

## Wales

By Rowland Pittard rowland.pittard@railfuturewales.org.uk

### ■ ■ Railfuture battles for better provision for the disabled

Railfuture has been successful in influencing the policy on making trains more accessible for disabled people. Six of Railfuture's recommendations are among the ten in a National Assembly of Wales report. The report, published in October, was produced after the Assembly's equality of opportunity committee carried out an inquiry into the impact of Welsh Government policy on the accessibility of transport services for disabled people in Wales. The full report is available from the National Assembly of Wales.

### ■ ■ Trains are vital to boost rural tourism

Railfuture has also submitted evidence of how important trains are to rural tourism after another inquiry – by the Assembly's rural development committee. Railfuture supports sustainable integrated transport and encourages members to walk or cycle or use public transport where possible. Railfuture believes the transport system should also meet the needs of visitors from abroad who can contribute to the well-being of the Welsh economy. We also reminded the officials that it is important for good ferry links to be maintained with Ireland, partly as a way to encourage tourists who are prepared to walk and use public transport rather than drive. Good information provision is essential. The committee's report will be published next year.

### ■ ■ Ferry crossings to Ireland must serve passengers better

Rail ferry links with Ireland have declined with the closure of the Rosslare Europort to Waterford line which provided rail links from Fishguard to southern Ireland with the night ferry crossing and from southern Ireland to Fishguard with the evening crossing. There is now only one daily sailing between Holyhead to Dun Laoghaire and the afternoon crossing from Holyhead is by traditional ferry to Dublin Port giving a much later arrival in Dublin. The high-speed ferry has been replaced by the smaller Lynx for the winter with the effect that sailings are less reliable in bad weather and boarding involves a bus transfer from the terminal, rather than the direct gangway access to the high-speed ferry.

### ■ ■ Opportunities missed at Newport

Newport's new station building and footbridge opened in September prior to the Ryder Cup golf event. The new building has received a mixed reception from the public as it is further from the city centre and bus station and there is a longer interchange between platforms. The inquiry office has been closed and the newsagents shop moved outside the station barriers. There is now a lift to platform 4 and toilets (including disabled) on platforms 1 and 4. The plans for a bus interchange adjacent to the station have been shelved and thus a major step towards integrated transport in Wales has not been achieved.

### ■ ■ Progress on signalling system for future

The European Rail Traffic Management System was introduced between Pwllheli and Harlech in October and was followed by three days of driver training before being brought into passenger use. ERTMS is important for the development of cross-border trains throughout Europe. It is being adopted in many other countries, but Britain is sadly lagging behind. More info: [www.ertms.com](http://www.ertms.com)



### ■ ■ All-Wales get-together for Railfuture activists

Railfuture held a well-attended all-Wales meeting on 9 October 2010 when topics discussed included the future form of the Welsh branches, a Rail Plan for Wales, the fourth revision of the Development Plan for the Railways of Wales and preparations for the forthcoming Assembly elections.

### ■ ■ Cheer for campaigners as rail freight grows

Freight traffic remains buoyant with new developments, including two daily 31-wagon trains of coke from Redcar to Margam, a restarting of coal movements to Uskmouth power station, scrap metal from Lackenby to Margam, steel from Margam to Scunthorpe and an increase in Freightliner traffic to Wentloog terminal at Cardiff.

# Rail city Salzburg

By Trevor Garrod

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The city of Mozart and The Sound of Music is also proud of its public transport.

Each year since 2003, Salzburg has hosted the Salzburger Verkehrstage (or Transport Days).

The event brings together public transport users and providers, politicians and the industry, from the German-speaking countries and further afield.

The conference theme this year was *Rail and Bus without Borders* and it was organised by Peter Haibach of Railfuture's ally Pro Bahn Österreich.

I was one of the speakers and outlined the work of the European Passengers Federation in putting the users' point of view to the European Commission and MEPs, and its dialogue with the railway industry.

There have been positive trends such as the development of international high-speed trains.

But there are also negative aspects which need to be addressed to enable rail to provide an attractive alternative to the private car and the plane.

We learned about the efforts of Swiss public transport authorities in Basel to improve services and information in the region where Switzerland, France and Germany meet.

