

Railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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Vive la différence!

France hammered home its high-tech lead over Britain with the opening in June of a new station for high-speed trains. It serves both Paris Charles de Gaulle airport and the TGV new direct line which allows high-speed trains to travel from north to south France without wasting time in Paris. A rapid rail line also connects the station with central Paris. London Heathrow may have Concorde but even with the planned new Express rail link, it will be light years behind its French rival. Picture: John Davison

Goodbye to the road runners

By Peter Clark

The imminent demise of Gwent County Council is being celebrated by RDS in South Wales.

We now believe our campaign to restore passenger trains between Newport and Ebbw Vale in the Western valley should meet with success.

The immediate goal is to encourage pro-rail attitudes in the new unitary authorities which will succeed Gwent next May.

To this end RDS sent 80 questionnaires to all candidates close to the Western Valley rail line prior to the unitary-authority elections in May this year.

We received 28 replies from candidates who indicated 100 per cent support for improved public transport in their area. Following the elections, we have 12 councillors who pledged to help us in our push

to restore the passenger trains. Perhaps the biggest hurdle of our campaign is overcoming the negative attitudes fostered by Gwent County Council.

In 1991 their consultants' report looked into the feasibility of the Western Valley line and other rail passenger projects.

The council ignored the consultants' recommendations for investment in stations at Caerleon, Severn Tunnel Junction and Magor, so the £42,000 spent on the report was a waste of money.

Worse, the report set back the Western Valley service because it made some silly assumptions and claimed that a subsidy of £13 per passenger would be needed.

This figure has stuck in councillors' minds and RDS now has the task of pointing out the flaws in the report.

Chief among these flaws is that Ebbw Vale

— one of the biggest non-rail-served towns in Britain — was not considered as the terminus of a service because a steelworks now occupies the site of the original station.

We say the town should be served by a station at the site of Garden Festival Wales where a £20m-a-year factory-shopping complex is being built, along with hundreds of homes and some factories.

From that point, a feeder bus would connect with trains to serve the town centre and some housing estates.

The concept of feeder buses has been proven in neighbouring Mid Glamorgan, and RDS suggests a second rail-link bus to serve Abertillery.

The consultants also assumed that a station should be provided at every settlement although RDS advocates restricting the number of stops.

This would reduce capital costs and speed up trains so they are competitive with the sumptuous new roads provided at enormous expense by Gwent County Council for the benefit of the car-owning minority.

We feel the comparison between Ebbw Vale, Aberdare and Maesteg cannot be made too often.

The last two towns have had their rail services restored recently, with funding from Mid Glamorgan county council and Europe.

Both rail services are successful to the point of being financially self-supporting and there is no reason why a service to Ebbw Vale should be so different as to need subsidy of £13 per head.

Our campaign has aroused considerable interest in the area's newspapers, and we were invited to brief members of Blaenau Gwent Borough Council and its chief executive.

The council itself is an RDS corporate member and the councillors seemed delighted that we were able to produce solid reasons why the rail service would not be anything like as big a drain on their budget as had previously been made out.

Lottery winners

First prize of £400 in the RDS annual national draw went to Mr A W Stacey of Reedham, Norfolk.

The draw took place at Bookham on 29 July with £200 going to Philip Atkinson of Matlock, £100 to T Bruce of Totnes, £50 to Colin Clark of Deddington, Oxon.

Book prizes went to Tom Fairhall of Brighton, Goddard Pickett of Leamington Spa, C Morris of Redditch, John Reynolds of Taunton, P Gardiner of Didcot, Ian Llewellyn of Harlow, G V Crine of Truro, Mrs M Smith of Goring on Thames, J Thorley of Morecambe, C Spires of Maidenhead, E Forbes of Norwich and D Reavil of Ash Vale, Hants.

Thanks to all those who helped by buying and selling draw tickets. We are pleased that the draw resulted in our raising over £2,000 for our campaign for better rail services.

TREVOR GARROD'S VIEW



Growing richer and stronger

When RDS was formed in 1978, it had barely 500 members, its journal was just a few sheets of typescript stapled together, it had no administrative staff, National Executive members effectively subsidised the society and it ran out of money in September each year.

We have come a long way. We had 1000 members by 1984, appointed our first administrative officer two years later and started national press advertising in 1987.

Each year membership has shown a net increase, bringing it to over 3,400, and we no longer have regular financial crises. The challenge now is to increase our membership and income to the point where we can pay a full-time officer while still being able to afford national and local campaigning.

Influencing powerful people costs money. This year we spent over £500 on printing and distributing a high-quality report on East-West Rail Links.

It was aimed particularly at MPs and councillors from Suffolk to Wiltshire, who are also the targets of expensive lobbying by bodies such as the British Roads Federation — so it had to be smartly produced.

To save postage, East Anglian branch chairman Peter Wakefield delivered a considerable number by hand and I cycled around Lowestoft putting them through county councillors' doors.

This report was also taken to Brussels by Ray King, John Barfield and Richard MacQueen, who discussed it and many other issues with European Commission officials. While we could not afford to bankroll a luxury 'freebie' for these officers, we did pay £200 towards their Eurostar fares.

Earlier this year, £260 was spent on *Gasp*

for Air, a good quality RDS pamphlet capitalising on the report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution and aimed particularly at opinion formers and decision takers.

In June RDS was featured in *The Observer* and one or two members complained it harmed our image by distorting our views.

We cannot guarantee that the press will print exactly what we want. *The Times* printed a letter of mine for the first time ever at the beginning of January, but only after I had agreed to the omission of one paragraph.

The only way we can be sure that our full and exact message is conveyed in the media is by paying for advertisements. This year so far we have spent £1,400 on two national press adverts, as well as lesser sums for local and specialist journals.

Branches have also been able to call upon national funds. Over £130 has gone to the North East branch this year for a publication and work to form a new local users' group while over £200 was spent raising our profile in Kent and Sussex where the road lobby would like a multi-million pound highway from Folkestone along the South Coast.

Some campaigning organisations spend a high proportion of their income on staff salaries and expenses.

We spend less than 10% on honoraria for the administrative team and travel costs of officers and members to attend National Executive meetings. That leaves 90% for servicing members and running campaigns. Let us try to retain these strengths of our Society as we work on the next stage of our growth.

Half-speed Fawltly Britain

Eurostar trains continue to travel in Britain at half the speed they do in France.

And while Belgium is now building its 185mph high-speed line, the British Government is still thinking about building the dedicated Channel Tunnel link through Kent. It should have happened years ago, but now it might happen by 2002, if we are lucky.

More changes to the present scheme are being suggested by the Commons select committee.

The MPs say an extra £87 million should be spent on extra tunnelling at Barking and King's Cross.

They also suggest building a £20 million box at Stratford to allow for a future station there.

They also suggest there should be around £8 million provision for freight, in the shape of loops on the new line and links to the Dollands Moor freight yard near Folkestone.

The Government looks like taking the same lackadaisical approach to Britain's main lines, after presiding over the closure and emasculation of many of our branch and secondary railways.

The West Coast main line to Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow, the Midland to Leicester, Sheffield and Nottingham and the Great Western to Bristol, South Wales and Cornwall have been crying out for action for years but the Government has been content to let things drift while the InterCity 125 diesel trains give an acceptable service. Now these trains are getting elderly and some sort of decision will have to be made soon.

Of course a rolling programme of electrification should have been planned years ago so these lines could be upgraded for high-speed running. Instead the Government used a financial trick to get out of electrifying the Midland main line and carried on doling out taxpayers' money to its friends in the road lobby.

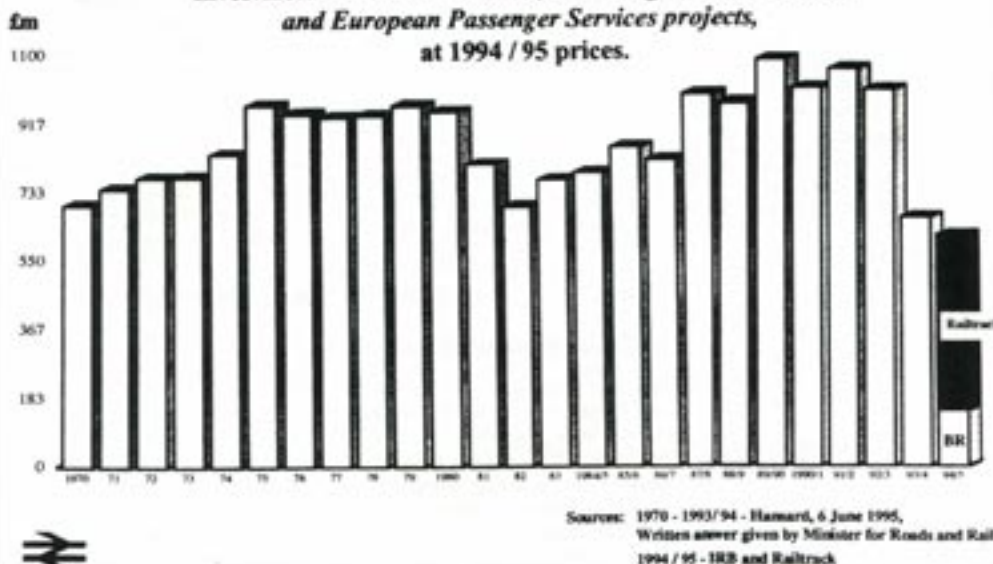
Local councils have at last woken up to the fact that the Government is allowing our national rail assets to waste away.

The latest attempt to stir the Department of Transport into rail action has come from a group of councils in the West and Wales.

But while our continental com-

Railway investment

Investment in the rail network, excluding Channel Tunnel and European Passenger Services projects, at 1994/95 prices.



Trust aids RDS

The National Trust's response to the Royal Commission on environmental pollution shows it shares many RDS ideas.

Particularly laudable is the introduction of a ticket combining travel by BR, shuttle bus from the station and admission to Knole, a trust-owned Elizabethan mansion in Kent. Further ventures of this type will have to await an assessment of the Knole scheme, but the time is right for RDS to make contact with the trust, which with 2.2 million members could be a force for change.

