



**British Section**

**Newsletter**

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## **European Association of Railway Personnel**

**Association Européenne des Cheminots (AISBL)**

**International Association (A.R. 4.2.1985)**

**International Non-governmental Organisation with advisory status to the  
Council of Europe (6.4.1977)**

**International Non-governmental Organisation with consultative status to  
the UN (decision E/ 2002/ of 22.07.2002) and member of the  
United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**

**Registered address: A.E.C (AISBL). - 25 Square de Meeus 1000 Brussels, Belgium**

**AEC EUROPEAN BUREAU – elected at the General Assembly at Poznan (PL), September 2017, and remaining in office provisionally until new elections can be held.**

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### **AEC BRITISH SECTION COMMITTEE**

The Annual General Meeting for 2020 had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus outbreak. The existing committee and officers will remain in place as caretakers until such time as a new AGM can safely be convened, hopefully in October, as follows

#### **Honorary President:**

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formerly Operations Manager  
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Colin Charman,

The British Section Newsletter is produced by a small team headed by Philip Worsfold, who fulfils the non-committee role of Editor and Translator

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**A membership Application Form / GDPR Declaration is attached to the e-mail edition of this Newsletter.**

**The European web page is at: <http://www.A-E-C.net>** (hosted by the German section)

AEC Latvia is at [www.ldzb.lv/aec/lv/](http://www.ldzb.lv/aec/lv/)

The aecitalia website is not recognised as representing the official Italian section of AEC. Vito Visconti is no longer a member of AEC.

The **French section website** has been **re-established** at:

<http://aec-france.pagesperso-orange.fr/>

The **British Section Website** is available at <http://www.aec-europe.co.uk>

The British Section Facebook page is closed.

The British Section Newsletter is also available on line at the European website and on the British section website.

## EDITORIAL

I am writing this in the second week of May. Britain has just held local elections; there have been elections for the regional parliaments in Scotland and in Wales and a bi-election in England. Politically the regional results were very different from those in England, where the ruling Conservatives have consolidated their hold on English politics despite the Government being troubled by accusations of sleaze and crony. I think it is significant that in England there was a poor turnout. In the Hartlepool bi-election only around 28 000 out of a possible 70 000 registered voters actually voted. To me this suggests a weariness with politics in England; people have become so punch drunk with continued parliamentary misdeeds that they have just turned away from politics. This communal burying of heads in sand is very dangerous because it allows extremists to take and consolidate their control. This happened in Germany in the 1930's and I fear it is now happening in England. The Scottish Nationalist Party is now one seat short of an absolute majority in the Scottish Parliament. Calls for a second referendum on independence for Scotland cannot be ignored for ever. The British government's view that such a referendum is a once in a lifetime event is at odds with the Scottish view that the situation has changed dramatically because of Brexit – which Scotland as a whole opposed in the British 2016 referendum. The Scottish view is wholly justified and inter nation politics will soon be on a collision course.

Meanwhile in Northern Ireland dissatisfaction with the arrangements with the EU have led to rioting and British business is suffering massive losses in exports to Europe. So far, imports have been only slightly affected apart from the additional paperwork and the fact that each individual different article has to be listed, declared and possibly liable for duty (difficult for a small antiques dealer trying to import things he has purchased in French flea markets); although there have been occasional hold-ups in supply causing some empty shelves in supermarkets. But when the agreement is fully implemented the full rigours being experienced by exporters (72 sheets of paper replacing 3) will also be felt by importers. This will result in very noticeable price increases in the shops, which at present are minimal but noticeable. Last week also saw the stand off concerning fishing rights around the coast of Jersey; thankfully quickly brought under control. Once Europe looked to Britain as a bastion of fair play and reason. But now Britain has lost the trust of Europe. We are seen as mavericks to be dealt with suspicion. I doubt if I shall live to see that trust regained.

On the bright side, travel restrictions to certain countries have been relaxed; but they are aimed principally at the package holiday market. Overland travel out of Britain is still impossible for the likes of AEC members in either direction. The British section aims to hold its delayed Annual General Meeting in October, within a weekend get-together. It would have been great if some members from Europe might have attended, but currently they would have to undergo two weeks quarantine before being allowed into the community – and probably have to endure the same on their return home. That's not a likely scenario. But please remember that this AGM is very important. The future of the British section will be on the agenda. I urge you to attend – if only for the meeting on the Friday afternoon, although we would love to enjoy your company during the following days.

Philip Worsfold. May 2021

*(The views expressed are personal and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Association.)*

### Reminders.

**Again a reminder that the British section website is now up and running at [www.aec-europe.co.uk](http://www.aec-europe.co.uk) It will be a source of up to date information, so please use it regularly. Jenny Worsfold is the webmaster and material for insertion should be sent to her as an e-mail attachment.**

## **Recruitment**

Nigel Hyde has been elected as Treasurer and Membership Secretary as well as Recruitment Officer. Any ideas you have should be channelled through him. All enquiries about membership should be addressed to **Nigel Hyde**. **Please note telephone number and e-mail addresses on page 2.**

## **NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.**

### **BOOKING ARRANGEMENTS.**

As mentioned in the last newsletter, we will be holding our **2021 AGM on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> October at the Elstead Hotel, 12-14 Knyveton Road, Bournemouth, BH1 3QP.** The AGM will take place on Friday afternoon, at a time to be arranged to suit travel arrangements, and we have reserved some rooms at the Elstead for both Friday and Saturday nights so that we can make it a social weekend, visiting some place or places of interest on the Saturday, before returning home on Sunday. We hope that all covid restrictions will have been lifted by then but it will, in any case, be quite a small event primarily for members and any would-be members of the British Section.

