

# AERA

Association of European Rail Agents

## Meeting 14<sup>th</sup> June 2012

### At the offices of East Midlands Trains, St Pancras

#### Attendees:

Bob Hex (Chairman) – Trainseurope  
Mike Woodward (Treasurer) – Life Member  
Don Somerville – HRG  
Chris Watkins – Real Russia  
Dan May – Ffestiniog Travel  
Andy Brabin – Railbookers  
Tom Fitzsimons – HRG  
Brendan Fox – Thomas Cook Publishing  
Mark Smith – Seat 61

Meeting started at 11.10.

The Association welcomed Kate Andrews from Loco 2.  
She enjoyed the meeting and wishes to become a member.

Gareth Leslie did not turn up and there was no presentation by EMT, so the meeting agenda was immediately moved to Mark Smith.

#### Seat 61

Mark gave a very interesting presentation regarding Seat 61, why he started it and how it is now doing very well. He stated he encourages people to book their trains not only on line but also to contact the agencies which appear on his site, which would be all the current members of AERA. He also made the point that unlike the common misconception that rail is only for train spotters or for interrailers and only journeys of 3 hours would be of interest; 50% of his output is dealing with point to point journeys in Europe and that many people wish to travel quite long distances. This was confirmed by Trainseurope and Ffestiniog as seeing the same trends, and generally that was agreed across the board by the members present. Mark also said that people are fed up with flying and are looking at alternatives to air travel. Turkey and Russia seemed to be of major interest at the moment. Bob Hex made the point that this may be so but the ticket suppliers are not catching on to this trend at all. The presentation lasted 45 minutes and a discussion brought us up to 12.15. The association thanked Mark for his presentation.

### **CIV Tickets**

We then had a discussion about UK CIV tickets issued by ATOC; Bob Hex explained we are still awaiting a response from Louise Ellman to my email concerning the a la carte conditions applied by various TOCs and the tendency to try get out of selling them to clients. Mark Smith agreed with Bob on the principles of these tickets and why they came about during the end of the BR sectorisation period and beginning of the privatisation process. Bob would like to bring this up again at the next AERA meeting. It would seem that the attempt to discontinue the "Highland Chieftain" service on the ECML has been withdrawn and the train is now enshrined in the franchise. This was raised by Dave Felstead last meeting, Bob has told him the good news.

A written update about the website was received and given to members, the update written by David Glover. This will have to be raised at a future meeting again.

Mike Woodward gave us a print out of the current financial situation in AERA which looks pretty good.