Thousands of people come into Basel regularly for work, business or leisure from the two neighbouring countries, and the city is trying to encourage them to use train, tram or bus.

Another border area, Maas-Rhine, has made great progress in the past 12 years in promoting public transport in the border area of Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany and making the system more user friendly.

This also has relevance for travellers from Great Britain. If we travel from London by Eurostar and Thalys trains to Aachen, our Thalys ticket now also entitles us to free use of local and regional public transport.

A Deutsche Bahn speaker told us its international passenger traffic had increased by 10% each year since 2005, thanks to high-speed rail. The train was competitive with air for four-hour journeys and a train with six-hour timings was marketable as an alternative for would-be air passengers.

There were problems when trying to reinstate cross-border routes. We were given a presentation about a former line across the Austrian-Czech border which could carry international passengers, have a tourist role

and take heavy timber traffic off local roads.

The Czechs had upgraded their section but some Austrian politicians wanted to convert theirs into a cycle path. One speaker urged the European Commission to bring together both sides to solve such differences.

To counterbalance the problems, however, we received impassioned presentations from two railway managers: Gunther Mackinger of Salzburg and Jürgen Bosse of Usedom in north-east Germany.

They showed how local knowledge, customer care and a "can do" approach can overcome difficulties and lead to better services and greater passenger numbers, within and across borders.

Open access also featured widely in many of the contributions and in points raised by delegates. Some warned of the dangers of monopolies and of the benefits of competition, with one would-be open-access operator between Vienna and Salzburg provoking lively discussion.

The matter was wisely summed up by a Swiss transport consultant at the end when he said: "What harms public transport is the misuse of monopoly and the misuse of competition."

Another very relevant point, which ran like a thread through the discussion, was the need for knowledgeable on-train staff who looked after passengers.

Our packed programme also included a cross-border train to the town of Bad Reichenhall where a five-course meal and local beer were on the agenda, to the sounds of a Bavarian band. No Mozart!

The 2011 Salzburger Verkehrstage will be 3-5 October with the provisional title, *Lust und Last der Mobilität* (pleasures and burdens of mobility).

# 52 varieties of ferry

By Trevor Garrod

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Great Britain has no fewer than 52 ferry services – to the Continent, Ireland, the Isle of Man, Channel Islands, Scilly Isles and Scottish islands.

Railfuture's international committee has just issued a report on them, based to a considerable extent on our own members' experiences when using, or trying to use the ferries.

The conclusions of the report are:

1. Passengers without cars, and passengers with bicycles, are not always treated well by ferry companies.

2. In a few cases, those without cars (foot passengers) are not allowed to use the ferry services at all.

3. In many more, even when ferry operators welcome foot passengers and cyclists as well as motorists, it has become difficult to reach the vessels even from adjacent rail stations, in the way that at one time was considered the norm.

4. Ferry companies can, if faced with the unexpected, such as volcanic eruptions closing airports, soon put on extra services for those otherwise unable to travel at all, and this even includes relaxing any bans on foot passengers. Railfuture has welcomed moves of this kind.

5. On some routes which faced damaging competition from budget airlines, a swing away from air use, thanks to increasing hassle and delay at airports, has resulted in more traffic. This in turn had led to increased use of feeder rail services, where these exist, and some train operators have been unable to cope properly because of rolling-stock problems.

We urge that all ferries should be open to foot passengers, and that rail operators to provide enough

rolling stock and staff to cope with demand.

Our report contains a wealth of information about rail links where these exist, or bus links, to the nearest station. Not all of these are well advertised by the ferry companies.

On the other hand, we give full marks to Stena Line for its rail-sea-rail promotions on the Harwich-Hoek van Holland route and some good offers on its Holyhead-Dun Laoghaire/Dublin routes.

Thanks to all Railfuture members who contributed and to Peter Walker who produced the report which has been sent to ferry operators and relevant train operating companies and to politicians.

The report is available from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ. Please send an SAE.

### From ferries to airport links

The Airport Links report issued by Railfuture in February continues to stimulate debate and reaction. It is also available from Trevor Garrod.

One of our members in East Grinstead writes that this town of over 20,000 population, only seven miles away from Gatwick Airport, has no direct public transport link to it. There was a rail link, changing at Three Bridges, until 1967.

