

## BULLETIN OF EUROPEAN RAIL TRAVEL nr 33

WELCOME to the summer 2025 edition of the newsletter produced by Trevor Garrod to support the work of rail campaigns.

We hope you will find it helpful.

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### EUROPEAN PASSENGERS' FEDERATION CONFERENCE COMES TO ENGLAND

On June 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> some 50 delegates attended this year's EPF conference held in the UK for the first time since 2008 . The venue was the STEAM museum in the former Great Western Railway works at Swindon now an 70-minute journey from London by frequent electric trains.

Members of EPF affiliates from Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Spain, Poland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium and Slovenia were joined for part of the conference by local colleague students from Swindon on a transport-related course.

Naturally the future transport policies and programme of the European Union were featured with two high-ranking speakers while there was also a session on women in transport that showed there were many issues relevant to both sexes.

For one session the conference divided into four workshops to discuss aspects of EU projects in which EPF is involved.

Community Rail Partnerships are an almost uniquely British institution developed in the past two decades and it was inspiring to have a speaker from the Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire CRP. After the conference some delegates travelled by train from Swindon to Stroud to experience their work.

On the second day there was an interesting discussion on private and public sector involvement in providing public transport, leading to a consensus that there is a role for both and that co-operation is desirable.

The conference concluded with a session on information and ticketing, involving professionals in the field, one of whom stated that despite the introduction of new technology, “the railway is still a people industry.”

A full report of the event, including presentations, is available on the website [www.epf.eu/conference](http://www.epf.eu/conference).

On the Saturday evening, 20 delegates made a 40-minute bus ride to Avebury, using a scheduled service on which all were, after some hesitation, able to go contactless. British participants, if they qualified for bus passes, were able to use these.

This service 49 has recently been improved and takes passengers out of urban Swindon up into the hills to the south to the picturesque village of Avebury with its prehistoric stone circles and the historic Red Lion pub which a typical English meal was enjoyed.

It was still daylight as we sped back down the hills into Swindon – whose bus station is not the best advert for this 19<sup>th</sup> century town – but we saw a new one nearing completion as part of its regeneration.

For us British it was a pleasure to host our colleagues from the rest of Europe, a considerable number of whom were also taking the opportunity to spend longer exploring our country.

## CROSS-BORDER TRAINS: CAUSE AND EFFECT?

Train operators sometimes respond to calls for better cross-border links by saying that only 6% of passengers use them. Would a higher percentage use them if they were improved?

It was interesting to learn the results of a survey commissioned by the Community of European Railway & Infrastructure Companies (to which most operators belong), indicating that "a large majority of European citizens would like to travel faster and more easily between European countries, preferring to travel by high speed rail instead of flying."

A total of 5,107 adults in 27 EU countries were questioned in May this year and results showed that only 1 out of 10 consider transport connections between EU countries to be adequate. 3 in 4 EU citizens in this sample said they would take a high speed train instead of a plane when travelling across Europe for short or medium distances if there were fast and reliable rail services between European capitals and major urban areas.

79% agreed that Europe should invest more in high-speed rail to make it easier to travel between European countries.

It is also interesting to note that in large countries such as Spain, France and Italy high speed trains within the country have been successful in helping achieve modal shift from plane to train.

The study recommends that an expanded network of new or upgraded lines ultimately stretching to 49,400 km and costing 546 billion euro would improve rail's share of the international market Europe-wide.

## MULTIMODAL NEWHAVEN – DIEPPE

In issue 31 of this bulletin we focussed on the DFDS ferry between Newhaven and Dieppe and how foot passengers can reach it by train on the English side and by train and shuttle bus on the French side.

Colleagues in the European Rail Campaign(UK) and the Association of European Rail Agents have been in discussion with the group TransManche Metro and in correspondence with officials of the Departement of Seine – Maritime in Normandy to stress the importance of retaining and developing this user-friendly service, especially for tourism on both sides of the Channel.

