

AERA Meeting
14th December 2012

London St Pancras Station
East Midlands Trains Meeting Room

Attendees:

Bob Hex – Trainseurope (Chairman)
Philip Barnard – ACP Rail (Secretary)
Mike Woodward – Life Member (Treasurer)
Enrico Soresini – International Rail (Ordinary Member)
Dan May – Ffestiniog Travel
David Glover – Rail Tour Guide
Scott Wild – Rail Tour Guide
Brigitte Thomas – Real Russia
Tom Lyde – Hogg Robinson
Don Somerville – Hogg Robinson
Trevor Garrod – European Passenger Federation

Presentation by:

René de Groot – Eurail Group
Han Huisman – Eurail Group

11:13 Start

Eurail Group Presentation

Due to late start, the agenda was re-organised so Eurail could present first.

The Chair asked for everyone to make an introduction of themselves to Eurail around the table.

René de Groot made a presentation of the Interail/Eurail product.
A copy of the presentation is available from the Secretary upon request.

Eurail/Interail Questions

Q1) The Chair asked René de Groot is there any plans to merge the Interail and Eurail products as one pass? He gave the example of a youth American and English couple, who can't use first class together or travel in the same countries around Europe together because of restrictions.

AI) René answered that the long term aim is to merge the two passes. It is right that there is no 1st class youth pass... but members are not ready to launch this yet.

Hans Huisman added that Eurail want to merge the two products but the railways don't all agree, particularly as not all railways offer a 1st class product?

He mentioned that the new chiefs of the railways are mostly from a nationally owned energy company or cheap airline background and have different views on the future. They do not all have pro-Eurail stance nor do they have much rail knowledge?

Q2) Enrico Soresini asked about Supplements and Reservations. He said that Interail is becoming irrelevant and difficult to promote with compulsory reservations and the cost of these reservations is too expensive. Germany is the only country that has an open “TCV” network which works for Interail.

A2) Hans said that we are facing more high-speed trains which require reservations. The new high-speed rail companies that start up are usually all represented by the national railways themselves. The Interail pass was originally designed as a leisure travel pass and not a high-speed travel pass. We need to tell our travellers not to take these trains.

René said that we might all be looking for a pass which includes reservations but train reservations in Europe are split five ways by the railways and the Eurail reservations are usually in the cheap sector, which is the first to sell out.

There is a great future for the Interail pass but it needs a new position.

Hans jokingly added that one way around it is for Eurail to operate their own trains!

Q3) Tom Lyde asked if it was possible to split the pass into a “backpacker” and “business” pass?

A3) To which Hans answered that the country of residence rule must be removed for this to happen or merge.

René de Groot and Hans Huisman leave to catch their flight home.

The association breaks for coffee at 12:16

Re-convene at 12:27

Chair Report

The Chair offers his thanks to the Eurail Group for their presentation, as well as East Midlands Trains for letting us have access to their very convenient meeting room.

Also he thanked Trevor Garrod from the EPF for his attendance.

The Chair updated us with the latest goings on... including an update from with the EPF and also an update from our correspondences with Louise Elman MP.

He was most concerned with the availability to “all” of the new services starting up. Such as:

THELLO (the replacement for Artesia) he mentioned that there is only one booking platform for this system, through Trenitalia. This surely is against the EU single marketplace?

NTV (new high-speed in Italy) he added that this will only be bookable through the SNCF online Euronet system.

ID TGV (Internal French TGV’s for internet sale only) Dan May advised us that Rail Europe refuse to sell these as they are for SNCF internet customers only.

The Chair said that these issues affect our ability to sell if our agencies do not own the right system? A letter to Chris Irwin will have to be written to include the above.

Secretary Report

Secretary reads out the apologies from Jennifer Swierc, Chris Watkins (who sent Brigitte in his place,) Lee Davies and Don Carman.

The Secretary said that he had put most of his report into the agenda for discussion.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported that finances were fine and as we are having our meetings hosted, there was little outgoing. The current account was holding £182.83 and the saver was holding £2528.87. He advised that AGM is usually our biggest expense and that also needed organising.

EPF and AERA

The Secretary introduced Trevor Garrod and spoke of the time when AERA were going to represent at the EPF AGM in London with a stall but the decision was overturned by the then Chairperson and we didn't end up going.

The Secretary asked Trevor if it was possible to look at having a stand at the next EPF AGM and where it would be? Trevor replied that there were two options for us (as AERA) to represent at the EPF next year.

Firstly, we would be welcome to the EPF Conference and AGM next March in Salzburg (or the year after 2013 in Basel.)

