standage en route is within a controlled safe and secure environment? Railtrack has to provide sidings and yards without local authority assistance. This is unfair trade and another example of double standards.

Flying high The branch believes more holidaymakers and business people should be encouraged to "take the train to the plane" when flying from East Midlands International and Humberside International airports. Derby station has a coach link to East Midlands, and Barnetby (for Humberside Airport) has a taxi link. Passengers ring on arrival for a cab. Meanwhile in South Humberside the Cleethorpes-Manchester Airport service is attracting new business and performing above budget. A new initiative, through rail booking to Leeds-Bradford International Airport has been introduced and is doing well. Users book a through rail-coach ticket to the airport. Tickets can be bought on the train.

Boston docks Trade is booming. A large steel warehouse opened to store steel imports before delivery to Birmingham steel terminal. The daily steel trains were priced off the rails three years ago. Now port officials and customers would like to see over 80% of the traffic back on rail. The Department of Transport is being asked for grants to re-create and update the rail facilities into the dock still in situ but deteriorating after three years' idleness.

Habrough loses out Regional Railways NE, as forecast by RDS, have reduced the number of Cleethorpes-Manchester Airport trains calling at this point. Habrough has considerable untapped potential, being railhead for Immingham (three miles distant with a good taxi link run from the former station office) as well as for the Lincolnshire village of Keelby. Fifteen calls a day have been lost on weekdays and about half a dozen on Sundays to speed up the timings. The same could be achieved, without axing the stops, by upgrading at least some of the line for 90 mph running.

Crowle Loses Out The wayside station of Crowle won back (after 22 years without Sunday trains) a stopping pattern of six trains in summer and four in winter. But without warning RRNE removed the west-bound call on Sunday evenings of a train which served returning university and college students, nurses and servicemen.

Don't miss us out This summer's weather contributed to a rise in traffic on the Crewe-Skegness route but we are asking

for wayside stations like Haverhouse, Thorpe Culvert, Hubberts Bridge, Swineshead and Ancaster, to be given a reasonable service. Rural dwellers pay council taxes and income tax to the Government and expect some benefit from the grants financing rural rail services.

Severnside

By Eric Barber



Road threat Plans for new roads threaten to destroy parts of the now-closed Honeybourne route to Birmingham which is supposedly "protected" for a light rail scheme.

Bath Spa to Yate The "protected" Shortwood to Yate section has been severed by the new Shortwood bypass junction with the partly built Avon ring road, which is "the worst thing to happen to the south west" - an M25 for Bristol.

Trams A cross-city mini tram network is proposed for Bath by Ultra Light Rail Transit Limited.

Substitution Buses have replaced trains on the Severn Beach peak services to Avonmouth and prompted the formation of a Friends of Severn Beach Railway Group.

Misguided Just when rail freight could return to the Bristol-Portishead line, Badgerline wants to convert it into a guided bus system.

Through ticket Experimental through ticketing allowed people to use bus and train to get to Broadmead shopping area and the city centre.

Wrecking roads Plans to build a road through Wells are being fought by groups who suggest the rail line from Shepton Mallet should be restored instead.

North Wales

By Rod Fairley and Dave Sallery

Guidance We have offered to help consultants Steer Davis and Gleave when they investigate ways to improve public transport in the Deeside area. We shall argue for a new station at Deeside Industrial Park and have offered a guided tour of the area.

Cheap fares The experiment on the Wrexham-Bidston line has proved a success. Revenue is up.

Aspirations European Transport Commissioner Neil Kinnock asked to see rail users on a visit to Chester to help promote North Wales electrification. He seemed to understand our needs and aspirations. When we presented him with a folder containing our wish lists and other RDS material, he commented that his wish list was bigger than ours! Speakers from all over the north west, North Wales and Ireland spoke in favour of electrification. What was apparent was that there was no overall manager of the team.

