

RDS Railwatch

A VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

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60p

SAVED! But it was a long drag



The majesty of Ribbleshead with Flying Scotsman pulling a special charter train in 1983.

By RICHARD WATTS

The bells of Settle church rang out in celebration when the eight-year fight to save England's most scenic railway line ended in victory.

As the champagne bottles were uncorked, fears of privatisation faded. Yet only the day before the decision was announced, informed opinion said the line was going to be sold.

The about-turn was fantastic news for everyone who had been campaigning, as well as vindication for 32,000 objectors and a howl of protest from Ruswarp the dog. A vote of thanks is due to all RDS members who contributed support and enthusiasm and made it possible to thwart BR's plans for closure by stealth.

The S&C rundown was a classic case, with strong parallels to the current wrangle over Gainsborough Barnetby. BR thought it had entered the final act in 1982 when it diverted the Nottingham Glasgow express services away, leaving a rump two trains a day between Leeds and Carlisle.

Such was the timing of these trains that few passengers were able to use them and even fewer able to object if they were withdrawn. But the tocsin had been sounded and in 1981, the Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line Association was set up, quickly followed by the Settle Carlisle Joint Action Committee. On behalf of RDS, I was to devote a considerable amount of time and energy to the JAC for the next six years.

BR must have had little idea how much passion would be unleashed when it began formal closure proposals in 1983. Perhaps its biggest error was to appoint Ron Cotton as closure manager. Ron's marketing abilities ensured that very soon there was a complete turnaround in the line's fortunes. Nevertheless the TUCC hearings went ahead, over 16 days in 1985, with hundreds of objectors presenting detailed evidence. The TUCC report eventually called on the Minister to reject BR's closure proposal. The Government unfortunately remained unconvinced with David Mitchell (Minister of State for Transport) dropping the bombshell that he was "minded" to close the line. Before reaching a final decision,

he asked the private sector to put in bids for its purchase.

Where had we gone wrong? Surely the evidence was enough to convince anyone that the line should be reprieved? But the logic did not appear to fit in with current political thought. The S&C was now being seen as a test case for privatisation.

The good news finally came on Tuesday April 11, 1989 with Secretary of State for Transport Paul Channon announcing that both the Settle Carlisle and Blackburn Hellifield lines had been reprieved.

The significance: Trevor Garrod writes on Page 3.

Picture yourself a winner

HOW would you like to see one of your photographs gracing a railway calendar? Now's your chance!

RDS is planning to produce a calendar with 12 of the best black-and-white pictures produced by members. The choice will be decided by a photographic contest.

First prize is £20, second prize £10, and third prize £5. The top 12 will each receive one free calendar which will be for 1991 but will go on sale in summer 1990.

RULES Photographs must be on the theme of rail development which may be inter-

preted freely. They can include people. The contest is open to any individual or family member as well as any member of an affiliated users' group.

All entries must be black and white prints with a one-sentence caption. No more than 10 photographs per person. RDS reserves right of publication. All entries must be received by no later than 31 December 1989.

Send entries to Nick Lewis, Photographic co-ordinator, 36 Common Road, Stotfold, Hitchin, Herts SG5 4DB.

What a choker

Attempts to make Strathclyde regional council reconsider its plan to build new roads have been brushed aside by its officials.

RDS official Helen Broadbent objected to new motorway proposals and gave details of how vehicle exhausts, particularly nitrous oxide, were contributing to the break-up of the ozone layer.

She told them: "Building new motorways is about as much out of touch with modern knowledge as building new factories to manufacture Thalidomide or teaching people to smoke cigarettes in schools, or restoring open sewers to the streets."

She urged Strathclyde to plan transport to reduce road traffic while encouraging walking, cycling, electric vehicles and public transport.

Strathclyde tried to wash its hands of these far-reaching problems by saying: "This is an issue for national government."

Helen has appealed to them therefore to

make representations to the government to reduce road building and introduce measures to cut road traffic.

Helen's position is supported by a report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development which has produced a report saying: "Transport and traffic management policies can make a significant contribution to pollution abatement and also produce many other transport and social benefits."

The report also warns of "new" pollutants, polycyclic organic matters, aromatic hydrocarbons, heavy metals, fibres such as asbestos from car brakes, emissions from fuel additives and the use of regenerated lubricants.

