

RAIL EAST

EAST ANGLIA RAIL
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NEWSLETTER no. 54

Spring 1988

Chairman: Steve Wilkinson, 52 Manor Park,
Histon, Cambridge, CB4 4JT (Tel:3961)
Secretary: Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road,
Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ (Tel:81721; or at work,
Norwich 28181 ex 44)

WE'RE GETTING THERE

"We're getting there" is British Rail's new slogan. Are they getting there? What progress is being made towards attractive, modern rail services playing an increasing role in our transport network?

Are we, in the Railway Development Society, also "getting there" in our aim to provide an effective voice for rail users campaigning for an attractive modern railway?

Just after midnight on March 17th, 25,000 volts of electricity started to flow through the wires between Colchester and Ipswich and on to Haughley Junction. RDS was campaigning for this electrification scheme throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. It is now a step nearer reality - and the first public electric trains are due to start running into Ipswich on May 13th.

The first mast has also been erected at Peterborough for the East Coast Main Line electrification.

On the branch lines, there is good news from Sudbury - where the most recent survey shows a 34% increase in passengers using the station on an average working day, compared with 4 years ago; and a 13% increase in those using the intermediate station of Bures. That shows what active promotion by the Sudbury - Marks Tey Rail Users' Association has achieved.

On the East Suffolk Line, more level crossings have been modernised. Mells and Bramfield Road crossings south of Halesworth are the latest sites where manually operated gates have now been replaced by open crossings with flashing lights.

Radio signalling will probably not now start on this line until the autumn, because of delays which are not BR's fault; but our corporate member the East Suffolk Travellers' Association is planning a summer survey as part of its pressure for the additional trains which these lower operating costs will enable BR to introduce.

At Quidenham, on the Breckland Line, a new freight link is taking shape, just to the West of Eccles Road station. This will serve a new grain store and bring additional traffic to a line which at least one prominent Norfolk County Councillor wants to see closed...

RDS has continued to grow - as can be seen from the AGM report on page 2 - and has successfully overhauled its national constitution to make it a more businesslike, but still democratic, consumer organisation.

Our local book, EAST ANGLIA BY RAIL, has been revised and expanded and is being published in 5000 copies by Jarrolds in April. It should soon be in bookshops throughout the region and beyond, putting across the value of rail travel to a wide public.

You can order EAST ANGLIA BY RAIL at £1-95 from your local bookshop, or direct from our Sales Officer, Peter Lawrence, 75 Marlpit Lane, Norwich, NR5 8XN.

HOWEVER, these achievements must not make us complacent. The Quidenham scheme was almost scuppered at a late stage by certain less-than-reasonable objections. Roughton Road Halt is not yet open, though work has now been in progress there for a year. BR still have problems, especially of capacity, between Colchester and London.

What we can spend on promoting rail usage is matched ten times over by what the roads lobby spends on "macho" promotion of cars, lorries, new roads. So our achievements must not make us complacent, but must encourage us to build further our strength and influence.

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40 members filled the conference room at the new Central Library in Bury St. Edmunds for the Annual General Meeting of the East Anglian Branch of RDS; and a dozen apologies for absence had been received.

Presenting the Annual Report, the Secretary drew attention to "things happening on the railways of our region - which will in due course bring us a better railway." These included electrification, the East Suffolk modernisation and the building of Roughton Road Halt. Further welcome items of news during 1984 included the dropping of the singling plans in the Diss area and the extension of the Anglia Ranger facility to cover places like Sudbury.

These were all achievements which RDS had fought for - and must encourage us further in campaigning for schemes like Royston - Cambridge electrification; and further station and experimental line reopenings.

RDS membership in the region had continued to rise, by 13½%, to 264; and Mr. Garrod urged members to push up Branch membership to over 300 during 1985. After reviewing the varied activities of the Branch during 1984, he stressed that these had been achieved by teamwork by the main Branch committee, the Printing & Publications Committee and scores of ordinary members contributing in a variety of ways. After thanking everyone for their support, he concluded, "Our activities should in my view, continue to be varied, campaigning in a variety of ways on a variety of fronts; though we may need to put more resources of money and people into some activities than into others."