**This is quite a critical time for the British Section.** We have a diminishing and aging membership and travel has become more difficult due to both Brexit and the pandemic. On the other hand, some of us feel we have been greatly enriched by joining in the European events of AEC and making many friends in other European countries. And, as believers in the need to work closely with Europe, this must be a time when we need to shout this loud and clear. So is the British Section going to grow? To survive even? We need to see as many as possible at this AGM to make your views known and to plan for the future. We do value the membership of those of you who do not usually attend AEC events, but this is the time when we really want to see you.

**The cost of the weekend** will be £130 per person for 2 nights' bed and breakfast plus the cost of meals and any visits. To **book your place**, please send £130 to our treasurer, Nigel Hyde, whose contact details can be found on page 2 of this newsletter. Please contact Nigel for bank details if you wish to pay by bank transfer, or send him a cheque payable to "Association Europeene des Cheminots". The latest date for bookings is Friday 27<sup>th</sup> August if we still have availability.

**And please remember** if you cannot spare the time for the full weekend, you will still be warmly welcomed just at the AGM itself. The agenda for and time of the meeting on Friday afternoon will be published in our September newsletter and on our website. <http://www.aec-europe.co.uk>

## **A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Bob has claimed lack of inspiration for his musings, but did offer these personal (edited) comments.

I feel events recently are becoming totally representative of a society that is in terminal decay. There is much to say about many issues which aren't in contextual alignment with the AEC; so I'm keeping neutral this time. The predictably massive over-reaction of the Israeli government to Palestinian aggression resulting in the indiscriminate killing of children, is not an item for our membership, nor is the passing of an elderly racist Royal. The only thing I could write about was our crumbling rail services, stopped due to cracks in the trains! Could this be a metaphor for the break up of our industry or Association, the demise of the UK due to the collapse of Democratic processes in Parliament? Again the one word I can remember is Brexit.

Our membership cannot be expected to be open minded about this and I shall always be angry with the people who were behind it (as I believe you are too) for that is the cause of terminal decay in our society. I hope to calm down for the next newsletter

## **TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT NEWS**

### **EUROPEAN RAIL OPERATORS LOOK TO FUTURE, ORDERING LARGE FLEETS OF NEW EQUIPMENT**

By Keith Fender |April 13, 2021

#### **Operators in Spain, France, Germany are among those making major purchases**

Germany's Deutsche Bahn has ordered 30 more of these Siemens Velaro high speed trainsets. (Keith Fender)

Despite ridership numbers that have fallen dramatically during the coronavirus pandemic — by up to 90% in some countries — Europe's rail operators are showing confidence that better times and passengers will return, ordering billions of dollars of new equipment in recent months.

In contracts worth more than \$2.3 billion, Spain national rail company RENFE placed orders for two new commuter rail electric multiple unit fleets in March. The orders were shared between Alstom (152 trains) and Stadler (59 bilevel trains); both firms have factories in Spain which will build the new fleets. The EMU equipment is for commuter rail services around Madrid and Barcelona where the existing fleets are no longer large enough to cope with demand — 510 million passengers were carried on these services in 2019, and many trains are over 30 years old. RENFE has also recently awarded Spanish train builder CAF a \$300 million contract to build 37 metre gauge trains (both electric and diesel) for the country's remaining narrow gauge routes.

In France, a massive order for 146 new commuter rail EMUs for use in the region around Paris is the subject of a bitter legal dispute. Originally awarded to Spanish company CAF and Canadian owned Bombardier in 2020, the \$3 billion contract — which has been finalised — has been fought over by the losing bidder, Alstom, with multiple legal actions in French courts. The story got even more confused as of January when Alstom bought Bombardier, but is still trying to get the contract cancelled. This is despite previous guarantees by Alstom that it would honour existing Bombardier contracts. Alstom was the only other bidder for the contract originally and reportedly bid around half a billion dollars more than the winning CAF/Bombardier offer.

In December, just before Alstom took it over, Bombardier won another French contract, worth around \$675 million, for 33 part bi-level 'Regio 2N' trains for use around Lille in the north of France; several hundred of these trains have now been supplied to French regional governments who buy the trains and then contract their operation.

France also saw its first order for hydrogen fuel cell powered trains in April when 12 EMU/Hydrogen hybrid regional trains were ordered from Alstom. Alstom has hydrogen fuel cell supply deals with Canada based Hydrogenics (now part of Cummins). Alstom delivered the first of 14 production 'iLINT' hydrogen fuelled trains in Germany in March.