• The Scottish Green Party policy calls for a 55 mph road speed limit, sleeping policemen at blackspots and near schools, maximum lorry weight to be reduced to 20 tonnes, more cycle lanes and walking routes, investment in rural rail routes, new commuter stations, rail bridge over Dornoch and new rolling stock with proper facilities.

Mr Portillo promised that RDS would be consulted about planned changes to public transport grants (section 56).

Chairman Alan Bevan wrote a follow-up letter to Mr Portillo pointing out that road users do not pay for new roads and rail users alone should not have to pay for rail projects.

Freight users particularly were demanding grant rule changes which would meet that most common public cry: Put freight back on the railways. Alan also pointed out that specious figures about railway losses were all too often based on BR figures. Not long ago BR was claiming it would cost £5 million to repair Ribbleshead viaduct. Now it is £2 million. What will it be next week?

*****Cash in with RDS*****

The RDS lottery winners for March were 1 - Mr Ebbett, Bath £38.70; 2 - Mr Flowers, Grantham £19.24; 3 - Mr Savage, Cleethorpes £9.63 and Mr Mitchell £9.63 (Prize pool £77).

April: 1 - Mr Thornton, Stratford £39.50; 2 - Dr Berson, London WC1 £19.74; 3 - Mr P Smith, Blackburn £9.88 and Mr Strachan, Cheltenham £9.88 (Prize pool £79).

The winners for May were 1 - Reg Snow, Great Bookham £40; 2 - Mr B Walsh, Diss £20; 3 - Mr R Cummings, Cheadle Hulme £10; 4 - Mrs P Lean, Saltash £10. (Prize pool: £80)

The number of members joining the lottery has doubled in six months. You can be a winner too. Contact Dave Finch, 28 Neville Avenue, Kidderminster, Worcs, DY11 7AL.



What the papers say

The Swiss are rejecting threats from the Common Market to allow even more juggernauts in. They say freight traffic should go by rail, even if it means lorries being driven on to trains.

Railway Gazette International

Let's have a campaign for real trains which can carry bikes, prams and luggage.

letter in The Guardian

Why does BR build trains without cycle facilities when it knows there is a demand?

letter in The Guardian

The road lobby is to mount a legal challenge to London's night and weekend ban on juggernauts.

Evening Standard

There should be a £5 a day charge for using a car in central London, says the London Planning Advisory Committee.

Evening Standard

The only way to get London's traffic moving is to improve its railways.

Evening Standard

If BR is to be privatised, it should be operated as a wholly owned subsidiary of SNCF.

letter to Railway Gaz Int

A 21-year-old graffiti vandal was sentenced to two years jail after causing £4250 damage to Tube trains and stations.

Evening Standard

Stanley Baldwin was the last British Prime Minister to prefer the train to aircraft. Perhaps the 1930s weren't so bad.

Modern Tramway

After complaints about dangerously parked cars in the Upper Street area of Islington, London, police began towing cars away. They raised about £100,000 per month from the towaway fees.

Daily Cyclist

Muhammed Rahim was turned down for a BR job at Southend because he did not arrive for the interview on time. His train was on time at Bethnal Green, but an hour late into Southend.

Guardian

Despite small changes in the Budget, the attractiveness of the company car has hardly been undermined.

Financial Times

The benefit of public spending cuts have been more than offset by the paralysis caused by lack of investment in transport infrastructure.

Financial Times

TREVOR GARROD'S VIEW

The reprieve for the Settle Carlisle line is significant for rail users nationwide. First it shows a well-organised and well-researched campaign, cutting across party lines and mobilising thousands of people to lodge objections and sign petitions, can have results. Government policy and BR policy CAN be changed.

Second, we must be constructive along with the protests. Rail users have worked with local authorities, tourist bodies, commerce, industry and BR management to promote this line. Extra trains have been put on, closed stations have been reopened. Publicity for places of interest has been produced.

As a result, local commuter traffic has been boosted together with local and long-distance leisure travel. Paul Channon himself paid tribute to the way revenue has been increased.

Third the Settle Carlisle victory represents a setback for both the substitution and privatisation lobbies. The suggested bus services for this 72-mile line would have been very unattractive compared to trains. Hopes of a credible private buyer being found have come to nought.

Of course some private input is likely to be involved in promoting the line but partnership between BR and private firms is a very different matter to selling it off.