Branches should press for the inclusion of public transport information in trust literature. Contacts at national level may be needed too.

A W Collins, 8A Moorland Road, Mickleover, Derby DE3 5FX

Real progress

A correspondent in *Railwatch* 64 wonders how you can call for rail improvements without attacking the status quo. I admit it is much easier to argue in favour of investments by pointing out its failings but that doesn't make it easy to promote railways, bearing in mind the hostile stance taken by so many in positions of influence.

They love to hear stories about decaying track and ancient trains - not because they want to invest in our rail system, but because they are glad of any excuse to introduce mass closures. The lunatic rails-into-roads lobby has friends in high

places, and often receives favourable coverage it certainly doesn't deserve.

We rail lovers must point out the usefulness of existing services, and how much better they would be if not starved of investment.

Some of us are hostile to what used to be called the Common Market, so reference to Europe raises suspicions rather than proving any points.

It is tricky knowing what to do, living as we do in the remnants of Mrs Thatcher's great car economy!

Tim Mickleburgh, 101 Scarth Road, Grimsby, Lincs DN33 2AE

Official double think

In *Railwatch* 64 we find several instances of a Government, supposedly devoted to a free market, restricting choice.

Franchise Director Roger Salmon, states that, "Since road coaches already operate overnight services there is no need for BR to operate seated coaches on their overnight trains".

This seems to be a move to cut down competition in favour of a road interest. Why should we be restricted to an inferior service - slower and less comfortable, whose only advantage is cheapness? Of course road owes its cost advantage to Government [taxpayer] subvention.

And why should Robert Key [Westminster Watch] be allowed to get away with the existence of a motorway and an air service daily as an

explanation of the deterioration in the number of trains and the poorer scheduling on the London to Cardiff route.

Surely in free market conditions all three modes ought to be allowed to compete freely. Why in this case is the number of trains being reduced and the scheduled time taken raised? The minister, unlike the market, is very imperfectly informed of passenger needs. Given the minister's own avowed prejudices, he may have a hidden agenda.

Dr D G Guild, 53 Grange Road, Edinburgh EH9 1TX

Age-old problems

One of the main aims of the RDS is to ensure rail and public transport can compete with the private car.

There are growing numbers of old people who have or will soon have to abandon their private cars on health grounds. I am an octogenarian and I love a rail journey in itself. But in the modern world, I am not alone in finding big railway stations daunting.

Information services have been mechanised and are not always easy to understand or operate while officials able to answer queries are disappearing from platforms.

Transporting luggage is sometimes an insuperable problem especially if flights of stairs have to be negotiated. This also applies to mothers with prams. These travellers need wooing if they are to continue to travel at all, and we plead for stations to present a "passenger friendly"

attitude. The aim should make it easy for them to progress from taxi door to railway seat. Help may be available but is not widely publicised or promoted.

Is there anything RDS can do - especially if new stations are being opened or existing ones renovated (as in the proposed Heathrow development) to bring these points forcibly before the responsible authorities?

Mrs Veronica M Roberts, 4 Pat-shull Place, London NW5 2LA

Anglia fares

The decision of Anglia Railways to abolish those Super-Saver fares which it sets is most regrettable. Their purported "replacement", pre-booked SuperAdvanced/Apex fares, introduces the need to plan ahead and locks travellers into specific trains in both directions. This adds hassle to rail travel which isn't there with road.

If rail is to play an effective role in the national transport infrastructure, it must remain a primarily walk-on mode of travel. Making pre-booking the norm, and in effect charging a premium for turn-up-and-go travel, makes road more attractive and is totally unacceptable.

Gary Dangerfield, 6 Surrey Road, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 7SB

Rhyl graffiti

I see in *Railwatch* that the course of the rebuilt Rhyl station has been vandalised with graffiti. Better than publicising such occurrences

Rayner's Review: Playing Monopoly with the railway

Railwatch is pleased to welcome a new commentator. Here former London Midland regional operating manager Peter Rayner casts a critical eye over British Rail.

The annual report and accounts from the British Railways Board for 1994 and 1995 make interesting reading.

They show that outgoing Chairman Sir Bob Reid and the board members who remain have all been rewarded for a "job well done".

Yet that "job well done", selling off essential parts of BR, has made it more difficult to operate the railway and more difficult to keep it safe.

BR did make a profit but the uncomfortable fact is that the

profit exists only because the Government doubled the subsidy.

And despite this so-called profit, there is no money available to replace the 2,000 or so old coaches which are vulnerable if involved in accidents.

The profit of £362,000,000 was achieved because the rolling stock leasing companies made a profit of £450,000,000.

Without these leasing companies which are about to be transferred to private ownership, there would have been a loss of £88,000,000, - almost exactly what was spent on privatisation last year. The statistics meanwhile confirm a continuing decline in railway usage, both passenger and

freight, since 1990. It is wrong to assume that last year's strikes are to blame. The real problem is that people, both inside and outside the industry, can see that it is not operated effectively or managed consistently.

BR's report opens with a eulogy to Sir Bob Reid by the man who steps into his shoes - John Welsby.

It is my view that during Sir Bob's five-year period as chairman, more damage has been done to the railway than even in the era of Dr Beeching.

Beeching pruned the trees excessively. Sir Bob damaged the very roots of the tree by destroying the co-operative culture. He replaced it with a

fragmented group of businesses squabbling among themselves, worrying about costs but worrying more about how to pass the costs to another part of the railway. Playing Monopoly with the public purse in the name of market forces is Sir Bob Reid's achievement.

The changes he oversaw have enabled accountants to shunt pieces of paper more easily while shunting wagons and trains is more difficult.

A fair comment on Sir Bob's period would be to say that he has done a good public relations job.

He has smiled while others have hacked away at the railway's strength.

The English disease

would have been to remove the graffiti immediately. Ceramic tiles are easy to clean.

I work at McDonald's and we occasionally get outbursts of graffiti. None of your readers, however, would have seen any because it is wiped out immediately by the application of elbow grease and scouring powder. McDonald's have a burning desire to keep its premises and its products spotlessly clean, something sadly lacking in London Transport and BR.

We should chop off the fingers of offenders as happens in Moslem countries. Occasionally they are caught here and prosecuted and sentenced to a few hours community service at which they laugh.

J P Randall, 110a Neville Road, Forest Gate, London E7 9QT

Cheating statistics

It is an article of faith with RDS that road transport in this country receives massive hidden subsidies from the Government. Yet our opponents never tire of claiming that only a fraction of what motorists pay in tax is actually spent on roads, thus implying that motorists not only pay for themselves but subsidise other areas of public spending!

How do we reconcile these two statements? I assume the road lobby is not actually lying, so it must be a question of which figures are looked at, and how they are looked at.

Could someone enlighten me? I'm sure I'm not alone in wanting a little catechism that I can rehearse when confronted by this infuriating contradiction.

Anthony Turner, 22 Laven Avenue, Burley in Wharfedale, Ilkley, W. Yorks. LS29 7ET
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Editor's note: It is not easy to do a simple sum but Friends of the Earth calculate that cars alone receive a net subsidy from the Government of £6 billion, taking into account the costs of air pollution, accidents and loss of open spaces.

The real benefits of people using public transport are enormous but difficult to put money values on.

Britain's Department of Transport has happily issued misleading statistics for years but at last the European Union is trying to get to grips with the financial and economic realities, issuing a Green Paper on transport costings this autumn.

Freight puzzle

I was somewhat startled to read in Railnews that RDS supports freight privatisation and voted heavily at the Exeter AGM in favour of the Government's policy in this respect.

Railwatch 64 reported that the meeting passed a resolution "welcoming the idea of open access for freight train operators".

I attended the AGM but had to leave early so perhaps I did not get the whole story.

I do not agree with rail privatisation in any way at all and especially splitting the rail network and business in such a devastating manner.

I am so disgusted with the whole scheme that I joined the Labour Party because of it.

Perhaps the situation regarding RDS could be made clearer in both Railnews and Railwatch.

B Easter, 31 Ambleside Road, Grove Park, London SE12 9TN

RDS freight committee member John Saunders explains.

As proposer of the motion passed at the AGM on freight re-organisation, may I reassure you that passing the motion in no way affects the society's attitude to the sale of Railtrack or the fragmentation of the passenger railway? We are opposed.

The motion welcomed open access for freight operators, in line with European Union policy.

Companies seeing an opportunity for rail freight can now try their hand, perhaps in a niche market too small or specialised to be worth the management time of the rail-freight majors.

As society moves towards integrated manufacturing and logistics organisations, some of these may consider rail only if they can own and operate the trains themselves.

The motion also said that "in present circumstances there may be advantages" in transferring the major freight operators into the private sector, free of Treasury controls. There may, of course, also be disadvantages. The freight committee should be able to talk to all operators and potential operators, private or nationalised, and encourage the transfer of traffic to rail. The motion allows that to happen. If you need more clarification, please write to me at Sawyers Lane, Sutton, Wymondham NR18 9JH

Germany catches the English disease - rail closures

Rail campaigners in Germany are worried that people in Britain have a rosy view of their train services.

They point out that Germany is facing its biggest-ever programme of regional freight lines.

They warn that the aim of the government is to reduce the number of railfreight depots to only 31 and to reduce the number of sidings for factories.

They estimate that one third of the 25,000 mile Deutsche Bundesbahn network is at risk. The worst affected is the former East Germany which has a "superb" extensive rail network which used to be used for most heavy freight under the Communist regime.

Closures are expected there when the crying need is for investment in new trains, especially for regional and rural lines.

The German post office which is being privatised this year has also stopped using rail almost completely.

The German government is spending "crazy" money on creating high-speed lines at the expense of the conventional inter-city network and regional services, according to Wolf Drechsel of the VCD, the organisation which campaigns for ecological transport and the environment.

He says the Government is distorting the figures to make ICE high-speed trains look profitable.

Mr Drechsel also condemns the decision to spend billions of marks on the maglev Transrapid train.

He points out that the German government's plans to privatise the railways has already led to slower schedules on long-distance trains and the reduction of hourly schedules to two-hourly or even four-hourly ones.