High speed and regional orders in Germany

German national rail company Deutsche Bahn ordered 30 additional Siemens-built, 200-mph 'Velaro' high speed trains in 2020. The \$1.2 billion order made in July just after the first wave of the pandemic (Germany is now experiencing its third such wave of infections) is for trains able to operate in neighbouring countries and is part of preparations for the introduction of a national regular interval timetable

[see "[Germany plans integrated national rail schedule ...](#)," *Trains News Wire*, Dec. 23, 2020].

Multiple orders for new regional and commuter rail trains have continued to be placed in Germany. Alstom won a \$900 million order (which includes 30 years maintenance) for 34 new part bilevel, part single-deck Coradia Stream EMUs for use for services from Bremen from late 2024. Part bilevel design EMUs are becoming common in Europe; German state operator DB has ordered 31 regional trains from Siemens for use in Bavaria from Munich; of these 25 are Siemens' new part bi-level Desiro HC (High Capacity) model, plus six smaller Mireo single deck trains. DB has also ordered a faster version of the Desiro HC model for use at 119-mph on high speed lines shared with faster ICE trains; this fleet of 26 trains will enter service in 2023 between Nurnberg and Erfurt.

### **Trains for the 2026 Winter Olympics**

In Italy, the regional government for Lombardy placed a \$410 million order for 46 new regional trains in March 2021. The new trains to be built by Hitachi and Alstom in Italy are due for delivery by 2025, and will be used to provide transport for the 2026 Winter Olympics, to be held in Milan and Cortina. These new trains are in addition to a fleet of 176 already on order from Hitachi and Alstom in contracts worth nearly \$2 billion for delivery before 2025. In late 2020, the region also ordered six Coradia

### **A few diesel trains, too; some introductions delayed**

The vast majority of new trains on order are electric, but small numbers of new diesel trains are on their way too. Czech Railways has ordered 33 'Link' two car DMUs from Polish builder Pesa, and in Hungary the state railway MÁV has agreed to develop new DMUs with Chinese firm CRRC; the trains will be assembled in Hungary. In Britain new Civity DMUs are being built by CAF for use in several regions, and Stadler is building bi-mode (diesel and electric) Flirt trains for services in Wales.

## **SHIFTING FREIGHT TO RAIL: ON TRACK FOR A GREENER FUTURE**

In the framework of the European Year of Rail, with rail being one of the priorities of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union, held a conference dedicated to rail freight on Wednesday 12 May 2021.

### **Description**

The Commission's Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy, published last December, sets a target for rail freight traffic: to increase by 50% by 2030 and to double by 2050. But, despite the considerable public and private investment both in infrastructure and rolling stock, we have observed a stagnated modal share for rail freight the last two decades.

So **what is required to finally boost modal shift for rail freight?** At the conference - "Shifting freight to rail: on track for a greener future" - moderated by Karin Helmstaedt., two panels discussed from different angles, ways to boost modal shift

### **Panel 1: Through the lens of the customer**

- How can rail freight services become more reliable?
- What are the challenges faced by the end users when using rail?
- What are the challenges faced by the railway undertakings in addressing their clients' needs?
- What services do railway undertakings need to offer in order to attract more goods to trains?

### **Panel 2: Ship-to-wagon as the driver for modal shift**

- How to address the 'last mile' near and inside the ports?
- Interoperability at the port
- How to improve efficiency in the operation transferring the goods from the ship to the train?

## **FUNDING AGREED FOR NEW €3.5BN CÔTE D'AZUR LINE**

Apr 20, 2021, by David Haydock

THE French government has announced that additional consultations between stakeholders on the new Ligne Nouvelle Provence Côte-d'Azur (LNPCA) serving Provence and the French Riviera is complete and that central and local government have agreed financing for the €3.5bn cost of the project's phases 1 and 2.

LNPCA is a combination of new sections and upgrades of the existing network, which is designed to eliminate railway congestion in Marseille, Toulon and Nice, and relieve the slow and congested Marseille – Nice line. A major part of the project is a new underground station at Marseille Saint Charles and subterranean links to the existing network.

Following initial discussions, additional consultation took place in 2020 and early 2021 on a series of points which have now been agreed by the committee piloting the project, which includes Mr Renaud Muselier, president of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region.

The route is part of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and EU funds are expected to cover 20% of the cost of the project. Central and local government will both contribute 40%, equal to €1.383bn at 2020 prices.

Phase 1 will include several modifications and additions to track around Marseille to increase capacity, adaptations around Toulon to support a new local shuttle service and a new station to serve Nice airport.

Phase 2 will involve construction of the new underground station in Marseille, links to the existing network, and upgrades in the Cannes and Nice areas, including a new station at Cannes Marchandises, and an underpass to avoid conflicting movements for trains to and from Grasse.

Phase 3 will support further capacity increases and Phase 4 will involve construction of new sections of line in the Cannes and Nice areas.

No timetable for the work has yet been announced.