Let's aim for next success



Trevor Garrod

RDS was instrumental in setting up the Settle Carlisle Joint Action Committee five years ago and over £500 has been spent from our anti-closure fund to help local campaigners. Let's now aim for similar success in the fight to save Gainsborough Barnetby.

Guinness is good for us

By STEVE WILKINSON

Drinkers throughout Britain can toast Railfreight when they down their rich dark glasses of Guinness.

For the international drinks company despatches 145 million kegs of its brew each year by rail.

Yet only nine years ago, virtually none of the output from the Park Royal brewery in West London was on the rails. Its private siding was almost disused.

What a difference those years have made. Now 40 per cent of production is entrusted to Railfreight and the firm is pleased with a reliable service which road hauliers cannot match.

For instance, Monday night will see a trainload of Habbfins wagons, each carrying more than twice the load of a juggernaut, leave Park Royal.



By Tuesday the wagons - rented from Cargowagon - will be unloading at Deanside freight depot, Glasgow. By Wednesday, the wagons will be back at Park Royal for re-loading.

Other trains go to Swansea, Exeter, Liverpool, Sheffield and Gateshead.

Not surprisingly, road hauliers are sniffing around, trying to grab back some of this multi-million pound business.

At the moment, Guinness is content to allow the rail business to expand but it is unhappy at the way trains seem to be disrupted more than lorries by bad weather and bank holidays.

Sideways look at Railfreight 89

Black African railway officials stood back in admiration as they watched big containers being pushed, pulled and swung from road trailers on to rail wagons.

Demonstrations of these latest methods of intermodal movement was one of the main themes of the Railfreight 89 exhibition at London's Cricklewood.

There was Tiger Rail's TrailerTrain which converts from a road semi-trailer into a rail wagon, BR Research's air-cushioned side-loader, various cranes, the well-tried and

tested Minilink and Maxilink as well as Tiphook's side-opener.

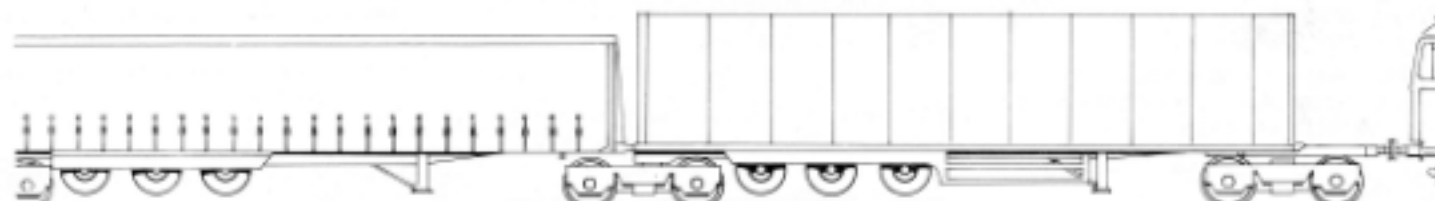
The new small-wheeled wagons, designed to allow the use of big containers, were being shown off by Powell Duffryn from Cardiff. As RDS has pointed out, these could be crucial as more European rail freight heads into Britain.

Even without gauge changes, 7000 wagons have already been approved for international workings to the Continent.

From the opening of the Chunnel, 200 European freight expresses will run each week, with the figure rising quickly to 400 a week.

RDS officials attended the exhibition and were told by many people that business is buoyant.

Below: Tiger Rail's TrailerTrain which was described as a major breakthrough in freight haulage, combining the advantages of both rail and road.





Bring back the tracks: The bridge at Welsh Bicknor now used as a footpath

Wye not?

By JULIAN LANGSTON

It might soon be possible to travel by train to beautiful Symonds Yat if a £25 million private enterprise plan is successful.

RDS member Eric Rawlins is hoping to get together a consortium to reopen the picturesque Wye Valley line from Hereford to Chepstow with the added bonus of putting such tourist spots as Monmouth and Ross-on-Wye back on the network after 30 years.

Mr Rawlins believes the 46-mile route could be profitable as a 25kv electrified single track with 18 new stations. A branch from Ross could also provide a service to Gloucester.

"We aim to have a parliamentary Bill passed by 1990," he said.

There would be a private share issue with a target date for opening in 1993.

