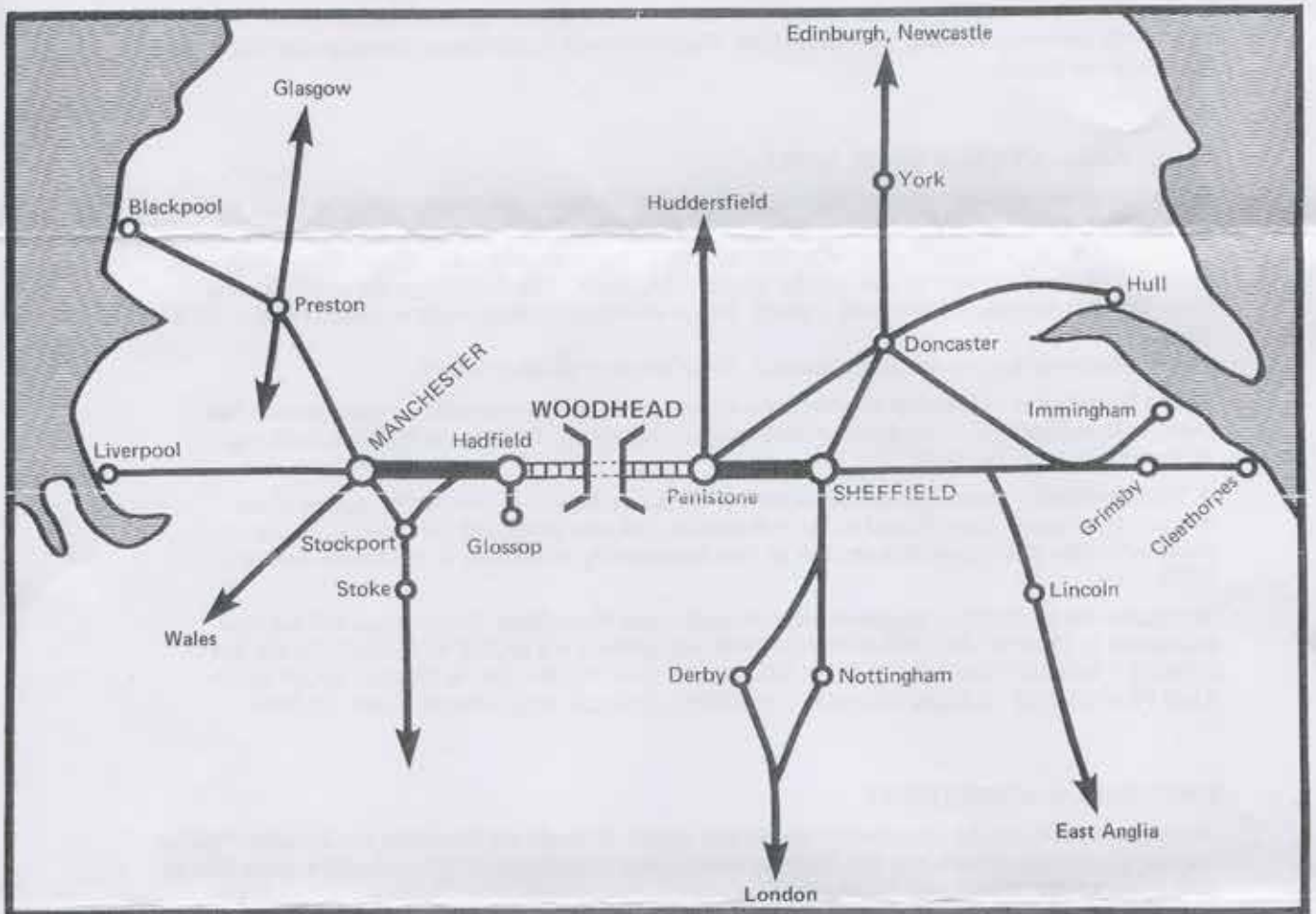


WOODHEAD IS THREATENED!



**SAVE IT
NOW
AND DEVELOP IT!**

WHAT IS THE WOODHEAD ROUTE ?