He points out that the Inter-Regio trains are already only every two hours.

Mr Drechsel says: "I admit that in comparison to Britain, DB is still a superb system." He says few people in Germany realise that what is happening in Britain is a warning against

privatising the railways. The new DBAG is a public limited company with all shares held by the state.

It is divided into business units which must become profitable, and these units will be converted into limited companies in 1997 with privatisation to follow soon afterwards.

This accelerates the previous strategy, which had been to reform DB as a holding company in 1997 and to split off individual units five years later, with privatisation following some time after that.

There will be further changes in 1996 when the Länder become responsible for determining the level of local services and for ordering them, either from DB or other organisations.

The subsidy, to be increased to £4 million, will then be paid to the Länder.

Already the involvement of the Länder has led to improvements.

The Dürer Kreisbahn which operates two branch lines from Dürren between Köln and Aachen was under threat of closure.

Then Nordrhein-Westfalen bought it for 45p from DB and was given £450,000 as compensation for historic underinvestment.

The old 1950s railbuses were replaced by a new fleet of Regiosprinter from Siemens-Duewag.

These new light rail vehicles can couple up to standard heavy rail vehicles, something which would be forbidden in Britain on "safety grounds".

The trains also have space for prams, bikes and luggage.

Eight other manufacturers in Germany and France are designing vehicles for this type of line because they have identified regional and rural rail services as an area of growth.

In this country, blinkered Department of Transport officials forced BR to buy trains that cannot easily take prams and bikes.

And railway managers are implementing stupid rules to prevent trains gaining from the increasing numbers of leisure travellers who want to take their bikes on the train.

Anglia declares UDI

By Howard Thomas

Anglia Railways appears to have made a unilateral declaration of independence since 28 May 1995, highlighting the dangers of privatisation in bringing fragmentation and more difficulties for travellers.

Anglia's actions immediately affected one colleague who frequently uses Anglia services from Bury St Edmunds, Ipswich and Colchester.

But they have great implications for the rest of the railway network and for passengers throughout Britain.

First Anglia has abolished the Super Saver fare on InterCity services in order to "simplify" understanding of the fares structure in the minds of the travelling public.

This has meant a substantial increase in the fare paid by someone wanting a day return trip between, say Ipswich and London. The surrounding publicity from Anglia which suggested that fares had not gone up is misleading at best.

Anglia scrapped a useful cheap fare and the travelling public is too intelligent to fall for the propaganda line that fares have not been increased.

Second Anglia now does not accept Network and Gold Card discounted tickets on InterCity services within the former Network SouthEast area. This unilateral action particularly affects passengers between Colchester and London.

The third action concerns the quality of information about connecting train services, especially where these involve other operators' services. It seems that passengers wishing to travel between Bury St

Edmunds and London are given information about connections only via Table 15 in the Great Britain Passenger Timetable in operation from 28 May. No connection times from London via Cambridge are given for services operating between Cambridge and Bury St Edmunds. Previously, this information WAS given.

Connection times via Cambridge are, however, given in Table 111 of the ABC Rail Guide which is produced by an independent company.

Many people prefer to go to London via Cambridge. The journey from Bury St Edmunds to London via Cambridge is shorter (85 miles to Liverpool Street, 88 to King's Cross) than that via Ipswich (95 miles to Liverpool Street).

There are six trains an hour between Cambridge and London (two to Liverpool Street and four to King's Cross) but only two between Ipswich and London. Journey times are often better via Cambridge than via Ipswich.

From Bury St Edmunds, the fares are the same whichever way one goes, even taking into account the withdrawal of the Super Saver facility.

Perhaps we should be seeking ways to offer passengers via Cambridge a lower fare. After all, the Cambridge route is not served by InterCity!

If Anglia Railways (UK) Ltd are allowed to get away with these bits of unilateral action, how long will it be before people using Network Cards are banned on InterCity services to London from Reading, Milton Keynes, Bedford, Luton and Stevenage? How long before SuperSaver fares are

withdrawn from the rest of the system? Midland Main Line is also reported to be refusing to accept Network card-discounted tickets between Bedford and London.

As the privatisation proposals are implemented, the reassurances given by politicians seem ever shoddier and more cynical. What authority do promises from politicians have anyway? The ones who implemented these controversial and ill-thought-out policies have now conveniently moved on. Meanwhile others have to pick up the pieces.

The Central Rail Users Committee was presented with a report on Anglia's actions in dropping the SuperSaver but, even if it wanted to, the committee can do little.

It was created by politicians who were careful to limit the influence of public opinion on railway operations rather than give the public proper representation.

Quangos are easier to control and politicians have shown in the past that, if consumer watchdogs do a proper job, there are ways of emasculating them - like sacking the chairman.

This doubtful structure of political patronage which dates back to mediaeval times undermines democracy - and also ensures that the railways are not run in the interests of the general public but are in the control of vested interests.

The problems of fragmentation are dealt with in a new RDS report by Ruth Turner. *Protecting the Network* is available for £1.50 post free from Martin Ball, RDS Sales, 89 North Wallington, Fareham, Hants PO16 8TJ. Cheques payable to RDS.

Getting lost on the new railway

By Paul Jowett

A new booklet inviting tourists to *Discover Lincolnshire* is a good example of how privatisation is making life more difficult for travellers.

Sponsored by Regional Railways, Lincolnshire County Council and South Humberside Tourism, the booklet is given away free at stations and tourist information bureaux. It has great potential, detailing how to visit the main places on four rail

routes in the county which are covered by the new Lincolnshire Day Ranger ticket and operated by Regional Railways Central.

Also included is the Barnetby to Cleethorpes line which is operated by Regional Railways North East, together with tourist information, rail fares and frequency details.

Problems arise however with the Lincolnshire Rail Map which is included.

The map is in fact a Regional Railways Central map, showing connections from Leicester to Stamford, Nottingham to Grantham and Newark. The Day Ranger tickets are available from all these places.

The map does not but should surely show the county's main rail route, the East Coast main line, even if the Day Ranger tickets are not valid for travel on it. A major tourist brochure should not restrict a rail map to one operator's lines.

It would be even better of course if a reasonably priced Day Ranger ticket was made available for all the rail lines in the county and which could include Regional Railways NE trains from Sheffield and Retford as well as the Doncaster-Grimsby

route and Barton branch. Perhaps the East Coast main line with its high-speed InterCity trains might not be included in a Ranger ticket but it MUST be on any rail map, even if in a different colour.

The map which purports to be a county rail map also shows only main stations, plus Heckington and Wainfleet. It omits all other wayside stations, even on Regional Railways Central routes.

Maybe the marketing people have not thought through the effects of their work but we seem to have train operators working against the travelling public's interests, to promote their own self interest.

In fact, of course, all train operators would benefit if it was easier and cheaper to travel by rail.

Rails to Mansfield

The annual general meeting of RDS will be held on Saturday 4 May, probably at Mansfield. By then, this Nottinghamshire town should have lost its dubious distinction of being the largest town in England without passenger trains, and enjoy an hourly Sprinter service from Nottingham.

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 Railway Development Society.

Opening the experts' eyes

By Trevor Garrod

The public have proved the professionals wrong again following the reopening of the line to Bathgate.

Given a rail service to Edinburgh, people flocked to use it in double the numbers that were predicted by "computer analysis of the available data".

The experts suggested that by 1995, 400,000 people a year would be travelling on the line. In fact, there are now 900,000 rail travellers.

So it was quite apt for the small industrial town, 18 miles west of Edinburgh, to be the venue for our fourth conference on rail reopenings on 17 June.

RDS members from as far away as Eastbourne, Totnes and Bradford-on-Avon attended.

The 150 or 158 trains to Bathgate drops people on a neat modern platform with shrubs, glass shelters, toilets and a town map.

Next to it is a small car park, bus terminus, taxi rank, café and pub. The pedestrianised main shopping street is 100 yards away.

Until the reopening, the area around the town was the largest urban area in Scotland without passenger trains, the conference was told by David Jarman, head of planning at West Lothian District Council.

Bathgate was also suffering nearly 20% unemployment following closure of the Leyland factory and the new town of Livingston needed a more convenient station.

Rail reopening has encouraged Bathgate people to look further afield for employment and training and has also encouraged commuters to buy homes in Livingston and Uphall, where the station car park has recently been extended to meet increased demand.

The fast journey time into the centre of Edinburgh was clearly a plus point for success while Lothian Regional Council's concessionary fares scheme helped encourage off-peak leisure traffic.

Mr Jarman said the future prosperity of the service could best be promoted by doubling the frequency, and attracting more car owners.

Restoring the link westwards to Airdrie was less of a priority, especially as it passed through a less populous area.



A 158 train calls at the reopened station of Bathgate. Local people can now get to the centre of Edinburgh in only 28 minutes and have their own gateway to the national rail network.

"Bathgate would not have reopened if we had listened to the pessimists," declared our other guest speaker, Councillor David Begg of Lothian Regional Council.

Local transport had been very road-based since the rail closures of the 1950s and 60s and the city of Edinburgh itself had a very good bus service.

Over the past decade, however, there had been a 40% increase in rail usage, with twice as many stations now open.

The line to North Berwick had been electrified and new stations built between Edinburgh and Drem, leading to a 60% increase in rail travel into the city from the east.

Councillor Begg said the priorities for the next decade were:

1. A new station at Edinburgh Park to serve a growing business centre west of the city which would have jobs for 30,000 people. Railtrack was supportive, but ScotRail less so. The conference passed a resolution urging ScotRail's new director John Ellis to give Edinburgh Park high priority.
2. The South Suburban Line could be reopened at a cost of £25 million and carry 14,000 passengers a day with nine new stations. Mr Begg paid tribute to RDS Scotland in persuading local politicians, including prominent Conservatives, to support the scheme. The Government's attitude, however, was not to lend money for the project because it might require a £300,000 a year operating subsidy. It still wants to build roads with your money though.

Councillor Begg said setting up a passenger transport authority for the East of Scotland would be the best way to ensure public transport was fully developed in the Edinburgh travel-to-work area, which covered parts of Fife, Central and Borders Regions as well as Lothian.