His group has already commissioned an engineering study and a financial appraisal as well as consulting BR Provincial about running private trains into BR stations.

It is not planned to operate as a preserved line using volunteer labour. Instead state-of-the-art technology should cut costs – and produce a profit. Sixty per cent of the takings will come from tourism but commuter services will be important. Observation cars and steam specials might be provided too.

"Most people are supportive of the idea because of the improvement it will bring to the area," said Mr Rawlins.

Mr Rawlins can be contacted on 0809 63394.



BOOKSHELF

See Britain by Train
by Paul Atterbury
AA and BR
A Great Way Round

Author Paul Atterbury lives in a converted Great Western railway coach and has travelled throughout Britain by train. He may even have read some of the RDS railguides.

For he has produced a national version, called See Britain by Train, which is published jointly by BR and the AA!

He has picked out 52 scenic routes, including the Settle to Carlisle, and shows how to enjoy them, using a combination of train, car and bicycle.

There is much of railway interest but most of the information would appeal to the more general tourist.

The 120-page paperback costing £8.95 is well laid-out and has attractive colour pictures.

Hopefully it will give a boost to Provincial services which are experiencing a renaissance with new long-distance Sprinter Expresses being introduced this year.

Provincial ran a special Sprinter to launch the book, giving journalists a tour from Birmingham to London via Shrewsbury, Craven Arms, Hereford, Worcester and Oxford.

Places to visit by Train

J A D Hewes A station-by-station guide to Kent and East Sussex with opening times and sketch maps showing routes from stations.

£1.30 post free from the author, 92 Hayes Way, Beckenham, Kent BR3 2RS.

Modern Railways Special: TGV

Brian Perren
Ian Allan £4.95

The story of SNCF's Train a Grande Vitesse is relevant to anyone interested in rail development in Britain.

RDS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AT SOUTHAMPTON

Privatisation: Who needs it?

The major issue facing the railways now is the politically inspired drive for privatisation, warned RDS chairman Alan Bevan. He called on members to oppose privatisation which was not wanted or needed by either BR or its customers.

He said there had been good news lately with the reprieve of the Settle to Carlisle and Lenton to Trowell lines. He predicted (correctly) that the Henley-in-Arden to Stratford-upon-Avon route would also be saved.

There was reason to be optimistic on some fronts. When the Cannock line reopened, loadings were 50 per cent above what BR had expected.

BR must now be praised for its pro-development stance, for reopening lines, and fighting Bustitution. It must also be encouraged in its aim of keeping the network intact. The new RDS book Who Should Run Our Railways? was launched in May and analysed the privatisation issue. Many MPs received copies from constituents who are members of RDS. The 24-page illustrated booklet can be obtained for £1.85 (including postage) from Alan Harwood whose address is on the back page. The book looks at how our railways have been run and by whom, who else runs railways. It considers each of the privatisation options and warns of the dangers of each.

A conference on privatisation is being organised by the Rail Transport Study Group, which is affiliated to RDS. The conference will be held on July 19 in Westminster Cathedral conference centre in London. You can obtain details from Pat Crane, 5 Elm Way, London N11 3NP.

The AGM heard details of how Southampton planned to build a metro for the "booming city". Mr David Bull, chairman of the city's transport committee said he hoped property developers would pay a substantial part of the cost. The elevated line is intended to link the Ocean development area to the traditional city centre for a 30p fare.

Your new executive



John Barfield



Andrew Macfarlane

The line-up is now:-
Dave Sallery, 83 votes,
Helen Broadbent, 78,
Peter Wakefield, 77,
Mike Crowhurst, 68,
Andrew Macfarlane, 64,
Philip Bisatt, 61, George
Boyle, 60, Chris Burton,
60, Ray King, 58, and
John Barfield, 53.

The four unsuccessful
candidates were: Ian
McGill, 43, Bob
Osborne, 43, Frank
Tomlins, 43, and Edina
Lewis, 38.



Peter Wakefield



Dave Sallery

Freight future

A Railfreight Conference is being organised by RDS, the Channel Tunnel Association and RTSG in Alexandra Palace, London, for Thursday October 5. Details from Pat Crane 5 Elm Way, London N11 3NP.

Travelling Hopefully

The editor of Railway Gazette International, Mr Richard Hope, will be the principal speaker at RDS's National Conference for Rail Users on Saturday November 11 at Friends House, Euston Road, London. Details from John Lark, 7 Gloucester Avenue, Gorleston, Great Yarmouth NR31 7LT. SAE please.

