

BULLETIN OF EUROPEAN RAIL TRAVEL 31

WELCOME to the winter 2024/5 issue of the bulletin issued by Trevor Garrod to support campaigners for better rail services throughout Europe. You may also forward it to other interested people.

CONTENTS

1. Railway 200, Eurostar and EPF
2. Seamless travel via Newhaven – Dieppe?
3. Barcelona tram along Diagonal
4. Back-on-Track
5. One change of train from London
6. Other useful news and information

RAILWAY 200, EUROSTAR AND EPF

What do these three have in common?

In 2025 there are many events to celebrate 200 years of public passenger railways. The Stockton & Darlington Railway opened in September 1825 in North East England. The European Passengers' Federation will hold its annual conference on June 23th and 14th in Swindon in England.

Colleagues from mainland Europe will be encouraged to come to Great Britain by Eurostar – the high speed service which began to link London to Paris and Brussels thirty years ago.

You can already visit the website www.railway200.co.uk on which an interactive map shows you events that have been organised, or are taking shape during 2025 and the first half of 2026.

The European Passengers' Federation will hold its annual conference on June 13-14 will welcome campaigners from all over Europe. The venue will

be the STEAM Museum in the town of Swindon between London and Bristol.

The 2-day event will have presentations and discussions on 4 topics:

1. Back to state operated public transport? From deregulation to regulation drawing on the British experience.
2. Ticketing and information from regional to cross-Channel (not only Eurostar but also sea links and coach)
3. Women in transport.
4. Focus on the passenger? The work programme of the new EU Commission.

The conference will be an unique opportunity to network with fellow campaigners, researchers and other mobility experts. Members of EPF-affiliated organisations will receive a discount on their registration. The full programme , speakers and registration form will be available soon on <https://www.epfconference.eu/>

Many Continental colleagues will no doubt come to England by Eurostar. This operator is due to resume its direct Amsterdam – London trains, in both directions, on February 10th. By then the expanded check-in facilities at Amsterdam Centraal should be complete. EPF has been in contact with Eurostar to prepare for its next high-level meeting with them, due on January 17th.

SEAMLESS TRAVEL VIA NEWHAVEN – DIEPPE?

This is a shortened version of an article to be found on the websites of the Association of European Rail Agents (www.aera.co.uk) and European Rail Campaign (UK) (www.eurorailcampaignuk.org).

The Newhaven – Dieppe ferry, now run by DFDS, was traditionally part of the cheapest cross-Channel route from London to Paris. Encouraged by news of a new shuttle bus between the quayside and station at Dieppe, six British travellers decided to try it for a 3-day autumn break in Rouen, Normandy, in October.

On Newhaven Town station a poster in English and French directed us to the ferry terminal, a few minutes' walk to the west. The terminal is a functional modern building and in the comfortable welcoming interior was a good display of leaflets from the Departement of Seine-Maritime. Going through border control was fairly quick and easy. We then had to board a minibus and wait for all motor vehicles to drive on to the ferry before being driven to the bows and walking through the vehicle entrance. Once up on the main deck we were welcomed by the staff and spent most of a pleasant crossing sampling the buffet.

At Dieppe the vessel now uses a small new outer harbour on reclaimed land below the white cliffs. A little bus took us up the road to the terminal to have our passports stamped. Some 25 of us foot passengers then crossed the car park to the Grisel bus for a ride on a roundabout route to Dieppe Ville station. The bus trip cost 3 euro and only small suitcases could be taken, but that was not really a problem.

Dieppe Ville station was built as the terminus for at least three lines but is now only served by one. It doubles up as a bus station and has a booking office, toilets and a shop. We saw no publicity for the shuttle bus, financed by the Departement at least till the end of 2024. It is however mentioned on the DFDS website.

Travel to and from Rouen was by modern comfortable bimode diesel trains. On the way back we had 40 minutes to wait at Dieppe station and a welcome coffee in the station shop. Only 8 of the 30 or so foot passengers joined the shuttle bus to the port and we suspected others had booked taxis to the port. After controls at the terminal we were bussed down to the ferry after all the other vehicles had been driven on and then ascended an escalator to the passenger deck.

However, at Newhaven we were pleased to hear an announcement that foot passengers would be let off first. Most of us negotiated three flights of stairs on to the car park just half an hour after the ship had docked. We all knew the way now and in less than half an hour several of us were on a train heading to Lewes and Brighton.

BARCELONA TRAM ALONG DIAGONAL

Pau Noy reports that a new section of tramway, between Glories and Verdaguer, was completed in October and trams have been using it since November 9th. This section is expected to carry 25,000 people a day and it links with three metro lines so there is plenty of scope for connectivity.