## NIGHT TRAIN CONFERENCE IN BERLIN

On the weekend of September 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> the Back-on-Track network will hold a major conference in Berlin, starting with a press conference and pyjama party on the Friday evening

Then on Saturday the conference proper will start at 10.00 in Stadtwerkstatt, Mehringdamm 20 with sessions on-

Night Trains versus High Speed

Faster Tracks in Central and Eastern Europe

Night Train Economics

and Go Everywhere Standard.

On Sunday the topics will be

Capacity in Rolling Stock

Single Booking Platform

and Volunteering for Night Trains.

This final session will concentrate on building Back-on-Track's network of national groups and of course on how to campaign for a target network by 2032.

More information is available, including how to register for the conference, on the website <https://back-on-track.eu>

## FURTHER CAMPAIGNS AND DEVELOPMENTS

The EUROPEAN PASSENGERS' FEDERATION is due to hold its autumn General Meeting in Berlin on Saturday October 4<sup>th</sup>. All affiliated bodies will receive full details in due course. You can keep up to date with all EPF actions via its monthly newsletter or by logging on to [www.epf.eu](http://www.epf.eu)

The Association of European Rail Agents is in the process of upgrading its website ([www.aera.co.uk](http://www.aera.co.uk)) to provide customers with improved information about travel abroad by rail and about new border controls due to be introduced between the UK and the rest of Europe in October. This will be a gradual process and AERA representatives had a very informative meeting about it with officials at the Department for Transport in London at the end of June. We look forward to the promised Government information campaign in the autumn.

The European Rail Campaign (UK) is following closely the plans by Eurostar, Deutsche Bahn and SBB for through train between London and Frankfurt and between London and Geneva or Basle. Meanwhile, ERC(UK) is distributing its updated (for 2025) leaflet on night trains. Its other new leaflet, on places on the Continent only one change of train from London, is now at the design stage.

ERC(UK) is continuing dialogue with politicians and campaigners in Kent for some of the international trains to serve Ashford or Ebbsfleet. If Eurostar is unwilling to do so, would a new entrant consider it? There are several considering running trains through the Channel Tunnel.

We have received reports of planned Copenhagen – Berlin trains and – in the Swiss press – considerable interest in proposed through services between London and major Swiss cities.

The European Rail Timetable summer printed edition has appeared and as always is very informative. Find out more via its website [www.europeanrailtimetable.eu](http://www.europeanrailtimetable.eu)

You can also sign of for their free *Friday Flyer* with its digest of the latest changes and developments in services.

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

## EXPLORING THE NETHERLANDS BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

This article is a shortened version of one posted in June on the website of the European Rail Campaign (UK) ([www.eurorailcampaignuk.org](http://www.eurorailcampaignuk.org))

In mid May 12 members and former members of the British association Railfuture enjoyed a group visit by rail to the Netherlands, staying in Amersfoort, a medium-sized town east of Utrecht and on the mainline from Rotterdam and Amsterdam to Berlin and beyond.

We were on a learning curve, even though nearly all of us are experienced travellers. For example, you can now go contactless on Dutch public transport, which made life easy if we used the bus stop outside our hotel to reach the station or, in the other direction, on an interurban bus to the tram stop at Utrecht Science Park.

A few years ago, major Dutch stations often had a combined booking office for rail and local buses and trams. Now Utrecht and Amersfoort have separate enquiry offices – but the bus office willingly provided us with timetable booklets – something which many bus operators in the UK have given up!

Using trolley buses in Arnhem or city buses in Apeldoorn was easy, in order to visit the wooded hills north of the city or the great palace and park of Het loo respectively.

It was a pity that the tourist office which had been next to the ticket office on Arnhem station when I was last there, now stood empty and we were directed to a city centre church for information.

For the Veluwsch Stoomtrein southwards from Apeldoorn we needed traditional card tickets – which the volunteer staff gladly sold to us.

Some more adventurous members made day trips to Amsterdam or Groningen; but for several of the National Railway Museum in the historic Maliebaan station in Utrecht was another highlight – especially as it was easier to reach now that NS run an hourly shuttle train there from the central station.

The next issue of this bulletin is due to appear in early September.

*Trevor Garrod has made every effort effort to include accurate information but cannot be held responsible for any errors or recent changes. 11/7/25*