

RAILWAY INVIGORATION SOCIETY

Hon. Chairman :-

M. P. L. CATON, PH.D., 10 GROSVENOR GARDENS, UPMINSTER, ESSEX.
(TELEPHONE : UPMINSTER 5991)

Vice-Presidents :-

JOHN BETJEMAN, ESQ., C.B.E. LORD KINROSS
PROFESSOR C. L. MOWAT, M.A., PH.D. TORQUIL NICHOLSON, ESQ., B.SC., A.M.I.E.E.

PROGRESS REPORT NUMBER 71.

MAY 1967

THESE LINES CAN BE SAVED.

✓✗ The map recently published jointly by the Ministry of Transport and the Railways Board, showing in black those lines which it is proposed to retain and develop, envisages a much larger system than would remain if the 1962 Transport Act were taken to its logical conclusion. The future of lines shown in grey on the map is uncertain; they will not necessarily be closed but will be reviewed as quickly as possible and when the Board decides to publish a closure proposal, the Minister's permission for publication will not need to be sought. The usual closure procedure laid down in the 1962 Act will then, of course, be followed.

Although the number of grey lines is considerable, a large proportion of them are freight only or have already been approved for passenger closure. Some fifty, however, are services where passenger closure proposals have not yet been published and since almost all of these are of considerable social importance, it is deeply regretted that their future should still be in doubt. Since the total cost of retaining every one of them would be relatively small, Mrs. Castle would have done much better to have gone a stage further and taken our advice to halt all closures, this having the obvious additional advantage of conferring immediate stability on the whole railway system. ✗

✓✗ Recent developments on the Eastern Region have, however, provided a formula whereby all of such lines can be saved, not only on that region but elsewhere, provided the necessary action is taken quickly. The situation was summed up in a recent newspaper article by the Regions General Manager, Mr. G. F. Fiennes, who has stated that ✗ railway managers will declare to any community what is the method of operation of a line at its lowest cost. The community may examine the railway's books, and if they so desire can then subsidise the remaining deficit. ✗ That this Region can indeed cut costs to a minimum is seen from what has already been achieved on the branch lines in East Anglia where losses have already been cut to a fraction of their original figure by the employment of such measures as destaffing stations, simplified fare and signalling systems, the singling of tracks and the use of automatic level crossings.

Some local communities in the Eastern Region are already negotiating such an agreement

with British Rail as a means of retaining their local line or even of reopening lines already closed. There is no reason why the same should not be done throughout the Country and we urge local authorities and other interested bodies in all areas where services are threatened or have recently been withdrawn, to make similar approaches as soon as possible.

✓✗ We do not unreservedly support the principle of local subsidies, since costs often have to be met by those communities least able to bear them, but provided the railways do their part by introducing all possible economies - and this must be seen to be done - few lines are likely to require large sums to keep them in operation. Much of the expenditure would, in any case, be offset by the saving of social costs such as additional road improvement schemes and school transport which would occur should the services be withdrawn. We consider that this approach is far more likely to succeed in securing the retention of a service than if matters are allowed to proceed through the closure process with the hope of a Ministerial reprieve. ✗

THREAT TO SOME REPRIEVED LINES.

✓✗ Perhaps the most disturbing outcome of the above map is that several lines are shown in grey which have already been given Ministerial reprieves, in some cases as recently as within the past two or three years. If such decisions are to be apparently so lightly disregarded after such a short time, does this mean that the work of the T. U. C. C. S. and Ministerial staff, to say nothing of that of objectors, is just so much waste of time and money?

The Society has taken up the matter with the Minister and asked for an explanation. In the case of one of these lines, Romford to Upminster, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport has informed the local M. P. , Mr. A. L. Williams, that . . . 'the Board will need to demonstrate to the Minister's satisfaction that there has been a material change in circumstances if at some future date they decide that they wish to publish a new closure proposal. In this event the full statutory procedure would be invoked'. This may well apply in the other instances, but it is most unlikely in the majority that there will be any significant change (improved roads, etc.) for many years to come. It would have been far better, therefore, if a firm decision had been made to retain these lines at least for a specified period of reasonable length. It is understood that some of the grey lines, as they are reviewed, may be transferred to the development category but the situation in all cases must clearly be watched carefully. ✗

ROADS SURVEY TO INCLUDE SOCIAL COSTS.

In the reply from the Ministry of Transport which we have received to our Memorandum on the 1966 Transport White Paper, we have been informed that the Ministry's research into transport costs is not being confined to track costs as we had supposed. It is far wider in scope and is concerned with the total costs of transport. Passenger as well as freight transport is being included and the survey will cover operating and social costs.

