



Two single-car Stadler RS1 diesels on the Breisgau S-Bahn at Elzach, Germany, heading for Freiburg in the Black Forest



Stadler GTW lightweight articulated three-coach electric multiple units at Lenzburg, Switzerland. These can also be two-coach units for less busy routes. The extra short section, with the pantograph, is the four-wheel drive unit on to which the adjacent coaches are articulated. This can house a diesel motive power unit rather than the electric drive seen here

European lesson for UK

**Report and pictures
by Malcolm Bulpitt**

It is not yet clear exactly how the financial cutbacks will hit the railway but the programme to replace inter-city coaches has been postponed and looks likely to be axed. Some of Britain's rolling stock is comfortable and its life can be extended if the financial pressure demands.

More efficient and higher-capacity rolling stock is however needed for many local railways, outwith the electrified systems that serve our major conurbations.

The new coalition Government says it supports railway electrification. Good news.

The downside is that the programme to introduce new diesel rolling stock has been sidelined. This means many of our local railway services will continue with life-expired, or inadequate, units. It also means that there are few spare units to operate any routes Railfuture campaigns may succeed in getting reopened.

The Department for Transport view is that when major routes and vital links are electrified the current diesel units will be cascaded to the secondary services. Even if current plans materialise without delay, much of the cascaded stock will be 30 to 40 years old and fit only for the scrap heap. Many local services are overloaded and need more capacity now, as do many Community Railway schemes. A lot of the rolling stock used on these services is uncomfortable (the dreaded four-wheel railbuses), very inefficient in fuel use and requires high levels of maintenance.

How long will passengers who have switched to rail be prepared to suffer trips, crammed like sardines, in vehicles that are decades behind modern cars and coaches in passenger amenities?

In mainland Europe, governments and railway operators have long since recognised the need for modern rolling stock to serve all parts of their modern railways, not just the headline services. The Swiss Stadler company is making good business out of supplying GTW

lightweight articulated trains in diesel or electric format to operators in Switzerland and abroad.

The GTW and RS1 units meet the present European Union TSI standards for collision absorption, so technically could be used in the UK without modification.

Reopened rail routes in Germany are not only using GTWs but also other railcars produced by Stadler and Siemens. In France, SNCF is operating many peripheral services with elegant new units sourced from various manufacturers. All are off-the-peg and could be bought and used in the UK now.

It would be nice to think we could develop our own British equipment but time is not on our side.

If manufacturers are given worthwhile orders, they could be persuaded to set up a production line in Britain. For example, with big orders from Germany and Poland, market-leader Stadler exported



A three-coach diesel multiple unit on a French branch line approaching Aigues-Mortes in Provence. There are several variations of this class including two-coach units

their production lines, as well as their designs. If a unit is considered safe to work in the rest of the European Union and Switzerland surely it should be basically safe for us too? Modern rolling stock not

only assists the operator's bottom line but also encourages greater use of the system, and the more the system is used the easier it is to argue more investment should go into enlarging the system.

2010 best practice on show in Berlin

By Trevor Garrod

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Eurorail is an annual conference of railway professionals and this year the European Passengers' Federation was invited to participate and speak on the theme *Are your passengers happy passengers?*

I attended with Willy Smeulders of the Flemish association TreinTram-Bus and Dietmar Dalbogk of the German association Pro Bahn.

This was also an opportunity to talk to operators, infrastructure managers and firms which supply the railways with everything from rolling stock to signalling to catering equipment.

Open access and franchising were among the topics discussed at Berlin. Some speakers were dubious about the effectiveness of this.

Supporters pointed out that it could reduce subsidy requirements and lead to innovation, but that new operators should have access to existing depots and stock to avoid duplication. Liberalisation

was "not an end in itself", however. It needed to prove that it could provide better quality at an affordable price.

Several speakers called for a "level playing field", not only between rail and its competitors, but also between train operators.

The need to address taxation, charging and internalisation of external costs was widely accepted.

A speaker from the Spanish Railways explained how they had developed a 900-mile high-speed network to counter competition from road and internal airlines and stressed that a high-speed train operator must be "a true partner that accompanies the customer throughout his/her journey."

That included giving the customer all relevant information, including the time and cost of the journey to the station or airport. Passengers were given a refund if the train was late or the air-conditioning was not working. A speaker from our own high-speed operator, Eurostar, said that 130 million people fly each

year between Britain and mainland Europe and 10 million now go by train.

Of those flying, 11 million were travelling to or from places that could be reached by train within six hours.

This was why Eurostar had joined RailTeam which brings together several high-speed operators.

A study, Network 2020, was now under way to explore greater integration. Our EPF presentation focused on easy rail travel, measuring passenger satisfaction, passenger rights and fares.

We described the British National Passenger Survey which has few equivalents in the rest of Europe at present but also made the point that it was not enough to seek the views of passengers on the train. Operators also needed the views of non-passengers on why they were not using the train when they could do so!

More information on EPF's presentation can be found at www.epf.eu