



Railway Development NEWS

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members

Railway Development Society BM-RDS London WC1V 6XX Telephone 01-405 0463

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All these, and many more views, news and reports
in this new-format quarterly journal from RDS.

November 1979

YOUR SUBSCRIPTION: the Chairman explains.

The Society's National Committee considered the question of subscriptions at their September meeting, and reluctantly decided that increases were inevitable in these days of inflation. They will take effect from 1 January 1980, and full details are contained in the Members-Only Supplement to Railway Development News.

The rates for pensioners and students have been kept as low as possible, but it is hoped that those who can will add a donation to the basic subscription. In any case, I appeal to all members to add a donation to their subscription if at all possible, so that the Society can expand its activities in many ways.

At present, many committee members are helping the Society by not charging expenses incurred on Society work: some alleviation of this situation is desirable.

Fears have been expressed that we could lose members because of these increased subscription rates, but I am sure that— as the increase is only 2p per week for an ordinary member— no-one will resign and in fact everyone will remain loyal and do all possible to recruit new members. More members will enable us to hold subscriptions down in the future.

Much work has been done since the RDS was formed in October 1978 from the previous Societies. Not all of our efforts can be publicized because of their "off-the-record" nature with people of influence, and I hope members will realise this.

R. V. BANKS
Hon. Chairman

ELECTRIFICATION A WINNER but THUMBS DOWN FOR ROAD/RAIL TRANSFER

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In our inaugural issue, last October, we stressed the key role of electrification to the future of B.R. Now a year on with a new Government the subject is once more in the news with the publication of the joint B.R./M.o T. Study*. Four different notional options have again been considered but the major conclusion is that the greater the input the greater the benefits.

Ranging from £230m. to £750m. by the end of the century the proposals could save B.R. and the nation up to £34m. a year. At 1978 prices the largest option - to electrify 5,810 miles (more than double the present amount) would save £12m. p.a. whereas the lowest (a mere 3,450 miles or 31% of the network) would save only £3m. p.a. What boosts these figures (to £34m.) are future likely energy costs, bearing in mind the events of the last year.

Under option 2 870 more miles would be electrified equivalent to ECML, St.Pancras - Sheffield - Leeds, York - Birmingham, Edinburgh - Glasgow and Edinburgh - Carstairs.

Option 5 on the other hand would cost £491m. but achieve the highest cost savings of £47m. p.a. With over 50% of the system electrified its 5,810 route miles would extend to Plymouth and Penzance, Crewe to Holyhead, Edinburgh to Aberdeen and Doncaster to Hull. It is in fact the savings that would accrue to B.R. in reduced costs of rolling stock with electric traction that reduces the figures of £230m. and £750m. to £160m. and £500m. respectively. On top of this it has always been found that electrification produces additional revenue arising from improved speed, quality and reliability of services which must surely give added weight to its implementation.

Both Sir Peter Parker (B.R.Chairman) and Norman Fowler, the new Minister of Transport, have waxed optimistic about the outcome of the final report, due early next year, but whilst the Minister saw encouraging signs that a case for further electrification would be demonstrated he stressed that it was important that a project which involved a very large commitment of resources should be thoroughly analysed. The Society's Strategy Committee will be studying the report* and no doubt sending its observations to the Minister.

Turning to the freight scene whilst Mr Fowler has now set a time limit for the fitting of Tachographs in all lorries in accordance with E.E.C.Regulations, the Department of Transport has come out strongly against a plan aimed at transferring heavy freight from road to rail even though it would be funded by massive subsidies from the E.E.C.

* "Review of main line electrification" Interim Report, HMSO. £1.75

Using a German principle of "Piggyback" trains, lorries would be transported all over Europe by rail leaving only short road journeys to and from the nearest rail-head. Details of the plan, contained in a paper produced by the E.E.C. Transport Directorate have already been shown to European railways and selected road haulage companies and it will probably be debated in the European Parliament.

Whilst the reactions from the road lobby were predictable - The B.R.F. describing it as "Impracticable and requiring operators to re-design many of their lorries - B.R. have also given it a rather cool reception, possibly in view of the large amounts of money which have recently been poured into development of Freightliners. More particularly however, extensive engineering works would be required to cope with the "European Gauge" trains although a spokesman for B.R. said things would be radically different if a Channel Tunnel were built. In any event this would not likely to be operating until the late 1980s. (All the more reason to make an early start on it. Ed.)

THE NORTH AMERICAN SCENE - AMTRAK & VIA

Looking at both Europe and America there appears to be a general trend towards cutbacks in rail passenger services, some obvious, others more subtle. Having dealt, in our last issue, with the situation in the U.K. it will be useful to see how railroads are faring in North America, particularly in the light of the energy crisis which seems to be hitting harder than in Europe, possibly because of North Sea Oil.

