

BULLETIN OF EUROPEAN RAIL TRAVEL 22

Welcome to the autumn 2022 issue of the bulletin compiled by Trevor Garrod to support rail campaigners in European countries.

Thank you to everyone who has provided information.

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NEW NIGHT TRAIN STUDY IS ON THE WAY

In our last bulletin we reported on work by members of the Back-on-Track network to investigate the potential of international trains, and in particular night trains, to help reduce global warming.

On September 15th the network will publish its paper on greenhouse gas emissions and how an expanded night train network can encourage modal shift and reduce the problem.

The paper is the work of Juri Maier of Back-on-Track Germany, with input and comment from colleagues in several other European countries.

From 10.00 (CEST) on September 15th it will be possible to read the paper on the website www.back-on-track.eu .

NEW NIGHT TRAIN BETWEEN HAMBURG AND STOCKHOLM.

On September 1st a new service started between Hamburg Altona and Stockholm Central, as a joint initiative between the Swedish SJ and German RDC. A Youtube video was made, interviewing passengers and Back-on-Track campaigner Joachim Holstein.

The service, which operates every night, currently only has 3 sleeping coaches as the other ones they want to use have not yet been approved for running in Denmark.

Meanwhile, open access operator Snälltöget has reported record numbers this past summer between Sweden, Hamburg and Berlin. It runs for 220 nights a year and since 27th June 2021 has carried 120,000 passengers (a 500% increase on its previous Malmö – Stockholm overnight service). Each departure this summer has been fully booked and in 2023 it plans to increase its services to 240 nights a year.

On September 6th OeBB and Siemens launched their new Nightjet stock in Vienna. By the end of 2025 a total of 33 new generation Nightjets will be on the rails; the first ones entering service in 2023 on overnight services between Germany, Austria and Italy.

20TH BIRTHDAY OF EUROPEAN PASSENGERS' FEDERATION

On October 19th 2002, in the Belgian city of Ghent, 15 people from 11 associations or statutory bodies in 8 European countries met to form the European Passengers' Federation (EPF).

The federation is an international non-profit organisation constituted under Belgian law and has grown to three times its original size. A significant number of its member associations are from non-EU countries.

You can read about EPF's policies and actions on its website www.epf.eu, including links to its member associations and information about the EU projects to which it has contributed or in which it still participates.

AVI-ACTION CONFERENCE IN LILLE OCTOBER 5TH-9TH

The Stay Grounded network will hold its next major event in Lille from October 5th to 9th, and it will also be possible to take part virtually.

The aim is “to bring together the movement for reducing aviation, for new alliances and to give us a chance to exchange experiences about actions and tactics while strategising plans for new action.”

It will also be an opportunity to meet local campaigners against the expansion of Lille –Lesquin airport in the association NADA (Non a l’agrandissement de l’aéroport).

The event will start on Wednesday evening October 5th and consist of a number of workshops plus a plenary session on the Friday and (on the Sunday) a European Network Meeting for Stay Grounded members only.

Obviously the scope for reducing short- and medium-haul flights by modal shift is of particular interest to pro-rail campaigners.

For more information, including registration, log on to [https://stay-grounded.org/action-conference 2022/](https://stay-grounded.org/action-conference-2022/)

EUROSTAR PROSPECTS

Eurostar has in the past built a good record in encouraging modal shift from air to rail between London and Paris and Brussels; and also now, 4 times a day, London and Amsterdam.

However, from June 5th 2023 the operator will no longer be offering a through service from London to Disneyland Paris. The service is to be suspended to enable Eurostar “to focus on core routes.” The operator cites as reasons the continued recovery from the pandemic and new EU entry rules due to be introduced by the end of May 2023, involving photos and finger prints.

From June, therefore, British passengers heading to Marne-le-Vallee (for Disneyland) will have to change at Lille or Paris.

Eurostar says it will “revise its options” for 2024. It has also stated that its calls at Ashford and Ebbsfleet International stations in Kent will remain suspended in 2023 and may not resume before 2025.

In the early years Eurostar made much in its advertising about its strength in providing easy fast travel from city centre to city centre. Then, as the Continental high speed network grew, it attracted more passengers using its trains as part of a longer journey. This was reflected in the results of surveys conducted in the early 2000s by the voluntary body Railfuture.

