

A voice for European rail users

By Trevor Garrod

The European Passengers Federation which brings together Railfuture and a dozen similar organisations in western and central Europe, has been active in recent months in dialogue with other players in the transport field.

These include the Community of European Railways with whom we have discussed international rail passengers' rights; and the International Rail Transport Committee on the subject of General Conditions of Carriage.

Contact with officials of the European Commission continues. EPF has also established a Eurostar Working Group with British, French and Belgian representatives to pursue issues with the relevant authorities.

Work has been done on an EPF brochure, introducing the federation to potential new members, the media, politicians and transport professionals. It is hoped that this will appear during the winter.

The meeting of EPF's Administrative Council on 31 May devoted some time to fine-tuning the draft statutes (constitution) which were sent to the Belgian Justice Ministry for advice and approval.

A general election in Belgium and subsequent negotiations to form a new coalition government delayed matters, but at the time of writing it is expected that a decision will be received in September.

EPF has, in fact, made steady progress ever since the initial meetings of European rail users' organisations in Lille in 2000, but there are limits to what can be done on a purely informal basis, and so the creation of a formal structure without losing the impetus of the organisation has been important in 2003.

The administrative council meeting due on 18 October will among other things, decide on the venue and themes for the next general meeting, to be held on 20 March 2004.

All members of affiliated bodies are entitled to attend, and five members of Railfuture attended the last one in Namur in March.

For details of the 20 March 2004 meeting, please send an SAE to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ, marked EPF.



Spain is powering forward into the rail future with the construction of its second high-speed line, from Madrid to Barcelona. This is one of the "power heads" which have been built by Bombardier and the Spanish company Talgo for the trains which will speed at 218mph to Barcelona and the French border at Le Perthus, 470 miles from Madrid. It has already set a new Spanish speed record of 224mph.

The trains are set to start running in service next year and are designed to cut the journey time from Madrid to Barcelona from 6.5 hours to 2.5 hours. Talgo trains have wheels that respond independently of their axles, a unique coupling system and high-powered engines.

25 years of progress, we hope!

LOOK BACK

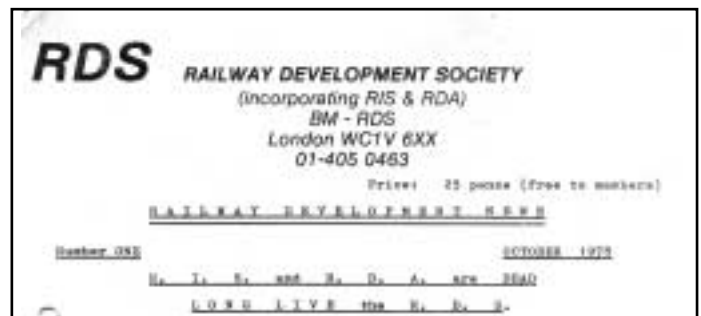
By Trevor Jones

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The first issue of *Railway Development News* – the precursor to *Railwatch* – was published 25 years ago, in October 1978.

It comprised seven sheets of photocopied or duplicated A4 sheets, printed two sides and making a total of 14 pages. It was stapled together in the top-left corner and was priced at 25 pence (free to members).

The front-page headline read: RIS and RDA are dead. Long live the RDS. The report explained: "Following formal decisions by the membership of the three constituent societies (the Railway Invigoration Society, the Railway Development Association, London Area and the Railway Development Association, Midland Area), earlier this year, the Railway Development Society came into existence on 1 October 1978, after many months of hard work by its interim Steering Committee, and was launched at a Press Conference held at Ye Old Cheshire Cheese, Fleet Street, London, on 3 October." It added: "The im-



mediate objectives include more investment in the railways, a rolling programme of electrification, more freight traffic; and the re-commencement of the Channel Tunnel without the massive roll-on, roll-off complex originally planned for Cheriton." [So we failed in that last respect!]

The main headings on other pages included Electrification, Channel Tunnel report, wide support for Isle of Grain proposals into the feasibility of restoring its rail passenger service.

In *A Load on Your Mind*, the RDN reported that "Britain is now paying more for moving less than it was 10 years ago"

accompanied by facts and figures, pointing out the disadvantages of moving freight by road, published by Transport 2000.

There was also a 12-page Guide for Rail User Groups, the first to be published by the new society (RDS). The "Sparks Effect" told how the King's Cross-Royston new electric services were expected to increase revenue by 6% in the first six months but actually pushed up revenue by 30%!

The editor of RDN was John Barfield who is still a member of the editorial board, and the sub-editor was *Railwatch* Midlands correspondent Alan Bevan who was until recently a national executive member.