As reported in our January issue, plans were produced last year by the U.S. Dept. of Transportation to cut the AMTRAK system of federally funded passenger services from 27,000 to 19,000 miles. In the meantime there has been another energy crunch and the architect of the plan, Brock Adams, was one of the casualties in President Carter's recent shake-up of the Administration. Nevertheless it now seems that the Adams Plan is likely to go ahead largely as intended, despite a bid both in the Senate and the House of Representatives to block the measures to implement it.

These took the form of an amendment, proposed by Sen. Frank Church, to Senate Bill 712, calling for retention of the present AMTRAK system for another year so that the AMTRAK management could study ridership in the light of the energy crisis. At the same time Congressmen Wyche Fowler and Albert Gore tabled a similar amendment in the House of Representatives which would have increased the authorisation of operating subsidies by \$131m. to \$718m. for FY 1980 to AMTRAK and for capital funds by \$51m. to \$241m. However to quote the June issue of the magazine of NARP * "Faced with skyrocketing train ridership,

*National Association of Railroad Passengers.

scolding criticism from the press and the alarming prospect that the Senate would vote to save the whole system D.o T. came up with a compromise plan adding \$65m. to the appropriation for FY 1980 which would have the effect of saving some of the threatened services."

In the event, due to the threat of a Presidential veto (a quirk of the American Constitution) by Acting Sec. of Transportation W.G. Claytor, the Gore-Fowler Amendment was defeated in the House on 24th July and the amended scheme (H.R. 3996) will presumably go ahead as planned. All concerned are, however, convinced that there will be more forthcoming support for AMTRAK in view of the energy situation and the giant increase in ridership, which in April literally exploded by 16% over the previous year, so much so that AMTRAK President, Alan Boyd, put a block on the sale of 63 older passenger cars which needed minimal refurbishing as they might be required to run the entire system for another year.

Now there is talk of the State of Kentucky joining California and Texas in lawsuits against AMTRAK, the Sec. of Transportation and others for failing to file a full, adequate and complete environmental impact statement before putting forward the proposed cuts. Whatever the outcome it seems that citizens of some states of the Union are not going to let their remaining trains be swept away without a fight.

Turning to the Canadian scene the position is not all that different. Faced with a situation not dissimilar to that in the U.S.A. the Federal Government set up in the last year or so a Crown Corporation known as VIA RAIL CANADA to take over the passenger operations of both CN & CP. Is this an attempt to revitalise the Canadian rail system or, as some sceptics think a subtle train-cutting device concocted by a traditionally anti-rail Ministry of Transport, described by one commentator as "so entangled in its out-dated love affair with jets and airports that it cannot comprehend the energy, environmental and social policy of a modernised rail passenger system?"

If recent events are anything to go by there is evidence to support the latter view with nationwide hearings by the Canadian Transport Commission into the discontinuance of rail services. One example is quoted by the magazine "Trans-Action" * in the following terms:-

"The commitment of VIA Rail management to a truly national passenger rail system was left open to serious question following recent hearings of the CTC's Railway Transport Committee in Alberta and Saskatchewan. At stake were the ex-CP Edmonton - Red Deer - Calgary service and the ex-CN Regina - Saskatoon -

* Newsletter issued for members of Transport 2000 Canada.

Prince Albert train, serving respectively the most important city-pairs within each of the two provinces. Their abandonment would leave all of western Canada's major cities without any inter-city rail passenger service save that provided - inadequately at best - on the two transcontinental routes. Apart from that, only a handful of local and remote passenger-carrying trains would remain in the entire vast territory west of the Great Lakes. Just when the passenger train's time seems to have come, most travellers in the western half of the country would be abandoned to the automobile, airplane and bus."

During similar hearings in 1976 and 1977, however, the CTC came out in favour of the retention and improvement of long-distance trains on both CN and CP lines between Winnipeg and Vancouver despite a "Beeching" type attitude at the MoT to what it saw as "Unnecessary duplication" of a service through both Edmonton and Calgary, Regina and Saskatoon. Nevertheless the overall picture does not encourage hopes for the future of Canadian rail passenger services.

I am indebted to material supplied by Hank DiVenuto, (Editor of "Track 4", Georgia), NARP, Canadian Forum and Transport 2000 Canada. Responsibility for any errors in compiling the material, however, is mine and mine alone. ED)

A NEW STRATEGY FOR DMU REPLACEMENT

One of the many remarkable products of the British Rail Research Dept. is a two-axle underframe with the potential for 90 mph operation. Rather less remarkable is the Leyland Experimental Vehicle, formed from this underframe and road bus body components. Would such a bus on rails stand comparison with APT, HST, or Mk.III coaches, or contrast sufficiently with the private car and bus?

An entirely different approach to DMU replacement is the Class 210 DEMU. This is luxurious, but heavy, complex and expensive. For rural branches the cost of this unit would be excessive and on suburban routes electrification will probably remove the need for an advanced diesel unit in the not too distant future.

