

Train of thought

Readers air their views about the railway industry and *Rail Professional*

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What about the costs of privatisation?

Norman Bradbury of Railfuture (Train of thought, December 2011 issue) is opening up a can of worms with his lengthy exploration of the balance sheet of privatisation.

What about the one-off costs of the privatisation process in the mid-1990s, when a vast army of accountants,

consultants and lawyers were brought in to facilitate the sale of BR assets?

And the hiatus in annual station re-openings – only once reaching double figures between 1996 and 2007 – and all the delayed economic, social and environmental benefits?

Surely a more important focus for campaigners is to ask why rail policy in Britain (yes, in Scotland too) continues

to be so ideologically driven, at the expense of value for money.

Above all, just what is the point of the costly franchising process, and why did McNulty not challenge this?

Norman Bradbury is right to say that 'there can be little doubt that today's fragmented railway is less cost effective than BR was' – it's time for government and the rail

industry to adopt an evidence-based approach to the search for a sustainable long-term structure for our railway system.

David Spaven
Edinburgh

Rail re-openings

An issue has arisen from the publication of the letter from David Giles in the January issue of *Rail Professional*.

I wish to make it abundantly clear that Mr Giles is not a member of Railfuture and has not been for many years, nor do we have any connection with his appeal for funds.

Railfuture has no connection with trade unions and, having non-partisan status, relies entirely on funding from membership subscriptions and donations.

However, I should point out that Railfuture has always actively campaigned for re-openings of stations and routes where there is a practical case for doing so and has a 'fighting fund' of its own to support such campaigns.

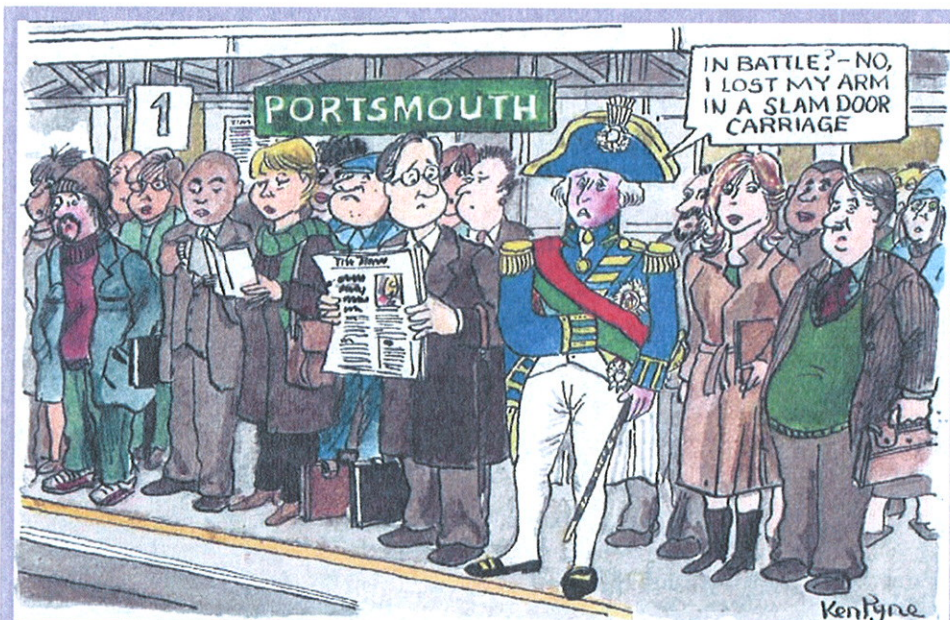
Indeed, we have produced a number of publications listing re-openings that have been implemented over the years and the most recent, Britain's Growing Railway, Volume One appeared in 2010.

Norman Bradbury
Railfuture

Passenger satisfaction – whose?

Having met Charles Horton last year and found him to be a reasonable person, I was therefore astonished to see his comment in *Rail Professional* that 'Passengers, in general, are more satisfied than ever' (News, January 2012 issue).

Certainly not the passengers of Southeastern Trains and here in north Kent



The 450s replaced slam doors

Clearly Tim Shoveller is not firing on all cylinders when it comes to the Portsmouth – Waterloo line (*Rail Professional*, January 2012 issue) in his desire to do things better. He is wrong that 450s replaced five-abreast slam door stock.

The slam door stock was mainly four abreast and it was 444s that replaced slam doors stock, in a blaze of glory, with ceremonies by

Portsmouth and Havant Mayors.