One hopes that Eurostar will not neglect that wider market. Of course, the attitude of the UK Government towards Eurostar’s challenges has not helped. Can we expect anything better after the change of Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Transport on 4th September?

FREE OR CHEAP TICKETS

For three months this summer, the German government funded a discounted rail fare scheme – the 9 euro ticket.

This gave a month’s cheap travel on regional rail services and represented remarkably good value for money. It was introduced partly to encourage modal shift and partly to counter the effects of the pandemic on public transport usage._

At the time of writing it is not clear what if anything will replace it; and certain politicians were claiming it discriminated against people in rural areas who lived a long way from their nearest station.

The Spanish government has introduced free travel on commuter and regional trains (up to a distance of 300 km) from September 1st until the end of the year, having in August announced a 30% discount on all public transport on all public transport fares, covering metros, buses and trams. This is to tackle the cost of living crisis.

Last year Austria introduced the Klimaticket - an annual public transport pass which works out at 3 euro per day. It is reported to be very popular.

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A CROSS-BORDER EXPERIENCE

By Trevor Garrod

While on holiday in August I travelled on the Marschbahn, or “Marshes Railway”, which serves the western side of Schleswig-Holstein but crosses into Denmark. It is part of the route used by many holidaymakers visiting the North Sea resorts and islands, with trains branching off at Niebull over the Hindenburgdamm to the popular island of Sylt.

The Marschbahn north of Niebull to the Danish town of Tonder was closed to passengers for almost two decades in 1981, having previously only been used by occasional seasonal passenger trains from some years.

Initiatives on both sides of the border led to an experimental summer passenger service in 2000 which carried some 10,000 passengers. From 2003 this became an all-year service and since 2020 Arriva Danmark has operated a through service from Niebull via Tonder to the important town and port of Esbjerg and carries some 90,000 passengers a year between Niebull and Tonder.

I joined the 2-car modern diesel multiple unit at Niebull, together with some 30 other passengers and three bicycles. We sped across the flat landscape of fields and woodland with two unstaffed halts (at one of which we called) and before long drew into Tonder station – an impressive late 19th century building which appeared to be unstaffed. A third of the passengers alighted here and the rest were continuing to destinations further north.

Tonder is a town of some 8,000 people, dating from the 13th century, with an impressive 16th century church and many gabled houses along its bustling pedestrianised main shopping street. The Michelin phrase “merite le detour” could apply to it, and it has a helpful tourist office as part of a shop; but the rail service is also fulfilling a function for longer-distance travellers from Germany up towards Esbjerg; and as I subsequently found, a fairly new halt Tonder Nord, was busy with students from nearby schools and colleges going north towards Ribe.

I found the lack of a town map at either the main station or the halt rather inconvenient, as was the lack of a timetable poster. I relied on my copy of the European Rail Timetable! No one checked my ticket on either the northbound train or in late afternoon the southbound one, which was also well used, but only six of us boarded at Tonder main station.

EUROPEAN RAIL CAMPAIGN (UK) In our last issue we report on ERC(UK)'s new leaflet "Save a Day, Travel by Night". 80% of the print run has now been distributed and the electronic version has also been sent to many people and organisations. It can still be ordered from Trevor Garrod (tgarrod21@gmail.com) or downloaded from www.eurorailcampaiguk.org

ERC(UK)'s secretary has had further correspondence with politicians in Kent, who are very keen to see Eurostar serving Ashford and Ebbsfleet again.

ERC(UK) member Robin Whittaker reports that the Harwich – Hoek van Holland night ferry was fully booked throughout August and the early part of September; and that Continental night trains were fully booked for even longer. He also recommends trying the P&O ferry between Hull and Rotterdam (Europoort), which has bus connections to the main line stations at either end. These could be better, however, and he comments, "It looks to me as if P&O are trying to ditch the foot passenger service."

FINDING OUT MORE: Log on to www.europeanrailtimetable.eu to order the quarterly timetable and/or subscribe to its very informative Friday Flyer.

Log on to www.aera.co.uk to reach the specialist rail agents and tour organisers who are members of the Association of European Rail Agents and a link to The Man in Seat 61.

It is planned to issue the next Bulletin of European Rail Travel at the start of December. Trevor Garrod has made every effort to include up-to date information but cannot be held responsible for any errors or changes to the information in it. Feedback is welcome to tgarrod21@gmail.com.

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