However, it is possible to buy a ticket through to Gatwick on the buses running through the town permitting interchange at Three Bridges Station (awkward road crossing) or Crawley Bus Station (no problem).

The airport has PLUSBUS connections but apparently intermodal changes (between bus and train) were discouraged at Gatwick Airport station to reduce congestion.

## Sevenside

By Nigel Bray

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### ■ ■ Bristol needs electrification for a bright future

Transport plans for the four unitary authorities in Greater Bristol are set out for 15 years ahead in the West of England Partnership's joint draft local transport plan. Railfuture Sevenside gave its support to much in the plan for 2011-2026 that was very positive about rail, particularly in Chapter 6, which discusses economic growth. But in our response to the LTP consultation exercise, we argued that funds for a new high-speed line between London and Bristol would be better spent on electrifying and resignalling the existing network.



We see increased capacity as a higher priority than greater speed for main lines in the South West. In welcoming the plan's support for quadrupling Temple Meads to Parson Street and Dr Day's Junction to Filton Abbey Wood, we pointed out that surviving passenger railways in the Bristol area now enjoy more frequent services than they did in the 1960s and that this would increase the attractiveness and financial viability of additions to the local network. We asked for car parking to remain free of charge at smaller stations in order not to discourage rail use.

The intention to work with Network Rail and the freight industry to promote movement of freight by rail rather than road is excellent but needs more rail terminals and safeguarding of recently disused ones such as Bristol East Depot and Bath Westmoreland Yard.

Background: <http://travelplus.org.uk/our-vision/joint-local-transport-plan-3>

### ■ ■ How Gloucestershire could raise its rail profile

Gloucestershire County Council has also consulted on its draft LTP3, covering the same 15-year period and the branch was represented at one of the stakeholder meetings. The consultation document is full of good intentions but understates the benefits of rail, particularly for freight. It states that sidings at Ashchurch are not available for other than military traffic.

Our response reminded the council that it had helped to reactivate the sidings, which received trains of bottled water during the floods of 2007. We said: "The county has been too modest about its excellent work in restoring rail freight capacity which was soon to prove valuable in a major emergency."

Public transport hubs are proposed at a number of locations, although rail does not appear to feature in them. We suggested ways of creating a more passenger-friendly interchange at Gloucester, where the railway station is separated from the bus station and city bus stops are sited by a busy dual carriageway with slow-acting pedestrian lights. We asked for the proposed public transport smart ticketing scheme to include rail as well as bus travel because many local journeys are quicker when made partly by train.

We consider the apparent lack of interest from Network Rail in opening new stations in Gloucestershire to be unduly pessimistic in the light of the success of reopenings elsewhere. The council's proposal for a station at Hunts Grove, south of Gloucester, is welcome and we have asked for sites to be protected for stations at Brimscombe, Churchdown, Newnham and Stonehouse Bristol Road.



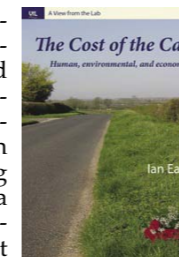
Background: <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=99568>

## Antidote to Top Gear stupidity

Rail campaigner Ian East has written a book which "serves the pro-rail cause".

Ian's motivation for writing *The Cost of the Car: Human, environmental, and economic* which has been described as an antidote to Top Gear, was "moral, not financial". He said: "What matters to me is to raise awareness of the advantages of rail over road, and of the importance of rebuilding and upgrading our network. There is much ammunition in this book. I was moved to

write it while at a conference in San José, California, when I learned of a young mother rendered entirely dysfunctional merely through losing her driving licence as a result of a relatively minor ailment. As a scientist and engineer, I found such a state of affairs astonishing, and decided to consider our 'modern' transport system objectively. My aim has been to make the issues and arguments



accessible to the general public, however technical. It reveals the human cost of what is both environmentally and economically a ridiculous form of transport." He added: "I also do my best to debunk the busway."

The paperback book is published by Open Channel and is available at all online bookshops. ISBN 978-0956540904. Buy it or read a summary at [www.costofthecar.info/](http://www.costofthecar.info/)