

Railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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Mobile magic

Mobile phones can be a nuisance on the train but they are also vital for keeping in touch with office or family while on the move.

Now they are more directly useful to passengers.

In Switzerland, it is possible to buy your ticket with a text message on the way to the station and have the ticket sent to your phone.

Once on the train, all you need to do is to show your mobile phone to the conductor.

You need to pre-register to use the service and have a modern picture messaging phone. See page 3 for pictures of the phone ticket.

Switzerland of course has an excellent railway, reasonable ticket prices and a national rail card.

In Britain politicians, railway planners and railway companies are much too ready to say no, turning their back on worthwhile enterprise and innovation.

The latest threat is to the Saver ticket which both train operators and the Government seem happy to sacrifice.

The Saver – introduced by Railfuture vice-president Ron Cotton when he worked for British Rail – has been crucial in keeping the railway socially inclusive, rather than a businessman's exclusive club.

The new official watchdog, Passenger Focus, is reluctant to go on the offensive to Save the Saver, hinting that there might be a better way.

The train operators seem to want high price standard fares and a flawed system of cheaper advance purchase tickets.

If the Saver is to be sacrificed by the Government, Railfuture will want to see a national railcard giving passengers up to 50% reductions on off-peak travel, a massive reduction in the cost of all open tickets which should then be officially protected, with any subsequent price rises pegged to the retail price index.



Picture: SBB