The second half of the conference stressed the need for political lobbying, and track-bed protection.

There was also a need for the increased revenue from petrol tax to be ploughed back into public transport investment.

Peter Wakefield gave an update on the East Anglian Branch's work campaigning for Cambridge-St Ives reopening and a new East/West link across Middle England.

Conference unanimously passed a resolution noting with concern the absence of any central authority or agency responsible for actively promoting rail reopening or restoration schemes.

It urged the Government to give one national body with adequate funding the responsibility for promoting the rail network.

The resolution was sent to Ministers and to transport spokesmen of the major opposition parties. A reply has already been received from Rail and Road Minister John Watts MP in which he appears to assign this responsibility to Railtrack.

But he also says that he would welcome reopening proposals from local authorities or groups of authorities.

A full report of the conference, including the interesting

papers prepared for it, is obtainable at £1.50 (including postage) from our Sales Officer Martin Ball, 89 North Wallington, Fareham, Hants PO16 8TJ. Make cheques payable to RDS.

Disused Railway Survey

Many of the disused railways in the RDS South West Branch area have been surveyed in order to determine reopening possibilities, writes Gerard Dudgeon.

The survey now extends to other areas to include Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire, Avon, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. I have been setting up a data base system to record the information and make it easy to keep up to date.

An additional aim of the database is to structure the data in such a way that new information can be generated from it. So far only the Barnstaple to Ilfracombe line has been entered (about 50 records) and a start on the line west of Okehampton has been made. For those who have lost contact with me during this project or anyone who would seriously like to join in, please write to me at 67 Higher Exwick Hill, Exwick, Exeter EX4 2AW.

Life Beyond Cars

This booklet, published by RDS two years ago, has almost sold out, and Tony Smale is now planning a new edition. If you would like to contribute to the new edition, please contact Tony Smale at Broadheath, Fishers Hill, Catisfield, Fareham, Hants PO15 5QY.



Welcome Alan

Alan Crowhurst is the new RDS administrative officer who will assist chief administrative officer John Bigny, with a wide range of tasks.

They include handling inquiries from members and outside bodies, dealing with stationery and attending meetings of the National Executive and Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Alan's address is 2 Clematis Cottages, Hop-ton Bank, Cleobury Mortimer, Kidderminster, DY14 0HF. Tel: 01584-890807.

Picture by Kenneth M Bryant

Monthly lottery

The monthly RDS lottery winners: May Catherine Worrall, Bristol £56.80, Brian Hastings, Scunthorpe £35.50, D J McCutcheon, Portsmouth £21.30, Donald Bulmer, Weston £14.20, R Burrows, Hassocks £7.10, Chris Burton, Cambridge £7.10, June J Ward, Newark £57.20, Paul Wilson, High Wycombe £35.75, Christine Marchant, Esher £21.45, Geoffrey Wood, Wakefield £14.30, Austin White, Birmingham £7.15, Michael Sheppy, Feltham £7.15, July Mrs P L Hamlyn, London £57.20, Dave Fleming, Bolton £35.75, Mike Savage, Cleethorpes £21.45, H L Cook, Reading £14.30, David Peters, Telford £7.15, C A Jones, Spalding £7.15.

■ Alarm UK which fights against road building is holding a seminar on public inquiries at Newport, South Wales, on 16 September. For last minute bookings, phone or fax 0171 582 9279

■ A freight logistics exhibition called Flex which is expected to include rail operators is to be held at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham between 10 and 12 October. Details 0171 436 9774

■ Railtex 95 will see 300 organisations from 14 countries exhibiting their rail wares at Wembley from 21 to 23 November. Information Judy Aspdon 01707 275641.

■ A Community Participation in Public Transport conference is being organised by Transnet Research at Huddersfield on Thursday 28 September. A second Transnet conference dealing with Local Authorities and Rail Passenger Projects is being staged at Derby on Thursday 14 November. Details 01484 665273. Fax 01484 666974.

■ *Preserved Railways Mean Business* edited by Paul Salvesson is available for £15 post free from TR (Publication), 6 School Lane, Berry Brow, Huddersfield HD4 7LT. Make cheques payable to Transnet Research.

Rail mail



This is Royal Mail's new train which will revolutionise the delivery of letters in Britain.

The fleet of 100mph trains is undergoing trials and should be in service early next year.

The new trains will operate from a new rail mail station built beside the West Coast main line at Willesden, London.

"Our new trains will give customers an even more efficient service and the value for money they expect," said Post Office chief executive Bill Cockburn. "Railnet will help Royal Mail achieve its goal of creating a delivery network which will be the envy of postal administrations worldwide."

The 16 new 325 four-car trains are based on the Thameslink 319 units and can operate over both 750 volt third rail and 25kV overhead routes.

They have been given more power for long-distance high-speed work on the main line but can also be hauled by diesels over non-electrified routes.

"Railnet is the greatest change in mail transport in the whole of Royal Mail's 350 years," said Royal Mail managing director Peter Howarth.

The historic partnership between mail and rail is a critical element in efficiently moving large volumes of mail over distances of between 100 and 250 miles. The method of doing this has remained broadly unchanged for more than a century - until now.

The new one-person-operated trains being built by ABB in Derby will allow for a switch away from passenger trains carrying mail, to handling it on dedicated trains which run to their own timetable.

Rail express systems which helped to develop the new trains will also be modernising the existing Travelling Post Offices and will maintain the entire fleet under a new 10-year contract with British Rail.

The Willesden mail station will have seven platforms and will replace mail handling at five other main line London

revolution



tions and one depot. The post will
vel in new containers which will be
nsferred between trains, vans and
anes.

he specially designed containers
can fast loading and unloading.
ey also protect the mail much bet-
er than the traditional mailbag,
hich will eventually be phased out,"
id Mr Howarth.

cause the letters will be in better
dition, it should clear the way for
ore mechanical sorting.

he same sturdy wheeled metal-
timed container holding trays of
ail will be used in lorries, trains and
orting areas.

ch tray is capable of holding more
an a standard mailbag's worth of
letters.

p to three trains can be coupled
together to make a 12-car train carry-
ing 135 tonnes of mail and they can
ange from ac to dc traction on the
ove.



ON TRACK: Preparation work at Wembley

Paying for rail improvements

By Henry Law

THE Government's hopes of getting the private sector to pay for the Channel Tunnel rail link were dashed in July when it turned out that the "cheapest" bids were seeking over £2 billion in public funds.

This confirms what most readers of *Railwatch* already know - that a railway system cannot be made to pay on the basis of traffic receipts alone.

The reason, which is less well appreciated, is that so much of the gain from the existence and operation of the railway falls outside the system, beyond the reach of the providers of the infrastructure and train services.

The benefits are, however, perfectly tangible. Recall how, for example, the East Coast main line electrification pushed up property prices along the route.

We are now seeing the same thing in other areas. The choice of Ebbsfleet as the site of a major international station on the Channel Tunnel link has handed huge unearned profits to Blue Circle, which owns large tracts of derelict land in the area, while the Jubilee line extension is adding millions to land values in run-down parts of south and east London.

The Government has said that it is willing to support infrastructure improvements so long as the beneficiaries pay. This is a sound principle, since there is no reason why the general mass of taxpayers should pay for developments which will generate large profits for a few lucky land owners. Unfortunately the Government is unwilling to follow this policy through to its logical conclusion.

If the beneficiaries of infrastructure improvements are whoever happens to own the land in the area served, then all that is required is a mechanism to claw back site values, for example, a universal property tax based on land values alone. There would then be no further difficulty in paying for infrastructure improvements.

★ Henry Law is publicity officer for the Land Value Taxation Campaign. He can be contacted at 19 Queen's Gardens, Brighton BN1 4AR. Tel 01273 690389

■ A new RDS leaflet called *Essex Metro* shows how to regenerate the area. Copies are available free from Paul Krebs, 24 Bartok House, 30 Lansdowne Walk, London W11 3LT.

■ Rail tickets can now be bought by credit card on a new national hotline number which provides information about bus times. Premium rates are charged on the 0891 910910 TBC hotline set up by Southern Vectis with the aid of a £40,000 grant from the Department of Transport. This hotline fills an information gap, created by the deregulation of bus services. But the danger is that rail travellers will soon have to pay premium rates for information.

LOCAL ACTION

Scotland

By Douglas Smart

Broken promises The branch has submitted a robust response to the Franchise Director's draft passenger service requirement for ScotRail. We have demanded that ALL the numerous cuts which have already been implemented should be reinstated. We consider all the disparate bodies now responsible for running our railways should be held to the original promise that the PSR would be based on the 1994 timetable. The fact that it does not do so represents a gross betrayal of rail passengers. In addition to our minimum requirements for the existing services our PSR observations also include a wish list of investment which we would like to see. In some cases we have stated a case for rail investment in lieu of parallel road improvements. While we are in no doubt that some of the funds for improving the rail network should come from the road budget, we doubt if many of the other observations on the PSR will state where the money will come from. In all the controversy over the Fort William sleeper and other savage cuts, not one politician has come up with the obvious solution, namely to switch a modest amount of funds from the grandiose road building programme to ScotRail.

Political vacuum Far many months we have tried without fail to find out from the opposition parties precisely where they would find the money to do all the things for the railways which they say the Government should be doing. Finally we made contact with Henry McLeish, Labour transport spokesman, and pressed him on this point. He could not give any guarantee of funds for rail investment other than a vague reference to adjustments within the transport budget, but he did state that the Scottish road building programme would continue!

Unitary future The branch has written to all the new unitary authorities suggesting that they should endeavour to continue the current Region-wide transport policies by forming joint committees for transport purposes where regions are broken up. We have also suggested they should give priority to rail investment over road building. We also hope that many of them will affiliate to RDS to replace the 17 district councils whose affiliations we will lose.

London and Home Counties

By Simon Martin

Ghost train The branch provided half the ghosts when the Save our Railways group highlighted the ludicrous one-train-a-day service on the Seven Sisters-Stratford route. Great fun was had by all – and lots of local news coverage attracted. We also hope to support an event at Aldwych on 4 September commemorating a year since the line was shut.

Way forward The new Association of London Government has started a debate on a Passenger Transport Authority for London. Given that the branch already supports a PTA for Heathrow, we will be watching this debate closely and contributing as soon

as we can. Local control of services in London is now so poor that a PTA is the only way to restore faith in public transport in the capital.

Network card At the time of writing, urgent meetings to discuss Anglia's pull-out of the Network Card are being sought. The card is a fine legacy from Network SouthEast and a great success. However, it can only really survive if the whole of ex-NSE stays in. Anglia will not be thanked if it is the train operator that kills the card. **Chelsea-Hackney** The branch has submitted a response to this and argued for the retention of Central London stations. We will watch what happens and hope to meet the project team in the future.

West London line The good news is that White City will be getting its station on the West London line. It's not nearly enough but it's a start. Many congratulations to the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham for ensuring that the improvement is linked to bus and cycling routes.

Timetable madness Chiltern Trains took off the trains that stopped at Sudbury Hill and Harrow Road Stations between 8 and 9am. Given that these stations are rush-hour services only the long-term future of these services must be in doubt. Lots of unfavourable coverage and a campaign by Brent has left Chiltern unmoved. We will be leafleting and hope to have a public meeting before September is out. The Branch will be looking at restructuring to give users from Marylebone and Paddington a higher priority than presently. Any member interested in helping is welcome to get in touch with me.

The Essex Metro Never heard of it? Well you soon will, the branch's new anti-M25 leaflet looks at the service which could be developed as an orbital alternative to the M25 North East corner. As a part of this we are discussing the possible reopening of Tilbury Riverside – which LTS have not dismissed.

Yorkshire

By James Towler



From the Horse's Mouth Privatisation has proved to be a more complex task than first forecast, with the Government's timetable proving to be very demanding. Within BR, change management teams are in place in all the major businesses, but policy guidelines can only be developed and agreed at HQ level [in consultation with the Department of Transport, the Regulator, the Franchise Director and Railtrack]. Early experience with the contract 'templates' so far developed makes clear that there will be a much larger requirement for HQ policy guidance and clearance of major contracts than previously anticipated in order to meet the timetable. [Extract from Vacancies at British Rail]

Up and running Our June quarterly meeting was held in Ilkley and provided an

opportunity for members to sample the "new" electric service from Leeds. The general consensus was that the refurbished 30-year plus 308s provided a better, if rather solid, ride; although a minority preferred the eight-year old 144 Pacers they have replaced. However, there was unanimity that new ABB [York] or Hunslet [Leeds] electric multiple units were the real answer.

Sauna Travel You cannot beat travel in an air-conditioned railway coach on a hot summer day – when it's working! Unfortunately both Mk 4 coaches and 158 DMUs have been beset with air-conditioning problems. We have taken these up with East Coast and Regional Railways. East Coast reports that in resolving one problem, it has unearthed another. RR accepts that units fitted to the 158s have "suffered from some design and durability problems" and they are fitting modified equipment which should improve performance.

Crystal clear First the good news. Regional Railways North East has won the Plain English Campaign's 'Crystal Mark' for clarity for its Hull-Selby-York/Leeds pocket timetable. The bad news is that a handful of stations and over two dozen trains are omitted. The Selby and District Rail Users Group complained to RR North East only to be told that they were "out of step" with customer requirements. "We have found people want the straightforward version we have published," says RRNE. Even though it omits over half-a-dozen stations and 26 trains? Come on, pull the other one!

It's Not Me Guv! It's becoming increasingly hard to pin anyone down in our increasingly fragmented railway. Take the case of the withdrawal of the 0849 Doncaster arrival from Lincoln [and its return working] which represents an 11% cut in services on the line. We took this up with the North East Rail Users Consultative Committee. It had not been told of the withdrawal during timetable consultations. The matter was considered at their quarterly meeting when the RRNE representative responded: "Sorry, it's nothing to do with us. It's a Regional Railways Central train!"

South Wales

By Peter Clark

Crossed lines: RDS sprang to the defence of rail users and rail businesses when a fatal level-crossing accident prompted further calls for all open crossings in Wales to be provided with barriers. The driver of the car involved in the accident said afterwards that he had seen flashing red lights but had no idea what they meant! RDS pointed out that if Railtrack is forced to provide more barriers, it will pass on the costs to train operating units, which will raise fares. This will encourage more people to use the roads, which are infinitely more dangerous. Instead, any improvements to level crossings (largely for the benefit of drivers who ignore the Highway Code) should be paid for from the bottomless highways purse. Regional Railways South Wales and West said providing more barriers could push up rail fares and such action would have to be thought through

very carefully on lines such as the Heart of Wales route. Regional said British Transport Police had surveyed a barriered crossing at Cardiff for four days - and counted 60 motorists ignoring the lights!

Bay watch RDS warnings about delays to light rail in the Cardiff Bay development zone was delivered free to 100,000 homes in the Welsh capital, thanks to a local free paper! We said work was proceeding on the massive development with no sign of work on a light rail system, which all sides have agreed is essential. We warned that if good public transport wasn't provided at the outset, thousands of extra commuters would jam Cardiff's roads, and people in the Valleys - where the closure of coal mines has resulted in mass unemployment - would not be able to take jobs there.

Points west Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers' Association, affiliated to RDS, has organised a real ale rail trail along the Whitland to Pembroke Dock line. One pub is taking part at each of the route's 10 stations, and drinkers get the landlord's signature on a card when they produce the rail ticket they used to travel to the pub. When the card is filled with 10 signatures, participants are given a certificate by the Campaign for Real Ale, co-organiser of the trail. The cards can then be sent to Regional Railways for entry in a free draw, the prizes for which are two return tickets to the beer festival in Olympia, London, and to London for Christmas shopping. As well as encouraging greater use of this rural line, the ale trail could also cut down on drink-driving.

Feed me ever more Three experimental rail feeder buses in West Glamorgan are to be withdrawn because of poor usage. The decision was taken two months after RDS claimed, through local media, that BR had not played ball. The county council was paying to provide buses to link with trains at Swansea, Neath and Maesteg, but BR had failed to mention them in pocket timetables, on TV monitor screens and in tannoy announcements. Many travellers at Swansea station were not aware of the bus because BR had not provided direction signs to the bus stop around the side of the station. The buses are included in the summer pocket timetables but this came too late to make amends, the decision to withdraw them being based on the first nine months performance. This was disappointing news, especially as several feeder buses (including the one from Caerau to Maesteg station) continue to thrive in Mid Glamorgan.

44-tonner alert Rail users may have to pay for roads to be prepared for 44-tonne lorries, RDS warned in a press release. Strengthening road-over-rail bridges ready for the widespread unleashing of 44-tonne lorries will cost about £400 million and Railtrack is expected to foot the bill in part. We warned that such expenditure could put services at risk in Wales and other parts of Britain and force up fares. Rail-freight customers could see higher prices as they paid indirectly for measures to make road haulage more competitive.

Pedal power More than 500,000 cycling tourists are expected to pedal in Wales once a cycle path from Holyhead to Cardiff and Chepstow is complete, according to the

Wales Tourist Board. But RDS wrote to the board urging it to press the train operators for changes to their unwelcoming attitudes towards cyclists. If more cyclists aren't carried on the trains, many people will be put off coming to Wales, rural roads would see traffic problems worsen, and quiet country railways would lose out on valuable income.

North Wales

By Dave Sallery



Ban killer bars Liberal democrat MP Paul Flynn (Newport West) asks for our help in getting bull bars banned from four-wheel drive road vehicles. He says Parliament can save dozens of lives and avoid hundreds of serious accidents by banning the bars. These macho fashion accessories have some use on farms but they should be removed on public roads where they become bully bars or killer bars. Research from Britain and four other countries prove that vehicles with front bull or nudge bars turn slight accidents into crippling ones, and serious accidents into fatal ones. The Government says it would like a ban but European rules forbid it. Another excuse for inaction. Only persistent pressure will force the Government to act. Write to Mr Flynn at the House of Commons or ring him on 0171 219 3478 if you know of accidents involving bull bars.

Bridge bashing A driver who hit the railway bridge at Cefn-y-bedd with an empty coach, ripping its roof off, was fined £60 for careless driving. Despite having nine penalty points on his licence, magistrates decided against a ban after accepting that it would cause hardship!

Shunting crash A careless shunting accident in May resulted in damage to a Class 153, a 156, and two Class 158s at Holyhead. Damage was so severe the vehicles had to be removed by road. Hasty redrawing of diagrams was needed.

Docking time Stena Sealink have had to alter docking times for their catamaran Sea Lynx II because of construction work in the harbour. As a result several Regional Railways boat trains have been hastily retimed.

Causeway danger Transport police have had to deal with a serious problem on the causeway between Anglesey and Holy Island. The attractiveness of the tidal race to canoeists has resulted in large numbers walking along the main line to the centre of

the causeway complete with canoes! Largest number reported was 85 on a Sunday morning. In a separate move, two Regional Railways train drivers are visiting Holiday & Caravan sites in the Rhyl area to warn of the dangers of trespassing and crossing rail lines.

Cheers A new bistro style complex has been opened on the recently modernised Chester station.

Greedy roads 79,000 new vehicles were registered on Welsh roads last year. The average household spent £33 a week on motoring compared to £4.66 on fares and other travel. Total spending on roads in 1993/94 was £500 million or £172 per head of the population.

Royal Rhyl The new station complex was opened by Prince Charles on 23 July.

Long march The rail users group are fighting plans for developers to move Wrexham Central station a quarter of a mile away from the town centre.

Mid Wales

By Chris Magner

Flying the kite A new logo based on a red kite has been produced to promote the Heart of Wales line. The line takes people to one of the few places in Britain where the rare kite can be seen. Full colour adverts were also published in the tourist press as Regional Railways South Wales and West sought to raise people's awareness of this unique line. The operator also produced a colour folder for the special Rambler Sunday trains.