Why not combine a level of comfort similar to that of the Class 210 with the mechanical simplicity of the railbus? This vehicle would consist of the 90 mph two-axle underframe, with underfloor engine and mechanical transmission but a body composed of standard railway components such as those of the Mk. III coach or Class 313 EMU. The use of standard railway components simplifies maintenance and avoids the problem of putting toilets, railway cab, guard's facilities and through corridor into a body not designed for such things. One of the problems of underfloor engines, high maintenance cost caused

by track dust and flying ballast, could be avoided by protecting the engine with a cover similar to the underfloor equipment cover used on Mk.III coaches. Performance similar to the Class 210 can be obtained by the use of one bus engine per railbus vehicle, as the power/weight ratios are similar.

If the diesel version of such a vehicle proved successful, perhaps an electric version might be developed, to reduce energy consumption, track wear and capital cost and increase acceleration for a given power supply. The advanced two axle chassis, itself a spin-off from APT research, may even prove as important as the APT itself!

C.Nather

Y ROADS SHOULD BE CONVERTED INTO RAILWAYS

It is commonly known that the oil situation is becoming worse daily, that bus services in particular are becoming unreliable, and that as soon as in possibly 10 years time there will be a real oil crisis when a gallon of petrol could cost more than £5 or even be unobtainable. Sheikh Yamani means what he says in threatening not to help the Western world any more if the latter's use of oil is not restrained. He has also warned of the threat to our supplies by terrorist action against vital installations in the Middle East. Yet we still go on building even more motorways, and trying to close more railways. I very much fear that we will learn the hard way when oil is really scarce, unless we seriously adopt some positive solutions as soon as practicable.

We must first stop building any more roads, and in particular motorways, and insist that any railways under the threat of closure are reprieved. We must next think in terms of coal and electricity instead of oil. One may ask "What is going to happen to the road construction industry?" The answer is quite simple: transfer all the resources and manpower into building and electrifying railways.

We must start by electrifying the remaining 80% of the present railway system, to provide a faster, smoother, and more efficient service, to bypass the present diesel fuel problem. Let us not forget that there is enough coal to last for at least 300 years, i.e. several generations. This process would obviously take some years and considerable capital expenditure to complete but should be much cheaper than continuing with useless roadbuilding projects. After all, without petrol, the roads would soon become useless.

The next stage is to start turning roads into railways in earnest. To take 2 examples: The M20 converted into a railway would provide a vital rail link between London and the ports when a Channel Tunnel has been built, perhaps even allowing some land to be given back to the farmers.

The M1 could also be transformed into a railway, to provide a valuable rail link between London and the North of England by the time the railways become overstressed with extra demand in the 1990s and the M1 itself becomes obsolete, when the oil shortage really begins to bite. I should like to see the reinstatement of a comprehensive railway network over the whole of Great Britain, better even than it was before the days of Dr Beeching. We should therefore be prepared to prevent any further track on lines which have been closed from being torn up, and to reinstate those services as they used to exist. The whole motorway system should eventually be transformed into railways and/or agricultural land, as the former simply won't be needed.

The money to finance all this change can be raised by the following means: tolls on all motorways, until they are closed for transfer into rail, and tolls into all city centres with a population of over 500,000. This system of tolls would of course be bitterly resented and resisted by ardent road users, particularly lorry drivers and road haulage firms, who would claim that the cost to their customers would be increased quite unjustifiably, but they too would eventually have to appreciate the seriousness of the oil situation. Obviously then oil does finally run out, lorries would have to be given first consideration in providing deliveries, but only to make short trips to their local destinations; the vast bulk of the journey being made by rail.

To return to the implementation of tolls in more detail, those on motorways should be charged at say 5p. per mile for all vehicles, those for journeys into city centres to be charged at least £1 per journey. Buses and coaches should of course be exempted from any tolls. The benefits of such a system should be easy to appreciate: people who had to use their cars would be forced to share them much more than they do now, much more freight would travel by rail, and the majority of people would travel by public transport. The buses in cities like London would be able to move much more freely and efficiently than before as they would not be suffering the intolerable traffic congestion which they do now.

The money raised from such a system of tolls should be sufficient to enable fares on buses and trains to be reduced considerably, which would itself ensure that they no longer travelled empty. Staff operating buses and trains should be made a special case as far as pay is concerned, which would go a long way towards eliminating staff shortages. The money raised from tolls should also enable the frequency of bus and rail services to be increased, thus making the services more attractive.

In conclusion, opponents of my article will say that electric and battery cars should be encouraged, and that

oil should be extracted from coal. With this I cannot agree. The only vehicles which should run from batteries and electricity would be buses, trains and other essential services. Once oil has run out cars would no longer have any function, and in any case, battery cars could only be sold at prohibitive prices. I cannot see the sense in the extraction of oil from coal. This should be strongly resisted by all environmentalists as providing no solution to our energy problems, just making them worse, as coal so used would not be available for vital electricity production.