The acceptance of the need to undertake these studies, long advocated by this

Society, is a most welcome step forward. It is hoped that their completion will be followed by a determined effort to place road and rail on the same financial footing.

MINISTRY POST -CLOSURE SURVEY.

✓~~x~~ As we go to press, we have just heard from the Ministry of Transport that a report on the above survey will be published very shortly and will be available to those interested. ~~x~~

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

The Society's 1967 Annual General Meeting took place at the Caxton Hall, Westminster, on April 22nd. Copies of the Chairman's, Membership Secretary's and Treasurer's Reports and the Accounts for the year 1966 are enclosed to members with this Progress Report.

Resolutions to the Minister.

The meeting passed the following resolutions which have been forwarded to the Minister of Transport :

1. That British Rail be asked voluntarily to freeze all further proposals to close railway lines and services pending the passing of the new Transport Act.
2. That the Minister of Transport be urged to investigate possible ways of reducing operating costs with the aid of the Railway Inspectorate.
3. That the Minister of Transport be urged to assess the social advantages of re-introducing railway services with the aid of her economic advisers.
4. That this Society urges the Government to introduce legislation whereby the Minister of Transport be given the power to re-open closed railway lines which, had they not recently been closed, would have fulfilled the criterion of social usefulness justifying their retention. The Society also requests the Minister of Transport, pending any such legislation, to include such closed lines as the Somerset and Dorset line (Bath to Bournemouth) in their assessment of which lines fulfil this criterion. Finally, it requests British Rail to stop lifting the track of any more closed lines, pending any such assessment.

Resolution No. 4 was introduced by our member Mrs. R. Colyer of Blandford, Dorset, who has first hand experience of the many difficulties brought about by the closure of the Somerset and Dorset service.

Election of the new Committee.

The new National Committee, elected at the meeting, is now constituted as follows: -

Chairman: Dr. M. P. L. Caton.

General Secretary: Mr. J. W. Barfield.

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Treasurer: Mr. P. E. Postgate, F. C. A.

Committee Members: Dr. A. Henson, Mrs. R. Colyer, Messrs. K. H. Adderley,
R. V. Banks, D. J. Bradbury, J. M. Firth,
R. Macqueen, G. F. Manley, C. J. Polkinghorne,
R. G. Pullen, H. R. Purser, B. R. Sageman,
J. M. Stanley, R. H. Whittaker,
Mr. W. Wright (Clerk to the Council, Whitby U. D. C., Yorks).

In addition, all area representatives and branch secretaries of the Society are ex-officio members of the National Committee.

CORPORATE MEMBERS

The Society welcomes the following new Corporate Members:

Bangor Chamber of Commerce,	Caernarvonshire
Rhyl Urban District Council,	Flintshire.

REPORTS FROM BRANCHES AND AREA REPRESENTATIVES.

(Edited by Mr. L. G. Hipperson, 21, Ullet Road, Sefton Park,
Liverpool, 17: telephone Sefton Park 3446)

Readers who wish for more information about particular items should write to the appropriate representatives.

East Suffolk/East Norfolk Branch

Branch Secretary: Mr. B. R. A. Cooper, 1, St. Paul's Close,
Aldeburgh, Suffolk.

The annual general meeting of the Branch was held at Saxmundham on 8th April. This was followed by the first meeting of the new committee.

✓✗ It is officially announced that electrification will be extended from Colchester to Ipswich by 1970. The timing for the 68½ miles journey from Liverpool Street will be reduced from 69 mins. to 60 mins. Other plans include a fast direct link between Ipswich and Peterborough to connect with the Midlands and North-East. ✗

North-Eastern Branch

Branch Secretary: Mr. R. K. Mains, 114, Manor House Road, Jesmond
Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2.

✓✗ We welcome the formation of the third branch of the Society, which took place at a meeting in Newcastle on 11th March.

Local authorities are at present considering whether to give financial support to British Rail if the Whitby-Scarborough and Northallerton-Ripon-Harrogate lines are re-opened.

The Branch has written to the local authorities in the north of England whose lines are not included in the railway network plans. A press statement was issued expressing regret that these lines, some of which had already been refused closure by previous Ministers of Transport, had not been selected for development. ✕

The proposed closure of North Wylam station has been published and at least one objection has been lodged. Scotswood station closed on 1st May and the Branch has been in touch with BR regarding services on the Newcastle-Carlisle line.

The Branch has made contact with the newly-formed Northern Passenger Transport Co-ordinating Committee.

The Society's North-Eastern area annual report for 1967 contains much matter (not all of which it has been possible to include in progress reports) dealing with the tremendous amount of work done by the Society in the North-East during the past twelve months. Copies of this report, price 1s. 6d. each (excluding postage) are available from the Branch Secretary (address on previous page).