The Woodhead route is a double-track main line railway running for 42 miles from Manchester to Sheffield. It includes the Woodhead Tunnel, the most modern tunnel under the Pennines, completed in 1954. The route was electrified in that year, as part of a larger East – West scheme which was never completed. *Woodhead is the only electrified Trans-Pennine railway.*

Scheduled through passenger services from Sheffield to Manchester were withdrawn in 1970, leaving only local services on the Sheffield – Penistone and Manchester – Glossop sections. The through passenger service was not making a loss, but the reason given by British Rail for its withdrawal was to enable them to develop the line for Trans-Pennine freight.

There was tremendous public opposition to this cut, but after three Tucc inquiries the closure to passengers of the central section, from Hadfield to Penistone, through the Woodhead Tunnel went ahead.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE 1970 ?

* An improved service between Manchester and Sheffield via the more southerly Hope Valley Line was promised, and this former branch line has in fact been upgraded. However, this line contains two major tunnels – Cowburn and Totley – whose deteriorating condition frequently means temporary closure of the line for engineering work. This has happened every Sunday from October to May for the past 7 years. There are frequent mid-week diversions also – 85 in 1977.

What happens to these diverted trains? They are sent via Woodhead!

* The Manchester – Glossop electric service has doubled in frequency, an extra station has been built at Hattersley and another proposed at Gamesley. This shows that it is fulfilling an important local demand.

* The Sheffield – Penistone service is now provided not by electrics but by ageing diesel railcars. It is slower than it used to be, infrequent and now proposed for closure. However, Wadsley Bridge station on this section of line temporarily re-opened in the severe winter of 1979.

* Despite the promise of development of freight over Woodhead 10 years ago BR are now proposing to close it. **ALTHOUGH WOODHEAD HANDLES MORE FREIGHT THAN ANY OTHER TRANS-PENNINE LINE, CLOSURE OF THE 15 MILES BETWEEN HADFIELD AND PENISTONE IS NOW FORMALLY PROPOSED ON AND FROM JUNE 1st 1981.**

WHAT WILL HAPPEN THEN ?

* Freight traffic will be required to use longer routes through the Pennines and be diesel-hauled instead of electric. Where will BR find the extra diesel locomotives? They have recently had to turn away traffic because of shortages.

* Freight traffic helps subsidise the passenger service to Glossop and Hadfield – which, as we have seen, has gained in popularity. If this passenger service has to bear all the costs of the track, its finances could be jeopardised and cuts occur.

* Unless a miracle cure is found for the problems of the Hope Valley tunnel, trains will still have to be diverted from that line when the engineers are in possession. Without the Woodhead alternative, passengers would have to be bundled on to buses threading their way over Trans-Pennine roads that are frequently impassable in winter.

* BR could well, as a result, lose passenger and freight traffic – which would not do other lines any good either.

BUT ISN'T THIS THE AGE OF THE TRAIN ?

Yes indeed. The train is the best way of moving people and goods on long distances. It is also the safest and less prone to disruption in bad weather. It is also the most efficient user of energy. It can be electrically operated and thus reduce our dependence on one type of fuel.

Both the government and BR say that they want to see more railway electrification, to save energy.

So why close an electrified line ?

WHAT, THEN, SHOULD BE DONE WITH THE WOODHEAD ROUTE ?

It should be kept as an integral part of the rail network. Its full freight and passenger potential should be developed.

Here are some of the ways this can be done:

* Conversion of the 1500v DC electrification scheme to BR's standard 2500v AC. Other such schemes have been converted without difficulty viz. Manchester – Altrincham and Liverpool St. – Shenfield. BR give a figure of £24 million for such a conversion of Woodhead, but our evidence suggests this is based on the conversion costs of the Liverpool St. scheme where there were clearance problems. There are *no* such problems on Woodhead. To start from scratch and electrify another Trans-Pennine route would be far more expensive than this, inflated, figure.

* Trains into Sheffield Midland station from Woodhead at present have to reverse at Nunnery Junction. A new spur could be built, at an estimated cost of £2½ million, to avoid this.