## **DB, SNCB AND ÖBB FINED BY EC FOR CROSS-BORDER RAIL FREIGHT CARTEL**

Apr 20, 2021, by Kevin Smith

THE European Commission (EC) has fined Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB), German Rail (DB), and Belgian National Railways (SNCB) a total of €48.594m for breaching EU antitrust rules relating to cross-border rail freight services. DB's fine accounts for 99.4% of the total.

An investigation conducted by the EC concluded that the three railways participated in a customer allocation scheme, which is prohibited under EU competition rules, for cross-border block trains operated on key European corridors. The EC says the railways exchanged collusive information on customer requests for competitive offers and provided each other with higher quotes to protect their respective businesses. DB's fine is €48.324m, which was increased by 50%, due to the railway's status as a repeat offender due to its liability in another freight cartel ruling from 2012 relating to activities that took place between 2002 and 2007.

However, DB and SNCB's fines of €270,000 were reduced by 45% and 30% respectively under the EC's 2006 Leniency Notice for their cooperation with the EC during the investigation. In addition, in view of acknowledgement of participation in the cartel and their liability, the EC applied a reduction of 10% on the fines imposed under the commission's 2008 Settlement Notice. ÖBB applied for immunity in April 2015 and as the first applicant received full immunity under the Leniency Notice, avoiding a fine of around €37m.

SNCB says the activities were conducted within its former subsidiary, SNCF Logistics, now Lineas Group. SNCB divested its majority shareholding in the company in October 2015 and as of January 14 2021 no longer holds any shares in the company.

“The practices at issue occurred in the context of trilateral freight sharing services that were offered by ÖBB, DB and the former SNCB Logistics, and aimed at securing the position of “lead carrier” of one of the participating operators,” an SNCB spokesman said, adding that the company fully cooperated with the investigation from the outset.

ÖBB told IRJ that it “cooperated extensively” with the commission in the procedure from the very beginning. A DB Cargo spokesman said the company was evaluating the decision and is not yet ready to make a statement.

#### *Activity*

The activity took place between December 8 2008 and April 30 2014 with SNCB participating since November 15 2011. The ruling concerns only services operated by the three railways. Block trains typically serve high-volume customers, carrying a single commodity, operating on established routes such as between ports and industrial sites.

Under the freight sharing model, which is a contract foreseen in international railway law, railway companies performing cross-border rail services provide customers with a single overall price for the service required under a single multilateral contract.

“Rail transport of freight is vital for a sustainable economy model,” says Ms Margrethe Vestager, EC executive vice-president in charge of competition policy.

“Fair competition is important to provide customers with the best offer when using sustainable transport. A cartel between key operators offering rail freight services on essential rail corridors across the EU goes fundamentally against this objective.

Today’s decision sends a clear signal that this type of collusive behaviour is not acceptable.”

The fines are calculated based on sales value achieved by the cartel participants for the services in question in 2013, the last full year of infringements.

An ÖBB spokesman said comprehensive measures have been taken at ÖBB and Rail Cargo Austria to prevent such misconduct. “Since 2015 all relevant employees have undergone an intensive training programme on competition issues,” ÖBB says, adding that no ÖBB or RCA customers were affected by the practices.

“Due to the strong competitive pressure from truck transport and private companies, the prices were always very competitive and the margins extremely low,” the spokesman said.

## **WABTEC TO CLOSE BRUSH TRACTION PLANT**

20 April 2021

UK: Wabtec has announced its intention to close its manufacturing operations at the Brush Traction site in Loughborough.

‘Decisions like this are never easy but over the past few years, our site has experienced reduced volume and this decrease is no longer sustainable’, a Wabtec spokesperson told *Rail Business UK*. The decision to close the plant would ‘help to simplify and optimise the company’s manufacturing footprint in today’s cyclical environment, as well as better position Wabtec for success’.

The proposed closure is subject to consultation. Wabtec said was fully committed to all customer commitments, and ‘providing the employees affected with resources and benefits to manage the transition.’

Wabtec acquired Brush Traction for US\$31m in February 2011, with the aim of strengthening the US firm’s position as a locomotive aftermarket service provider in the UK market. Tracing its ancestry back to the Falcon Works of 1865, the Loughborough plant has been working in recent years on the repowering of Class 73 locomotives for GB Railfreight and the conversion of Class 319 EMUs to electro-diesel Class 769s for various operators.

## **RENFE ANNOUNCES POSSIBLE EXPANSION OF AVLO LOW-COST HIGH-SPEED SERVICES**

Apr 8, 2021 by Keith Fender

**The new route would be in addition to the Madrid – Barcelona service due to launch on June 23.**

SPANISH national operator Renfe has announced that its new Avlo low-cost high-speed service, which is due to launch on the Madrid – Barcelona route on June 23, could be expanded to add a Madrid – Seville service from 2022.

Five class 112 Talgo AVE trains have been converted to the new Avlo specification. This includes 20% more seating with 438 seats per train and vending machines replacing the previous buffet bar service.

A demonstration service for the Spanish media operated between Madrid and Barcelona in late March. Renfe has already sold 200,000 Avlo tickets for the Madrid – Barcelona service with fares starting at €7.