The conference format is as follows:

Friday (evening)

- Seminar (Salzburg Local Transport)
- Welcome dinner
- Networking evening

Saturday (09:15 – 17:00)

- Urban Transportation (Wien Linien)
- Rail Liberalisation (Trying for Westbahn or Veolia)
- Transport Policy Europewide (2 EU Speakers)
- EPF AGM early evening (90 mins)

Sunday (morning)

- Tour of city by tram
- Or train trip to Krimmel

Trevor stated that he expects around 75 – 90 people from 12 – 15 different countries, mostly made up of the 33 EPF members. It is also open to outside bodies. European Infrastructure Managers and CER usually send someone. He added that it will be useful networking with people from the Bruxelles Parliament.

Enrico asked if there were any railways that attended?

Trevor replied that they are on the mailing list but only attend when presenting.

Trevor advised of another possibility, being the 10th anniversary celebration of the EPF on 19th October 2012 in Bruxelles. It will be a more low key event than the AGM.

Trevor also advised that the EPF meet with other railway affiliated members on a regular basis. Such as Eurostar (usually in June,) Thalys (usually in May,) Railteam (usually in January) and UITP and CER twice a year. They also meet with the commission or cabinet on an adhoc basis.

Trevor welcomed our input (if not in person, via e-mail) to their next Railteam meeting and further meetings too.

The Secretary asked Trevor if all the money for their projects and conferences comes from their subscriptions? To which Trevor replied that the subs pay for a good amount of expenses but they do also make money on their conferences and through projects. Projects are an important part of what EPF do and there are two in the pipeline now for which there is an amount of money allocated to carry this out.

Trevor also added, that if need be they can also draw on the resources of larger members to field any bigger expenses but not often.

Website

The Secretary mentioned that AERA has a good website which has potential to be bigger and better, however, it is simply sitting there with little action on it. He suggested that a sub-committee be set up to look into what could be done, such as getting a higher Google ranking or advertising or even having a message board for members only.

Enrico, the website caretaker for AERA suggested that a sub-committee was a good idea and he welcomed anyone who would want to look into this with him.

Trevor Garrod mentioned that he could help put a link onto the Railwatch site or even their magazine. He also suggested that news articles on a regular basis will help.

The Secretary took names for a sub-committee, which was agreed as follows:

Enrico Soresini

David Glover

They will report back to the association in two meetings time (6 months) with some results as to how to push things forward online.

Subscription Charges

The Treasurer said that the current situation of £100 per member was ok.

The Secretary mentioned that a few suppliers did not renew their subs, was that because they had to pay and were no longer free?

Enrico said that we should not have any free suppliers, if anything we should charge more for them as they have the money.

David Glover said that maybe they could pay extra for a web link?

It was decided to keep the AERA subscription for 2012 at £100 per member.

AGM

The AGM was provisionally booked as the – **15th March 2012**

It was discussed that the AGM (as per the AERA constitution) would be held outside of London... but where?...

Tom Lyde suggested York, David Glover suggested Newcastle and Brigitte Thomas suggested Nottingham.

It was decided, due to the day trip convenience, to look at Nottingham for this year's AGM. (...and perhaps Newcastle next year)
For those who can't make Nottingham in a day, accommodation will be paid for.
Brigitte Thomas will look into a meeting room, restaurant and hotel in the Nottingham station area.

Future meetings

The Chair decided to state the months of our 2012 quarterly meetings in advance as:

- March (AGM)
- May
- September
- December

The Secretary said that it would be good to get exact dates down at the AGM for everyone's diaries. He also mentioned that we have a list of possible hosts for the next meetings, such as ACP, SNCB and Eurail again.

The Chair said that he'll ask East Midlands trains kindly if we can use their office again as it was very convenient.

AERA Committee Nominations

The current committee decided they will stand again, with the following exceptions:

- Enrico Soresini will run for Vice Chair, as the post is currently empty.
- Mike Woodward will run for treasurer but will call upon help from time to time from neighbouring member Don Somerville (as Mike is now retired.)

The AERA Committee that will be standing for 2012 will be as follows:

Chairman – Bob Hex (*Trainseurope*)

Vice Chair – Enrico Soresini (*International Rail*)

Secretary – Philip Barnard (*ACP Rail International*)

Treasurer – Mike Woodward (*Life Member*)

Ordinary Member – Empty

If a current member feels they would like to be part of the 2012 AERA Committee and wishes to be considered for any position, especially the vacant Ordinary Member place... please forward your name and position to the Secretary before the AGM.
If no applications are received the committee will remain unchanged (as stated above)

AOB

Rail Tour Guide

The Chair asked our new members about themselves and how their business started? David Glover explained that Rail Tour Guide was started in 2010, when he was medically retired from the railways and he started this business with his friend Scott Wild, who still works for the railways (catering crew on Cross Country) alongside a third affiliate member. Rail Tour Guide essentially do bespoke tours in the UK but they recently got a Travel Agent contract who asked about rail tours beyond the UK, which they then took on... and that is how they ended up selling rail in Europe.
The Chair wished them the best of luck in what is a tough industry to crack!

A vote was taken by the Secretary for their joining, it was unanimous in favour.

The meeting closed at 14:04