* Such a spur would be especially important when the Midland Main Line from London to Sheffield is electrified – and this is quite high on BR's list of priorities. Electric trains could, and should, ultimately link important centres like Leicester, Derby and Nottingham with Sheffield, Manchester and the 250,000 people living in the catchment area of the Woodhead Line.

* Tameside, Glossop, Penistone and Stocksbridge have a combined population of some quarter of a million – the Woodhead Line can provide them with a fast, efficient link into Manchester, Sheffield and other important northern centres.

* Woodhead has direct links with east and west coast ports, which can be developed for both passengers and freight. Several suggestions have been made by various bodies for through services.

* The need to change locomotives at the limits of the electrified line has been cited by BR as a disadvantage of Woodhead; but extension of electrification on the main lines to Liverpool and Preston, to Humberside and industrial Yorkshire, would overcome this. If BR and the government seriously want more electrification, Woodhead is well-placed as a link in the electric network.

WHAT ABOUT THE COST ?

* As we have seen, conversion of Woodhead would be cheaper than electrification of any other Trans-Pennine Line (though we are not arguing against electrification of additional routes – our ultimate aim is to see all the main line network electric).

* Even taking the (inflated) cost of £24 million, this would not buy many miles of motorway across the Pennines. Yet if Woodhead is closed and dismantled, how long will it be before vested interests renew their clamour for spaghetti junctions up Longdendale, motorways in the Peak District ?

* Railfreight is expected to pay its way, and by the end of 1979 it was virtually doing so. In contrast, road freight receives a substantial indirect subsidy from the government, because the heaviest juggernauts do not cover their track costs. Some people might contend that the

transport of freight around the country is too important to be left to purely commercial factors; but as it is, BR's freight operations are under tight financial pressure from government, and this partly accounts for the pressure to cut routes.

* Although BR's freight carrying have been down in 1980, so have road hauliers. There is, after all, an economic recession. But no one therefore talks about closing down motorways — so why railways?

* The Armitage Committee has just recommended that we allow even bigger lorries on Britain's roads. If the government accepts this recommendation, it has been calculated that £1350,000,000 will have to be found to strengthen bridges alone, to cope with the extra weights. Alongside sums of this nature, the cost of Woodhead pales into insignificance.

* British Rail has been starved of investment in recent years — BRB Chairman Sir Peter Parker has called our network "the bargain of Europe", and we do indeed spend less on our rail system than any other comparable European country. What other European railway system is forced to consider the closure of main line electrified routes ?

THE WOODHEAD ROUTE IS AN ASSET.

BRITISH RAIL MUST KEEP AND DEVELOP THAT ASSET, AS PART OF A MODERN, ATTRACTIVE RAIL NETWORK, PLAYING A BIGGER PART IN THE NATION'S TRANSPORT SYSTEM.

THE GOVERNMENT MUST ENSURE FOR THE RAILWAYS A GREATER SHARE OF TRANSPORT INVESTMENT, SO THAT ASSETS LIKE WOODHEAD ARE RETAINED AND DEVELOPED.

WHAT CAN I DO ?

Write to: * Norman Fowler MP, Secretary of State for Transport, 2 Marsham St., London SW1P 3EB.

* Sir Peter Parker, Chairman, British Railways Board, 222 Marylebone Road, London NW1 6JJ.

* your own Member of Parliament, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

This leaflet is published by the Railway Development Society.
JOIN US AND STRENGTHEN OUR CAMPAIGN.

Write to: Railway Development Society, BM-RDS, London, WC1V 6XX.

RDS is a national independent voluntary body campaigning for the retention and development of rail transport and a national voice for rail users. You can join for £4 (students and pensioners £2; students under 18 £1.50; local authorities £5).

Write to: Glossop, Hadfield & Longdendale Special Transport Action Group,
Mr. P. White, 57 Platt Street, Padfield, Hadfield, Hyde, Cheshire, SK14 7EJ

This group is the umbrella group for all bodies campaigning to keep and develop Woodhead, and you can join it as an individual for £1 (minimum); or corporate bodies can affiliate for £3 (minimum).