

AERA

Association of European Rail Agents

AERA AGM Holiday Inn Express – Nottingham 15th March 2012

Attendees:

Bob Hex – Trainseurope (Chair)
Philip Barnard – ACP Rail (Secretary)
Mike Woodward – Life Member (Treasurer)
Enrico Soresini – International Rail (Ordinary Member)
Brigitte Thomas – Real Russia
Jonathan Eate – Real Russia
Don Somerville – HRG
Tom Lyde – HRG
Lee Davies – The Travel Bureau
Brendan Fox – Thomas Cook Publishing
Oliver Schmidt – Deutsche Bahn
David Glover – Rail Tour Guide
Dave Felstead – Rail Trail Tours

11:26 AGM Starts

Chair Welcome

- Successful year last year
- New meetings i.e: Houses of Parliament and Eurail
- A member has left but new one joined, so cancelled out each other
- Lost suppliers though and we are very disappointed about that

(11:33 Lee Davies arrives)

Treasurer's Report

- Account balances are as follow:
 - o £258.78 Current Account
 - o £2332.31 Saver Account
- This is up on 2010
- Bank charges are down £9.45
- Last years major expense was £333.00 for the web
- Last years AGM saved us £700.00 on 2010, thanks to Brendan
- Today costs £176.00 + £96.00 for lunch, again a great saving, thanks to Brigitte for finding it
- Overall we are more than holding our own

Constitutional Changes

- It was decided by the Secretary that the position of Ordinary Member would be closed, as there were no takers.
- Therefore constitutionally it was decided to change article 6.3 (e) originally:
- *(e) One ordinary member (or in the event of the growth of the Association additional members as is deemed necessary)*
- to read: **(e) one ordinary member (optional)**
- This wording was passed with a quorum

Committee Vote

- The votes were taken via ballot box including entries by proxy
(...beautifully designed again this year by Mr Barnard!) :o)
- The final result was:
Chairman: Bob Hex
Vice Chair: Enrico Soresini
Secretary: Philip Barnard
Treasurer: Mike Woodward
Ordinary Member: Closed
- This was passed with no objections
- Mike Woodward wished to thank Brigitte for helping organise such a good venue for the AGM

Break for lunch at 11:57

AERA 1st Meeting of 2012 **Holiday Inn Express** **15th March 2012**

Start at 13:18

Follow up on existing issues

Transport Select Committee

- Chair gave overview of our meeting with Louise Elman from the Transport Select Committee
- It was noted that Louise Elman was limited in directly approaching ATOC to get them to recognise AERA
- She did ask for our comments to put into a folder for her to draw on for any future European problems, however, it seems that most problems are domestic
- She is appreciative of our association
- Most importantly we are known to her and she knows of us as international sellers within the UK
- The Secretary asked if we are copied in on the minutes of her transport select committee meetings as she promised?
- The Chair said that he wasn't sure that they had too many meetings since we last met them.

- The Chair is to contact Louise Elman to ask if there is anything of interest for us?
- The Secretary added that it would be good to have points from her agenda on ours.
- The Chair asked Oliver Schmidt if DB had any dealings with Louise Elman?
- Oliver Schmidt replied no, just with Brian Simpson.

London International Fare

- The Chair explained that the London International Fare (UK add on to Eurostar ticket) is still available in all computer systems but rarely programmed into user screens
- Least of all they are used on an inbound basis... yet this is a CIV ticket!
- Dave Felstead advised about a group he had travelling from Germany to London. Their ICE train broke down and they got into Bruxelles just in time to connect with the last Eurostar to London. Eurostar got them under carriage to London but no-one accepted the hotel bill for the group who had to stay in London that night before travelling onwards.
- Dave Felstead mentioned that because he could not claim he looked into the rules and it states that the final operator is responsible for the claim.
- Dave Felstead added that ATOC always used to have CIV on the ticket and ATOC are responsible for implementing the CIV rules in the UK. There is no longevity in an industry causing problems
- The Chair said that through ticketing is turning into a jungle

Rail Training

- The Secretary promptly suggested that we need to get to the source of this problem. The source is in training. We should create a course for a company such as City & Guilds for European Geography and Rail module.
- Tom Lyde said that ATOC already have an exam set for this
- Dave Felstead said that the ATOC contact is Lee Grainger
- Enrico Soresini reckoned we should go to the press about this lack of knowledge
- David Glover said that we should pose the question to Lee Grainger first to see what they examine?
- Lee Davies noted that basic Geography is the problem
- The Secretary said that we should invite Simon Calder to our next meeting
- The Chair will contact ATOC and based on their reply will contact Simon Calder
- The Secretary will write a letter to City & Guilds for a rail module
- Brendan Fox added that IATA does have a rail module and Brendan does have input to this