Way forward We are trying to persuade Regional Railways North West to use surplus air-conditioned Mark 2s to give a

better service on the North Wales line where 90 mph running still appears to be some way off. There is concern in the region that Railtrack still say that the project will happen but no longer quote dates.

The main pocket timetable for north Wales services has appeared without Sunday times. Prospective travellers are advised to ring a Sunday hotline for details.

King Coal Household coal traffic has made a welcome return to Llandudno Junction. This traffic ceased with the end of Speedlink but the depot is now served from Yorkshire by Loadhaul. However, the Saturday BR fuel train to Holyhead will cease shortly. The depot will be served by road from a local supplier.

Ferry long wait Delays to the introduction of the fast ferry to Ireland continue with entry into service now expected in March. Platform 1 in Holyhead is out of use indefinitely due to the poor condition of the track.

Too far Plans to move Wrexham Central station 300 yards to allow for a property development which includes shops and a car park were approved by Wrexham Maelor Borough Council. The council refused on two occasions to allow rail users to address them to point out the difficulties the plan would make for rail passengers. By contrast the council cleared the way for the developers, Trinity House Investments Ltd, to give a presentation in the council chamber. The council's action was so unfair and possibly illegal that the Wrexham Birkenhead Rail Users Association is protesting to the Ombudsman. They will continue to fight this unreasonable plan.

Thames Valley

By Chris Wright

Binliner trains The last branch meeting was a site visit to Shanks and McEwan's waste tip at Calvert, which is served by binliner trains. The grant system favours road so that rail is up to £10 per tonne more expensive. Two million tonnes are currently carried, but 10 times more could be attracted to rail if the grant system reflected the true cost of road transport.

Objection! We objected to a planning application for Castlethorpe station site which should not really have been closed and, with three surviving platforms, could easily reopen.

Back to basics The Chiltern Line Franchise is, unlike others, actually based on the existing timetable.

Media coverage The *Independent on Sunday* reported how rail privatisation has pushed up reopening costs at Kidlington - up from £500,000 to £850,000 in three years. Oxfordshire has included the project in its TPP bid.

East-West links The Oxford-Bletchley line figures prominently in the Steer Davis and Gleave study of East Coast rail links. The initial report is due this month.

Rail potential Councils in the M40 corridor funded a study of the potential for rail in the area. Peter Headicar of Oxford Brooker University will give a presentation on the findings at the branch AGM at Oxford on 17 February.

Envelope re-use labels

RDS envelope re-use labels are available with the slogan: For Cleaner Air, Go by Rail. £1.80 per 100 post free from Martin Ball, 89 North Wallington, Fareham, Hants PO16 8TJ. Cheques payable to Railway Development Society.

WESTMINSTER

238% increase

With the news that Strathclyde region will experience a 238% increase in the cost of running the same railway services this year as it ran last year, the Minister for railways and roads, *John Watts*, introduced a special grants report on 18 July.

The report set out the measures the Government was proposing to ensure that passenger transport executives (PTEs) obtain financial cover for the additional costs that fall to PTEs and passenger transport authorities this financial year as a result of railway restructuring.

Railtrack's access charges and the rolling stock companies' leasing charges need to be at a level which will cover the cost of renewals investment and earn a return on their investment. Train operators also need to earn a rate of return on their operations. These adjustments reflect the real economic costs of providing the services in question. Mr Watts explained the purpose of the new system was to maximize 'transparency' i.e. to show what each item of service actually costs.

Henry McLeish (Labour, *Fire Central - Transport Spokesman*), opening the debate for the opposition, expressed concern about what this money is to be used for. "If the allocation was about providing more trains in Yorkshire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester, or more services, stations, railway stock or signalling, it would be something to debate." However, he added, "this report shows the price of privatisation, nothing more, nothing less.

"PTAs provide an opportunity to attempt public-private integration, to tackle congestion, and to address an integrated public transport network." He said the Government is willing to squander £250 million every year to pay for privatisation involving the passenger transport authorities.