On a visit to Seville, where the Avlo expansion announcement was made, Renfe president, Mr Isaiah Táboas, also confirmed that the operator will be involved in plans by the Andalusian regional government to develop a unified public transport tariffs and ticketing system.

Táboas announced that the company expects demand to bounce back following the pandemic with passenger numbers expected to reach 70% of 2019 levels by the end of 2021. Passenger ridership on Cercanías suburban services in major cities reached 50% of pre-pandemic in April, although demand for high-speed inter-city travel remains suppressed with Renfe only operating around 40% of the previous timetable.

## **NOTES FROM THE BULLETIN OF EUROPEAN RAIL TRAVEL**

### **What Future for Eurostar?**

Only two trains a day are running each way between London and Paris; London, Brussels and Amsterdam, because of the pandemic and in some cases government-imposed travel restrictions. International travel for British citizens, by air, sea, or train, is not generally to be allowed again until May 17<sup>th</sup> at the earliest. Will Eurostar still be running then?

Ian McDonald, Secretary of the European Rail Campaign (UK), issued a statement on February 19<sup>th</sup>:

“In December ERC(UK) wrote to the Secretary of State for Transport, Grant Shapps, seeking a Government pledge to support Eurostar during the Covid crisis, during which they have lost 95% of their passengers and are at risk of bankruptcy.

“The reply, while ‘supportive’ made no pledge to commit finance, in spite of some help given to airlines. In press statements, Mr Shapps declared it a French responsibility; but their ownership is only 55% of the operation. The UK Government sold off their 40% share in 2015 to financial institutions in Canada and the USA, who Mr Shapps thinks are the ones to rescue it.

“This is quite unsatisfactory and we shall continue our campaign, along with other groups. A reply has been sent to Mr Shapps and ERC(UK) members have supported two petitions to the Government organised by other bodies.”

### **European Year of Rail**

At the end of 2020 the European Commission announced the award of the contract to undertake the study of international night trains to Steer Davies Gleave, an experienced and well-regarded British consultancy which will be assisted by a German partner. This work will feature prominently in the Year of Rail, with a report to be launched at a conference in the autumn.

The European Passengers’ Federation is expected to submit a paper based on discussions within its German member association PRO BAHN, whose long-distance passenger working party has made many thoughtful suggestions.

The network Back-on-Track has issued a statement strongly supporting the Year of Rail initiative because “accelerating climate change, unsustainable travel patterns and years of railway negligence and cutbacks require immediate action.

“Back-on-Track expects during 2021 a statement from the government of each EU Member State on which way they will support night trains and cross-border day trains, also taking into account neighbouring countries outside the EU.

“Back-on-Track demands both from the EU and from each Member State a statement on a binding goal for the share of train/road/plane passenger traffic in 2030, 2040 and 2050.

“Back-on-Track demands a common booking platform.

“Back-on-Track is glad that a revised passenger rights regulation has been put forward, but we call for significant improvements with regard to through ticketing for international journeys.

“Back-on-Track urges the Commission to develop mechanisms to provide a good quality rolling stock pool, accessible for companies providing night train services.

“We are looking forward to good co-operation of rail companies in all Member States as well as in neighbouring countries for developing night and cross-border services.”

### **Progress Towards a 24/7 Railway**

Berlin and Stockholm are due to be linked by a new night train, operated by Snälltåget and Transdev, from May 8<sup>th</sup>. It will run twice weekly at first but then daily from June 11<sup>th</sup> to September 5<sup>th</sup>, then twice weekly again till October 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The train will serve ten stations, including Malmö, Høje-Tåsstrup (for Copenhagen) and Hamburg and it will be possible to purchase a Kombi-Ticket to 30 different DB stations. There will be seating and reclining seats, plus couchettes where, because of covid, only a complete compartment is bookable. Catering will be available in Sweden and Denmark.

Investigations have been underway in the Vasta Götaland region, into the case for a night train between Oslo, Gothenburg, Copenhagen and Hamburg. 8 million people live along this corridor and a report has been produced on the benefits and opportunities of such a service.

Regiojet is to re-introduce a night train from Prague to Rijeka for the summer season; when a twice weekly car-carrying overnight service will link Bratislava and Vienna to Split.

The 2021 summer season will also see an overnight train from Basel to the resort of Binz, on the island of Rügen, operated by the company

Wolfgang Klapdor reports that on February 25<sup>th</sup> SNCF Voyageurs opened bookings for the new Paris – Nice night train, the first of which is due to leave Paris Austerlitz on April 16<sup>th</sup>. Tickets will be available from all the usual SNCF sources.

There will be a service every night, in each direction, until August 31<sup>st</sup>, with fares starting at 19 Euro. Sleeping compartments will be available for 4 instead of 6 passengers and couchettes will be available at 50% occupancy because of COVID restrictions.

By the end of the year, a night train service should also be linking Paris and Tarbes, and Paris and Vienna.