Barcelona has had two distinct tram networks for decades and it took 25 years of campaigning to link them. The track goes along the central reservation of the Diagonal, the grand avenue that runs from northeast to southeast across the central part of the city.

A final 2.5km of tramway still has to be built, joining Verdaguer and Francesc Macier. This is expected to be open in 2028. There will then be 10km of tram line running along the entire Diagonal.

BACK ON TRACK

The Back-on-Track network has engaged in meetings and publicity events during the past two months.

A series of “Pyjama Parties” were held at the end of October at the main stations in a number of European cities, to publicise the night trains and call for more of them.

Suitably clad members and supporters of Back-on-Track gathered at Copenhagen, Nantes, Barcelona, Berlin, Erfurt, Gijon, Hamburg, Lisbon, London, Stuttgart and Zurich, with their banners and placards. The demonstrations gained widespread coverage in the news media, and there is a possibility that they will be repeated at the end of March.

Then, during November, meetings either in person or by zoom took place to discuss and develop the policy and lobbying of Back-on-Track.

On November 2nd a webinar took place to discuss the effects on night trains of co-ordinated engineering work in different countries.

The lobbying group met on November 5th to draft a policy paper, which was accepted by the general co-ordination meeting on November 19th. It is not being published just yet but will be an important guide for activists.

Contact is also being made with potential members of the Transport Committee of the new European Parliament.

Then on November 16th a meeting at Gavle in Sweden looked at the future of domestic night trains, and campaigning against the threatened withdrawal of those from Gothenburg to Duved and Umea. It was noted that the national operator SJ has a fleet of night train stock that should be able to continue operating for at least ten years.

On November 25th members mainly from Spain gathered in Barcelona , joined by Elmer van Buuren (co-founder of The European Sleeper) to discuss efforts to run an international sleeper service to Barcelona.

Back-on-Track has a growing number of national groups or affiliates. One of them, Back-on-Track Germany, is considering holding a joint conference with Stay Grounded next year. Both Back-on-Track and Stay Grounded have an obvious common interest in promoting the rail alternative to short-haul airlines.

Finally, Back-on-Track Europe will take a further step forward to becoming an association internationale sans but lucrative (international non-profit association) on December 20th when colleagues from Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and the UK are due to visit a notary in Bruges to sign the relevant papers, thus completing the legal process, and then plan the next steps for the organisation.

“JUST ONE CHANGE OF TRAIN FROM LONDON”

This is the subtitle of a new leaflet “DESTINATION EUROPE” which has been compiled by members of the European Rail Campaign (UK).

It contains a map drawn by Simon Hope highlighting how a Eurostar can take British travellers from London to Paris, Brussels or Amsterdam where they are just one change of train away from, for example, Nice, Bordeaux, Barcelona, Berlin, Frankfurt or Geneva.

The text of the leaflet is designed to reassure people who may not be regular international rail travellers, and so it refers to metro transfers in Paris, how to book and how to get help during your journey.

The leaflet is being digitised and it is planned to have paper and digital versions available by March. More details in our next bulletin.

Meanwhile, for journeys that may have to be done by air, is there a good rail link to and from the airport? Have you or someone you know recently experienced this. The European Rail Campaign (UK) is collecting experiences, good and bad. For example, how easy was it to get between the platform and the terminal, was it easy to buy a train or light rail ticket and how could it be improved? E-mail your experiences to ERC(UK) committee member Ian Ring (revianring@gmail.com)

OTHER USEFUL NEWS AND INFORMATION

The next printed issue of the popular *European Rail Timetable* is due out in January. It will then appear twice a year, in Winter and Summer issues; but there will still be digital versions every month. Indeed, the next digital version will be available on December 16th.

For more information log on to www.europeanrailtimetables.eu, including from December 15th additional trains between Brussels and Amsterdam Zuid (for the business district) and then a new Ouigo service between Brussels and Paris via Mons.

Another very helpful source of information on international rail is The Man in Seat 61 (<https://www.seat61.com>)

Forthcoming meetings:

European Passengers' federation in Brussels January 18th; and Annual General Meeting on April 5th in Luxembourg (subject to confirmation).

European Rail Campaign (UK) AGM on December 9th in Birmingham

Association of European Rail Agents AGM January 30th in Ghent – preceded by an educational visit the day before.

Trevor Garrod has done his best to provide up-to-date information in this bulletin but cannot be held responsible for any errors or changes. Next issue – March 1st.