Hugh Bayley (Lab, *York*) interjected to say that the £380 million payable to the PTAs was

three times the amount needed to save the York Carriage Works by building 100 new carriages for use on suburban railways.

Mr McLeish agreed, saying: "Ministers who always lecture the opposition on probity in public expenditure are about to spend £250 million on simply nothing." *John Gunnell* (Lab, *Morley and Leeds South*) pointed out that money is allocated to district councils in the form of a 'bolt-on' and they will have the choice whether to spend the money on railway services or hold on to it for other purposes.

Mr McLeish went on: "The Government will pay hand over fist to fatten up Railtrack and the leasing companies for privatisation and they will of course pay money to the train operation companies."

Mr McLeish asked for a cast-iron guarantee that the extra costs of the privatisation will be paid in the years beyond 95/96. He said the metropolitan authorities were being asked to spend money with no guarantee about the kind of railway system they will have. They did not know which operators would be franchised, what charges the leasing companies will impose and what charges Railtrack will impose. The transparency of the cash is also in doubt. A grant is a fixed sum that is paid to the PTAs and it can be spent. If it is subsumed into the revenue support grant settlement there is no guarantee that it will be delivered to the railways or debated on in Parliament.

Huge sums

Paul Tyler (Lib-Dem, *North Cornwall*) quoted increased charges to PTAs as a result of the change in arrangements: West Midlands - £35.6 million; West Yorkshire - £28.3 million; South Yorkshire - £12 million; Tyne and Wear - £3.9 million; Merseyside - £49.8 million; Greater Manchester - £48.1 million. "These are huge sums." He announced that, as a result of the whole system of apportioning grant to the public transport system in Greater Manchester, all

three political parties represented on the PTA have agreed to sever their links with British Rail and have pulled out of their section 20 agreement under the Transport Act 1968.

Mr Gunnell, mentioning his time as leader of the West Yorkshire Metropolitan Council and his efforts to develop new railway services, expressed his anxiety that additional costs arising as a result of privatisation would make it much more difficult for those exercising responsibility locally to bring about developments in services that the public want.

He went on to explain that at the moment PTEs had the power to set fares and specify participation in multi-modal ticketing systems, and wanted the minister to confirm that authorities would continue to hold those powers in the future.

Money-go-round

Glenda Jackson (Lab, *Hampstead and Highgate*) explained the new regime thus: "The PSO grant is paid to the franchise director who pays it to train operators in the form of track subsidy. They pass it on to Railtrack which, because it is still nationalised, returns it to the Treasury.

"That is the money-go-round, as *Keith Hill* (Lab, *Streatham*) so accurately called it; and so, this money has not at present been lost to the taxpayer. However if and when Railtrack is sold off, all this money will not be paid back, as some of it will go to shareholders, the shortfall being made up from increased fares, reduced services, or increased council tax."

Ms Jackson gave examples where increased track charges had threatened services, including Watford Junction to St Albans Abbey and Leeds to Bradford InterCity trains.

She cited a recent opinion poll showing 55% of Conservative party supporters opposing rail privatisation, one in six even stating they would abandon the party on this issue alone.

Mr Watts, winding up for the Government, refuted all charges. He said costs had not risen, they were now just more transparent! He maintained that the cost of running, say, the St Albans branch had previously been hidden by the general taxpayer whereas now they will be paid for by the user.

When challenged by Mr McLeish on this point, Mr Watts replied that the track access costs for example were, he supposed, being attributed to other operating units within BR. The purpose of

the restructuring was to ensure transparency so that costs could be identified and attributed where they belong. In answer to a further charge that the extra £250 million now required could not possibly have been hidden within BR's accounts, Mr Watts maintained they had always been there and that the new method of accounting had enabled them to be identified.

In reply to the anxiety among Opposition members that money meant for the railway might not be spent on railway services, the Minister made the extraordinary assertion that as the Metropolitan Authorities were all in Labour hands it would be up to the 'brethren' to take the matter up among themselves!