Look at Lincs

The new RDS railguide Lincolnshire and North Midlands by Rail was published last month. It costs £2.50 from Alan Harwood (address on back page). The new Peaks and Plains is also published this month as well as a new edition of A to Z of Rail Reopenings.

Do your bit

Volunteers are always needed to join specialist committees and to fulfil other important society functions. If you want to volunteer, contact the chairman of relevant committee.

Coming soon

A diary is being produced by RDS for 1990. Look out for details in October's Railwatch.

Up and up

RDS membership continues to rise. In April, the total was 2106. The aim is 2500 this year and 3000 by the time of Rail Development Week to be held next year between March 25 and 31. We are aiming for seven days of activity nationwide. We need your ideas. Contact your branch secretary.

New Railways

Our book on new railways will be published in Rail Development Week, putting the case for new lines, including light rapid transit schemes. Any member wishing to help with the book should contact Mike Crowhurst, Cowman's Flat, Heath Hall Farm, Heath, Wakefield WF1 5SL.

London short changed

By JOHN BARFIELD

London risks being short changed by the Central London Rail Study even though it came up with exciting projects to cure the capital's transport ills.

Major rail infrastructure projects in London will inevitably require a significant element of public finance. It is idle to expect, as the report hints, that the bulk of funding could come from fare-paying passengers or from property developers.

RDS made this clear in its response submitted to the Department of Transport at the end of April. Without adequate funding, the document will represent another missed opportunity gathering dust on the shelves like its predecessor in 1972.

Dealing with the details, RDS picked East-West Crossrail as the most useful proposal which should be given the highest priority. Heathrow Express services should also be extended to King's Cross to give international connections.

Copies of the society's paper can be obtained from me (address on back page).

Points for consideration:

- London's Old Kent Road is so polluted by traffic that air purifiers may be provided on the routes. Southwark council has been told carbon monoxide levels are twice World Health Organisation safety levels.

- In Switzerland, the Greens pioneered the idea, now being implemented, of comprehensive nationwide coordination of public transport.

London is competing with European cities that have been getting their act together for a long time. The notion that private capital will pay for the transport we need is misplaced. The Government will have to spend the money itself. With a budget surplus of £14 million, it is not as if funds are lacking.

Chartered Surveyor Weekly

London traffic jams are so bad that there should be a Minister of Transport for London, says the Confederation of British Industry.

Evening Standard

The Dutch have a plan to cut road traffic over the next 20 years as a way of reducing air pollution. Taxes may add 50 per cent to the costs of both buying and running a car.

New Scientist

News in brief

Colossos of roads

The Department of Transport has admitted that only 84 members of its staff are employed on rail matters. By contrast 1900 are engaged solely on road matters with a further 9600 on licensing, inspection, testing, safety and finance. The Government claims to "invest" in roads and to "subsidise" railways.

Better late than never: The European Parliament has at last demanded that catalytic converters be fitted to cars in an attempt to clean up exhausts. Renault has pledged immediate improvements. Converters have been available for 30 years and are compulsory in America, Canada, Australia, Japan, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. We will have to wait until 1993.

Well done BR

BR's Provincial sector was praised in a report by the Monopolies Commission in March for providing acceptable services with limited resources. It also said Bustration was hardly worth considering.

Friendly action

Norfolk Friends of the Earth is selling off £8.50 plots of the disused Wymondham to Farnham railway line to protect the Lizard wildlife reserve. A new road (!) threatens to cut it in half. Details from Norfolk Friends of the Earth, 38-40 Exchange Street, Norwich NR2 1AX (Tel 0603 625394).

Donner and Blitzen!

West German railways plans to introduce freight trains running at over 100 miles per hour. The trains will be called Blitzgüterzüge.

The acid test

Two million tonnes of nitrogen oxides were pumped into Britain's air in 1986 with 40 per cent coming from cars and 40 per cent from power stations. In Europe, only the Soviet Union and West Germany have a worse pollution record.

Green solution

The Green Party advocates a full environmental and social impact study for any plan to build a new road, as well as a traffic appraisal.