Meanwhile, the Swedish consultants RAMBOLL have been awarded a short contract for a study on “Berlin as a night train hub”. The city council considers that the German government’s TEE 2.0 proposals are too west-orientated and that there is also a possible case for overnight services to Oslo, the Adriatic, Barcelona and even Scotland.

### **Iberia Night Train Petition**

Campaigners in Spain and Portugal have launched a petition, through Change.org, in six languages, with explanatory notes, aimed at the relevant politicians. You can also access it via the Back-on-Track website. By the end of February, over 3200 people had already signed.

The petition reads: *“We ask the Spanish, Portuguese and French governments to consider not only resuming the recently stopped Portugal – France night train connection, but also extending it to a major train hub in Europe such as Paris (or potentially Brussels) instead of reaching just Hendaye on the French/Spanish border. “We urge the Spanish and Portuguese governments to order their national rail companies to join the declaration of December 8th made by SNCF, DB, OeBB and SBB in favour of building a new European night train network. “Additionally we urge the Spanish government to study new night train links between the Iberian Peninsula and central/eastern Europe such as Barcelona - Frankfurt – Berlin and Barcelona - Milan – Rome.”*

### **Cross Border Progress and Campaigning**

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, several Back-on-Track activists were among just over 100 participants in a webinar on cross-border rail services organised by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. Speakers included parliamentarians, campaigners, European Commission and trade union officials.

There was particular focus on the borders between Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic – for example, where different electrification systems were used on each side of the border; but much of the event dealt with general issues relating to all border regions, such as depopulation and concentration of rail investment in large urban areas.

Useful advice was given by the European Commission speaker – such as that cross-border Public Service Obligation grants were possible if regions and states were persuaded to work together to their mutual advantage; the TEN-T and Connecting Europe Facility schemes were available to help; and the Recovery & Resilience funds could also be used for rail projects.

There were calls for cross-border services to be given the same priority as domestic ones and for ticketing to be easier and more attractive.

We were promised a full report of the webinar in due course.

Meanwhile Dr Karl Schambureck, who has been active for several years in pressing for better connections between Austria and Italy, reports that from May 3<sup>rd</sup> the EMONA Eurocity train will no longer end in Ljubljana but continue to Trieste Centrale. After a gap of 58 years, there will again be a direct connection by train from Vienna to Trieste.

It is also reported that the Culture Train between Berlin and Wroclaw is due to resume on March 19<sup>th</sup>.

PRO BAHN’s passenger working group has also had further discussion on cross-border services between Germany and Belgium. Its meeting on February 13<sup>th</sup> agreed that a local service to Stolberg Altstadt should be extended across the border to Eupen; and that it should press for improvements to the Frankfurt – Brussels ICE service, which should ideally continue to London; or, if this is not possible, there should be guaranteed connections and through ticketing to and from England.

### **OTHER NEWS**

**Luxembourg** – We have just learned that the new tramway has now reached the central station –so anyone arriving by train from four directions can now continue swiftly and smoothly into the old city or, over the spectacular Red Bridge, into the modern European quarter.

**Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport** The pre-pandemic plan for a massive Terminal 4 has, we understand, been abandoned in favour of a more reasonable project. This seems sensible as the airport already has very good rail links.

**THE EUROPEAN RAIL TIMETABLE** is available again on paper and in digital format You can order it via [www.europeanrailtimetable.eu](http://www.europeanrailtimetable.eu)

**Our thanks to Trevor Garrod of Rail2000 for the above information.**

## **UNLOCKING NETWORK CAPACITY - from International Rail Journal.**

Signalling technology has gone through various revolutions in the past 60 years as railways have pursued increases in performance and capacity. Kevin Smith charts the key milestones and looks at continuing efforts to transfer metro automation to the mainline.

A popular introductory slide in presentations about railway signalling at industry conferences is a photo of an empty track held up alongside a congested motorway. The caption says it is two transport systems at full capacity.

The shot of the track emphasises the limitations of the railway. Fixed infrastructure with often long fixed block sections and the extended braking distances of trains demand high levels of safety, restricting the number of trains able to operate.

The principle of controlling entry of a single train into a block section has been in place since the first token-based signalling systems and continued with lineside optical signalling. Generations of signalling engineers have attempted to crack this conundrum. However, it is only recently that the technology to do so has emerged. Communications-based train control (CBTC) for metros was among the first innovations to deploy a moving block principle, whereby the protected block moves for a specific distance behind the train, increasing the flexibility of operation and providing the opportunity to cut distances between trains.

The technology also facilitates automatic and driverless operation. However, it was not the first to offer such functionality. London Underground's Victoria Line, which opened in 1968, pioneered Automatic Train Control where the train operates automatically, but a driver is present in a supervisory capacity. The Port Kobe Line in Japan, which opened in 1981, and the VAL system deployed initially in Lille in 1983, were the first entirely driverless urban transport systems.