Mr Watts said that as track and leasing charges had now been 'settled', a steady state had been achieved and that the amount of funding would be adequate for the services provided. However, "we have also agreed that, if significant additional costs arise and are identified, we shall take steps to make good the shortfall." On the question of profits for Railtrack shareholders, the Minister said the Rail Regulator had insisted on a track access charging regime to ensure that Railtrack could fund about £600 million for reinvestment. As to Manchester PTE withdrawal, Mr Watts asserted: "If Manchester thinks it can take its ball away, it will quickly find that it does not own the ball; it is my ball and I shall take it away and give it to the franchising director."

Franchises

In a debate in the Lords on 17 July, questioned variously by Lord Peyton of Yeovil, Lord Clinton-Davis, Lord Marsh and Lord Monkswell concerning the refusal of the franchising director to allow British Rail to bid for any of the franchises, *Viscount Goschen* (Conservative Transport Spokesman in the Lords) maintained that Ministers were specifically excluded from instructing the franchising director on whether or not BR could bid for franchises. He suggested that the franchise director would make comparisons between the bids and the cost of BR continuing to run the service, but that the results would not be published as they would be commercially sensitive. Lord Monkswell wondered why in that case ITV franchises were allocated on an open bid basis. Lords Clinton-Davis and Marsh maintained that the franchise director was denying the will of



WATCH



Parliament by blocking franchise applications that BR had made and that the public had a right to know whether the bids of those allocated franchises were better, worse, more expensive or cheaper than those which would have been made if the Government had taken the advice of this House and allowed BR at least to have its bid considered.

Baroness Thomas of Walliswood doubted that the OPRAF staff were competent to understand the value of the different bids in any case. They did not seem to understand the importance of a network approach and when asked about this they referred to the local authorities to provide details as to what parts of the network and which connecting stations were the most important.

Timetable trouble

The failings of Railtrack's Timetable were highlighted by the then Shadow Transport Secretary *Michael Meacher* in a debate on privatisation on 18 October. He said it had so many errors it was having to be reprinted and added: "I understand that trains were scheduled to collide on the route from Waterloo to Exeter.

"The Tories said that privatisation would reduce bureaucracy. In fact the increase in bureaucracy will be stifling. According to Railtrack's legal advisers, for every station used by more than one of the 25 train operating companies, there will have to be a 42-page lease and a 196-page lateral contract and a 31-page joint access agreement. All the documents have to be customised and there are 2,500 stations.

"The hideous complexities of this crackpot privatisation structure are mainly responsible for the continually missed deadlines and abandoned targets."

The previous Secretary of State had said privatisation would "provide even greater scope for private capital to be injected into better facilities."

But Mr Meacher said: "Since privatisation was announced in 1992, investment in the network has halved in real terms. In fact privatisation has generated the biggest dearth of investment in the history of the industry.

"Last year, for the first time since the war, there was not a single order for new rolling stock. The previous Secretary of State said last week: 'My job is to show, before the next election, that our vision is the right one.' He certainly has a hard job.

"Perhaps he could make a start on his task by trying to persuade the workers at ABB at York, the most efficient skilled carriage builders in Europe, that his vision is the right one when it is the Government-induced investment blight arising from privatisation that has just destroyed 750 of their jobs." Mr Meacher added:

"Labour wants not merely a publicly owned railway but a much better railway. We want a rail renaissance in this country. "Our objective is a high-speed rail link, not merely from the Channel Tunnel to London – under this Government that is 10 years too late – but up through the heart of Britain to the north of England and Scotland, with high-speed connections to the east and west of England and to Wales."

"Our objective is to transfer freight from road to rail by creating a piggyback freight network with freight terminals in all major urban and industrial areas.

"We shall develop a national public transport information network integrating rail and light rail with bus services wherever feasible.

"At the heart of our policy is the integrated transport strategy that this nation desperately needs. Such a strategy is incompatible with the privatisation and break-up of our railways.