Thello

- The Chair advised of problems with booking Thello trains being no better from previous meeting
- Enrico Soresini had actually used Thello only a few weeks before and was able to give us an update:
 - o The Thello boutique is hidden away in Paris Gare de Lyon due to bad FS/SNCF relations

- Enrico asked SNCF desk where the Thello desk was and they didn't know and when the boss came out, he only pointed!
 - SNCF don't sell Thello and you can only buy Thello tickets at systems or Boutiques only
 - Enrico didn't like that there was no welcome on the platform
 - There was no people to assist on the train either, so passengers didn't know what to do?
 - Eventually some staff appeared after 30 minutes rolling
 - Much cleaner than Artesia and got a Champagne voucher for 1st class and breakfast was only Coffee, Croissant and Orange Juice
- The Secretary asked if the carriages were en-suite?
 - Enrico said they were not and had no plans to be, so this will not really appeal to the high-end customer. This will really appeal more to the Inter-railer.
 - The Secretary added how can this service be good for an Inter-railer when it doesn't accept InterRail passes?
 - Enrico said there is no alternative for an overnight service... currently they are going to Milano and Venezia but will be going to Firenze and Roma in June
 - Brendan Fox also added that Thello are planning a Torino – Lyon day service and that NTV will also not be taking InterRail or Eurail Passes
 - The Chair asked if anyone in the association could help answer... who does the operation of these Thello trains?

Eurostar immigration

- It was noted by the chairman that immigration staff want to check and stamp all tickets on Eurostar journeys.
- This takes twice as long as the tickets get checked twice
 - Stamped in Lille or Bruxelles (British Control)
 - Checked in London (French Control)
- This is holding up passengers and causing Eurostar's advert of 30 minute check-in to be false advertising.
- The Chair asked if anyone who uses Eurostar will please feed back?

DB ICE FRA – BRU

- Dave Felstead mentioned that the timing of the Frankfurt – Bruxelles ICE had been changed... was this for the path of the new service to London?
- Oliver Schmidt said that first they have changed the domestic timetable, then later they will change the international timetable. Eurostar have changed the connection time at Bruxelles from 18mins to 45mins because of the ICE's late running.

Break: 14:35

Reconvene: 14:54

DB Presentation

Oliver Schmidt said that he was proud to be part of AERA and shared similar problems to the issues we face.

Oliver gave an update on DB to all members present.

A copy of which can be requested via the Secretary.

AERA Website

- Enrico Soresini explained what the sub-committee have done in the last three months.
- David Glover showed us a dummy of the new look AERA site stating that this will take over from the new site. David said that this site currently costs £144 + work.
- Enrico added that we need to look at moving away from hosting and make it more manageable, as it is currently sitting there costing us money.
- David proposed that he, as RailTourGuide, has hosting space and that we pay him £140 inc. VAT per annum plus £20 for any outside work (approx 3-4 hours per annum) and we can control and update it ourselves at no extra cost. Minutes and future meetings can go on there and there can be a members only page. We could set up a Facebook page and possibly feature a member each month in profile?
- Brigitte Thomas asked if we were loading Twitter onto the new site, as most of her aftersales come from Twitter not Facebook?
- Enrico said that Facebook is a multiple linked page that spreads but Twitter is not like that.
- Brigitte said that a travel blogger can write an account on Twitter.
- Enrico added that we don't have anyone employed to write answers back.
- Enrico said that the sub-committee needs full power to decide and implement the new website when the old one expires in May.
- All present agreed to give full power to sub-committee over the new website

Evolvi

- Dave Felstead wanted to inform the membership that when booking a first class reservation in Evolvi and first class is full it will automatically default to standard class, without this information being present on the confirmation.
- Many agreed with this.

Treasurer

- The Treasurer and all present agreed to the £100 flat membership fee for 2013.

A.O.B

Highland Chieftain

- Dave Felstead advised that he was in the knowledge that the 12:00 London - Inverness "Highland Chieftain" will be terminated at Edinburgh.
- Passengers will have to change for a lower class of train to Inverness.
- If the direct train is stopped then this will affect a loss of tourism towards Inverness.
- However, if the direct train is stopped, then why is ScotRail still running the Sleeper?

Educational

- The Secretary suggested that with the new momentum AERA has got and the new members, it would be good to have an Educational trip.
- Both Brigitte and Oliver said that they would look into the possibilities of hosting an AERA educational.

Next Meetings

- The Chair and Secretary announced the following meetings this year to be:
- Thu 17th May (now rescheduled to: Thu 14th June)
- Thu 27th September
- Thu 6th December

Meeting closed at 15:57