From the following Treasurer's Report, it was seen that resources at the end of 1984 amounted to £39.69 in the general fund; £42.83 in the Printing & Publications account; and £134.33 in the Chartered Train account; and stock of some 900 pens and 1000 labels. Income for 1984 had been £515.67 - of which only £92.88 had come from the Branch's share of members' subscriptions. Major items of income were sales (£144.95), donations (£114.99) and transfers of money from the profits on "East Anglia by Rail". Major items of expenditure included printing (£168.17), postage and telephone (£136.75) and room hire (£80).

If you would like a copy of the full balance sheet, please send a stamped addressed envelope to the Secretary.

After further reports, the following were elected:

Chairman: Steve Wilkinson

Treasurer: Ian Carter

Vice-Chairman: Charles Taylor

Sales Officer: Peter Lawrence

Secretary: Trevor Garrod

Minutes Secretary: Peter Wakefield

Committee: John Brodribb, Geoffrey Roper, Lewis Buckingham, John Page.

Nigel Baylem was thanked for his services as Hon. Auditor and re-appointed.

Guest speaker: For the second half of the meeting we welcomed as speaker

Mr Lew Adams, National Executive Member of ASLEF.

Mr. Adams explained in some detail the succession of Plans and promises made by successive Governments and management during his 30-year career on British Rail. Corporate Plans supposed to last for five years rarely seemed to run their course. Since 1954, the unions had regularly been promised a secure future if they accepted some redundancies. They had agreed many such schemes, without resorting to strike action - but he claimed that promises of greater job security and a better railway had not come to fruition.

"We are not Luddites," Mr. Adams stressed. The rail unions were prepared to accept new technology, but if this gave their members extra responsibilities then they expected extra financial rewards.

Job losses were not matched with improvements for the passenger, on the experience of recent years. "57,000 jobs have gone out of the railway industry since 1975," our speaker quoted, "But in the same period there has also been a 42% cut in Government financial support to BR." Since 1980, management had been working towards a 40% cut in vehicles, a 10% cut in train mileage but was forecasting a 12% increase in passenger journeys. "Where will we put them?" he asked - adding that London commuter services were working towards a 135% loading factor in peak hours.

The flexible rostering which had led to the 1982 strikes had been imposed by management and as a result the number of hours of overtime worked by foot-plate staff had gone up from 16,700 per year to 38,000! It was therefore now costing an extra £12-14 million a year to the railway industry.

Mr. Adams dealt in some detail with various technical innovations on BR and again stressed that his union was not opposed to them - "The only question is: how much are management going to pay us for the extra responsibilities of things like Driver Only Operation." They were prepared to accept simplified signalling, computerised signal boxes, remote control of Merry-go-round trains in power stations if a satisfactory financial deal could be negotiated.

Finally, he warned about possible privatisation of BR. Already we had seen the BTH Hotels privatised - but 18 months later their pension schemes were still being administered by BR. If passenger routes like Fenchurch Street - Southend were privatised, he predicted the disappearance of off-peak and weekend trains, with profit to shareholders being judged more important than service to the public.

Questions: Mr. Adams answered a range of questions, some of them critical of his union's attitude to the movement of coal during the miners' strike; and some of them questioning the wisdom of the strike weapon in general.

He was also asked about demarcation lines which involved what seemed to the layman to be unnecessary crew changes, or to restrict operating flexibility. Mr. Adams replied that some demarcation lines had been lifted in recent years; but that the railways' high safety standards also required all drivers to be familiar with "the road".

The discussion was cut short only by the need for members to catch their trains home - and Geoffrey Roper moved a vote of thanks to Mr. Adams for a very informative and illuminating talk.

STATION REOPENING CAMPAIGNS

ARLESEY: 150 people packed the Village Hall at Arlesey on February 19th for a public meeting to investigate the case for a new station. The meeting was called by the Town Council and was addressed by RDS members John Tizard (also the County Councillor for Arlesey) and Trevor Garrod; and by spokesmen for BR and Bedfordshire County Council.

Arlesey lost its two stations on the East Coast Main Line in 1959 - but there is now a population of over 16,000 in Arlesey and nearby villages, who presently have to travel to Letchworth, Hitchin or Biggleswade to catch a train. Electrification of the main line would bring a fast, regular electric multiple unit service past the village. A station would cost between £300,000 and £500,000 to build, according to County Council estimates and BR would be looking to the County Council to provide half of the money. (This apparently assumes that platforms would be long enough for 8-coach trains and that £100,000 would have to be spent on a footbridge.)

