

Prizes for you and profits for Railfuture

As a member of Railfuture, you have a chance every month to win a cash prize at the same time as helping Railfuture raise funds for campaigning.

The top prize may not be £1million but your chances of winning something are much greater than in the National Lottery.

Campaigning for more and better rail services costs money and this is a fun way to help. Half the money received each month is returned in prizes and the other half is used for campaigning. Can you afford not to join in?

Send a cheque for £12 made payable to Railfuture and you will

have a chance each month for 12 months. Or you can send multiples of £12 for more chances each month.

Be sure to enclose your name, address and Railfuture membership number. Only paid-up members of Railfuture are eligible.

The more people join, the bigger the prizes will

be. Send to: Railfuture Lottery Officer, 13 Arnhill Road, Gretton, Corby, Northants NN17 3DN.

Lottery winners for February are: Ian S Appleyard, D J Barr and David Townsend.

Lottery winners for the March are: H Maughan, P H Ludlow and A P Koolman.

Higher rail fares drive us to despair

By Tony Smale

One good reason for joining your local rail user group is that you get to hear about planned service alterations and bargain deals on fares.

It is so expensive to get around by public transport these days that rail user group newsletter editors seldom miss a chance of passing on information about ways to travel more cheaply.

A recent newsletter from the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester rail group (better known as STORM) includes a round-up of special offers from Midland Mainline as well as news of changes to the validity of Saver fares – a minefield for even the most seasoned traveller.

From the East Norfolk Travellers Association, we learn about the curious art of buying multiple tickets.

They quote by way of example the cost of a return journey between Nottingham and Great Yarmouth – a staggering £51.50 with a Saver return.

But by purchasing an Anglia Plus ticket at £9 to the edge of the Anglia region, followed by a cheap day return between Ely and Nottingham for £19.30, the total fare comes down to a much more reasonable £28.30.

It is a sad fact that relatively few people belong to rail user groups and

thus do not get to hear about these clever wheezes to save on the cost of travel.

To most of the population, public transport in Britain is frighteningly complex and hugely expensive.

So complicated is it, that we regularly hear stories about booking clerks and bus drivers failing to understand the full range of tickets at their disposal.

The whole fares system descends to the level of a Whitehall farce when fares expert Barry Doe points out (in *Rail* magazine issue 513) that Plymouth folk wishing to travel to Paddington should buy a return ticket to Ipswich as it's considerably cheaper!

As rail users, we should be angry about all this. Very angry indeed! We need to protest with the vigour and effectiveness of the lorry drivers who blockade oil terminals. We've had enough of unaffordable fares and ludicrous disincentives to travel. Let's take this new Government to task on its commitment to public transport at every opportunity!

Since Labour came to power in 1997, motoring has become 6% cheaper in real terms, while bus fares have risen by 16% and a rail ticket is on average 7% more expensive.

■ **Tony Smale is Railfuture's Rail User Group Liaison Officer**



STRASBOURG: Jean-Paul Jacquot, left, and Peter Faross from DG Tren, the European Commission's railway department

Picture: Nick Fotis

European passengers unite

By Trevor Garrod

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As many as 45 members from 18 rail users' organisations in 12 countries gathered in Strasbourg, France, on 12 March for the AGM and Conference of the European Passengers' Federations of which Railfuture is a founder member.

Max Mondon, chairman of the local public transport users' association, welcomed delegates to Strasbourg. Brigitte Ollier of the Union International des Sports Publics described the lobbying and research work of this association of public transport operators, particularly at European level. EPF members were impressed by the expertise of UITP and saw potential for the two bodies to work together.

Sven Andersen, formerly of Deutsche Bahn and now a writer and consultant, described the potential of TGV Est to reduce the journey time from Paris to Frankfurt and important south German destinations and discussed the various options for crossing the Rhine.

Peter Faross from the European Commission stated that travel by citizens of the European Union countries had more than doubled since 1970 but passenger rights had not developed. After introducing such rights for airline

passengers, the commission was now developing them for rail travellers and planned to do the same in the maritime and coach sector.

Each member state should designate a body to handle complaints. The European Commission sought a balanced approach which would assist the passengers but not make great financial difficulties for the operators.

Jean-Paul Jacquot reported on the recent meeting between EPF representatives and officials of Transport Commissioner Jacques Barrot.

Dominique Devin from SNCF described how the rail network of Alsace had been regenerated since 1997, with a 43% increase in passengers, thanks to decentralisation and co-operation between SNCF and the regional council. The aim now was to ensure that the arrival of TGV Est would benefit all people in the region.

Further discussion took place on EPF projects on international long-distance trains and passenger representation.

For a full report (in English, with French, German, Italian and Dutch summaries) please send a £1.50 cheque (payable to Railfuture) to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ.