

New chance for rail

The collapse of Railtrack could give Government and the Strategic rail Authority the chance to take a more radical and positive approach to getting Britain back on track.

At a critical moment, the Strategic Rail Authority is being urged to reverse the Beeching era by restoring key links and returning major towns to the rail network.

The new study sponsored by Railfuture and five other bodies finds that putting the tracks back boosts regeneration and helps to boost the rail network generally.

The report *Beeching in Reverse - the case for a programme of line and station reopenings* identifies a number of schemes in the South East as leading contenders for reopening. They are:

- Bedford to Sandy
- Bicester to Bletchley
- Bletchley to Aylesbury
- Hythe to Southampton
- Lewes to Uckfield
- Princes Risborough to Aston Rowant
- Romsey to Eastleigh
- Shanklin to Ventnor
- Tunbridge Wells to Eridge
- Leighton Buzzard to Dunstable

However, the report stresses that this is not an exclusive list. There are many other contenders.

The report highlights the success in the 1980s of a programme of rail reopenings carried out by British Rail and local authorities.

It goes on to show that since privatisation the cost of such schemes has rocketed and the rate at which lines and stations have reopened has slumped. Although, with the creation of the Strategic Rail Authority, the pace has picked up again, there is still no national policy or programme for reopenings - and many viable schemes are stuck at the planning stage.

The report recommends that regional audits should be carried out to identify all towns of 20,000 or more without a direct rail service as a precursor to providing dedicated rail-link buses, or direct rail services.

The report also shows that the cost of bringing back the tracks is, in most cases, cheaper (mile for mile) than building major new roads.

"This report shows the extraordinary success of most of the lines and stations reopened during the eighties and nineties," said the report's author, Paul Salveson, director of the

Transport, Research and Information Network.

"From Mansfield to Maesteg and from Bathgate to Clitheroe passenger growth consistently exceeds expectations and the railway has not only taken traffic off the roads but also provided a valuable boost to local development.

"What's more the cost of these schemes comes in far cheaper than building new roads. What we need now is for the Government's Strategic Rail Authority to actively promote line and station openings as part of a programme to restore missing links and put back on the map the major towns that Dr Beeching left stranded."

Peter Lawrence, chairman of Railfuture, said: "At a time of concerns on global warming, the requirement to reduce the use of fossil fuels and ever increasing road congestion, modal shift is becoming increasingly essential.

"In the view of Railfuture the reopening projects outlined in this publication are priority schemes to give greater access to rail and are a first step towards expanding the UK national rail system.

"It is clear there is a demand for more rail travel and the proposed schemes will increase journey opportunities for those wishing to use environmentally friendly public transport."

Stewart Francis, chairman of the Rail Passengers Council, said: "While no one is suggesting that all the lines and stations closed by Dr Beeching should be restored there is a strong case for accelerating a targeted programme of selected schemes.

"At a time when the public is deeply sceptical about the future of the railways there can be no greater symbol for a wider rail revival than putting back the tracks to those towns for which there are viable and cost effective proposals."

Jonathan Bray, adviser to Transport 2000's Platform network and coordinator for the *Beeching in Reverse* report, said: "There are many parts of the country where the wounds inflicted by Dr Beeching's axe still haven't healed.

"From the Scottish Borders to Caernarfon, and from Ebbw Vale to Swanage there are viable schemes, strongly supported by the local community, to restore their connection to the rail network.

"If the Strategic Rail Authority and the Government want to demon-

strate that they are serious about turning the railways around then a commitment to a staged programme of restoring key rail links will do wonders for their reputation."

The report was followed up by a conference in Nottingham. The report is supported by Railfuture, the Rail Passengers Council, Platform (Transport 2000's rail campaign and information network), The Railway Forum, Plymouth City Council and the Association of Community Rail Partnerships. Funding has largely been provided by the RPC and the project was coordinated by Platform.

Copies of *Beeching in Reverse* have been widely circulated to the rail industry, politicians and the media. Additional copies can be obtained from TR&IN, Brian Jackson Centre, New North Parade, Huddersfield HD1 5JP for £10 (£6 for rail user groups) including postage and packing.

For more information (and contacts for local reopening campaigns) contact:

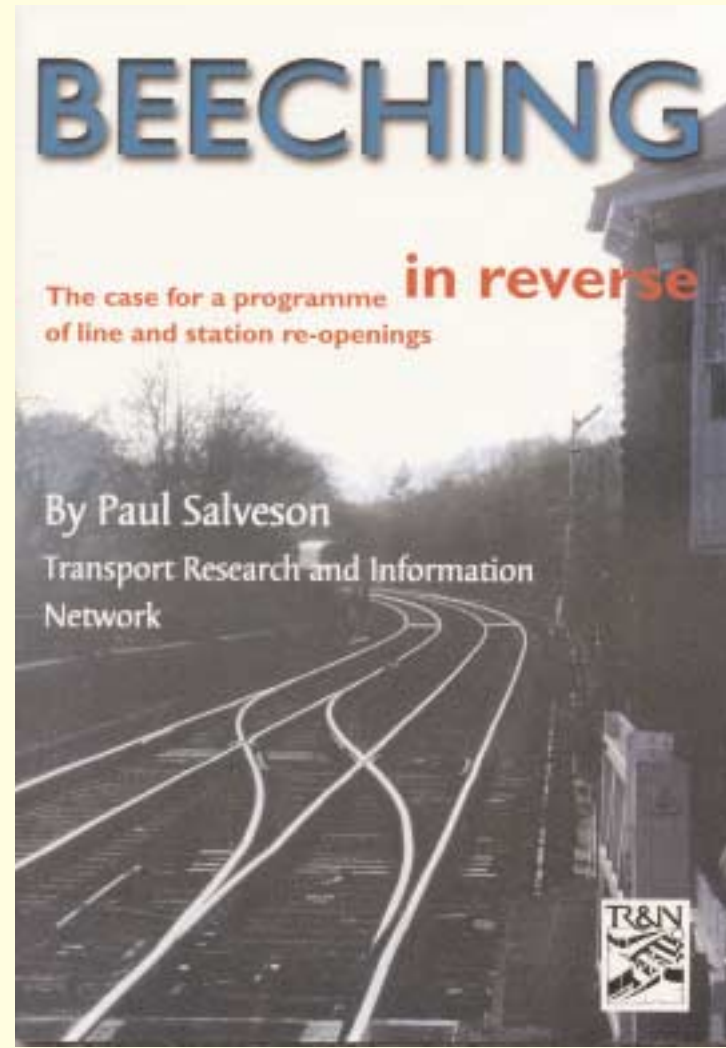
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By Simon Hope

I fully support efforts to put Beeching in reverse but Dr Richard Beeching was not responsible for all line and station closures.

The process actually began in the 1920s and many of the lines closed as a result of the 1963 Beeching report were already in a sorry state because of a consistent lack of investment, followed by some misguided investment under the 1955 modernisation plan.

In addition, local passenger rail services were not properly publicised and cost-cutting as a way of making services more viable was neglected.

With the lack of a coherent national strategy, it was not surprising that the Ministry of Transport concentrated its efforts on gearing up for the "motor age" with massive road investment with all its sad consequences.

While many railway officials of that time who bore a heavy responsibility escaped public scrutiny, Beeching became a scapegoat for serious errors of judgment made prior to his period as chairman of BR from 1961-65.

To take the map of Herefordshire published in *Railwatch 89*, only seven of the stations were closed during the Beeching era, while 50 were closed before Dr

Beeching swung his axe and nine of those were closed before nationalisation in 1948.

Nine stretches of the track shown on the map were closed before Beeching, while only one was as a result of the 1963 Beeching report.

Nationally a total of 2,355 stations closed between 1948 and 1962, while 1,630 stations closed between 1963 and 1969.

Dr Beeching found guilty but only just!

By Paul Salveson

The Trial of Dr Beeching, at Nottingham's Galleries of Justice on 26 September proved to be a close run thing.

By a narrow margin (involving two recounts) the audience/jury found Dr Beeching guilty of "wilful failure to take into account the transport needs of future generations".

He was sentenced to be detained at Her Majesty's pleasure at Riccarton Junction, pending the arrival of the next train to Carlisle. This could be some time.

Dr Beeching, played by Brian Barnsley, erstwhile music organiser of the Penistone Line Partnership, put up a chilling performance which won him little sympathy from the more sceptical members of the audience/jury.

However, he was brilliantly defended by Allan Dare, who

in real life is business development manager for Chiltern Railways. The noted railway historian Martin Bairstow spoke for the prosecution. Mr Henry Lewis cut a splendid figure as judge.

"This was debate on a very high level," said Dr Paul Salveson of TR&IN, which organised the trial, and the following day's conference on railway re-openings, *Beeching in Reverse*.

The trial was intended as a bit of light entertainment for delegates attending the conference, but it turned into a fascinating discussion of the rights and wrongs of transport policy in the 1960s, and its continuing impact on today's policy and practice.

The conference highlighted the findings of the new report *Beeching in Reverse* by TR&IN on railway reopenings, and also heard presentations on reopenings in Northern Ireland and the Robin Hood Line and new stations on Merseyside. The proposed reopening of the Waverley Line, from Edinburgh to Carlisle, was also featured.

TR&IN also staged a conference on Regional Rail on 21 November at the National Railway Museum, York. The theme was railways and regeneration and heard presentations on Sunderland Direct, regeneration along the Durham Coast Line, the Ebbw Vale re-opening and the sustainable branch line. Keynote speaker was Adrian Lyons, director-general of the Railway Forum.

Map by Rail for Herefordshire Closure data by Simon Hope

When those lines closed

Route	Mileage	Closed	Company
New Radnor-Kington	6.5	1951	BTC
Kington-Leominster	13.75	1955	BTC
Presteigne-Titley	5.75	1951	BTC
Eardisley-Titley	7	1940	GWR
Hereford-Brecon/			
Talybont-on-Usk	41.25	1962	BTC/BR
Hay-on-Wye-Pontrilas	18.75	1941	GWR
Hereford-Colwall	17.75		
...Withington		1961	BTC
...Stoke Edith		1965	BR*
...Ashperton		1965	BR*
Leominster-Bromyard	13	1952	BTC
Newnham Br- Woofferton J	8.5	1962	BTC/BR
Newent-Ledbury	13.5	1959	BTC
Ludlow-Hereford	23.5		
Woofferton J		1961	BTC
...Berrington & Eye		1958	BTC
Ford Bridge		1954	BTC
...Dinmore		1958	BTC
Moreton-on-Lugg		1958	BTC
Hereford-Ross-on-Wye	12	1964	BR*
Hereford-Pepergwym	26.75	1958	BTC

BR* = British Railways Beeching era
BTC = British Transport Commission
GWR = Great Western Railway

Herefordshire: Lines and Stations 2000



Herefordshire

Rail lines closed

Before BR	25.75 miles
BR Pre-Beeching	102.25 miles
Beeching	12 miles
Open in 2001	68 miles