

Tourists go green

By Trevor Garrod

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Green tourism was the theme of the sixth Salzburger Verkehrstage, held in Austria in October.

The 130 participants from eight countries included several from European Passenger Federation member organisations.

The venue, in the province of Salzburg, was the small town of Zell am See, beautifully situated by a lake surrounded by spectacular mountains and itself a good example of green tourism.

The railway station is well-sited for the pedestrianised town centre and many hotels, together with a well-equipped modern conference centre where the event was held.

It was not all talk. We were also given a ride from Salzburg to Zell in the Austrian Federal Railways' new high-speed Railjet train, which will soon be running to Munich and Budapest and other central European destinations.

The Pinzgauer Lokalbahn, a meter gauge railway damaged by floods in 2005, has also reopened to Mittenstall and is now owned by the province of Salzburg. We enjoyed a ride on it, coupled with an evening at the Tauern National Park visitor centre in this small town.

Here are a dozen key points made during the presentations and discussions at this very informative and stimulating conference:

Rail travel should be part of the holiday or leisure experience, including for those tourists who have arrived by plane or car.

Public transport operators must be customer-focused and that includes having well-trained staff.

Over 80% of leisure visitors to Austria now come by plane or car but they can be encouraged to use public transport around their resort and region – for example with a network card.

More than 20 resorts from Les Gels in France to Bled in Slovenia now market themselves as "Alpine Pearls". Motorists who hand in their car keys for the duration of their stay are entitled to a special pass for free or reduced rate facilities.

Rail has a large share of the market for short-break holidays, as much as 60% in cities advertised by the German company Ameropa.

Over 50% of customers use the internet, even though they may then go to a travel agent to book. Websites need to include information about trains and local public transport.

Another major German operator, TUI, now offers combined train and flight tickets from the customer's home station to the airport.

In Switzerland there is a national network of footpaths and cycleways, served by 18,000 bus or tram stops or railway stations.

Representatives of the rail industry showed how train interiors could be adapted to carry more luggage and bicycles in summer and more commuters and skiers in winter.

New initiatives, such as rover tickets with special offers at other tourist attractions, take three years to reach their full potential.

In the Italian Alps, the line from Meran to Mals has reopened with cross-border bus links to Austria and Switzerland while another, from Trento to Malè, has been modernised, with local and regional authorities playing a key role.

It is important for public transport operators to work closely with local hoteliers and other businesses which benefit from tourism.

Next year's Salzburger Verkehrstage will be from 7-9 October. Congratulations to Peter Haibach and Christa Schlager for their organisation of this year's event.

European passengers on target for Berne

The European Passengers' Federation, of which Railfuture is a founder member, will meet in Berne, Switzerland for its 2009 annual general meeting and conference on Saturday 14 March.

The theme will be *Transport Integration for Passengers* and colleagues in our sister organisations Pro Bahn Schweiz and Verkehrs Club der Schweiz have prepared a very interesting programme.

The event will take place in the conference centre of the Swiss Federal Railways whose chief executive Andreas Maier will be one of the speakers.

The 2008 EPF conference in London was addressed by the then European Commissioner for Transport and Tourism, and we are pleased his successor, Mr Antonio Tajani, will be the keynote speaker in 2009.

The conference will run from 10.00 to 17.00 and the AGM from 17.30 to 18.30. All members of EPF-affiliated organisations have the right to attend. A booking form, including the charge, will be on the EPF website www.epf.eu or obtainable by post from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Rd South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ.

On the Sunday after the conference, there will be the opportunity to enjoy an excursion by train to Brig via the new Lotschberg Base Tunnel, returning via the classic and scenic route.

Travelling to Berne by rail, it is easiest to catch Eurostar to Paris and then a TGV from Gare de Lyon to Berne. Alternatively TGV from Gare de L'Est to Basle and then a Swiss train from there to Berne.



GREEN CHALLENGE: Pupils from Burnholme Community College, including the one pictured left, were on York station in October encouraging passengers, including the one pictured right, to make a pledge to be more green.

The passengers were asked to sign a Sustainability Wall, which was designed with the help of the pupils.

The Connectors scheme is backed by National Express East Coast which also plans to provide teaching resources and practical activities for young people in schools to raise awareness of environmental and sustainability issues to more than 10,000 secondary school pupils.

Picture: National Express

Railfuture needs you

By Clara Zilahi

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Elections are vital to maintain Railfuture as a democratic organisation and, to make it easier for every member to vote, a postal ballot was introduced.

Obviously most members will not personally know all the candidates.

The personal details and election address printed with the ballot papers should supply enough information to allow an informed choice.

You can vote for a maximum number of candidates, but are also free to vote for fewer.

The system falls down if there is no choice of candidates.

For several years the number of people standing for the Board has declined, sometimes being too few to trigger a contest.

Those likely to be interested in serving on the board are usually already involved in rail campaigning through their branch, rail user group or specialist committees.

To be also a board member will add a new dimension to your other work, and can indeed make it easier.

Meetings are held in different venues, mostly London, Peterborough, and the Midlands.

Board meetings are held on Saturdays.

Travel expenses to Board meetings are claimable but members are asked to forego the first £10 of any claim.

However, those who genuinely cannot afford it can claim the

whole amount. There are some necessary conditions of eligibility for membership of the board, such as the exclusion of anyone who has been declared bankrupt.

The election address gives candidates a chance to state how they hope to further the role of rail transport in society.

Board members become directors of the limited company, and this involves certain legal responsibilities, detailed in a paper that you receive when elected.

We are bound by rules affecting finance and health and safety.

Financial reports have to be submitted in time.

Computer literacy is advisable.

There is no requirement to know much about the technical aspect of railways.

Railfuture's concern is with rail as a useful form of transport, which has safety and environmental advantages over other forms.

The society must of course have experts to draw on.

Members with such knowledge are particularly useful on Railfuture's specialist committees.

Most voluntary organisations are finding it difficult to attract younger people and Railfuture is no exception.

Its membership is also too geared towards white males.

Nomination forms are available for download from the Railfuture website or by post from Railfuture Returning Officer, PO Box 7690, Hinckley, Leicester LE10 9WJ. Completed forms must be returned to the Returning Officer to arrive by 1 February 2009.