Station blossoms The Friends of Llantwyt Wells Station Action group have played a key role in the restoration of their station with new cast iron signs and flower beds on the platforms. At the ceremony in June to mark the work, a tree was also planted in memory of Graham Nuttall and his dog Ruswarp who both achieved fame in the fight to save the Settle-Carlisle line. Rambler Graham was found dead in 1990 at the Devil's Staircase by Abergwesyn after a walk near the Heart of Wales line. Ruswarp remained with Graham's body until it was found. The Ramblers Association is organising autumn and winter Wales Rail outings, using lines radiating from Shrewsbury. Leaflets are available from stations in the area and tourist offices.

Euro route Dyfed County Council is paying £10,000 for a survey into the viability of upgrading the 80mph Aberystwyth to Birmingham line for 90mph running. It could be eligible for European grants.

Integrated transport Work starts this month on redevelopment at Aberystwyth station which will provide a four-unit retail park, a bus terminus and extra car parking.

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. All the above prices include postage.

East Anglia

By Trevor Garrod and Nick Dibben

Network effect We are pleased that the Anglia has taken on board our suggestion and included in its summer timetable booklet the Norwich-Ely line operated by Regional Railways Central and given more information about the rest of the network. The *Anglia Plus* range of tickets, which give good value on the Anglia network in Norfolk and Suffolk, are also valid on Central's services between Norwich and Thetford. This may not have been what the architects of privatisation had in mind, but it is a step away from fragmentation of the network. This fragmentation also led to Thetford having no London Saver tickets, but pressure by our affiliated Breckland Rail Users' Association has led to this facility being restored.

Norwich General Secretary Trevor Garrod will be one of the speakers at a public meeting called by the Norwich Road Action Group on Future Transport Strategy and the Economy. Other speakers include Andrew Pharaoh of the roads lobby, who may well claim again that new roads are needed to create jobs, and John Stewart of ALARM UK, which has mounted a high-profile campaign against multi-million pound road schemes. The meeting will be on Friday 10 November at 7.30pm in the Friends Meeting House, Lower Goat Lane, Norwich. For further details, contact Denis Carlo, 213 College Road, Norwich, NR2 3JD Tel: 01603 504563.

Pedal power Saturday 24 June was cool and damp but Ray King, Rob Archer, Alexander King, Clara Zilahi and Trevor Garrod took part in our sponsored ride to Dereham where they met members of the Mid Norfolk Railway Society restoring the station building. Trevor Garrod raised £135, £70 of which has gone to the Mid Norfolk and the rest to the RDS Rail Defence Fund. Clara Zilahi raised £160, half of which has gone to the Rail Defence Fund.

Leaflet A colourful leaflet was published by Sudbury Rail Alliance following its successful campaign to secure a summer Sunday service on the Sudbury branch. RDS helped towards the cost.

East-West Link The branch, with the help of National Draw funds, has produced an eight-page report outlining proposals for a direct East-West rail route linking Ipswich and Norwich to Oxford and Bristol. The route would use a mixture of upgraded existing lines, reopening of freight lines and new construction. The report notes that there is currently no direct rail link between a number of rapidly growing districts such as Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford. The line would enable a rail journey from Norwich to Oxford in under 2.5 hours compared with nearly 4 hours at present. In addition to passenger traffic, the route could provide an alternative freight route from the East Anglian ports avoiding the congested North London Line.

The launch of the report was reported in a number of regional newspapers and several interviews were done for local radio stations. A consortium of local authorities, lead by Ipswich Borough Council, has been

created and they have appointed consultants to carry out a study looking at a number of alternative routes.

Out and about The branch sales team was active this summer attending events at Histon, St Ives, Brandon and Colchester. A large number of National Draw tickets, cakes and RDS books were sold and there were some lively discussions on rail issues. At the Histon Fayre, RDS chairman Steve Wilkinson's entry won the duck race!

Hop on a train This was the slogan used on a branch leaflet distributed to several thousand homes served by the Cambridge-Royston line. The leaflet, produced with financial help from West Anglia Great Northern Railway, highlights the traffic problems in Cambridge and sets out the benefits of train travel. Train times and fare information are also included.

New station proposed A new station at Cherry Hinton on the Cambridge to Ipswich line is planned for October next year by Cambridgeshire County Council. The £360,000 station will have a two-car platform with parking facilities for the disabled. It will be the first reopened station in the county. Studies are continuing on other stations in the Cambridge area including the reopening of the St Ives line.

North West

By Robert
Cummings



More complaints A disturbing 23% increase in the number of complaints was reported in the annual report of the Rail Users' Consultative Committee for North West England. Once again punctuality and reliability of rail services have been the chief causes of complaint and these categories show an increase of 25%. Local services have borne the brunt of the complaints. Greater Manchester's local trains have triggered Passengers' Charter refunds for most of the year. However the majority of journeys are within the Passenger Transport Authority area and therefore ineligible. Merseyrail has been christened "Miseryrail" by the local press!

Improvements please "There will be huge benefit if the traffic lost to roads in recent years could be brought back to the railway", said RUCC chairman Howard Middleton. "To achieve this, services must be improved and provided at a competitive price. Privatisation, which some perceive as a threat to services, also represents a major opportunity for improvement. The rail passenger will only consider it a success if standards are seen to be improved."

Funding uncertainty Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority has advised its executive to give notice that it is withdrawing from the agreement made under Section 20 of the 1968 Transport Act to support rail services in the conurbation. The finance for this support is raised by a levy on the 10 district councils in Greater

Manchester. The cost of supporting local rail services was £46 million in 1993/94, but as a consequence of the Railways Act, it rose to £95 million in 1994/95. During the present financial year the increased cost has been met directly from the Government's Metropolitan Railways Grant paid to GMPTA and has not significantly affected the process of negotiating the levy with Manchester's districts. The Government has said the Metropolitan Railways Grant will not be available after 31 March 1996 and instead it will be providing the districts with additional finance in order to meet an increased levy from GMPTA. Given adverse publicity for the generally poor reliability of rail services in Greater Manchester, and the continuing pressure on local authorities to reduce expenditure on key services such as social services and education, the Passenger Transport Authority has taken the view that it cannot take an informed decision about the level of revenue it could pass over to its Executive for Section 20 grant in 1996/97, and has therefore given notice that it is to withdraw from the agreement. The branch, along with user groups, is opposed to the withdrawal and at any suggestion that the Franchise Director should determine services levels and fares.

Fares reduced In an experiment designed to improve patronage on rural rail services, Regional Railways North West have reduced fares on the Wrexham to Bidston and West Cumbria lines, in some cases by 50%. If successful it is hoped that the scheme can be extended to other lightly used routes.

Free for bikes Since the introduction of the summer timetable, bicycles have been carried free of charge on all services operated by Regional Railways North West, subject to space being available. Express services on the North Wales Coast and Manchester Airport to Barrow and Windermere routes still require a reservation but this is also free of charge. Regional Railways NW are to be congratulated.

Victory for public transport Chris Davies, the Liberal Democrat victor at the Littleborough and Saddleworth by-election made railways one of the major issues during the campaign and carried out a survey of users in the constituency that showed that passengers thought services were unreliable and expensive, that money should be invested in rail not road and a huge majority were opposed to privatisation of Railtrack. Mr Davies is a member of the Support The Oldham, Rochdale, Manchester railway (STORM) and should be a useful pro-rail voice in Parliament.

Future meetings 26 September, Royal Station Hotel, Camforth. Speakers from Lancashire County Council at 1400. 25 November, Crewe Arms, Crewe. 27 January, Central Library, St. Peter's Square, Manchester. All meetings start at 1100.

Lincolnshire

By Paul Jowett

Bustitution Trains to Skegness were so popular on summer Saturdays that buses had to take the excess passengers. Rail customers want to travel on trains not buses, train operators should be running

Keeping in line with the world

By John Barfield

RDS is now able to use Eurostar trains as well as the post, phones, fax and Email to keep in touch with rail campaigners throughout the world.

A delegation from RDS travelled from Waterloo to Brussels on 10 July to meet officials of Transport Commissioner Neil Kinnock's office and the European Commission's Directorate General VII which also has responsibility for transport. A report of the meeting appears on the back page.

The meeting was organised by the RDS International and European Union committee which has an ambitious work programme for 1995/6.

The committee together with general secretary Trevor Garrod have also had the pleasure of meeting Jean Macheras and Simone Bigorne from our sister organisation (in France) FNAUT. The French pair took the opportunity to discuss matters of mutual interest while on holiday in Britain.

On the more formal front we are well into our consultation with RDS branches on rail access to airports. It is hoped to produce a policy document in the autumn.

Our first round of meetings with BR International, and the individual train operators involved in providing rail services to the Continent, is now almost complete.

We are still in regular contact with campaigners in America where reports on the future of Amtrak are worrying.

The international committee is just one of several specialist committees which enable RDS to be an effective campaigning voice.

A chance to be active

If you would like to become more involved with any of the committees, have ideas to offer or want to know more about the way we work, a national members' meeting is being planned for Saturday 4 November at Dr Johnson House, Birmingham from 1330 to 1630. Details from Alan Bevan, 12 Morris Field Croft, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 0RN. Tel 0121 745 6001

Aslef strikes

RDS national officers wrote to the key players in the dispute during July, urging a negotiated settlement.

We said that, if necessary, the matter must be referred to an independent arbitrator whose decision would be binding on all parties - the union, British Railways Board and the Government.

We are pleased that the parties to the dispute kept talking and that, after two strike days, the action was suspended.

Some of the media and politicians made a lot of fuss about "a third summer of chaos" caused by the train drivers' action.

In some areas, more chaos was caused by lineside fires putting signalling out of action and trains being cancelled because of mechanical faults or staff shortages. Unfortunately many commentators are only interested in making propaganda.

trains not buses and the Government should be ensuring adequate resources are given to the railways to relieve road congestion, not exacerbate it.

Charter mark By contrast, high track charges resulted in no summer charter trains to Skegness and no extra bank holiday trains. The price for privatisation.

Stopping dilemma People wanting to get to work and school by train are suffering as Regional Railways Central try to provide both a fast Crewe to Skegness and a useful local service. Haverhouse, Heckington and Wainfleet have lost train stops, along with Bingham, Bottesford and Radcliffe in the Nottingham commuter area. Meanwhile some of the stations along the line seem to have stops which serve no purpose, a "token ghost" service.