BRANCHES

North Midlands

Derby area: Campaigning by RDS and others led to the opening of Tutbury and Hatton station on the Derby Uttoxeter line on April 3. It was financed by a consortium of local authorities, the Rural Development Agency and the Nestle company. An hourly service is provided to Derby and Crewe.

Derbyshire county council takes a positive approach to rail and intends to develop proposals for reopening one new station each year, depending on finance.

RDS is already pressing for Willington station on the Derby Burton line to be reopened. This would serve an expanding village and would also be a short taxi ride (or long walk) away from the Toyota car factory to be built at Burnaston airport. Provincial policy is to reduce the number of intermediate stops on its Birmingham Lincoln trains so the Willington reopening might have to wait for the restoration of a Leicester - Burton - Derby or a Lichfield - Burton - Derby service. RDS is also urging that a short new freight line be constructed into the Toyota plant.

North Derbyshire: The county council is again providing a revenue guarantee for the Peak Rail Rambler service from Buxton on summer Sundays.

Cross-country trains will call experimentally at Belper from May 1990.

RDS suggestions were incorporated into the summer timetable. Nottingham Grantham was given an hourly service, the Hope Valley locals between Sheffield and Manchester are also hourly while Buxton to Manchester is now half-hourly. All the East Anglia trains to the North-west are diverted to Liverpool. A two-hourly Nottingham - Sheffield - Manchester - Blackpool also operates.

But RDS is obviously objecting to the proposed Bustration of Gainsborough Barnetby which would severely inconvenience passengers from Worksop and Retford to Grimsby and the seaside at Cleethorpes.

Malcolm Goodall

East Anglia

RDS questioned plans by a local businessman to run upmarket steam trains on the Sudbury branch. Would it mean a cutback in the DMU service to Marks Tey and Colchester which is used by commuters and shoppers? If the line was sold to a private company, would there be any such service at all? The East Anglian Railway Museum, which is based at Chappel station on the branch, has separate expansion proposals which would bring additional off-peak business to BR. We are in close touch with them.

Cuts: We have protested at cuts in local

services on the Breckland line and threatened cuts in evening trains serving Sheringham and Felixstowe.

Dereham: We continue our fight to save the Dereham line in some form. Freight traffic was to cease in June. We have contacted councillors and businesses in a bid to mount a rescue operation.

Trevor Garrod

North West

A new user group has been set up for the Skipton to Carnforth line. The Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group aims to rejuvenate this neglected line. Membership is £2 for individuals, £4 for families and £10 for corporate bodies. Details from Margaret McSherry, High Hazel Hall, Clapham, near Lancaster, North Yorkshire.

NETWORK NORTHWEST

Network NorthWest was officially launched on April 4 but, from May 15, the network will be revamped, thanks to the opening of the Windsor link. Many services will be able to run through from north-west to south-east Manchester. A new day ranger ticket costs £7.60 with one for Greater Manchester costing £3.80.

All stations in Lancashire are being improved in a £2.4 million scheme, spread over two years. Derbyshire, Cheshire and Cumbria could be next.

Richard Watts

Lincolnshire

RDS has lodged its objection to the proposed closure of Gainsborough to Barnetby, the Government's latest test case for Bustration. We welcome the establishment of development groups at Gainsborough and Brigg and we are giving them support. The Brigg group, in particular, is producing and distributing leaflets to promote the service.

Trevor Garrod

Sprinting along

BR Provincial is considering a Swindon to Peterborough service via the freight-only Oxford to Bletchley route. Local authorities are giving cash for a feasibility study for reopening to passengers.

Keep Watch

Railwatch is looking for an advertising representative and a cartoonist. Contact the editor.

Yorkshire

Pontefract joy: The freight line from Wakefield through Featherstone to Pontefract is to be upgraded for passenger use. West Yorkshire PTE will provide £1 million. At present Pontefract suffers from the worst service in the PTE area with gaps of five hours between trains. A new station with proper facilities could be built near the existing Monkhill - now bleak and isolated thanks to the vandals. It could serve both the Wakefield and Leeds lines. The present Sheffield York trains would be diverted by Barnsley and Wakefield and would be supported by the PTE. There would probably be a two-hourly service and new stations might be opened at Featherstone and Crofton.

New stations at Agbrigg and Outwood opened during the past year are attracting 100,000 passengers a year.

Altofts: The TUCC is calling on BR to run peak hour trains direct between Normanton and Leeds if BR goes ahead with plans to close Altofts station.