CBTC made its debut on the driverless Vancouver SkyTrain in 1986, and subsequently on the Detroit people mover and London's Docklands Light Railway (DLR) in 1987. These early applications were based on inductive loop technology developed by Alcatel-SEL, now Thales, and introduced as an alternative to track circuit-based control. Subsequent radio-based systems provided by other suppliers in the early 2000s increased reliability and led to a surge in the use of CBTC; all new metro lines and networks now tend to be fitted with CBTC and deploy a degree of automation, with the majority driverless at Grade of Automation 4 (GoA 4).

CBTC is an optimal application for metros because these tend to have little or no interfaces with other lines, reducing the complexity of operation. Mainline networks are far more complicated with many interfaces and varying speeds of operation. However, work is progressing to bring the benefits of operation pioneered with CBTC to the mainline.

The transition to in-cab rather than lineside signalling began with various national Automatic Train Protection (ATP) systems developed in response to several accidents during the 1960s and 70s.

The dawn of high-speed in Japan in the 1960s and Europe in the 1980s led to a steady rollout of cab-based signalling. The development of the European Train Control System (ETCS), the signalling component of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS), in the mid-1990s was intended to supersede national in-cab systems by providing an interoperable signalling system that permits seamless cross-border operation.

However, with projects proving expensive and time consuming, and loyalty to national systems strong, progress has been slow, much to the frustration of many. Indeed, more kilometres of railway are fitted with ETCS outside of than inside Europe.

London's Thameslink project was the first commercial deployment of ATO over ETCS at GoA 2 in 2018.

Nevertheless, this gap is steadily closing and the signs at the beginning of the 2020s are more positive. Improvements to software and the steady switch from relay-based

to solid state interlockings during the late 1900's and early 2000s were followed by the expansion of ETCS Level 2 during the 2010s to match almost universal GSM-R telecoms coverage in Europe.

Adoption on key corridors has been accelerated by European Union (EU) funding, and a number of countries now have national rollout plans. This began with smaller networks in Denmark, Belgium, Luxembourg and Norway, which is embracing a 'one country, one interlocking' principle where the entire network is controlled from a single control centre rather than 300 separate interlockings. Italy and Spain have also been passionate adopters of ETCS for their high-speed, and increasingly mainline networks, while traditional resistors Germany and France are also beginning the process of wider adoption.

Indeed, ETCS is the foundation of French and German projects to introduce semi and full automation of mainline operation. London's Thameslink project was the first commercial deployment of ATO over ETCS at GoA 2 in 2018. Using systems supplied by Siemens, trains operate autonomously on a central section, which has increased throughput to 24 trains per hour per direction. Siemens has followed up the London project with a contract to deploy ETCS at GoA 2 on Sydney's metropolitan rail network while Thales has GoA 2 pilot projects in France and Germany. In addition, Alstom worked with Dutch infrastructure manager ProRail and Rotterdam Rail Feeding to install GoA 2 on freight trains using the Betuweroute in the Netherlands in 2018. Alstom is also working with German regional operator Metronom, the Regional Association of Greater Braunschweig, the German Aerospace Centre (DLR) and Technical University of Berlin to test GoA 3 and 4 on the Braunschweig – Wolfsburg line. The project envisages operation at GoA 3 with the driver remaining in the cab, and GoA 4 for driverless operation in depots. The first trials with passengers are expected to take place in 2023.

Elsewhere in Germany, Siemens is working with the city of Hamburg and German Rail (DB) to introduce ATO over ETCS on the S-Bahn network and main lines in and around the city. Thales is also partnering with Albtal Transport (AVG) to develop GoA 3 and GoA 4 operation at the depot of Karlsruhe Transport (VBK) with a view to extending autonomous operation to the city's tram-train network. Furthermore, trials of ATO over ETCS by Siemens with Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) are the first to comply with Unisig standards. SBB's tests with regional trains confirmed an energy saving potential of up to 37% and a 30% increase in capacity.

In France, French National Railways' (SNCF) ambitious mainline automation programme commenced in 2018. Split into passenger and freight projects, the objective is to introduce commercial operation on the mainline network, including high-speed lines, from 2025.

Mr Luc Laroche, director of the autonomous train project at SNCF, says the project passed two important milestones in 2020: successful completion of the first obstacle detection tests at 100km/h, and successful operation of a freight train at GoA 2 on the Longwy – Longuyon line in eastern France at the end of October. "The purpose of these tests was to test the first brick of the future GoA 4 train," Laroche says. "The ATO GoA 2, which complies with European standards, demonstrated correct functionality. The tests also helped to define the entire organisation for ambitious trials in the future."

Among these is the next major challenge facing the project: identifying and reading lineside signals on which Laroche reports steady progress. He also says monitoring the railway environment is a major challenge and an area where significant headway is expected.

Further milestones are expected in spring 2021 with the final demonstration of the telecontrol project to successfully pilot a train from a remote location following initial demonstrations in June 2019. Testing of the autonomous passenger train project is also scheduled to begin at the end of April. A TER Regio2N EMU has been equipped to conduct the tests, beginning like the freight project at GoA 2, with the goal of reaching GoA 4 trials by 2023.