Too late now Customer confidence has been damaged by the loss of early and late trains on the Lincoln-Doncaster line and tea-time cuts on the Sleaford-Boston line. Improvements are possible in May but in the meantime customers, including season tickets, have lost faith.

Spur to action The local users group (SELTA) has suggested ways to improve safety and boost the number of Crewe-Skegness trains calling at Grantham, including providing a spur line at Allington junction. Regional Railways Central needs more trains and the resources to run them although part of the problem is that the East Coast main line is so busy there are no slots for Central between 0755 and 0857. The spur would allow trains to get to Grantham without going on the main line.

Market forces Central is likely to boost the service on the Lincoln-Peterborough line in May and, we hope, market it better. Pinchbeck and Donington stations should be reopened even though Railtrack has abandoned its resignalling plans.

Saturday service! Occasional power station fuel oil trains and Immingham chemical tank trains continue to augment the sparse three-trains each way Saturdays-only passenger service on the Gainsborough-Barnetby line. The four signal boxes are closed during the week so for six days of the week the line is closed. Relief signal staff provide the cover on Saturdays. The line needs all the publicity it can get but it has been omitted from the otherwise excellent map in the county council's Rail Times Book.

Hopeful strategy The new county strategy for transport published in June successfully identifies existing freight flows. The plan calls for more traffic to be switched to rail, but unless counties have a stronger say in what the new privatised companies do, the wishes will remain unfulfilled. Doubts are also voiced about the long-term future of rural services as costs become more "transparent" and the current government's funding arrangements become tighter.

North East

By Gordon Barclay and Peter Atkinson

SLUG The Saltburn Line has a new users group which gives them the title SLUG. The aim is to improve train frequencies and the condition of stations. For more information, contact Frank Maidens at 1 Leven Street, Saltburn, Cleveland TS12 1JY.

Thanks United Richmond and Dales bus services have been re-routed by United to call at Darlington's InterCity station following lobbying by branch members. The council has provided bus timetable information at the station.

Leamside limbo Railtrack is to retain the infrastructure of the Pelaw-Tursdale line intact for possible future use. Branch member Frank Storr has drawn up an information paper and hopes to set up a working party to explore the possibility of reopening.

Reopening hope New housing developments along the freight-only Ashington-Newcastle line could pave the way for its reopening to passengers. The European Union is to be asked by Northumberland County Council to fund a feasibility study.

Rail power A new coal unloading facility has been installed at Lynemouth to serve the Alcan power station. This should remove dozens of lorry movements from open cast sites to the power plant.

Sunday specials A tourist service on Sundays and bank holidays is being run again by Northumbria Buses from Newcastle Central station to Rothbury via several tourist attractions. Details 0191 232 4211.

New faces Peter Atkinson of 7 Orange Grove, Whickham, Tyne and Wear NE16 4TA is the new branch secretary. Robert Murrell has joined the committee as assistant chairperson.

Berwick blow People living in Berwick-upon-Tweed have been badly affected by Regional Railways North East's withdrawal from the town, leaving it exclusively to InterCity. The few remaining local trains north of Morpeth are now cut back to Chathill. At least one person has had to give up her job in Morpeth as a result.

Rail guides

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

Three for rail

Autumn bargain. Get the three leading RDS campaign books for £3 - Fighting for Rail, Who Should Run Our Railways and Rail for the Future.

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.

Go with Doe

Doe's Bus/Rail Guide Send £6 to receive the latest edition.

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

WESTMINSTER

Rail Franchises

In answer to a question from **Glenda Jackson** (Lab, Hampstead & Highgate) concerning bids from foreign operators, Minister for Railways and Roads **John Watts** replied: "There are no restrictions preventing foreign national rail companies from bidding for franchises."

*No! Only for British ones! British Rail is excluded from bidding. Questioned by **Alan Beith** (Lib-Dem, Berwick-upon-Tweed) our "nice" Prime Minister said that job losses at ABB in York were no more the result of the privatisation programme than an attack of the measles.*

Mr Major has been PM for the past five years, during which the obsession for privatising the railway has been the main plank of Government public transport policy. Has Crossrail been built? Or the CTRL or Thameslink 2000? Has West Coast main line modernisation been carried out or the numerous light rail and rapid transport schemes so desperately needed, constructed? Orders for rolling stock for these schemes would have kept ABB in work.

***Harry Greenway** (Con Ealing N) wanted a debate about Chiltern Railway's proposed summer timetable in which the 5.18 train to Northolt Park in his constituency had been cut, together with "other highly popular trains at important periods". He complained of the deteriorating service to his constituents and wanted something done about it! Conservative MPs are obviously on a sharp learning curve, as they are finding out in a slow and painful manner that rail privatisation will result in their having no control over services. They will increasingly be given the "brush off", as Mr Greenway was on this occasion.*

Decline

Opening the Rail Services (Labour Opposition Day) debate on 17 May, Opposition spokesman **Michael Meacher**

(Lab, Oldham W) pointed out that rail investment of less than £500 million was less than half what was required to keep things as they are now. He quoted Sir Bob Reid, former BR Chairman: "To keep the railway in a good steady state, we need to be spending in the region of £900 million to £1 billion a year."

He said the decline in the railway was unprecedented for 50 years. Last year, for the first time since the war, there were no new orders for rolling stock. No new signalling or electrification projects were ordered in the two years to April 1994 and Railtrack had placed only one significant contract since being set up that month. Track renewal was at such a rate that rails would have to have a working life of 90 years!

The 10-year investment plan which Railtrack should have come up with ages ago is still not forthcoming.

Mr Meacher went on to state that 2,500 coaches and locomotives needed replacement in the near future yet no orders were being placed. The Kent Coast fleet had 475 carriages more than 40 years old. But ABB in York had been allowed to close. Contrast the situation in Germany where the huge rolling stock investment programme has been shared out among its manufacturers to keep them all open.

The statistics of decline were enumerated. In the past year 20,000 trains were cancelled. Overcrowding on some commuter routes in the South-East is over three times the limit set by the Hidden committee after the Clapham disaster. Out of 102 service groups following reorganisation for privatisation, two thirds did worse than the previous year for punctuality and reliability.

Mr Meacher pledged that Labour "would substantially increase investment in rail to make up for the huge decline in investment that has taken place for years under the policy of Conservative governments."

If we ever get a Labour Government, it would be wise to keep this quotation handy!

Mr Meacher also wanted to know how much extra subsidy would be required to pay for the capping of fares, but the then Transport Secretary **Brian Mawhinney** would not be drawn. Labour estimated this would be between £330 million and £500 million per annum.

An underestimate given the latest report from the Commons select committee on transport.

An important point that arose during the debate was whether the Franchising Director's budget was secure.

Mr Meacher alleged that, far from being guaranteed, services are distinctly tenuous because they are entirely dependent on the vagaries of Government budgeting.

Some things never change! Fares had been allowed to rise 22% above inflation in the past 10 years.

He said 88% of the electorate were opposed to the policy.

Public demand

Replying for the Government, Dr Mawhinney poured scorn on the Opposition's "accusations, allegations and predictions", giving as an example the question of through ticketing. He claimed that the Regulator's document detailing options was "consultative, and out of three options that was what the public said they wanted."

The public was hardly likely to opt for an arrangement that involved a two-hour car journey just to get a ticket!

Further ridiculing the idea that it would be difficult to find potential operators because of the fare capping announcement, Dr Mawhinney quoted a Mr Watt of British Bus: "We're assessing the bids or assessing the information that the Government are providing, and this is simply another parameter that comes into the whole bidding process."

British Bus subsequently pulled out of the bidding process. He quoted Ken Irvine, of Prism Development (another expert on railways) who thought there was scope for making profits through improved efficiency, better marketing and higher quality of service to the customer.

Dr Mawhinney explained that he could not say what extra subsidy would be involved in fare capping because we were in a competitive bidding process, (some would say rather a press gang!) and its effect would be to lower bids. He implied Labour members were too stupid to understand the "efficiencies" that would flow from moving to the private sector, "efficiencies" that

have emerged from past privatisations.

Doesn't he mean job cuts? It is already rumoured that in Railtrack, everyone will be expected to take a hand at the shovel when carrying out track repairs.

"The Opposition would decimate the road budget and put it into the railways," said the good doctor. *If only!*

Defending the style of privatisation, the Minister mentioned that German Railways "have split operation of track infrastructure from passenger and freight services", that Austrian Railways "were restructured in 1994 to separate infrastructure and train operations" and that Danish Railways have been organised into infrastructure, passenger and freight companies. "We are leading the world in separating infrastructure from the provision of services," trumpeted Dr Mawhinney!

But nobody is splitting their railway into 80 different bits.

Peter Snape (Lab West Bromwich E) said Dr Mawhinney's contribution had been a disgrace. He had not mentioned the railway's present or future state, he simply made a series of cheap jibes which were unworthy of a proper debate about the future of the railway industry.

Mr Snape quoted from Railway Industry Association reports that the privatisation process posed a severe threat to train builders but were told repeatedly by Government spokespersons, that no such threat existed. The latest paper submitted to the Government said: "Despite repeated past ministerial assurances that our anxiety over privatisation causing a hiatus in investment was unfounded, the opposite now seems to be accepted as inevitable."

Costs soar

"With all its faults, the privatisation process of public funding gave both the operational railway and the supply industry some basis on which to plan production and investment strategy."

Mr Snape gave instances where he said the new regime had increased costs.

Costs for Railtrack's site supervision and possession in the Contract for Five Ways station in Birmingham was now 48% of the total instead of 21%.

Electrification from Castlefield to Salford Crescent in Manchester now estimated at up to £5.8 million compared with £2 million. A waiting shelter for



EDITED BY MICHAEL WEINBERG

WATCH

Waterloo station on the Southport line, which would have been done in-house now attracts a design estimate from Railtrack of £53,000!

The original InterCity 250 project for the West Coast main line was costed at £750 million, including rolling stock. The latest estimate was £1 billion, excluding rolling stock.