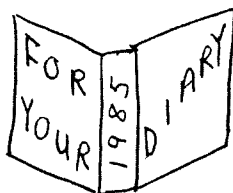
Virtually everyone at the meeting was in favour of the scheme - a fact that was doubtless not lost on the County Council and BR spokesmen.

RDS members Roger Green, from Watton-at-Stone, and Leslie Freitag, from Harpenden, also attended the meeting and gave the benefit of their experience in campaigning for similar schemes.

The meeting agreed to set up the Arlesey & District Rail Action Group, whose secretary is Mrs. Roberta Massingham, 39 Chase Hill Road, Arlesey, Beds. (Tel: Hitchin 732611).

Any local RDS members willing to help in the campaign - particularly with a survey of potential usage, would be very welcome. Arlesey Town Council has given its full support to the Group; while Beds. County Council have agreed to enter into detailed discussions with BR, especially on costings; to prepare capital project appraisals; and to help with a survey of potential usage.

An excellent start to a campaign - which we hope will also encourage others in our region.



Saturday April 20th: RDS National AGM at Unity Hall, WAKEFIELD, West Yorks, starting 2.00 p.m. All members are urged to attend. This is your chance to discuss the Society's progress nationwide over the last twelve months, consider what it should be doing over the next year and re-elect, or replace, the Society's national officers and National Executive.

Wakefield is now only 1½ hours from Peterborough by High Speed Train - so you can leave Ipswich at 08.55 or Norwich at 09.28 and, by changing in Peterborough, reach Wakefield at 12.54. Check in the current timetable or at your nearest staffed station for all the other possibilities.

Saturday April 27th: East Suffolk Travellers' Association AGM at Church Hall, SAKHEDRAH, starting at 2.30 p.m. The Hall is at the rear of the Parish Church on the Leiston Road.

Guest speakers will be Stephen Rattue (BR Passenger Manager, Norwich) and Mike Watson (Secretary, Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association). Mr. Watson's association is the largest active users' body in Wales, and he will talk on issues facing Welsh railways, and their relevance to us in England. All are welcome at this meeting. Tea will be served.

NENTA RAILTOURS

There is still some room on the NENTA special trains this spring to Kedgeley and the Settle & Carlisle on April 20th (£16-75 adult; £13.75 child); and to the West Highland Line on May 3rd - 5th (£25.) please contact Ray Davies, 36 Lighthouse Close, Happisburgh, Norwich, NR12 0QE (Tel: Walcot 650715). Both trains start from North Walsham and run via Norwich, Wymondham, Attleborough, Thetford and March.

Saturday May 11th: East Suffolk Travellers' Association special train from Lowestoft and all East Suffolk Line stations to YORK, allowing 5 hours in this historic city. The train will be locomotive-hauled with Travellers' Fare buffet. Fare: £14 (children 5-15 £8). Details from Trevor Garrod. Bookings: Albert Godfrey, Station House, Oulton Broad South; Arthur Haddingham, 55 Fair Close Beccles; Ian Carter, 1 Oak Green, Halesworth; or Geoffrey Cutting, Forge Cottage, Little Street, Yoxford.

Saturday May 18th: RDS/WyDRAC Special train from Dereham and all intermediate stations to Wymondham, to Chester, Rhyl and Llandudno, allowing 5-6 hours on the North Wales Coast. This will be an Inter-City train with buffet, leaving Dereham at about 07.00. It will be the fifteenth excursion to run from the Dereham branch since 1978, the first to have a Travellers' Fare buffet. Fare: £16.90 (children 5-15, £11.90) Tickets from John Hull, Cydonia Cottage, Station Road, Yaxham, Dereham (Tel: 5154); or Chris Pearson, 75 Crown Road, Dereham (Tel: 66479).

This is one of the most ambitious trains we have run from the Dereham line. If you can help in any way on the day, or by publicising it, please contact John or Chris as soon as possible.

Saturday June 8th: RDS SPRING MEETING IN ELECTRIC IPSWICH!

Four weeks after the start of the electric service, we shall be welcoming as guest speaker to our Spring Meeting Mr. John Ellis, BR Assistant General Manager, Eastern Region - to speak about the scheme and the future development of main line services in our region.

