

FAST FORWARD WITH RAIL

Designers are inspired by high-speed trains. Eurostar is already an icon and some spectacular stations exist for French TGVs, German ICEs and Spanish AVEs.

Now designer Paul Priestman has produced a double-deck "Mercury" train design to fast forward us into the future, as shown on the cover of this *Railwatch*.

He aims to encourage the Government to get on with building a high-speed line north of London as soon as possible.

Mr Priestman, who designed Virgin's Pendolino, believes high-speed trains are vital for the low-carbon, sustainable future of Britain.

He is already working on the design of Chinese high-speed trains and believes good design will help to persuade car and air travellers to take the train.

"Train travel has to be as exciting as air travel and as sexy as the latest car." For more information go to www.priestmangoode.com/transport.

Despite all the talk, the route for HS2 is not yet fixed and it is not planned to be completed until 2024. Yet pressure groups in the Chilterns and Warwickshire have been formed to resist it. Ironically

these areas are already blighted by roads and motorways which cause far more danger and pollution than any rail line.

Railfuture's network development committee is keeping abreast of the HS2 but is aware that Railfuture must ensure that the existing network is not starved of investment to pay for it.

Research has shown that investment in rail signalling and rolling stock gives the best return of any transport scheme.

It is also important that any new parkway stations must be located at rail interchanges, so a connecting rail service into town can be provided for people without cars.

Britain's biggest high-speed rail move forward is likely to come from Deutsche Bahn which hopes to run ICE trains from Germany direct into London St Pancras.

As one cynical rail campaigner put it, we may soon be able to travel high-speed from Ebbsfleet to Essen.

If those two destinations are not very enticing, also on offer will be Frankfurt and Koln.

ICE3 trainsets do not meet cur-

rent rules for carrying passengers through the Channel Tunnel, but the class 407 Velaro D trainset unveiled at Siemens' Krefeld plant in April was developed specifically for international services, and includes additional fire safety measures.

It will be used next year for international connections in Germany, France, Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Other Velaros are at work in Russia, China and Spain.

Earlier this year a review by the Intergovernmental Commission, which oversees Channel Tunnel safety, recommended permitting the use of non-splittable trainsets, trains shorter than the current 375 metre minimum length, and rolling stock complying with the fire safety requirements of the European Technical Specification for Interoperability rather than existing Channel Tunnel-specific requirements.

Britain's first high-speed railway, the Channel Tunnel rail link, has been put up for sale by the Government which is hoping to make £2 billion.

Other countries continue to invest in high-speed rail while Britain is still considering its options. Russian high-speed

trains were extended in July to serve the Volga city of Nizhny Novgorod, formerly known as Gorky, as well as Moscow and St Petersburg.

In Italy, Trenitalia announced in August that it is buying 50 high-speed trainsets for £25 million from a consortium of Bombardier and AnsaldoBreda.

The trains are similar to the Zefiro trains which Bombardier supplied to China but will be capable of working across borders to Germany, France, Spain and Britain.

Also in August, Sweden's new high-speed Botniabahn line was opened by King Carl Gustav from Nyland to Gimona.

The Israelis are building a high-speed line, in four stages, from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

And America took a step towards a high-speed future in August when work started on the country's first high-speed rail station at Transbay, San Francisco, which will be the northern terminus for the California high-speed system Los Angeles.

The Federal Railroad Administration is aiming to build 10 high-speed lines with money from President Obama's recovery and reinvestment fund.

HIGH-SPEED LINE-UP: New Siemens-built Velaro trains are fitted out for service after being delivered to a Russian rail depot



Picture: RUSSIAN STATE RAILWAYS