

# Eurostar questionnaire

By Trevor Garrod

trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk

Eurostar journeys were put under the microscope in a Railfuture survey from December 2007 to March 2008.

Those who replied used 124 different UK stations to start their international journey and only 11% reached the Eurostar station by car. 68% started their Eurostar journey from St Pancras International, 18% from Ashford and only 4% from the new Ebbsfleet station.

Interestingly, Brussels accounted for 41% of journeys by Eurostar, though it was the final destination for only 21% of customers. Many used it as a stage in onward journeys to the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and as far as Sweden and Romania.

About 70% of those replying to our questionnaire used Eurostar mainly for leisure trips, while most of the remainder were using it for business – but the latter made on average just over seven such business trips per year.

Asked whether their journey had become easier since the diversion of Eurostar to St Pancras and reduction in calls at Ashford, 34% said that it was, while 36% found

it more difficult and 15% still the same. The most popular means of booking was via a website, 32% using that method. However, 23% booked through a travel agent, 19% at a station and 15% by phone.

We had asked customers their reason for choosing Eurostar and, interestingly, speed was only the second most popular reason (13%) with 27% citing ease and convenience. A further 12% considered it preferable to flying, while 13% said it was simply the obvious mode for such journeys or indeed it had become a habit for them.

The most frequent call for improvement, from 28% of customers, concerned Ashford International, with demands for restoration of at least some of the calls cut when Ebbsfleet was opened.

9% called for cheaper fares or a simpler fares structure and 5% wanted through services to other European destinations.

For a copy of the report (which has been sent to a wide range of decision-makers and opinion-formers in this country and on the Continent), please send a large stamped addressed envelope to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ.

LOCAL ACTION

## East Anglia

By Nick Dibben nick.dibben@btinternet.com

and Trevor Garrod trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk

### ■ ■ Ticket gates

The branch has expressed concern to National Express East Anglia over queues forming at the new ticket barriers installed at Cambridge station during the evening rush hour. Passengers from one train are not passing through the barriers before the next train arrives. The situation is likely to get worse as the number of commuters continues to rise. The branch has suggested using the side entrances to the station to increase capacity during the busiest periods. On a positive note, since the barriers were introduced, ticket sales are up and numbers travelling without tickets has been reduced.

### ■ ■ Lost Groups

The branch has written to Arriva CrossCountry about the withdrawal of Group Save Tickets from its services. A confusing situation has arisen as other train operators in the area continue to accept these tickets.

### ■ ■ Busway woes

The unpopular Cambridge to St Ives guided busway built on the former railway line continues to have problems. Cracks have appeared in the concrete guideway sections apparently caused by the gantry used to move the other



sections. Strange that this wasn't considered when the route was designed! Steve Wilkinson's pictures show how the process of wrecking a railway, above, and digging a four-foot ditch was continuing in May at Histon. Below: The concrete sections of the busway are put in place by a huge beam-laying machine. This is where two main lines and a mile-long goods loop used to be. What a waste!



### ■ ■ Special train

On 12 April, Pathfinder Tours brought a full inter-city train from Birmingham to Lowestoft. The East Suffolk Travellers Association produced a special leaflet for the occasion, which members were allowed to distribute to passengers after the special train left Ipswich. As a result, 100 of the passengers signed a letter to Waveney District Council, opposing the proposal to close Lowestoft station (which is ideally sited for the town centre and the beach) and build a smaller one a quarter of a mile inland.

ESTA has also been trying to persuade Passenger Focus to organise a survey of passengers on trains from Norwich and London/Ipswich to Lowestoft, asking whether they would find an inland station less convenient. ESTA is willing to contribute towards the cost of such a survey.



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