This is the first time that we have had such a high-ranking British Rail speaker at a Branch meeting. The meeting will be in our usual venue, Ipswich Town Hall, starting at 2.00 p.m.; starting with a short business section.

Saturday June 15th: RDS Seventh National Conference of Rail Users' Groups, University College, London. Main speaker: Jimmy Knapp (General Secretary, NUR). Individual members of RDS can also attend but should book early. Details from Trevor Garrod.

Sunday June 30th: DERBYSHIRE ADVENTURER

The team of RDS members who organised last year's special to York and Scarborough are this year running an Inter-City excursion to Derbyshire. The train will leave Colchester by 08.00 and pick up at all stations to Ely before heading across the Fens and East Midlands to the scenic Matlock branch, where passengers may alight at any of the four stations. There will be a buffet on the train and the fare will be £13 (children £7).

There is a good variety of things to do and see on the Matlock branch - a tramway museum; industrial archaeology; Ribber Castle and park; riverside walks; amusements at Matlock Bath; the new cable-car to the Heights of Abraham; the start of the Peakrail preservation scheme - all in beautiful Dales scenery.

We need to fill 500 seats on this train to make it a financial success. Leaflets are being prepared, and so are posters. If you can help with distribution or display, please contact Stephen Binks, Auberics Farm Cottage, Bulmer, Sudbury, CO10 7DY.

You can book your tickets from Mrs. Jennifer Adams, 53 Line Tree Place, Stowmarket, Suffolk.

Saturday July 20th: RDS Branch Committee meeting, Lowestoft.

Sunday July 21st: ESTA special train from Ipswich and all East Suffolk stations to Sheringham. Fare: £6. (Children half fare) Details: Trevor Garrod.

Saturday September 21st: RDS AUTUMN MEETING, Assembly House, Norwich, 2.00pm
Guest speaker: Susan Hoyle (Executive Director, Transport 2000) on the current transport scene.

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PROPOSED SPECIAL TRAIN FROM SWAVESEY

We have been informed by BR that the Regional Civil Engineer is not willing for our charter train to Portsmouth, planned for this spring, to run along the Swavesey branch, because of the state of the track. This is rather surprising news, since we had previously been assured by other BR officials that passenger workings on this line would again be possible.

We have written twice to BR pointing this out and seeking clarification. If we are, after all, able to run this train, it will probably be in the early autumn.

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NORWICH - BIRMINGHAM SERVICE: We have written to BR seeking clarification of reports that local connections to Yarmouth, Lowestoft and Sheringham are not being guaranteed in the event of late running of a Birmingham - Norwich train, and await a reply.

BRECKLAND LINE USERS' ASSOCIATION: Following its recent display at Brandon Library, BLUA is planning similar displays, linked with promotion of the new EAST ANGLIA BY RAIL, in the libraries at Attleborough and Wymondham.

RDS STALLS: Lewis Buckingham is organising an RDS stall at a railway exhibition in Clacton on the first Monday in August; and Joan Coombes hopes to organise a fund-raising and publicity stall for RDS at a church fete in Ipswich. If you can help, or would be willing to organise a stall in your area, please contact the Branch Secretary.

ROYSTON & DISTRICT COMMUTERS' ASSOCIATION: Following a meeting of commuters in Royston on February 20th, this new association has been set up and RDS member Frank Pearson is on its 12-strong committee. The secretary is Ian Quinney, 15 High Street, Meldreth, Royston, Herts (Tel: 61696). Much of the impetus for the formation of R&DCA came from BR's proposals to cut the frequency of trains to Kings Cross; together with new Department of Transport guidelines that would allow more passengers to be crammed into each train! Watch locally for details of the association's next public meeting.

RDS BRANCH WINTER MEETING

On the evening of Tuesday 15th January, despite atrocious weather conditions, 28 people attended the RDS meeting at the YMCA, Cambridge.

Mike Foulkes, BR's Project Manager for the Anglia Electrification scheme, gave an illustrated talk on the progress of the work and conducted a lively question-and-answer session afterwards.

After mentioning some of the criteria used for assessing the viability of electrification schemes, and pointing out that - unlike road schemes - they had to show a financial return, not just a cost-benefit advantage, Mr. Foulkes outlined the work in hand.