Cumberland, Westmorland and the East & West Ridings of Yorkshire.
(Areas for which the North-Eastern Branch has special responsibilities)

✓✕ Local authorities are at present considering subsidising the Scarborough-Hull line on condition that "basic railway" methods of operation are applied.

✓✕ Leeds Central station closed on 1st May and it has been reported that the proposed withdrawal of train services between Hadfield and Sheffield Victoria (including closure of the latter station) has been published. ✕

A new station, New Pudsey, between Leeds and Bradford, was opened on 6th March and Stanningley remains open, subject to the Minister's decision.

Three Counties Branch (Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire)

Branch Secretary: Mr. N. G. Gobey.

It is regretted that, owing to private difficulties, Mr. Gobey is temporarily unable to deal with Branch matters. For the time being, all communications should be addressed to the chairman, Mr. W. H. Parker, M. B. E., Well Meadow, Pontshill, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire. We are indebted to Mr. Parker for the following report: -

The railway track between Rotherwas (Hereford) and Grange Court (near Gloucester) via Ross-on-Wye is now dismantled; rails and sleepers removed; and railway bridges over roads, etc., have been taken down to salvage the huge steel girders. The stone supports remain in certain cases.

It is rumoured in the Ross area that the track is being offered to adjacent landowners for £84 per acre, track only. Several farmers near Ross are known to be keen to buy track passing through their farms.

Honeybourne station became an unstaffed halt from 6th March.

BR has issued proposals for the withdrawal of passenger trains on the Bristol Temple Meads-Severn Beach line -nominal closure date: 29th May; also between Gloucester Central and Stratford-on-Avon - nominal closure date: 2nd October.

South-Eastern England

Area Representatives: (Kent) Mr. R. V. Banks, 121, Ashford Road,
Bearsted, Maidstone, Kent.
(Sussex) Mr. C. A. Rylands, 3, Priory Court,
Mountfield, Lewes, Sussex.

Mr. Banks, the Society's Press and Publicity Officer, has added the duties of an area representative to the many other tasks he already undertakes on our behalf. Arising from Mr. Rylands' temporary absence abroad, Mr. Banks has kindly sent us the following report covering both their areas: -

The British railways network for development map published in March shows four "grey" lines in Kent and Sussex, one of which, the Appledore-New Romney branch, closed to passenger traffic on 7th March, after a postponement from January, following objections from the traffic commissioners to the proposed alternative 'bus services.

✓✗ Closure notices have just been published for the Hastings-Ashford line (nominal closure date: 10th July) and are awaited for the Polegate-Hailsham branch. ✗

By far the most important event in the period under review was the three - day TUC hearing held at Tunbridge Wells on 26th-28th April to receive objections to the proposed closure of the Lewes-Hurst Green-Tunbridge Wells line. Over 3,000 objections had been received and the large Assembly Hall at Tunbridge Wells was packed for the first day's hearing. ✗

✓✗ Highlights in the evidence were as follows: -

- (1) On BR's own figures there was a steady annual growth of traffic taking place all the time - about 25% per annum.
- (2) Apart from the large number of commuters, the whole rural life of the area depended on this railway service.
- (3) If it closed, commuter traffic would be thrown on to other lines, particularly the Hastings-Tunbridge Wells-London line (already known as the "Punch-up" line!) In fact, recently planning permission for new houses had been refused to the Royal Borough of Tunbridge Wells, one of the main reasons being the congested state of the railway services.
- (4) A representative of the local 'bus drivers stated that he was authorised to say that it was the considered opinion of these men that the suggested schedules for the replacement

'bus services could not possibly be maintained. Sometimes in Lewes traffic moved at the rate of $\frac{1}{2}$ mile in $\frac{1}{2}$ hour and the large number of extra 'buses would aggravate an already impossible state of affairs. The whole network of roads in the area served by the threatened line was quite unsuitable for 'bus operation.

It is inconceivable that the Tucc can do other than report to the Minister that there is no way of alleviating the hardship which would be caused by closure and that the line should remain open. ✗

Isle of Wight

Area Representative: Mr. R. E. Burroughs, 3, Spring Hill, Ventnor, I. O. W.

✓✗ The Ryde Pier Head-Shanklin line, which has been electrified, was re-opened to traffic from 20th March.

A company, Sadler Vectrail Ltd., has been formed to operate a frequent service of diesel rail cars on the Ryde-Newport-Cowes line. It is envisaged that the I. O. W. County Council will purchase the railway land and lease it back to the Company. Sadler Vectrail will purchase the track, buildings and rolling stock.