Jonathan Servian

It is hoped that this article will stimulate new ideas. Members are invited to send any comments/views etc., to the Editor which may be considered for publication (space permitting) in the next or a subsequent issue of R.D.N.

(All unsigned articles are produced by the Editorial Board. Other material is welcome from members and others but does not necessarily represent the views of the Board or the Society) See p.2 for address for the submission of material.

R.D.S. DIARY

NOVEMBER - 24th - Meeting organised by the Yorkshire and Cleveland Branch in conjunction with the National Council on Inland Transport to consider the threat to the Woodhead line.

Venue Sheffield Polytechnic - early afternoon
Further details from:- K.Meyer, 5, Pembridge Crescent,
London W11 3DT OR D.J.Bradbury, 59, Dore Road,
Dore, Sheffield

DECEMBER - 1st - One more special train has been added to those organised by the East Anglian Branch and its associated Rail Users Groups. This will be a 4-car DMU to provide a Christmas Shoppers' special from Dereham to Norwich. Further details from:- T.J.Garrod,
15, Clapham Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1RQ

15th - On this day the East Norfolk Travellers' Association hopes to fill an 11 coach hauled train from Yarmouth to London attracting a sizeable number of people who have not been on a train for some years (Mr Garrod)

JANUARY 1980 - 19th - The Annual General Meeting of the East Anglian Branch will take place at Ipswich Town Hall starting at 2.0.p.m. After the normal business we shall be pleased to welcome as guest speaker the B.R. Div. Manager, Mr Gordon Clarke, who will speak on "Prospects and Problems for B.R. in the 1980s" (Mr Garrod)

--- NATIONAL A.G.M. --- BRISTOL --- 26th APRIL ---
FULL DETAILS WILL BE ENCLOSED WITH THE NEXT ISSUE.

REPORTS FROM BRANCHES AND AREAS

(This section which is based principally on information provided by branch secretaries and area representatives, tells what the Railway Development Society is doing throughout the United Kingdom, as well as giving news and views of railway happenings.)

BRANCHESLONDON & HOME COUNTIES

An appeal was made for more members to join RDS by Vice-President, Robert Aickman, when he took the chair at the Branch's first Annual General Meeting on 4th October. The Inland Waterways Association, which he founded, now has 15,000 members and the benefit of a part-time paid secretary but it was more difficult - he added - to start a mass movement today. One of the biggest mistakes he ever made - he admitted - was at the inaugural meeting of RDA in 1951, by suggesting that for every one person interested in canals there were 100 interested in railways. Driving one's own boat appealed to the "engine driver complex" but trains were different as they "kept on the rails" and time had proved him to be wrong.

On the London front he referred to the cleaning of St. Pancras station, undoubtedly influenced by the eminence of its architect (Sir Gilbert Scott of Albert Memorial fame). Next door was to be constructed the new British Library - on the site of the former Somers Town goods depot - but he echoed the sentiments of Dr Frank Tomlins (author of last year's RDA Channel Tunnel Report) in castigating the Govt. for not allowing provision to be made for a possible east/west railway route (as suggested therein) and it was unanimously agreed to make strong representations on this point.

On the railway scene generally he criticised; unpunctuality on inter-city trains and the trend towards bus shelters in the design of stations. He also made a scathing attack on the Underground where reduced services, lack of staff or some minor mishap were all typical of modern Britain. There were long queues at booking offices, long waits for trains, late ones could not be depended on to run and there was graffiti everywhere. "What sort of transport system is that" - "It was dangerous at night, because of muggings; there were no public lavatories and fares were the highest in Europe." One reason, he suggested, for the muggings and vandalism, was the long waits for trains. "Boredom puts ideas into people's heads."

He ended with an appeal for quality adding that it was disastrous for Branch Chairman, Charles Rowe, to have to regret the singling of the Ashford - Hastings line by saying "we must be content that they do not intend to close it altogether" "Unless we start calling for quality there will be nothing to save!"

Mr Rowe, in his address, said that whilst there had been fewer closures in the past year than in the last 25, train cancellations were a serious blot and should be stemmed. HSTs, whilst popular were all very well but what about new DMUs for cross-country services. In the coming year the branch would be watching closely the proposals for the re-development of Liverpool Street, hoped to hold a film show and run a railtour to the Isle of Grain in the Spring. In considering the area of the branch it was suggested that "London & South East" might be more appropriate.

The Society has recently published a "North Herts Rail Guide" - an attractive four-page leaflet giving train information to the residents of Letchworth, Hitchin and Stevenage. It is being distributed via local libraries and the College of Further Education by local member Mr M. Hadley and has been financed partly by the proceeds of an East Anglian Branch sponsored train ride which altogether raised over £70.