This includes the major operations of re-signalling (already completed on the Cambridge line), re-aligning tracks, raising bridges, modifying stations, erecting masts, putting up wires and arranging the supply of current. All this had to be done with a minimum of disruption to existing services. Great emphasis was laid on the need to keep people informed of what was going on, via posters, news-sheets and liaison with the media.

Work on the Cambridge line should be completed by the end of 1986, but delay in securing power supplies from the CEGB will mean that the first regular electric services will not run until May 1987. New air-conditioned carriages will be brought into use, and it is hoped that the journey times on fast services to Liverpool Street will be reduced to 55 minutes. The re-modelling and re-signalling of Liverpool Street station and its approaches will eventually permit further reductions, and eliminate the delays that now occur.

BR is to conduct a new passenger survey and study in an effort to improve services and minimise problems for passengers from north of Cambridge after electrification.

Mr. Foulkes also revealed an important new initiative: BR is to make a fresh submission to the Department of Transport within the next few months on the electrification of the Cambridge - Royston line, to permit through services to Kings Cross. They are confident that they have a better case than previously, and that this major improvement will be secured.

NORFOLK PUBLIC TRANSPORT PLAN: 1985/6

The Public Transport Plans produced by Norfolk County Council in previous years - usually accompanied by cries of protest from the Council at having to produce such a Plan at all! - have usually evoked varying degrees of criticism and scorn from bodies like RDS concerned with better public transport.

But this year we found some things to commend. Our comments were sent to the Council on January 27th (They have not been acknowledged, but this is obviously due to cutbacks in public spending)

We note with pleasure that the County Council "will investigate the possibility of producing other forms of publicity material" for public transport; and suggested combined bus/rail timetables. We also note that the Council is still committed to pressing for electrification from Norwich to Yarmouth. As we predicted, and as the Plan admits, the experimental deregulation of buses in North West Norfolk did not achieve any significant expansion of public transport.

However, we are concerned about the Council's apparent inactivity over the future of the Reedham - Yarmouth line. It has refused to join the East Norfolk & Suffolk Rail Alliance because it is apparently afraid of "becoming closely identified with support for a particular sector!"

"Does this mean," we ask, "that the County Council will not actively oppose any rail closure in the county, in case it might offend somebody elsewhere? Does this mean it will not commit itself financially to any improvement or modernisation in a particular place, because this might identify it with support for that place but not others?"

We think we should be told.

THE STATE OF OUR STATIONS

Peter Lawrence has produced an interim report on the good and bad points of East Anglian stations, based on returns from members covering 21 individual stations.

Further inspections of the other stations will be needed before we can produce a full report - hopefully during the summer - but here are some of the interim findings:

Waiting accommodation is considered adequate at 76% of the stations - but in need of improvement particularly at Beccles, Diss, Sudbury and Wymondham.

Station lighting is considered very good at 85% of stations - but could be better at Wymondham, Lingwood and Sudbury.

Seating accommodation is not so good - at only 52% of stations did members feel it was good or reasonable.

On the other hand, train information was judged as reasonable or good at 76% of stations - with Beccles, Halesworth, North Walsham and Colchester cited as stations where it could be better.

Car-parking was considered reasonable at 62% of stations. Those stations where it was limited and ought to be improved included Bury St. Edmunds, Cantley, Diss, Eccles Road, Elmswell, Foxton, Halesworth and Chappel; while some respondents also considered it inadequate at Norwich.

There were several comments about the need to tidy up unstaffed halts - which has been a regular problem for fifteen years now. In this context, tribute must be paid to our members Louis Hipperson and John Brodribb whose spadework on the four small gardens on the up platform at Beccles (with BR permission) has produced a marked improvement. In the coming months, it is hoped that some flowers - as distinct from weeds - will grace these plots for the first time since the 1960s. An offer has also been received from the local scouts to help in keeping this station tidy.

STATION REOPENINGS ON THE MAIN LINE?

For ten years our Society has been putting the case for selective station reopenings, or new stations, on the Colchester - Norwich main line.

During that time, interest and support has come, to a greater or lesser extent, from Bentley, Bramford, Haughley, Finningham, Mellis and Fornsett.

In January, the Suffolk Association of Local Councils circulated for us a paper setting out the case for selective reopenings, to be served by an electric multiple unit service when electrification reaches Norwich in 1987.