All soon forgotten and a bend in the truth makes it OK to continue to give the Portsmouth to Waterloo line a substandard service.

Nigel Tarrant
Waterlooville

Safety chart was incorrect

	Fatality risk per billion travellers		
	km	hours	trips
Mainline railway	0.1	3	2
Bus or coach	0.3	5	2
Car	1.6	66	22
Pedal cycle	21.0	268	92
Pedestrian	26.4	186	28
Motorcycle	83.6	3513	1492

I write in reference to the feature the Wright Track column, entitled Road Conditions (December 2012 issue). The article carries a chart taken from the 2010-11 *Safety Performance Report*.

Unfortunately, the right hand column shown in the article is a copy of the figures shown in the centre column, which does not give the correct information to your readers. The actual chart is above.

Diana Lucas MCIPR

Corporate communications manager
RSSB

the current dissatisfaction is now at such a high level as previously reached in the days of the dreaded Connex.

However, as a disillusioned member of staff pointed out, it is the same management but just under a different name.

As for being hasty in implementing change, we are crying out for it since the disastrous major timetable change in December 2009, which downgraded and worsened all domestic mainline routes as HS1 ruled the roost.

In a similar vein, whilst the clamour for HS2 is appreciated, I would warn all who think that it's eventual introduction will lead to long-awaited benefits to towns such as Milton Keynes and Northampton, Coventry on the West Coast route.

If the same Department of Transport policy applies as that dictated with HS1, you will see your services reduced and made even slower than now, as the DfT will force as many passengers as possible to use HS2.

The irony is that if major

improvements had been made to SET mainline services, hand in hand with the introduction of HS1, we could be enjoying a vastly improved railway today.

Sadly just a dream now, at least until 2014, when we may at last get someone who will actually do some good for the railways of Kent to take up the franchise.

John Cherry

Retired Atoc member
Chatham

HS2 must not be a 'stand-alone' railway

I read the article by Peter Plisner in your (High speed delay, January 2012 issue) with great interest, and find myself in accord with much of what he says.

I was particularly struck by his reference to a report by the Taxpayers Alliance, claiming that 'destinations like Coventry, Stoke-on-Trent, Manchester, Leicester, Nottingham, Derby, and Sheffield would be negatively hit'.

One of my principal

objections to the official proposed route is that it would effectively exist as a 'stand-alone' railway, largely divorced from the existing network. I believe HS2 should complement what we have now, and interact with it at strategic points.

For example, a high speed service from London to Birmingham could make use of my proposed route as far as Long Buckby/Rugby, then proceed by an (upgraded) existing line through Coventry to Berkswell, then via a new high-speed chord across to Widney Manor to reach a dedicated (and much enlarged) terminus at Birmingham Moor Street.

It may be worth reminding younger readers that the route from Widney Manor to Tyseley used to be quadruple track, until reduced to two lines by Dr Beeching, so there should not be a major problem in creating space for a couple of new high-speed tracks there.

There would need to be an underpass at Tyseley to enable high-speed services to reach Moor Street without interfering with the existing line coming in from Stratford-on-Avon but, other than that, there would be comparatively little required in terms of major infrastructure work in the Birmingham area.

This 'mix and match' approach seems to work very well on certain Continental systems, and lends itself well to a gradual evolution – clearly HS2, in whatever form is eventually decided, will not be put together in one single stage.

Indeed, I have seen nothing yet to suggest how the DfT's route will proceed north of Birmingham.

Ian Turnbull
Alderley Edge
Cheshire



Wrong rolling stock

In Paul Clifton's exchange with Tim Shoveller, the new SWT managing director might first have checked his facts and, with a generosity of spirit, avowed to understand his passengers' grievances, before exposing himself to interview (January 2012 issue).

It is not true that the Class 450 replaced 4VEP units on Portsmouth Main Line express services. It was main-line Class 444 units (billed as 'Portsmouth's new trains'), rather than Class 450, that superseded Mk I rolling stock in 2004.

In 2007, Class 442, misleadingly described by SWT as life-expired, was withdrawn from Bournemouth line services, with most of Portsmouth's Class 444 units plundered as replacements.

Thus Portsmouth Main Line services became an inappropriate dumping ground for the suburban Class 450, displaced from Reading duties.

It should not be asking too much of Mr Shoveller that he review his relationship with his Portsmouth Direct line passengers. Rather than dismiss their grievances with contempt, his first duty must surely be to redress the insult of the past five years by restoring the quality of accommodation on main line services that his passengers deserve.

Bruce Oliver
Southsea