MIDLANDS

Bromsgrove - On 1st October Bromsgrove trains were doubled to provide 10 to Birmingham and 8 back - mostly by extending the all-station Longbridge service. Buses connect with the trains at Bromsgrove where free car parking is also provided. Hereford & Worcester C.C. are meeting the £60,000 cost of the 6 month experiment and a green and brown timetable leaflet has been issued. Much credit for this must go to Mr Ron Swift of the Bromsgrove Passenger Action Committee.

Cradley Clean-up - Coincidental with RDS enquiries the WNPTE has announced that the extremely dilapidated Cradley station on the Birmingham - Stourbridge line is to be modernised at a cost of £500,000. The Branch have also suggested some improvements to the scheme for the benefit of users.

Kingsbury - RDS is giving active support to residents of Kingsbury; the Parish Council and the District Council for opening of a new station on the Tamworth - Birmingham line. The existing peak hour local trains passing this village of 6,500 could usefully serve the heavy commuter flows into Birmingham; the shopper and social needs and cater for visitors to the nearby 262 acre Kingsbury Country Park. Warwick. C.C. is being asked to approve the £100,000 needed for a station.

Walsall line - On 13th September the 17.15 EMU from New Street to Walsall train carried an official party including Cllr. Dr Peris Jones, Chairman of the County Transport Committee, Dep. Chairman Cllr. Kevin Qualters; Cllr. F. Hithcock of Walsall and Mr K. Sutton, PTE Director of Operations all with the aim of studying the rush hour traffic.

B.R. to Bewdley - On Saturdays in August B.R. ran 5 return shuttles between Kidderminster (BR) and Bewdley (SVR). The attraction of the ancient riverside town and the steam trains from Bewdley to Bridgnorth generated much usage of the 3 car DMUs which were timed to connect with the hourly local trains. Approximately 700 passengers travelled to Bewdley on the first day of operation.

New W.M. Travel tickets - In September WMPTC announced a new family ticket which will be available next year offering unlimited travel on BR; Midland Red; and WM. buses within the Metropolitan County except at peak times. For £2.25 two adults & two children OR one adult and 4 children will be able to travel the West Midlands for less than the price of 2 gallons of petrol. Also starting on 7th Oct. a 13 week WM Travelcard became available. The bus + 1 rail line card costs £27.50 (compared with £28.50 for the 3x4wk. card) and the all-line facility costs £35 (instead of £36 for the 3x4wk. card)

Channel Publicity - RDS and BR recently secured a notable headline and lead article of 4x4" publicity for the Channel Tunnel in the "Birmingham Post" (Building & Civil Engineering Supplement). The feature was followed by other articles on Newcastle's Metro.

Nuneaton - Leamington - In approving the Warwickshire Structure Plan the Sec. of State has asked for a fresh study on the re-opening of a passenger service between Nuneaton - Coventry - Leamington. In RDN 4 we reported that the CTCC had also suggested that this freight-only line should support at least a peak-hour DMU service and the Coventry - Leamington section now has a regular inter-city service.

Stourbridge - Snow Hill - The Branch continues to lobby for the full re-opening of Snow Hill station, not the least bearing in mind the inevitable and continuing delays being encountered by the half-hourly Stourbridge trains in and out of New Street due to main line occupation. Branch members have recently leafleted some 2,000 passengers with details of the Snow Hill scheme and RDS activities.

EAST ANGLIAN

Branch Meeting - In Norwich on 29th September the Branch Chairman, Mr S.F. Wilkinson gave an account of his visit, with two other members, to the B.R. Technical Centre at Derby, describing its activities as "taxpayers' money very well spent." Branch Secretary, Mr T.J. Garrod, also reported that the 5 trains chartered by RDS and its associated local groups (on freight-only lines) in the area had this year carried some 1,700 passengers, nearly all making return journeys. Contrary to what was sometimes claimed by the Society's detractors, rail "enthusiasts" made up only a small proportion of the passengers. The vast majority said Mr Garrod, were local people from places like -

Dereham, Wisbech and Swavesey, taking the opportunity to use their local railway for shopping and seaside trips. For example the special from Dereham to Lowestoft on Sunday 22nd July was a 6-car DMU packed with 330 local people who enjoyed an afternoon on the coast; whilst on 2nd September, a further 270 travelled to Lowestoft from Wisbech - the largest number so far to use one of our Wisbech trains.

Concern over Fakenham - has been expressed by the Branch at B.R.'s announcement - not unexpected - to withdraw freight facilities from the last 2½ miles of the line at the end of the year, as part of its effort to eliminate its overall freight deficit. However, the figures given to local unions (with whom we maintain close liaison) give little indication as to how much BR would save in operating costs; whilst the direct saving in maintenance appears to come to just over £2,600 over 10 years. Our concern is deepened by the revelation that it is proposed to send existing coal traffic to South Lynn by rail and transport it 20 miles on to Fakenham by road. Meanwhile, traffic to Fakenham has actually increased in recent months, with consignments of fertilizer coming over from Belgium via the train ferry.

