

# Oily future for UK rail network

Railway electrification has slipped off the agenda in Britain thanks to the break-up of the network among operators who would rather invest in cheap and cheerful diesel trains.

Railtrack has also lost interest in it, possibly because of the difficulties of finding funding for total route modernisation – and justifying it to shareholders keen to see profits increase in the short term.

An RDS delegation raised the issue with Railtrack at a meeting in July. We pointed out that on grounds of local pollution and noise and passenger comfort, electrification was a benefit on environmental and commercial grounds.

But Railtrack claims improvements in diesel engine technology and the decline in the costs of diesel fuel were undermining the case for electrification.

We warned Railtrack that it might soon have to draw up contingency plans to cope with the effects of global warming.

It is clear however that RDS may well have to shoulder the burden of proving that electrification is both necessary and beneficial.

Elsewhere in the world where short-term commercial self interest is not so important, electrification schemes are still being implemented.

In China, the world's largest electrification scheme started in December, centred on the Harbin-Dalian line.

Nearly 2,000 miles of track will be electrified using the system designed for German Railways. Adtranz – which has factories in Britain – is a partner in the consortium doing the work.

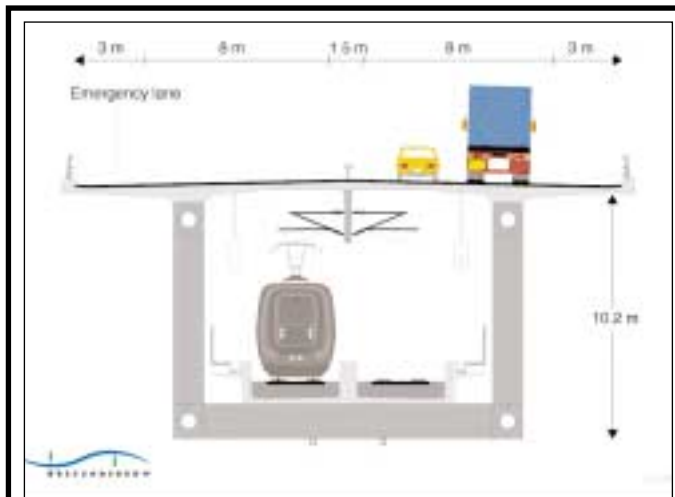
With the exceptions of Denmark, Greece and Ireland, all the railway systems in the fully developed countries of Europe have electrified almost all their principal routes. Denmark and Greece have electrification schemes proceeding.

If Britain continues indefinitely using diesel traction as a prime mode of propulsion, it will have the only large network in Europe where this occurs.

With diesels it will be difficult to match the Europeans in having train speeds higher than 140mph and reduces the prospect for though running from Britain to Europe.

John Prescott's boast that we will have a railway to rival the best in the world may well be an empty one without electrification.

The main topic of discussion at the Railtrack-RDS talks was the



By Erland Egefors

***It's an electric future for the railways of Denmark and Sweden which have been joined since July, by the road and rail Oresund link – a 19-mile bridge, a specially built island and a tunnel. A single ticket by train costs £5 while it costs £20 to drive a car over. There is plenty of room for bikes and other luggage on board the dual voltage electric trains which run on both the Danish 25kV and Swedish 15kV systems. Diesels will not be used because the exhaust can damage electrical equipment in the tunnels. The Adtranz three-coach electric trains provide rapid acceleration, high speed and maximum comfort – and can switch between the two countries' different automatic train control systems at 125mph.***

***Danish Railways have ordered 13 heavy dual-voltage locomotives to haul freight trains carrying swap bodies, containers and lorry semi-trailers. They will have three different ATP systems to allow through working to Germany.***

***Danish Railways estimated that operating electrics on the Helsingor-Copenhagen-Ringsted section saved £500,000 a year in fuel costs alone. There were further savings on servicing the locomotives.***

***Environmental considerations are taken seriously in Scandinavia. The Danes are considering establishing power stations near rail lines to generate electricity from burning rubbish. The rubbish will be hauled from the cities by rail.***

***The Danish government publishes comparisons between different fuels. For information, email: biopress@post4.tel.dk***

network management statement and how to unlock reopenings. External development manager Roger Jones agreed to look again at the potential strategic importance of Cambridge-St Ives-Huntingdon as part of the national rail network.

The meeting with Railtrack followed meetings with Strategic Railways Authority chief executive Mike Grant and Railways Minister Keith Hill earlier in the year.

RDS president Michael Caton and campaigns director Alix Stredwick attended all three meetings.

## Can it be true?

It is reported on the Bikes on Trains web site that Eurostar – which charges £20 to take bikes – sends them from London to

Paris or Brussels on a lorry. The web site advises people to put their bike in a bag and pop it in the brake van (coach nine or 10). It is included in your luggage allowance.

## Reopening on the web

Plans to reopen the Penrith to Keswick Railway line can be found at <http://www.ckp-railways.co.uk>

## Killer roads

A total of 3,423 people were killed on the roads in 1999 as road traffic levels rose by 2%.

## Bus links

Following consultations with local users and other interested parties, the Cambridge Area Bus Users' Campaign (CamBUC) was launched recently.

Integration with other modes of transport particularly rail is one of the key issues in the area which includes Ely, Newmarket, Haverhill, Saffron Walden, Royston, Biggleswade, St Neots, Huntingdon and Chatteris.

CamBUC web site and be found at: [www.cambuc.org.uk](http://www.cambuc.org.uk) or you can contact John Ratcliff, c/o Cambridge FOE, 1a Felton Street, Cambridge, CB1 2EE Tel: 01223 245533.

## Book for children

*The Train Now Standing in Nomansland.* By Lawrence Harris. Published last year by The Cartoon Cave, LE15 8ZF is a story for children about the exploits of a steam engine and its crew during the First World War.

## Room for archives

Good progress has been made on updating the database of the scores of documents – reports, books and other material – held by the Railway Development Trust, and intended for use by researchers. However the material still remains in various people's houses. We need a home for it, preferably in Norfolk or accessible to Norfolk. The trust would consider paying a modest rent. Please contact Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ

## Calling shareholders

RDS already maintains records of members with Railtrack and Eurotunnel shares. In addition, we should like to hear from members with shares in train operating companies or their holding companies and in BAA.

Please send details of any shares you own (in confidence) to our Shareholder Liaison Officer, C Oley, 37 New Road, Ormskirk, Lancs L40 1SR

## Milk trials

Freightliner is conducting trials hauling milk tankers from Cardiff to Purfleet, in association with Axis, the new milk marketing business.

## Rail links to sea

A new £3million quayside warehouse at the Port of Liverpool opened in June with a trainload of steel from Redcar which was shipped to Dublin.

It is the fifth rail facility at Liverpool which handles rail-borne containers, coal, steel, Channel Tunnel traffic and scrap metal.

Railtrack and English Welsh and Scottish Railway is considering serving Birkenhead docks which has not seen a freight train for 10 years.