A prototype rail car, which will be on exhibition at the I. O. W. Industries Fair at the end of June, has a normal operational speed of 58 m. p. h., auto temperature control, air suspension, fluorescent lighting, auto ticket issuing machine, public address, luxury seating and large scenic windows. The Company is now appealing for investors large and small, and, providing there is no obstructionism on the part of British Rail, would seem to have a very good chance of success. ✗

Somerset, Dorset and Western Hampshire

Area Representative: Rev. W. M. Andrew, 30, Richmond Wood Road,
Bournemouth, Hampshire.

A society has been formed with the object of re-opening part of the Somerset and Dorset system. Details may be obtained from Mr. D. R. Cappagli, 107, Hartfield Road, Wimbledon, London, S. W. 19.

The Poole-Blandford parcel service was suspended from 1st February.

✓✗ From 3rd April some electric services were provided between Waterloo and Bournemouth. ✗

Devon and Cornwall

Area Representative: Mr. A. E. Wilkinson, "Upwey", Beach Road,
Westward Ho', Bideford, Devon.

B. R.'s network for development plan shows a disturbing number of grey lines on the

map in this area and one is bound to ask whether those preparing it have given sufficient thought to several of the lines threatened.

✓✗ The Salisbury-Exeter line is to be retained in addition to the Taunton-Exeter-Plymouth line and the Torbay branch from Newton Abbot is "safe" as far as Paignton, the remainder of the line to Kingswear being in doubt. ✗

✓✗ After being officially removed from the Beeching Plan, the Exmouth branch is again on the danger list, although it carries a considerable peak hour commuter traffic into, and out of, Exeter Central. ✗

North Devon is assured of passenger facilities at Barnstaple, but possibly nothing else, as the Barnstaple-Ilfracombe line is not included in the plan and there is a danger of all rail-borne milk, clay, and general freight traffic disappearing from the area.

In Cornwall, the main line from Plymouth to Penzance is "safe," together with the recently-reprieved St. Ives and Looe branches, but the busier Falmouth and Newquay branches are threatened as also are several china clay branches.

Should all proposals materialise, there would be no rail access to the coast anywhere between St. Ives in Cornwall and Weston-Super-Mare in Somerset, resulting in even more summer holiday traffic being forced on to our already inadequate road system.

Shropshire

Area Representative: Mr. A. R. Jackson, 38 Essex Road, Church Stretton,
Shropshire.

Our member Councillor W. G. Jones, of Oswestry, is collecting evidence in an effort to re-open the Oswestry-Gobowen line to passengers.

Birmingham and the Black Country

Area Representative: Mr. D. Richmond, 26, Colebrooke Road,
Shirley, Solihull, Warwickshire.

The Minister has given no decision as to the future of threatened railway lines in the area, although the Government white paper gives greater hope of their retention. Requests have been made to the Minister that a new line should be opened from the new Chelmsley Wood estate (which may have a population as high as 70,000 in the future) to the Birmingham-Coventry main line at Marston Green.

Many complaints have been made of the 1967-8 timetable, especially over the re-routing of Solihull trains to New Street, thus adding 7 mins. to their schedule.

✓✗ The Society has published a memorandum regarding the redevelopment of the ex-GWR suburban lines in the area. ✗

A car underground scheme has been discussed for Birmingham. A railway scheme

might be considered as well !!!

The prospective Labour candidate for Nuneaton has re-started a campaign for the re-opening of the Nuneaton-Coventry-Leamington line.

✓✗ The West Midlands transport study has recommended the use of the Wolverhampton-Knowle and Dorridge line to become a rapid transit system (at least the third plan to recommend this). The rest of the study does seem to be rather road-biased). ✗

East Midlands and Norfolk (North and West)

(vacant)

The passenger service between March and St. Ives (Hunts.) ceased from 6th March. Closure of the Nottingham-Melton Mowbray and Manton-Kettering lines to passenger traffic was due to take effect from 1st May.

Following public pressure, BR have announced that the Sunday service to Cromer will be extended to Sheringham from 11th June to 10th September.

Conductor-guards will be introduced on the King's Lynn-Wisbech-March line from 5th June.

Merseyside, Wirral and West Lancashire

Area Representative: Mr. P. Byrne, 164, Park Road, Formby, Liverpool.

✓✗ The Minister has ruled postponement of BR's proposals to withdraw the local passenger services between Liverpool and Manchester via Tyldesley and via Patricroft. ✗

Bootle's Marsh Lane station was renamed Bootle New Strand at the beginning of March, as it serves the adjacent New Strand regional shopping precinct.