Leeds: A £10 million scheme has been drawn up to provide six tracks into Leeds from Whitehall junction which has long been a pinch point. Electrification has emphasised the need for action and for additional platforms.

Goole: Work started in May on repairing the Goole swing bridge. Local authorities have agreed to pay the premium for insuring the bridge against future collisions.

Hull to Scarborough: The dilapidated roof of Filey station is to be repaired at a cost of £250,000 (the Department of the Environment recognises its architectural importance). Platforms are to be raised at Cottingham and Beverley. But there seems no hope of cycles being allowed on trains using this line.

Denis Bradbury



Wales

New semi-fast and stopping services began on the North Wales Coast in May. The semi-fast Chester to Bangor service, with stops at Rhyl, Colwyn Bay and Llandudno Junction, has a journey time of 67 minutes, almost a mile a minute.

Provincial plan to upgrade track speed across North Wales to 90 mph. Anglesey however will remain limited to 60 mph.

The new area manager for North and Mid Wales Merrick Roocroft has attended RDS and rail users meetings.

It is hoped the new station at Llanrwst will be ready for the Eisteddfod in August.

The Kronospan sidings at Chirk were opened by Welsh Secretary Peter Walker. It will save 5,500 lorry journeys annually.

Rod Fairley

Scotland

Scottish branch was determined to make the transport and environment major issues in the European Parliament elections in June. Questionnaires were sent to all Scottish candidates on the theme that the choice of transport mode had a significant impact on the environment.

Highland candidates were asked for continued support for a Dornoch rail crossing. NE Scotland were asked to support saving land for a bus-rail interchange station in Dundee.

Generally candidates were asked if they would support changes in policy designed to shift traffic from road to rail. An opinion of the economic and social committee of the European Community urging member States to take into account the energy, environmental and safety advantages of rail was pointed out to them. They were asked

whether they would campaign to have the opinion converted into a binding directive.

Candidates were also asked whether they accepted that railways should be credited with environmental advantages when investment criteria were considered. The question of VAT on fares and the threat of heavier lorries was raised.

A plea was made for harmonisation - greater State support for railways in Britain to match European levels. RDS Scotland wants more input of EC funds into British railway projects. There is so much we can learn from Europe about transport and the environment.

Douglas Smart

Freight

Grants for private sidings have virtually dried up so the freight committee has approached the Government calling for restrictions to be eased.

It has also called for the VAT levy on foreign wagons operating in Britain to be scrapped.

George Boyle

PLATFORM

Settle it fast

The Transport Secretary has rightly refused to give BR permission to close the Settle to Carlisle line. There is no financial case for closing this line despite the railway management having run the service down.

The result of this rundown/closure policy over the years has been a loss of revenue exceeding any saving in costs. The costs of repairing Ribbleshead viaduct should obviously be spread over a long period.

Instead, BR should develop the line, by operating a daily two-hour regular interval semi-fast service from London St Pancras to Glasgow via Nottingham, Leeds, Settle, Carlisle and Dumfries.

E H Longland
20a Rous Road
Buckhurst Hill
Essex

What a waste

Rail services in North-east England are vastly underdeveloped. Even though the area has a high population density there are few access points to the local network. In addition the Leamside line faces closure following the electrification of the East Coast main line.

What a waste of a line which has great potential as an inter-urban service. With renewed economic activity in the area, a Middlesbrough to Newcastle Sprinter could

be introduced with reopened stations at Ferryhill, Sherburn, Leamside, Penshaw and Washington. But time is running out.

Chris Milnes
25 Theford Way
South Wootton
King's Lynn
Norfolk

London calling

I am editor of the proposed new RDS railguide called In and Around London by Rail. Contributions are now needed.

Photographs should only include railway subjects as an incidental feature.

I McGill
28 Chichester Park
Westbury
Wilts

In Parliament

In Parliament is a useful record which enables members to assess the performance of MPs. We should encourage those MPs who have a concern for the practical world of overcrowding, escalators not working, etc. Perhaps more members should use In Parliament and contact MPs who do not appear to be interested in improving rail services.

N Cripps
Birmingham

Carry on up the Midland

By JOHN ARMSTRONG
and MALCOLM GOODALL

Do it now! That is the clear verdict of consultants who considered the plan to electrify the Midland main line. Immediate investment in electrification from Bedford through to Sheffield and Doncaster would give a return of more than £100 million.

