

When British cartoonist Martin Rowson went to look at the state of the railways in Switzerland, he found a massive contrast with the railways of Britain.

It inspired him to create the cartoon above where you might recognise Transport Secretary Alistair Darling along with Transport Minister Kim Howells, who, like many other transport ministers, has moved on after only a year at the Department for Transport. Now for the

Where the trains are expected to run on time

first time, Railfuture is organising a friends to continental Europe for 10 trip to Switzerland in 2005 so you can see for yourself the country which puts rail not just at the centre of its public transport network but at the centre of governmental policy itself.

RDS Group Travel has been organising visits for members and

vears.

The party will leave London Waterloo mid-morning on Monday 9 May and travel by Eurostar to Paris, then by high speed train to the Swiss capital Berne, where it is planned to spend six nights, returning to London on Sunday May 15 in time for onward connections home to most parts of England.

Berne is an historic city which is also well situated for excursions to the mountains and lakes as well as visits of transport interest.

During their stay, it is also hoped our party will meet members of Pro Bahn Schweiz and Verkehrs Club

der Schweiz. These two associations are, like Railfuture, members of the European Passengers' Federation.

The party will again be led by Jim Walker and Derek and Kath Crane.

Full details will be sent out in mid-January.

Please send a stamped addressed envelope to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ. It is also hoped to organise

a second group visit, to Berlin in September, and information about this should be in the next issue of Railwatch.

Meanwhile, several members have expressed an interest in visiting Strasbourg, in eastern France, for the annual general meeting and conference of the European Passengers' Federation on 12 March.

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Bike and rail

As it becomes ever more difficult to take your bike on a train just when it should be getting easier, the Strategic Rail Authority has published its cycling strategy. After months of consultation, its policy looks remarkably like the one it started with.

The "strategy" says clearly that the train operators "should facilitate the carriage of cycles on offpeak services". But it leaves too much leeway to train operators, some of whom have been negative about bikes on trains.

The operators are allowed discretion to determine appropriate facilities and the SRA fails to take a strong lead, leaving it to train operators who are 'best placed to know" when to apply restrictions.

Shortly before the SRA's document was published, the Countryside Agency and Department for Transport published *Bike and Rail: A good practice* guide, pictured below. This provides practical advice to those working to deliver integrated cycling and rail projects, either in partnership or alone.

Case study examples across England demonstrate how successful and innovative projects have delivered increases in cycling and rail travel.

The key elements to provide for different users and journeys which are examined in detail are: cycle parking and security, cycle-friendly stations

(provision of ramps, lifts, automatic doors etc), information and marketing, including when cycles can be carried on trains, cycle carriage on trains, access and routes to stations, cycle hire, cycle centres, cycle rescue (breakdown) services. There is certainly great potential to increase his journey combination. Currently in Britain only 2% of passengers arrive at train stations by bicycle,



yet in Germany it is 15%, and in both Denmark and the Netherlands 35%.

Recently however, First Great Eastern Railways have achieved a doubling (from 1.5% to 3%) in the number of passengers arriving at stations by bicycle, by installing cycle parking at stations.

Bike and rail together also means a more cost effective use of land. Many rail stations do not have the space to provide more car parking but one car parking space can accommodate eight bikes.

Where the cost effectiveness of bike and ride improvements have been quantified and compared with park and ride, bike and ride has been shown to be markedly superior. As a result of the guidance it is hoped local authorities will include bike and rail projects in their 2005 local transport plan submissions to Government.

A PDF version of the document is available http://www.countryside.gov.uk/Publiat cations/articles/Publication_tcm2-20647. asp?bMultiplePDFs=true#

The SRA cycling policy should soon be available on its website at www.sra.gov.uk/publications

Volunteers needed

Tony Sheward is hoping to are also looking for outlets, per-stand down as Railfuture haps on steam lines, in libraries treasurer in the New Year so we are looking for a volunteer to fill his capable shoes. If you have some suitable skills to help Railfuture, please contact Mike Crowhurst or Ray King (contact details on Page 2). We on Page 2).

or in universities for Railfuture membership leaflets. If you can negotiate for our leaflets to be displayed, contact your branch secretary or Railfuture's membership officer (contact details again