Only our youngest members are now likely to see this project completed.

Mr Snape said that at his last meeting with the Minister of State concerning the West Coast main line he gained the impression the Minister did not think new trains were necessary.

Out of the total rail expenditure in 1994/5 of £1.1 billion, £500

million was connected with the channel tunnel. Ministers make much of the fact that this is still expenditure on railways.

However, much of the equipment bought with this money, which was after all ours, is to be handed over to whichever consortium can be persuaded to build the Channel Tunnel fast link. Taxpayers' money to develop a national asset such as our railway is one thing, but to use it to add to the profits of a private company, very likely foreign dominated anyway, is quite another.

Decisions needed

Proper decisions have yet to be taken on the West Coast main line, CrossRail, the Channel Tunnel fast link, and Thameslink 2000.

"All that work is crying out for decisions and investment, but there is no sign of the go-ahead in the department."

The contribution from **Dr Robert Spink** (Con Castle Point) epitomises the degree of muddled thinking which characterises so much of the Conservative case for this privatisation. He said he was born the same year the railways were nationalised, so he remembered it extremely well. *Precocious child, our Robert!* Since then £54 billion has been invested. But rail did not prosper; services were awful. They were unreliable. Management was pitiful and customer care was non-existent. The railways were run for the benefit of the unions and the workers, rather than for the benefit of the public.

Does he really classify money spent in the 1950s as 'investment' for today? Would he consider money spent resurfacing a road in 1950 as investment in roads? How much has been 'invested' in roads on this basis since 1948? The abysmal failure is the roads programme.

Turning to "his" line, the LT&S, he welcomed the excellent recent news for rail travellers.

Is this the completion of the new signalling system carried out at public expense?

He hopes the number of passengers will rise from the 22,000 today to beat the peak which was more than 30,000! *So it hasn't all been downhill under BR?*

Increasing passenger numbers can be achieved, according to Dr Spink by subsidising the fares! In addition there has been a continued improvement in service reliability "during the past two years."

This is remarkable says Dr Spink. "The line has suffered disruption as a result of an important resignalling investment. Despite such disruption, dramatic improvements have been achieved on the line."

Is he arguing for or against privatisation?

The Government (he means the taxpayer), has invested £150 million. It is delivering the goods. *As it would everywhere if the Government wasn't so obsessed with roads.*

He then looks forward to the 30-year-old trains being replaced by 10-year-old ones.

"All these factors will help to bring people back on to the line. Through ticketing is now offered by hundreds of stations, one of which is Benfleet, in my constituency. My constituents welcome that and are grateful to the Secretary of State."

Paul Tyler (Lib-Dem, N Cornwall) said there was evidence of the myriad ways in which the privatisation programme is devastating the network. He mentioned the case at Bury St Edmunds where trains to London via Cambridge are not in the timetable on the station. He considers this to be because of antagonism between Great Northern which operates the Cambridge route and Anglia which runs the Ipswich route.

Tim Smith (Con Beaconsfield) was pleased that the Chiltern Line's turnover was already



beginning to increase.

"The service is more responsive to customers and management from the private sector has been introduced."

"I believe the key management skill is marketing. With privatisation there is a real opportunity to increase sales." *The total route modernisation policy initiated by Chris Green has more to do with the increased revenue of the Chiltern line than private sector management.*

James Clappison (Con Hertsmere) complained that BR had put up car parking charges at Radlett by more than the rate of inflation. He called for greater sensitivity towards the needs of customers, which has been the characteristic of every other privatisation, so that the "imposition" on his hard-up constituents would be ended.

Radlett is one of the most affluent towns in Britain and hands up those who don't have to pay through the nose to park at the privatised BAA airports!

In a debate in the House of Lords on Transport Policies and the Environment on 7 June, there were contributions from seven Tory peers, four Lib-Dems, three crossbenchers and one Labour! Despite this the Government's policies were examined more assiduously than is usually the case in the Commons. It is disappointing, however, that so few Labour peers took part. Lord Berkeley, a crossbencher who is public affairs manager for Eurotunnel, said that in the first 10 years of high-speed train operation between Paris and Lyon, roughly the same distance as London to Manchester, rail traffic had increased by 80%.

Airport link

Questioned on 26 June, Mr Watts announced that the Manchester Airport southern spur rail link would be completed on 15 November. It was also revealed

that the deadline for bids to operate trains over the spur was 11 August, for inclusion in the May 1996 timetable.

Terry Lewis (Lab Worsley) wanted to know if a bid had been accepted by Railtrack and what track access charges had been agreed.

On being told that no bids had been accepted and no charges agreed, he enquired what level of service would be operated over the link from May 1996, which destinations would be covered and which train operators would be involved.

Mr Watts: "Commercial negotiations are still under way on these issues."

In other words we have a brand new rail line available in November, a unique event in itself, with absolutely no planned services ready to run over it!

Plea for jobless

In a 10-Minute Rule Bill on 11 July, **Hugh Bayley** (Lab York) pleaded for an enterprise agency to be set up to try to find employment for redundant rail workers.

He said: "Rail privatisation is still in its early stages, but already BR has made 13,600 workers redundant and thousands of other jobs have been lost in private sector rail manufacturing industries."

In his constituency alone 2,300 jobs have gone since 1992; 650 from BR and 1,650 from ABB.

During questions to Dr Mawhinney on 3 July, **David Sumberg** (Con Bury) advised the Secretary of State to abandon "the disastrous M62 relief road, which is causing havoc in my constituency, and where the management by his department is little short of disgraceful. Will he abandon the scheme sooner rather than later?"

Dr Mawhinney said a number of alternatives were still being explored.

COMMENT

Another year, another Transport Secretary. Dr Mawhinney has departed after only a year, and one of the few not destined to disappear into obscurity, at least not immediately! Since the Tories came to power in 1979, we have had 11 different Secretaries of State responsible for our railways. How many are remembered for any good they did the industry? Fowler, Howell, King, Ridley, Moore, Channon, Parkinson, Rifkind, MacGregor and Mawhinney. Names to conjure with. Can you

remember what most of them did, apart from relentlessly bowing to the roads lobby? The one who did the most damage? MacGregor, forcing through a reluctant Parliament and a sceptical electorate the chaotic privatisation process. Even Mrs Thatcher balked at that. The most arrogant? Mawhinney, like all of them knowing little about transport and even less about railways, but treating any opposing view to his own with contempt.

Where are they now?

Bankers in the driving seat

The extent of road lobby influence in Europe was revealed when a small RDS delegation went to Brussels in June to try to stimulate interest in rail development.

About 80% of European funds are spent on road building despite the fact that the Commission spends 80% of its own Trans European Network cash on rail and public transport.

This topsy-turvy world exists because the big money is distributed by European quangos and institutions controlled by vested interests, in the same way that the road lobby has controlled British transport policy for years.

We explained to Gert Koopman from Transport Commissioner Neil Kinnock's office that as far back as 1987 the then Transport Commissioner Stanley Clinton Davies had highlighted rail's energy, pollution and safety advantages and had called for financial values to be put on them so investments in rail could be properly judged against road building.

But those benefits were still not given proper financial and economic value in either Britain or Europe.

We said we were particularly worried about the effective hostility of the World Bank and the European Investment Bank to rail.

In 1994 for instance the World Bank claimed railways were a "macroeconomic and public finance problem". We said they were not a problem but the potential solution to a large number of problems. It was roads that created problems, including finance, pollution, and health.

In Britain, rail projects are only granted section 56 funding on the basis of the external benefits. But those external benefits are not quantified. Yet another Catch 22 for rail. We called for research into how rail could be given its proper financial and economic benefits.

We also pointed out that road building was justified on the spurious grounds of generating economic activity and was as a result granted funds from the regional, cohesion and structural funds. We pointed out that



This way forward: RDS stalwart John Barfield on his way to Brussels points out the advantages and stylish lines of a Eurostar train at Waterloo International

in 1994 the EIB lent £1626 million for road and £438 million for rail schemes. The bank also finances the car industry, helping to build new factories in Italy and Germany.

The bank claims to have examined the economic and financial effects of its schemes but it does not seem to be concerned that when it helps build a road at public expense, it undermines the financial performance of the railway.

For instance it did not consider the effect of building a second Severn Bridge on the InterCity train service between London and South Wales. Nor did it consider the effect on the West Highland line of building the Skye road bridge. In Eastern Europe, the

bank is also funding large-scale road building, thus undermining the financial wellbeing of the railway services.

The cost benefit analysis system used to assess road schemes is biased in favour of roads. It ignores the impact of road projects on rail operators, public transport users, cyclists and pedestrians when road schemes almost always have a strong adverse effect.

Road schemes also generate big increases in health-related spending both for accident victims and victims of chronic ailments caused by pollution and noise.

Mr Koopman intervened to say that he agreed with much of what we were saying and said the European Commission had moved quite a long way to address some of the problems.

He admitted that the direct Commission funds would form only a small percentage of the Trans European Network projects overall budget and that member states also had enormous scope to make their own impact. But he said Europe was attempting to come to grips with transport costs and benefits and a green paper would be published in the autumn dealing with the external costs of transport. He invited RDS to present evidence for that as soon as possible. The Citizens Network paper which aimed to increase public involvement in transport planning would also be made

public in the autumn. We were invited to submit evidence quickly and told that our east-West links campaign could be important.

We asked the commission to consider doing research into the spurious claims of road building as an economic generator.

Under the state aids framework, there were opportunities for regional governments to fund local rail schemes, something which was receiving strong support in France and Germany but the regime in the UK was not supportive.

The RDS delegation of international committee secretary John Barfield, vice chairman Ray King and Richard MacQueen also raised the issues of VAT, additionality, piggyback freight, the Channel Tunnel fast link, links to Ireland and gauge enlargement, interoperability, competition law, open access, and pollution.

We also established contact with the European Federation for Transport and the Environment.

Heathrow Express

The managing director of Heathrow Express will give a talk to the National Council for Inland Transport on Saturday 28 October at the Free Church Federal Council at 27 Tavistock Square, London WC1 at 1500. RDS members welcome.

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