We have so far had positive replies from Haughley and Gislingham Parish Councils, and an indication that there is also considerable support in other villages in the catchment area of the former Finningham station.

We shall therefore be meeting with local people and discussing the next steps during the next few weeks.

A FURTHER VOICE FOR COMMUTERS ON THE MAIN LINE

On March 18th, the Colchester branch of the SDP called a public meeting attended by just over 100 people, most of them commuters from Colchester to London, to voice complaints about the main line service and set up a rail users' group.

The most common complaints concerned unreliability, overcrowding and lack of information when things went wrong. BR's Passenger Manager Theo Steel was present to answer these complaints. He admitted that, for varying reasons, the service had been substandard since September, but said that punctuality targets had been met consistently for the three months before that. There was a capacity problem between Colchester and Sheffield, but the route from Liverpool Street to Sheffield should be resignalled by 1990.

The meeting agreed to set up a Steering Committee to form a Colchester Rail Passengers' Association; and our local member Lewis Buckingham was one of those elected on to it.

1000 60 1000000

Welcome to the following new members:

1. Mr. Anthony Wildish, 50 Coryers Way, Great Barton, Bury St. Edmunds, IP14 2SN
 2. Mr. John Tizard, 42 London Row, Arlesey, Beds. SG15 6NX.
 3. Mr. J.C. Rainer, 54 Ash Road, Onehouse, Stowmarket, IP14 3HD.
 4. Mr. D.H. Kepworth, 2 Higdon Close, Burston, Diss, Norfolk. IP22 3UG.
 5. Miss Lyn Morris, 20 Wiltshire Way, RAF Wyton, Huntingdon, Cambs.
- Mr. and Mrs. R.J. Morland have moved to 1 Mortlock Close, Melbourn, Royston, Herts. SG8 6DA.
- Mr. Alistair McGowan has moved to 1 All Saints Close, St. Ives, Cambs. As reported in the last "Rail East", our member Stuart Paston has indeed moved to Flordon but he has not become "the Rev."

TEN YEARS AGO

From Branch Newsletter no. 14, May 1975:

Magdalen Road station reopened on May 5th and was served by seven trains in each direction on the Lynn - Ely line.

The 09.55 Norwich - Birmingham train became a loco-hauled working with buffet.

An editorial in the Eastern Daily Press on 21.4.75 belittled the idea of electrifying to Norwich; while the MP for South Norfolk, and certain County Councillors, also poured cold water on the proposal, arguing that money be spent on roads instead.

Branch Secretary Trevor Garrod had a letter published in the press two days later putting the case for electrification and for the reopening of certain halts on the main line.

FLETTON PARKWAY?

Our member David Green, who is also a Peterborough City Councillor, has produced a paper suggesting that a new park-and-ride station be built on the East Coast Main line south of Peterborough, where Fletton Parkway crosses the line.

This could be a cheaper alternative to providing additional car-parking space, at a cost of between £2000 and £3000 per car, in the vicinity of the existing station.

On the other hand, would BR stop Inter-City trains at two Peterborough stations? Could Fletton Parkway only be served by an electric multiple unit semi-fast service to London (as would, hopefully, a reopened Arlesey station)?

If you would like further details of Mr. Green's proposal, please contact him at 63 All Saints Road, Peterborough (Tel:310917)

TIMETABLES FOR SALE

Our member Ben Johnson has a complete set of BR timetables from 1968 onwards, which he is keen to sell.

Any offers to Mr. Johnson, please, at 33 High Street, Great Wilbraham, Cambridge, CB1 5JD.

RAIL AND ROAD SAFETY: Following discussion by the Branch Committee at the beginning of February, the Branch Secretary wrote to the Secretary of State for Transport on the question of incidents at level crossings.

We affirmed our belief that ungated crossings, protected by flashing lights, were suitable where secondary lines cross most roads - but urged the Department of Transport to finance an education programme for motorists, similar to those launched when crash helmets for motorcyclists and seat belts for motorists became compulsory.

We also suggested re-testing of motorists and commercial vehicle drivers; and prosecution of motorists suspected of obstructing trains at crossings and endangering the lives of passengers and train crews.

We were told at the end of February that these suggestions were being considered by the Railway Inspectorate of the Department of Transport - and look forward to reporting their reply in our next issue.