

# Action in Europe

By Trevor Garrod

The Administrative Council of the European Passenger Federation, meeting in Ghent on 18 October, heard positive reports from many members.

The success of regionalisation in improving secondary train services in France was one example, as was the proposals for two line reopenings in the west of Ireland. These were balanced by points of concern voiced from several countries about cutbacks threatening funding to support rural services or renew infrastructure.

EPF's long-distance journeys working party is making progress on identifying corridors along which services should be improved and where fare anomalies discourage international travel.

Noting the recent European Commission developments on airline passengers' rights, the meeting looked forward to the imminent publication of the commission's proposals for international rail passengers' rights. It was agreed, subsequently, to write about these to members of the European Parliament with a

particular interest in transport.

The Community of European Railways, representing rail operators, has said it would prefer a voluntary code on this matter, and EPF will continue to have dialogue with the organisation.

In September the federation submitted an 11-page paper (in English) on the European Commission's Green Paper on services of public general interest.

In it, we remind the Commission of the principle of "free movement of persons throughout the European Union" but point out that higher fares for international journeys, and sometimes lack of coherence between services, militate against this ideal.

Our paper suggests that the EC should not merely regulate and co-ordinate but sometimes take initiatives of its own to improve matters.

For a copy of the EPF paper, please send a stamped addressed envelope to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ.

It was decided to hold the next general meeting of EPF on Saturday 20 March in either

Berlin or Leipzig. Individual members of EPF affiliates (such as Railfuture) are entitled to attend the general meeting which will be kept as short and business-focused as possible, and which will be followed by a conference with guest speakers and discussion. For further details, when available, please send a SAE to Trevor Garrod.

If travelling to Germany for the meeting (or for any other Continental travel), you may like to contact Peter Cannon at Travel Cannon Ltd, Saxmundham Station, Station Approach, Saxmundham, Suffolk IP17 1BW Tel: 01728 604600.

Finally, EPF is more than just its administrative council, which consists of one nominee from each of its affiliated bodies.

We welcome the input of individual members of these, some of whom have already helped with, for example, translating documents.

We shall also need members to help with research, which can often be done at home. EPF will never replace the national associations, but should give their work an added dimension.

## A message from the chairman

*Railfuture chairman Peter Lawrence writes:*

The end of the year is upon us and Railfuture members will be turning their thoughts over the next couple of months to the annual general meeting in May 2004 to be held in Newcastle.

I will not be seeking re-election as chairman at the 2004 AGM.

It is I think a time to move on and hand the baton to someone else. The past four years have been an interesting period.

There have been highs and lows, and some stressful times but that is part of being chairman of a large voluntary organisation.

During my period of office there has been a radical change in communications. With many members now on email we have seen not only quicker communications but also a bigger flow of information. In the past 12 months I have sent out some 1,600

emails and have certainly received more than this figure inwards, about 460 telephone/fax calls out and interestingly I have only written some 71 letters. Postage is becoming too expensive to use. We can now pass on information quickly, electronically to some 75 Railfuture activists and we are looking at how we can expand this system in order to inform rank and file members about important issues as soon as they develop. The range of topics passing through my bunga-

low each day is too long to list but a telephone call from the media can quickly send me off in a new rail direction.

The future looks good for Railfuture. We will continue our policy of inviting each branch in turn to give a presentation at national executive meetings in order to improve two-way communication. Work will continue on the National Railcard and the new Business Plan which will be circulated to all branches for discussion from January 2004. We

seek to improve our links between the national executive and specialised committees.

The formation of Railfuture Limited is also expected to commence from 1 January 2004. Our media profile and stature continues to increase throughout the UK.

It is my opinion that at the AGM the new chairman of Railfuture should come from outside East Anglia.

I have served you for four years and my predecessor was also from East Anglia and was chairman for seven years. Also the former secretary who served for over 10 years was from East Anglia.

If you are proposing to stand as an officer or a member of the national executive, then get your nomination in early to John Lee (address in panel right). A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Campaigning Year to everyone.

### Read all about it

One of the most refreshing books to be published about railways is *Parallel Lines* by Ian Marchant. He takes an outsider's irreverent and humorous survey of railways, romantics and rail enthusiasts and concludes: "I quite like them."

If you are looking for a Christmas present for anyone who is interested in railways, this could be it. It also provides a lot of moral support and pro-rail argument for campaigners. *Parallel Lines* is published by Bloomsbury and costs £13. ISBN: 0 7475 6578 3

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