The consultants used cost, benefit analysis techniques (as used by the Department of Transport to judge road schemes) to assess the rail choices. If the Midland main line was a motorway plan, the COBA read-out would mean it would be built tomorrow. This is further evidence of the need to treat road and rail investment equally.

The study results fully vindicate the RDS campaign to Electra-Fy the Midland Now which was launched at the Midland in the 90s conference in Leicester in March 1988. It is also in BR's financial interest to "do it now".

Indeed the consultants have erred on the side of caution, not including the following factors which would boost demand and the financial case:

- * Direct electric international services from the Channel Tunnel up the Midland
- * Electric services to Leeds via the Midland
- * Electric InterCity cross-London services to Gatwick and the South Coast via King's Cross International
- * Possible re-use of HST coaches
- * Further cuts in journey times by using tilting coaches

The study by Steer Davies and Gleave was published in April on behalf of a consortium of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire together with Sheffield city council. They are pleased to discover that electrification would attract 3500 jobs to the region.

The "do it now" option fully met the 7 per cent financial return on investment rule imposed on BR by the Government. In a classic case of moving the goalposts, this was raised by the Government to 8 per cent after the study was completed!

The cost of electrifying was put at £160



Good news from the consultants

million, with £100 million going on providing the power and uprating the track and £60 million on new Mark 4 rolling stock and class 91 locos.

The four options assessed were: 1A An improved 125 mph HST service, 1B A 110 mph HST service, 2A Phased extension of electrification to Sheffield and Doncaster between 1992 and 2003 with 125 mph max, 2B Immediate electrification completed by 1995 with 125 mph max.

The financial return assessment showed that an enhanced HST service gave a negative financial return as did the phased electrification in 2A. Only 2B provided a positive financial return and met the 7 per cent criteria.

The superiority of 2B is further reinforced by the cost benefit analysis undertaken by the study.

The consultants expect significant traffic growth on the Midland from the present 6.2 million journeys to 10.2 million in year 2000 and 16.3 million in 2020.

Journey times would be cut to one hour 50 minutes London to Sheffield, which is 12

minutes better than the best HST times. (Computer simulations for APT gave London Sheffield in one hour 38 minutes).

As an interim strategy over the next five years, the report suggests BR could improve services and raise line speeds, paying particular attention to stopping patterns between Bedford and Leicester and providing a parkway station near East Midlands Airport.

A Rail Forum is being set up to bring all the interested organisations together.

In Scotland, a campaign to get the line from Aberdeen to Edinburgh electrified is being organised by a group called CREATE which involves local councils and organisations.

British Rail has agreed to cooperate in a feasibility study and the city of Aberdeen is determined to have electric trains arriving there from Europe when the Chunnel is opened.

Meanwhile Devon county council is asking for electrification of the Paddington to Penzance route and upgrading of the Waterloo to Exeter line.

The report's findings

Options	1A	1B	2A	2B
Financial appraisal	-3.8	-12.2	-48.1	+2.1
Cost benefit analysis	+92.1	+19.0	+50.2	+101.2

LATE NEWS

WRONG AGAIN: The Department of Transport plans to spend £12 billion on a massive road building programme (including eight lane motorways) which will merely encourage more traffic on to the already clogged system. Over the next 10 years, normal spending will be doubled. When will they ever learn?

RDS general secretary Trevor Garrod led a sponsored Cambridge to Oxford cycle ride in June, meeting four council chairmen en route.

Another RDS guide, called Peaks and Plains, covering Cheshire and Staffordshire, has just been published. It costs £2.50 from Alan Harwood (address this page)

A seminar on the Channel Tunnel high-speed link is being organised by the London and Home Counties Branch at Ashford, Kent, on July 22. Details from H Trevor Jones, Flat 2, 11 Guildford Road, Tunbridge Wells TN1 1SW

A new magazine called Local Transport Today has been launched and is being published fortnightly. Editor Peter Huntley is aiming for a professional focus. It costs £42 for a year's subscription. Complimentary copy from Rodney Fletcher, Local Transport Today, Quadrant House, 250 Kennington Lane, London SE11 5RD. Reports to Peter Huntley, PO Box 176, Preston, Lancs PR1 6HZ

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