Closure notices for Chester Northgate station have now been posted and, if no objections are made, services will be diverted into Chester General station on or after 5th May, 1968. This diversion would mean that all Wrexham, Manchester and Birkenhead trains would have a common terminal in Chester.

The Lostock Hall Junction/Bamber Bridge Junction-Todd Lane Junction-Preston (East Lancs. Junction) line has been added to the Reshaping Plan. This entails a second closure proposal for Todd Lane Junction station. A previous proposal was made in August, 1965, and in the following December the TUCC for the North-West report that unalleviable hardship would be caused by the station's closure. The Minister's decision on this report is still awaited.

It is proposed to close the Warrington "straight (avoiding) line" to regular passenger services on 3rd July. The only trains affected are the connections to and from the Manchester Piccadilly-Harwich afternoon boat trains from Liverpool Lime Street. These connections would be diverted to make stops at Warrington Central.

✓~~✗~~ BR has announced an 80% increase in Liverpool-Birmingham traffic since the new all-electric service started on 6th March. ✗

Liverpool Lime Street-Runcorn-Chester General services have been drastically reduced, but not without a fight. Dr. John Dearden, of Helsby, had an unsuccessful meeting with the BR Liverpool passenger manager and later produced a memorandum after being challenged by BR to devise a service which did not use more DMUs than the existing service. The memorandum revealed that, far from there being a shortage of DMUs, as claimed by BR, one unit spends 2½ hours out of service at Birkenhead Woodside! How much money is BR losing because of poor DMU rostering?

Wales

Mid.

Area Representative: Mr. J. R. M. Moore, Llanfair Isaf, Harlech,
Merioneth.

✓~~✗~~ The Machynlleth-Pwllheli line is marked in grey on the new map of British Railways Network for Development. The Liaison Committee, set up by local councils to combat the Machynlleth-Pwllheli closure, held its first meeting at Dolgellau on April 19 and 20, and was addressed by Mr. George Dow, B. R. Divisional Manager, Stoke-on-Trent. After the meeting it was stated that Caernarvonshire County Council might have to terminate their subsidy to B. R. for the conveyance of schoolchildren between Criccieth and Portmadoc if certain difficulties in the service could not be overcome.

The M. P. for Caernarvonshire, and Merioneth are to take up at Ministerial level the future of the Machynlleth-Pwllheli line. They will put the proposals of local authorities for improving services on the line, both for passengers and industrialists, directly before Mrs. Castle. ✗

On the bright side, the Criccieth-Barmouth afternoon school train, which used to run empty from Barmouth to Machynlleth, commenced on May 1st to carry passengers from Barmouth (dep. 17.20) to all stations to Machynlleth from Mondays to Fridays inclusive.

The Carmarthen-Pont Llanio section of the old Carmar - then - Aberystwyth line, and its branches to Newcastle Emlyn and Felinfach are also in grey on the new Castle/Raymond map.

✓~~✗~~ The Area Representative has been informed that Mrs. Castle has now given B. R. permission to dispose of the formation of the Ruabon-Barmouth line. ✗

North

Area Representative: Mr. L. G. Hipperson, 21, Ullet Road, Sefton Park,
Liverpool, 17.

Our corporate member Prestatyn UDC convened a conference of local authorities and other bodies at Prestatyn on 3rd May to discuss the continued worsening of rail facilities in North Wales, in particular its links with other parts of Britain, e. g. Cardiff. Unfortunately, it was not possible for the Society to be represented, but we have asked to be informed of the outcome of the meeting so that we may give assistance in any resulting action.

A station manager has been appointed at Llandudno Junction to control an area extending from Conway to Talacre and from Llandudno to Blaenau Ffestiniog.

OTHER LINES ON WHICH THE SOCIETY HAS BEEN WORKINGStour Valley

✓✗ Passenger services between Cambridge and Sudbury were withdrawn from 6th March. ✗

Oxford-Cambridge

✓✗ The Bletchley-Bedford St. John's section has been reprieved for the time being, as the local authorities have appealed against the grant of licences to allow the United Counties 'Bus Co. to run substitute road services on the grounds that the company would be unable to run such services owing to staff shortages. As regards the Oxford-Bletchley and Bedford St. John's-Cambridge sections, the traffic commissioners have granted licences for the running of substitute 'bus services, but it is not yet known when these will begin. ✗

Isle of Man

We are pleased to announce that the Society is now exchanging information with the Manx Steam Railway Society.

The Manx Government has passed legislation which has allowed the Isle of Man Railway Company to lease its system to a consortium of wealthy enthusiasts from 1st April. The Douglas-Peel section will be re-opened on Saturday, 3rd June.

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