

## BULLETIN OF EUROPEAN RAIL TRAVEL nr 34

WELCOME to the autumn 2025 edition of the newsletter produced by Trevor Garrod to help the work of rail campaigners.

TOPICS INCLUDE INCLUDE ACTIVITIES OF BACK-ON-TRACK AND THE EUROPEAN PASSENGERS' FEDERATION; VISITS TO CZECHIA AND MIDDELBURG; "INTERNATIONAL" STATIONS IN SOUTH EAST ENGLAND; PROSPECTS FOR NEWHAVEN – DIEPPE FERRY AND SOME DATES FOR DIARIES.

### NIGHT TRAIN CUTS THREATENED

The night train between Paris and Berlin, re-introduced just two years ago, is due to be cut from December 14<sup>th</sup> as the French government is withdrawing its subsidy. The Vienna – Paris night train will also cease. A petition has been launched by the campaign Oui-au-train-de-nuit and has well over 40,000 signatures so far. Demonstrations have also been mounted at key stations.

There will still be a night train from Brussels to Vienna; while the day train between Berlin and Paris will continue and its journey time will be reduced by 20 minutes thanks to the new high-speed line between Halle and Erfurt.

There are also reports that the operator Treni Turistici Italiane will launch Le Stendhal overnight train between Milan and Paris in time for Christmas.

Back-on-Track held its annual conference this year in Berlin between September 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, attended by a large number of campaigners from 11 countries plus a considerable number of others joining on line. You can find reports on the website <https://back-on-track.eu>

On October 4<sup>th</sup> at least 20 people gathered with banners on Vienna main station to protest about the impending cut to their night trains, with the slogan Trains not Planes.”

The Stockholm – Berlin night train faces an uncertain future after April 2026; but SJ has applied to run an Oslo – Berlin service via Copenhagen and Hamburg or a service in which sections from Oslo and Stockholm combined to continue to Berlin.

On November 4<sup>th</sup> there will be an on-line Annual General Meeting of Back-on-Track Europe – a logical development after the formation of several national Back-on-Track associations.

### **EUROPEAN PASSENGERS’ FEDERATION**

EPF, which is multimodal and brings together nearly 40 passenger associations from most European countries, having been formed 23 years ago by a dozen groups from nine countries, held its autumn General Meeting in Berlin on October 4<sup>th</sup>.

The Federation’s newest member, accepted at the Berlin meeting is the Swiss-based Reseau europeen en train.

There was discussion of how to achieve modal shift in international travel, in response to the EU Paper on Connecting Europe; the role and potential of self-driving pods; the revision of rail passenger rights and the importance of different modes of transport to compete on an even playing field. EU sustainable tourism policy was reviewed.

How passengers should be informed during periods of disruption was considered, especially when more than one operator was running services on an international route. EPF has raised this question with the Community of European Railways and the topic can be regarded as a “work in progress.”

## **KERSTIN CARLBERG**

Trevor Garrod writes: Our colleague Kerstin Carlberg sadly passed away on September 24<sup>th</sup> after a short illness.

Kerstin was born in Spandau, worked in a bank and then as a professional cycling campaigner and then in later years with her partner Frank who traded as Fahrrad Frank at his cycle shop in Berlin's Torstrasse.

I first met her – appropriately – in Brussels in 2011 when we were preparing for a meeting with EU officials at DGMOVE. Kerstin had a wide knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, public transport and the environment and was active in PROBAHN and Deutscher Bahnkundenverband as well as frequently participating in EPF events.

EPF colleagues observed a minute's silence in her memory at the start of their October 4<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## **EPF DATES**

General Meeting on January 17<sup>th</sup> 2026, provisionally in Paris.

Annual General Meeting on April 18<sup>th</sup> in Switzerland

Annual Conference June 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> in Maastricht

General Meeting September 26<sup>th</sup>, probably in Brussels.

## **"CONVENIENCE BETWEEN DIESEL AND DIGITALISATION"**

Conclusion of an article in Der Fahrgast 3/25 about a group visit to the western part of the Czech Republic, translated by Trevor Garrod.

"It's not just the clockface timetable that makes rail journeys in Czechia so convenient, but also the booking system. We all booked our own trips and it was also simple to book our own seat reservations.

“Despite lack of knowledge of the Czech language, booking was extremely user-friendly, seats could be cancelled up to the final minute, various means of payment were accepted. There were ticket controls on every train with staff constantly friendly and quick.

“Bus tickets could be obtained directly on the vehicle. Rail travel seldom seemed to be as stress-free as it was here.

“Coupled with all of this was a breath of nostalgia and slower pace of life.

“In smaller towns it was completely normal to just walk across the track, mind you securely and under the attentive eyes of the train staff who stood by their trains equipped with whistle and signalling disc. It was rail travel from an earlier era, but at even intervals.

“Here the train staff are always visible and present, and that in the best sense of the word. A feeling of security and at the same time living railway traditions crowned by significantly better maintained stations.

## **ALTERNATIVES TO OVERTOURISM**

Residents of cities such as Barcelona, Venice and Amsterdam have in the last few years complained of the negative effects of having too many tourists. Why not try some quieter destinations that are still interesting and attractive?

This is one reason why I spent a short holiday in Middelburg, capital of the Dutch province of Zeeland, in early September. It has three trains an hour on the line to Vlissingen (English: Flushing) and can easily be explored on foot. Most of the trains are InterCity serving Rotterdam and The Hague and indeed Schiedam (which is handy for the metro to Hoek van Holland) and Schiphol (if you have to fly).