The Branch Chairman has written to Sir Peter Parker about this affair. An editorial in the "Eastern Evening News" on 1st October has basically supported our view. Surely it is not right that Fakenham should lose its rail link in this way. How many other Fakenhams are there around the country.

Euro-M.P. to meet Branch - In addition to an expression of willingness by Mr A. Turner, Member for Suffolk to meet branch representatives to discuss transport matters affecting the E.E.C. at a more local level the Branch Secretary has been invited by Fornsett Parish Council to speak at a meeting as part of its campaign to get Fornsett station - on the main line between Norwich and Diss - re-opened.

The Society has for some years argued the case for selected station re-openings on the main line between Norwich, Ipswich and Colchester. Meanwhile, further along the line Bramford Station Action Committee is now analysing the weighty response to its recent questionnaire on the possibility of a re-opened station for this large village.

YORKSHIRE & CLEVELAND - At its meeting on 8th September the Society's National Committee agreed to the formation of a Branch in this area and it is hoped to hold an inaugural meeting in the near future.

West Yorkshire Structure Plan - The Inquiry for this opened at Ossett on 17th October and the Branch presented its observations at the hearing on Transport on 24th. The main points made by the Branch were; the disproportionate amount of money allocated to new roads (£69m.) compared

with public transport (£22m.); the need for the reopening of more stations and better bus/rail interchange at stations generally.

Concern at Bradford - Bradford, once one of the chief rail centres in the north of England, now has a train service little better than that of a rural town; its links with other parts of Yorkshire are poor and the position of inter-city services is little better, there being none at all to Birmingham and the Midlands.

Freight at Stourton - In view of the success of the freight depot at Stourton the Branch is pressing for the development of other freight depots on suitable sites in West Yorkshire.

Airedale again - The Inquiry into the proposed trunk road between Bailden and Kildwick, which was abandoned in 1976 after stormy scenes, seems likely to re-start in 1980. Meanwhile there is a possibility that efforts may be made to re-open the stations at Kildwick, Steeton and Cross-flats. When these were closed it was estimated that about 2,000 people had to transfer to road to get to work.

Dronfield re-opening - The prospects of re-opening this station in South Yorkshire which looked bright after the experiences of last winter now appear to be fading. Whilst Derbyshire County Council and N.E. Derbyshire D.C. have agreed to their share of the £125,000 needed. S.Yorks. PTE are said to be hard pressed to raise their share of £26,000. It seems that the PTE would prefer this sum to be spent on subsidising diversion of the Sheffield - Penistone - Huddersfield service via Barnsley. Even if re-opened the proposals for Dronfield have been greatly watered down, with only three trains to Sheffield in the morning and three back to Dronfield in the evening instead of the four an hour outlined in the S.Yorkshire Structure Plan.

Woodhead Route - A special meeting recently took place at Penistone, staged by the Pensitone Rail Action Group and chaired by the Mayor, to fight for the retention of the Woodhead line. As a result a special committee consisting of representatives from the Unions, Town and District Councils and local pressure groups + the local M.P. for Penistone, was formed to amass facts and figures about the line and through the efforts of local M.Ps to seek a meeting with Sir Peter Parker soon after Parliament re-assembles. Meanwhile some of the station buildings at Penistone have been demolished. Sheffield City Council, however, published, in June, a report strongly condemning the closure proposal.

(See also R.D.S. DIARY for further action on the line.)

AREAS

North East England

Although no part of Tyneside's Metro is expected to be operational before June 1980, a further stretch of B.R.'s North Tyneside line between West Monkseaton and Tynemouth was closed from 10th September, and is now served by rail link buses. In addition Felling and Pelaw on the South Shields line are to close on 4th November. Felling is eventually to re-open as a Metro station, but Pelaw is to be replaced by the new Heworth Metro station.

Faced with economic problems, Tyne & Wear Councillors are considering smaller trains, cheaper stations and smaller platforms. Energisation of the Metro power lines was planned for 15th October, after a check by Government Inspectors. Whilst M.Ps and Councillors discuss the cost of the system it is bringing a trade boom to Tyneside, with visits from a large number of foreign countries who are interested in developing rapid transit systems of their own.

North East T.U.C.C. Chairman, Michael Kellner, has expressed fears for the future of the line between Newcastle and Carlisle if B.R. is forced to tighten its belt. He criticised the way B.R. was forced to cut services as a result of the fuel crisis saying "We felt the cutback was appalling because there is no question that the most energy effective way of travelling is by rail." The Committee continues to press strongly for the restoration of passenger services between Consett, Birtley and Newcastle.

