



cc Mr Batty  
Mr Batty

256/1

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER .

8 December, 1980.

File with pps

Dear Mrs. Batty Shaw,

Thank you for your letter of 12 November about rural rail services.

I hope it will help allay your members' concern about the future of rural rail services if I explain our policy and the statutory procedures that govern rail closure proposals. It is up to the Railways Board to decide whether to propose the withdrawal of particular passenger services. But they are very well aware that we are not prepared to see any substantial reduction in the rail passenger network, and they must follow the procedures laid down in the Transport Act 1962 and 1968.

These procedures oblige the Board to give full publicity to any closure proposal and allow users the opportunity to object to the local Transport Users' Consultative Committee. If there are objections, the TUCC report to the Minister, usually after a public hearing, on possible hardship that might be caused by the closure of a service. The Minister considers this report and any other relevant factors, including social and economic circumstances before reaching a final decision on whether to permit closure. I am sure you will appreciate that I cannot comment on particular cases which will come to Norman Fowler for decision. But I hope you will agree that the statutory procedures governing proposals to close rail passenger services afford a substantial degree of protection to passengers and they reserve the final decision to the Minister.

/ I believe

I believe that railways have a continuing role to play in meeting the transport needs of rural areas, and our refusal to countenance substantial cuts in the present passenger network should provide a stable framework in which the Board can plan the future of rural railways. Clearly, their future would be more secure if costs could be reduced. Norman Fowler has therefore asked Sir Peter Parker to look very carefully at ways of reducing costs on these lines by, for example, automating level crossings, simplifying signalling and by using lightweight rolling stock. Studies have shown that investment in these areas can pay for itself very rapidly in terms of reduced running costs.

Yours sincerely,

(SGD) MT

Mrs. P. Batty Shaw

*Chairman*  
National Federation of Women's Institutes

(Also invited by DOT to become a member of the CTCI until July 1983).