Bombed in 1940, the centre of Middleburg was tastefully rebuilt and contains what you may expect of a historic Dutch town – big

churches, ornate town hall, impressive windmills, canals, extensive market and pedestrianised shopping area...

I can also recommend a short train ride to Goes and a journey on the heritage railway to Hoedekenskerke; a ferry across the Schelde estuary from its terminal next to Vlissingen station and a bus ride thence to Sluis; and a circular tour of Walcheren by service buses, visiting the two contrasting small coastal towns of Westkapelle and Domburg.

Trevor Garrod

### **“INTERNATIONAL” STATIONS IN SOUTH EAST ENGLAND**

Ashford, Ebbsfleet and Stratford all have the word “International” after their name but currently no Eurostars call there.

The European Rail Campaign (UK) has been in dialogue with groups of residents in the county of Kent who are pressing, with support from at least some Members of Parliament, for stops in at least some for the Eurostars that served them before 2020. They have also pointed out that it is a disincentive to would-be foot passengers to and from Kent and East Sussex to have to travel all the way into London to catch a train to the near Continent.

On September 26<sup>th</sup> the Minister of State for Transport, Lord Peter Hendy gave a speech encouraging train operators to work with local councillors and businesses to “explore solutions” for Kent. He suggested that competition between operators offered the best prospect of international services returning to Kent stations and at least one of the would-be open access operators could be persuaded to fill this gap. This Office for Rail & Road is also expected to give a decision in October on whether trains from such firms would be able to use Temple Mills depot in east London, which is currently only used by Eurostar.

## **WHAT ABOUT NEWHAVEN – DIEPPE?**

For some journeys between southern England and Northern France this ferry service has real potential for foot passengers. We have dealt with this matter in earlier issues of this Bulletin and are encouraged to note that a meeting of stakeholders was due to take place in early October, on the initiative of Transmanche Metro.

For discussion would be access for foot passengers to and from the two ports and the scope for through ticketing. At Newhaven the station with frequent trains is adjacent to the ferry terminal but at Dieppe a bus journey is needed to bring passengers to the SNCF station from which the trains, while modern and comfortable, are less frequent.

## **THE CHALLENGE OF EES**

For British travellers to mainland Europe, the EU Entry/Exit System is due to be introduced in from October 12<sup>th</sup>. Essentially travellers have to provide additional information when they first leave the UK for a trip to the EU. In many cases this will be on arrival in a Schengen country, but for Eurostar passengers it will be at St Pancras International and additional kiosks are being provided there.

It will be useful to learn the experiences of people travelling in the coming weeks. The new system is not solely for rail passengers of course, and one member of ERC(UK) has promised to let us know his experiences when flying to Lanzarote later this month!

## **TRAIN IC146 CAN BE USEFUL**

It runs every two hours between Amsterdam and Berlin and provides an additional way of going from London to Berlin - with just one change of train, now that there are three Eurostars a day to the Dutch capital. It has also for at least two decades been handy to

arrive on the night ferry at Hoek van Holland and catch Dutch trains to Amersfoort where you can change in and out of train IC 146.

Trevor Garrod reports – I recently disembarked from the Stena Britannica at 08.15, was on the metro within a quarter of an hour, changing to an Inter City train 50 minutes later at Rotterdam Alexander and, after cross-platform interchange at Utrecht, reaching Amersfoort in time to grab a coffee-to-go before boarding the Berlin train at 10.35.

On my outbound and return journeys there was no catering on this train, which was a slight nuisance. On the plus side, there is no longer a need to change locomotives at Bad Bentheim. A Dutch dual voltage locomotive now works through and can spend just two minutes at the border station instead of the 12 minutes previously.

Some engineering work in the area of Melle and Bunde delayed us but we were into Berlin Hauptbahnhof a quarter of an hour late at 16.08. This train was particularly full by the time it left Bad Bentheim as it was the Day of Germany Unity and many passengers had brought their beer with them. On the return journey on the Sunday there was more room so I decided to stay on board till Amsterdam Centraal – from where my two onward trains were crowded but I was back on the Stena ferry in plenty of time for an evening meal.

### **MORE INFORMATION:**

The European Rail Campaign (UK) will hold its Annual General Meeting in Birmingham on November 25<sup>th</sup>. Members will receive full details nearer the date.

Stocks of the Campaign's "Travel by night train" leaflet, updated in April 2025, are still available from Trevor Garrod ([tgarrod21@gmail.com](mailto:tgarrod21@gmail.com)). Even if the changes in services mentioned

earlier in this bulletin, go ahead, the leaflet is still very largely up to date and of course it contains a warning that “all information is correct at the time of printing but is subject to change during the life of this guide.... We therefore advise you to look on the websites of train operators, especially Nightjet and European Sleeper, as well as the European Rail Timetable which also issues a very useful weekly Friday Flyer to which you can subscribe free of charge see [www.europeanrailtimetable.eu](http://www.europeanrailtimetable.eu)

**The Association of European Rail Agents (AERA)** will next meet in London on November 27<sup>th</sup>. Its website is being fully redesigned and will be relaunched in the coming winter. The website [www.aera.co.uk](http://www.aera.co.uk) gives information about, and links to, travel agents and tour organisers specialising in international rail.

The Man in Seat 61 Has a well-deserved reputation for advice on international rail services, ticketing and facilities and his website is <https://www.seat61.com>

Trevor Garrod has made every effort to include up-to-date information in this bulletin but cannot be held responsible for any errors or changes.

It is planned to produce one more issue in 2025.

October 8<sup>th</sup> 2025