Sunderland South M.P, Mr Gordon Bagier, feels that the Newcastle - Sunderland - Middlesbrough line could suffer from Beeching style cuts unless cash is made available for new rolling stock, although Transport Minister, Norman Fowler denies any such threat.

South Tyneside Councillors are expected to join with Chamber of Trade officials to approach B.R. They are very annoyed that no Sunday service was provided between Newcastle and South Shields during the summer months as had been the practice for several years, and they were not consulted about the decision.

Wansbeck District Council is to be asked to make a survey into the demand for a re-introduction of rail services between Ashington and Newcastle. Members of North-umberland Transport Committee agreed that only if the demand was there should the matter be taken further.

Subject to improvements to the track and the removal of bottlenecks, B.R. has plans for Inter-city 125 services to be introduced on the line between Newcastle and the South West.

Merseyside and the North West

Liverpool Lime Street station saw the start, in August, of the 18 month "Operation Lime Street" Modernisation project. Initially work is going on to update track and signalling between the terminus and Edge Hill. Resiting and rebuilding of the Booking Office, Buffet and Enquiry Office, enlargement of the concourse and extension of some platforms to accommodate APTs will follow.

Cheshire County Council's "Transport Policies & Programme" for 1980/85 pays lip service to the development of rail for both passengers and freight but with no inclination to provide finance. Discussions with B.R. are envisaged to "develop a strategy for rail services in the County" but then later comes "... support for a higher level of local rail services could only be at the expense of reducing support to bus services... and consequently none of the limited resources for public transport have so far been directed towards railways."

The two planned extensions of Merseyside PTE electrified lines into Cheshire territory (Hough Green - Warrington and Hooton - Chester) are relegated to the "desirable longer term schemes" category awaiting a move by MPTE to electrify out to Hough Green and Hooton. There is a more positive attitude towards freight as the Council "wish to encourage the use of railways in preference to roads for the transport of freight... by encouraging (a) location of industry by rail lines; (b) supporting Sec.8 grant applications and (c) encouraging and supporting applications for assistance from the European Development Fund for rail facilities."

The Royal Seaforth Freightliner Depot (North Docks, Liverpool) is due to become operational early in November, thus restoring direct rail connection to the port of Liverpool after a lapse of many years.

Station car-park provision is moving ahead at last on the Rock Ferry/Hooton line with Bromborough's out to the car, Spital and the Hooton extension under active negotiation, and Bebington jumping the queue with work already started under a Manpower Services scheme.

Contact has been made with another recently-formed local rail users group the Bebington Rail Action Group (BRAG) whose aim is the promotion and improvement of the Rock Ferry - Hooton service. Secretary:- Mr R.B.Palmer, 7, Princes Avenue, Eastham, Wirral, L62 8BL.

In conjunction with the Ramblers Association BR provided two special trains from Preston and Blackpool to Salwick for a "Ride and Walk" public ramble on Thursday 26th July. The Countryside Commission has declared the Yorkshire "DalesRail" experiment to be a runaway success." Over the last three years special trains have been run between Leeds

and Carlisle, via Settle, on the first weekend of each month from April to October. Sir Peter Parker has hinted that B.R. might re-open Heyshaw station dependent upon the success of the shipping service.

The Chairman of Lancashire Highways Committee, Cllr. George Woods stated on 5th July that "dramatic changes could take place in Lancashire transport habits over the next 12 months with possible large swings away from traditional priority for the car and lorry, to the energy economical bus and train". Cllr. Woods is keen to see improvements to stations like Bamber Bridge and to re-open ones like Lostock Hall.

North and East Lincolnshire

The Grimsby - Louth Rail Group had hoped to be able to run a special train from their freight-only local line to Grimsby and then to York on 29th September but problems with stock availability meant that this had to be cancelled. However, a lot of local interest was generated, with good press coverage, and it is hoped to organise such a train next year.

The South Humberside Rail Users' Group continues to make steady progress and is planning to hold, jointly with RDS, a public meeting in Scunthorpe on 17th November. This is subject to confirmation and details will have been sent to local members by the time RDN is received.

In June B.R. posted notices of closure in respect of two of their services in the area. Firstly there was the withdrawal of the Sealink Humber Ferry service, linking Hull with New Holland. No specific date was mentioned as this is dependent upon opening of the Humber Bridge (the latest completion date for which is given as late 1980) so it may be some time before the proposal can be implemented.

Secondly there was the proposed closure of the short sections of track at New Holland itself, leaving only the Habrough - Barton curve in use. Also proposed here was the closure of New Holland Pier and New Holland Town Stations. Once again no date was mentioned, lest closure would take effect when the new Grimsby & Cleethorpes - Barton rail service is inaugurated upon opening of the Bridge.