"The sooner this absurd privatisation is swept away into the dustbin of history, the better for the nation."

Obligations

Andrew MacKinlay (Lab, Thurrock) asked what would happen if a franchiser 'rats' on his obligations. "I want an undertaking from the Secretary of State that if there is any failure – any renegeing on the franchise – that part of the service will be brought back into the public service immediately," he said.

Sir George Young, Secretary of State for Transport, responded: "It would revert to the franchising director, to the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising. If the person with the franchise for that seven years renegeed on his obligations, the franchising director would have to re-let the franchise."

Sir George said over the last 45 years, traffic had dropped on the railways and the "monolithic monopoly failed the passenger". But *Terry Lewis* (Lab, Worsley) asked: "Does the Minister not think that the concentration of

public investment in roads during that period had something to do with it?" Sir George said no.

Gwyneth Dunwoody (Lab, Crewe and Nantwich) said Sir George's speech had been written presumably by the same people who wrote the speeches for his six predecessors.

"The Secretary of State, like most of his predecessors, is hoping that, with any luck, he will not be in his job long, so it will not matter to him what happens when the Government's policy comes home to roost in a big way.

"Railway men and women have been treated with open contempt. They are forbidden to speak openly about the problems that arise in their daily jobs. Many of them have been told they are no longer useful.

Investment

"Executives who boast they do not understand the system are brought in to organise, and the results are seen from day to day. "There is going to be a political catastrophe for the Government that will make their previous idiocies look like a beginner's effort."

John Heppell (Lab, Nottingham East) said Major General Lennox Napier (the retiring chairman of the Central Rail Users Consultative Committee) had said rail investment has never been lower for 20 years. Until 1993, it was running at around £1 billion per year, but it is now down to £400 million.

General Napier had said that infrastructure was deteriorating and that up to 85% of delays were caused by infrastructure failures such as poor signals. He said there were 2,600 fewer coaches than there were six years ago.

Mr Heppell said he feared the loss of an entire industry (rolling stock makers) because of the Government's short-sighted view. *Peter Luff* (Con, Worcester) insisted that rail passengers now had a guarantee about rail services. He added: "I believe there is a guarantee on the sleeper services to Cornwall."

Paul Tyler (Lib-Dem, Cornwall North) intervened to enlighten Mr Luff.

"The service from the West Country to Scotland, far from being guaranteed, has actually been removed!" he said.

Mr Luff responded: "I was referring to the service between London and the West Country." *Hugh Bayley* (Lab, York) highlighted the Hesketh report on signalling, commissioned after the Clapham disaster, and kept secret until now.

It listed 95 renewal schemes in order of priority and set a 'latest start date.' Thirteen schemes, estimated to cost about £170 million, had 'latest start dates' in 1993, 1994 and 1995.

He said Railtrack chief executive John Edmonds had misled the Commons Transport Select Committee by giving the impression they did not need to worry about the Hesketh report. "One finds that three quarters of Hesketh's top 13 schemes, which should have been started this year, are running behind schedule or have simply been shelved altogether by the Government," said Mr Bayley.

"Page after page, the Hesketh report reveals glaring faults with signalling systems."

Henry McLeish said: "Ministers, aided and abetted by Sir Robert Horton of Railtrack, are guilty on a number of counts. The first is a gross misuse of taxpayers' money. By any objective analysis, something like £1 billion has been spent on the privatisation process at a time when the industry is suffering from chronic under-investment. That simply cannot be right. "We are also witnessing the mindless destruction of the rail network."

Defeat

Labour's motion calling on the Government to abandon the rail sell-off and switch expenditure from promoting the dogma of privatisation to improving a vital public service based on renewal of rolling stock, upgrading of lines and higher standards for passengers was defeated by 259 votes to 288.

Five days later, *Clare Short* made her debut as Shadow Transport Secretary (replacing Mr Meacher) when she told the House: "I warn anyone contemplating bidding for any part of the rail network that there will be no gray train for fat cats out of this one – and that Labour intends that the rail system should remain in public ownership."

