

Concrete track beds and walkways were being laid this summer in the second stage of Britain's first high-speed line. The work was under way between Stratford and Manor Park in East London and Dagenham, Essex, prior to track-laying, signalling and electrification.

A paving machine makes three journeys through the tunnel, one to lay the concrete flat bed, one to lay the walkway on one side of the tunnel and one to lay the second walkway.

The Channel Tunnel rail link is being constructed in two phased sections with section one opening last year covering 46 miles from the Channel Tunnel to Fawkham Junction, north Kent. The 24-mile section

two extends the high-speed line to London St Pancras via new international stations at Stratford and Ebbsfleet. Network Rail (CTRL) Ltd, a subsidiary of Network Rail, operates and maintains section one under contract to CTRL (UK) Ltd. Once the entire CTRL is open in 2007, fastest London-Paris Eurostar journey times will be reduced to two hours 20 minutes and London-Brussels to two hours five minutes, and high-speed services from Kent to St Pancras will be able to operate.

The Channel Tunnel Rail Link has been partly funded by the European Union through the Trans European Network programme.

Information: http://www.ctrl.co.uk Picture: RAIL LINK ENGINEERING

Improving Euro contacts

By Trevor Garrod trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk

Representatives of the European Passengers' Federation from Great Britain, France and Belgium have met Eurostar directors for a useful exchange of views and information.

One welcome piece of news was that Eurostar passengers arriving from London in Brussels no longer have to stand in a queue to have the passports checked.

This check has been withdrawn, although the Belgian authorities reserve the right to reinstate it if there is a security need.

Other issues discussed at the meeting included onward connections, the Eurostar website, possible new routes (Antwerp, Amsterdam and Cologne being mentioned) and the desirability of research into where Eurostar passengers actually go when they arrive at London, Paris or Brussels.

EPF will be holding further occasional meetings of this type with Eurostar and hopes to establish a similar arrangement with the company which operates Thalys international trains. These trains run on a core network between Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam and Cologne and also serve some other destinations in France.

British travellers mainly use them for onward connections from Brussels into the Netherlands or Germany. We should like to hear both positive and negative experiences from Railfuture members using Thalys. Please send these initially to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ

Another ongoing EPF project is seamlessness of international journeys. For example, how easy is it to transfer from a Eurostar to ta French domestic train at Lille; or to buy a Brussels public transport ticket before you arrive in Brussels? Good and bad experiences should be sent to Trevor Jones, 67 Guildford Park Avenue, Guildford, Surrey GU2 7NH

The cuts in Dutch Railways international ticketing outlets are now unlikely to be as drastic as reported earlier this year. However, the

threat has prompted a useful debate within EPF and its constituent organisations (which now number 16 in 11 countries) on methods of booking international tickets.

The internet is likely to play an increasing role, but what about call centres, traditional ticket offices and spoecialised travel agents? Again, members' views will be welcome.

In July, as chairman of EPF, I gave a presentation at the European Training Centre for Railways' summer seminar in Bruges, Belgium.

This was a useful opportunity to discuss EPF's concerns with rail managers from 18 European countries.

EPF is now making arrangements for its 2005 general meeting and conference, to be held in Strasbourg, France on Saturday 12 March. Please send a SAE to Trevor Garrod if you are interested in attending. Knowledge of French is not essential, as English is also widely used at the meeting and the presentations of guest speakers are translated.

<u>Members</u> <u>wanted</u>

By Peter Harris Railfuture membership promotion and fundraising officer

New Railfuture membership leaflet A new leaflet explaining Railfuture membership and our work is now available from the Railfuture office.

For your reference, two copies are included with this issue of *Railwatch*.

I would be very grateful for your help in recruiting new members. If we could double our membership the economies of scale would enable us to increase the impact of our campaigning, nationally and throughout the regions.

And to double members, all we have to do is introduce one new member each! Any assistance you can give would be warmly appreciated.

Conference Special Offer: If you introduce new full-rate members, any or all of you can attend the rail user conference in Birmingham on 6 November for the special price of £10 (inclusive of buffet lunch). Confirmed speakers include Adrian Lyons, director general of the Railway Forum.

■ Peter Harris was appointed by the Railfuture board and is working three days a week, based at the Railfuture office in The Colourworks.

Apologies to Railfuture members who have had trouble contacting the office. Because our partner, the Dial a Ride Transport organisation moved, there was confusion about the telephone and internet services. We were hoping to get back to normal by early September.

******* Please note Railfuture has moved offices from 206 to the slightly smaller 205 at The Colourworks ***********