Humberside County Council will link this with a Hull/Barton/Scunthorpe bus service. A new transport interchange is to be built at Barton, around the rail halt, and a new halt is to be built at New Holland, both projects to be financed by the County Council. BR has said it will spend about £50,000 on track improvements to the New Holland - Barton stretch, so that the line speed here can be raised to at least 40 mph. A basic hourly service will operate, with 5 min. connections at Barton on to the bus services to Hull and Scunthorpe. The new service as a whole is planned to come into operation on opening of the Humber Bridge.

South Lincolnshire

We welcome the South East Lincolnshire Travellers' Association as a corporate member of RDS. SELTA will be holding its AGM at the Parade Hotel, Skegness on 24th Nov. at 1.45 p.m. Overcrowding has been experienced on many trains on Summer Saturdays this year, even on 6- and 8-car DMUs. During the late Summer Bank Holiday, relief trains were put on for various excursions to Skegness; and as there was not enough sidings to stable them at Skegness they had to be run ECS back to Boston and then out to Skegness ECS again in the evening for the return journeys! This is further evidence of the perils of over-economising.

Severnside and South Wales

The Pencoed Community Council is currently preparing to circulate a questionnaire to every adult in Pencoed in a bid to determine the likely level of support for the re-introduction of a station on the Cardiff - Swansea main line. Councillors hope that the public will give them a massive thumbs-up as they attempt to bring pressure to bear on British Rail who have doubted the viability of the scheme. The former station was demolished in 1966 after serving the village and its inhabitants for over 100 years. On the same line near Llantrisant consideration is being given to a new station to be located at Miskin Crossing, some 2 miles distant. RDS members will be pleased to note that following a suggestion from the Freight Sub-Committee B.R. has now changed the motive power on the Port Talbot - Llanwern iron ore trains from 3 Class 37's to two Class 56's.

Members may be aware that the West Somerset Railway (WSR) opened a further section of track to passenger service in June this year when trains reached Bishops Lydeard from Minehead after an interval of 8 years since withdrawal of the former B.R. service. Unfortunately the NUR has consistently opposed the restoration of the Taunton - Minehead rail link on the grounds that it would cause the parallel bus service (Western National/218) to be withdrawn, thus making their members (who drive the buses in the area) redundant. The NUR has always maintained that it will "black" the running of WSR trains into Taunton station when that stage is reached. A through excursion from London which was planned to run on 17th June was "blacked" by the NUR on top of which BR ruled that the WSR would not be allowed to use the cross-over from the main line at Norton Fitzwarren.

A conference of all interested parties was held on 29th June. Although RDS was not allowed to give oral evidence, a written submission was made by our Chairman supporting the restoration of the rail link. Support also came from residents and businesses alike - of all the people contacted not one rejected the restoration of the rail link. The conclusion reached was that "any objection to the rail

link because of its effect on the 218 bus route seems entirely illogical" In fact there has been no drop in the no. of passengers using the bus and new passengers have been attracted to the WSR from outside the area! By early Aug. the WSR had carried 15% more passengers than at the same time in 1978 and been forced to double the number of buses which provide a shuttle service between Bishops Lydeard and Taunton on Saturdays. Top level talks are being held to resolve the NUR problems as well as to bring down the price B.R. is asking for linking WSR with the main line at Taunton.

Wessex

"The Wessex Line (Portsmouth - Bristol) is an important link in the Inter-city network". This was the most important message which came from an address given by Mr Earl, B.R. Area Manager at Southampton to an RDS campaign meeting in connection with its booklet "Your Local Trains in the 80s" held in Southampton on 15th September. Following the example of Norwich - Birmingham, BR have introduced loco-hauled stock and speeded up journey times by cutting out the intermediate stops and it is paying off! The journey time between Southampton and Bristol is now competitive with that by car and he was hopeful of an hourly service in the next year or two.

Vincent Christie (RDS National Committee member and one of the authors of the book) stressed the need to continue pressing for investment in new DMUs. He was supported by Jon Honeysett (a local member and contributor to the book) who drew attention to the poor state of the diesel units operating the Bristol - Weymouth (via Westbury) service. An urgent decision was needed on replacement of rolling stock for this line in order to avoid possible threat of closure. On a more positive note, Mr Earl was hopeful of electrification from Southampton to Portsmouth and 2 HSTs per day operating through from Southampton to Glasgow by the mid-1980s. To sum up, a very successful meeting which attracted good press and local radio coverage thanks to the efforts of our hard working representative Pete Madsen.

Oxford

The Cotswold Line Promotion Group are urging the re-opening of the still intact Honeybourne station not least to cater for the recent and future housing developments as well as offering an intermediate stop on the 15 mile Moreton - Evesham line. It could also serve a possible Stratford-upon-Avon - Evesham occasional service. Further up the line BR has been persuaded to stop a London train at Pershore on Saturdays at 9.10. This facility started on 2nd June and has been well used. The station has been cleaned up and publicity leaflets circulated in the village. A grateful Pershore Parish Council have awarded £50 to CLPG.

RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT NEWS

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EDITORIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

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