It's a full-time job

Looking after the interests of rail users and trying to promote rail development has become almost a full-time job for many volunteer officers of RDS.

So the society is moving towards the appointment of a full-time officer, as agreed at the 1995 AGM. That means we need to increase our income.

To do this, we must first recruit more members. We want 4,000 by May, so we need to attract 100 new members a month.

Wessex and Wales have already done well on this front. Individual members can do their bit, however, by approaching friends and relatives, colleagues and acquaintances. A selection of leaflets can be obtained from Rowland Dale (address below).

We also plan to put details of RDS and its activities on the Internet in 1996 and to try some direct mailing experiments.

The National Executive has decided to increase the subscription for the first time in years. From 1 January it will be £12 for ordinary members, voluntary bodies and parish councils; £6 for unwaged, student and retired members. Other rates will be unchanged. Compared with subscriptions to similar national bodies, RDS still gives good value for money.

We are exploring other ways of raising money, including the expansion of our monthly lottery. In due course, the society may also be reorganised into a limited company and a registered charity.

Tony Smale and Martin Ball are trying new sales lines while Peter Cannon's services in booking Eurostar and other Continental tickets provide the society with a modest but increasing commission.

Occasionally the society has benefited from legacies. Indeed, our first Rail Development Week in 1982 was largely funded out of £500 which a member left us in his will. If you do plan to leave any money to RDS in this way, it would be helpful if you could send a note to the General Secretary.

Asking the right questions?

The Department of Transport has commissioned consultants to find out just who is stirring up all the trouble over rail privatisation. They have already contacted RDS chairman Steve Wilkinson who agreed to send them information about RDS.



Green Line *This is one of the latest stations to open on Britain's rail network - Sutton Parkway, shown here under construction. Robin Hood line trains began running from Nottingham to Sutton Parkway and Mansfield last month. RDS members enjoyed a champagne breakfast on one train on the 29 November Fun Day. To celebrate the reopening, the next RDS national annual general meeting will be at Mansfield, on Saturday 4 May in the Queensway Suite, Cooperative House, Mansfield, starting at 1100. Guest speaker will be David MacIntosh of Regional Railways Central, one of the prime movers of this scheme. He will have ideas how to get the next stage of the Robin Hood scheme - to Worksop - opened quickly. Meanwhile another major rail scheme was completed in October - the Sheffield Supertram scheme.*

Picture: Julian Langston

Missing fares

Thank you to over 300 members who completed questionnaires during the autumn. The initial impression is that staffing cuts are losing lots of revenue for the railways. Our passenger committee is working on a full analysis and will issue a report shortly.

Cycle ride 1996

Rob Archer plans to organise another ride next year, possibly in the West Midlands. This year's ride raised over £300 for the Society's Rail Defence Fund, as well as for other causes, and helped publicise the Dereham reopening campaign. If you

would be interested in taking part in a 1996 ride, or have ideas for publicising it, please contact Rob as soon as possible at 62 Checker Street, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE30 5AS. It would also be helpful to know when you could do a ride. The rides are usually on a Saturday in June.

Another job offer

Rob Archer has also been active in writing to train operating companies about the policies for the carriage of cycles on trains but family commitments mean he wishes to hand over this task to someone else. If any member is interested, would they please contact Rob (address above).

Eurostar travel

We hope to run special Eurostar trips from Waterloo to Ashford to Lille in January, to celebrate the opening of Ashford International station on 8 January 1996.

Peter Cannon also reports that there is still space available on the Spring 1996 trips to Lyon and Germany.

Peter can arrange rail travel from your local rail station to Europe by Eurostar, or rail/sea. For full details of above trips or European rail enquiries, send an sae to Peter Cannon, 6 Garrett Crescent, Leiston, Suffolk IP16 4LB. Tel 01728 830706 (evening) 01473 213000 (day). Fax 01473 214000.

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