SNCF is consulting closely with DB on autonomous trains, working together to guide the European specifications for GoA 2 and GoA 4, and sharing work and thoughts on obstacle detection. Laroche says regular exchanges are also held with Italian and Russian counterparts. Europe's Shift2Rail (S2R) project, of which SNCF and DB are members, is also playing a critical role in shaping future consensual regulations and specifications between operators and the industry.

## **BATTERIES – A KEY ENABLER OF A LOW-CARBON ECONOMY.**

### **From EU Energy News**

We have all grown up aware that batteries are a useful element in our daily lives - for powering our mobile phones, watches, torches or laptops. As an energy device, batteries are indispensable - they make these items portable and more convenient. And we have probably all taken them for granted; and occasionally felt let down when the alarm clock didn't work or mobile phone ran out of juice. However familiar they may be to us, most people are not fully aware of the absolutely crucial role that batteries can play in the fight against climate change and the future energy system as we strive to create a carbon-neutral economy in the EU by 2050.

The variable nature of renewable energy resources means that storing energy will play a key role in mitigating climate change. Creating sustainable and competitive energy storage solutions is therefore the next big challenge. As EU policymakers focus on raising our ambition for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, batteries have steadily been moving to the forefront of the discussion, not only due to the rapid rise of e-mobility, but also to their capacity to balance supply and demand within the electricity system.

### **Clean energy and competitiveness**

Batteries are the fastest growing storage technology and will play a key role to meet the EU goal of [cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 55%](#) by 2030.

In the energy sector, storage technologies can facilitate up to 40 services for electricity systems, including generating, transmitting and distributing the electricity, as well as increasing the self-consumption of solar and other renewable electricity sources by households, commercial buildings and industrial facilities across the EU. Batteries' contribution is especially significant for renewables, as solar and wind power remain fluctuating sources with varying levels of energy produced. Batteries can store electricity and compensate for the moments when the wind is not blowing, the sun is blocked by clouds, or has set for the night.

In the transport sector, the share of battery-driven vehicles is expected to rise dramatically. Already today, the overall cost for owning an electric car is comparable to petrol cars. While the purchase price of electric cars can be relatively high, they are cheaper to run, as electricity costs less and is taxed less than petrol. Electric vehicles are also cheaper to maintain. The difference in the purchase price of a new electric car and a new petrol car is expected to disappear within the current decade. This will be the ultimate game-changer on the car market. Besides being used for transport, electric vehicles will also provide an additional bonus for those that have invested in roof-top solar panels - whether public, corporate or private investors - and reduce electricity bills. Indeed, electricity from the batteries of parked cars can be used for domestic needs, when electricity prices are high or even sold into the grid.

**From a competition perspective, battery production is of increasingly strategic interest for the EU economy and society. This is why the EU supports and helps finance several initiatives that boost further innovation and uptake in batteries. Traditionally, most batteries on the market (in terms of electricity stored) were lead-acid batteries. These were mainly used to start petrol cars or to provide a backup for**

uninterrupted electricity supply in case of unforeseen outages. The EU has a strong position in this market, but as needs have changed and technology evolved, the e-mobility boom has now moved lithium-ion batteries to the forefront. Until recently, only 2 European companies, Saft from France (now owned by Total) and VARTA from Germany, were strong in lithium-ion battery niche battery markets, such as space applications or hearing aids. No European companies were producing lithium-ion batteries for mass markets and this part of the EU market was dominated by Asian producers. But the situation is changing. More and more companies are creating factories for lithium-ion battery manufacturing in Europe, for example:

- EU-based Northvolt is constructing Europe's largest giga-factory for lithium-ion battery cells in Sweden and will continue with a giga-factory in Germany.
- a joint venture between Total and the car manufacturing group PSA (involving Peugeot, Citroen, DS, Opel and Vauxhall) will establish mass-production battery plants in France and Germany.
- VARTA is targeting further expansion of its lithium-ion battery production in Germany and beyond. At the same time, Asian companies, such as LG Chem, Samsung SDI, CATL and SK Innovation, as well as the US giant Tesla, are advancing with their giga-factory projects in different EU countries.

### **EU action on batteries.**

The EU is stepping up its effort on batteries through an industrial push, a robust policy framework and vigorous research and innovation.

- 2001 Renewable Energy Directive.
- 2006 Directive on batteries and waste batteries.
- 2009 Revised Renewable Energy Directive.  
CO2 norms for cars and vans.
- 2014 Directive on the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure

2017 marked the start of EU's industrial policy on batteries when the European Commission outlined the concept of the [European Battery Alliance](#) with EU countries and industrial actors. A strategic action plan for batteries, covering the whole process from producer to end-user, was adopted in May 2018. Since autumn 2019, the [Business Investment Platform](#) of the European Battery Alliance gathers stakeholders along the entire battery value chain to accelerate transactions between investee and investor. Many different projects at different parts of the chain, including fast charging points, are funded by the European Investment Bank, the European Commission's Connecting Europe Facility and the European Regional Development Fund. To align EU efforts on battery research and innovation, the European Technology and Innovation Platform [Batteries Europe](#) was launched in 2019. As a central hub for all battery-related research in Europe, Batteries Europe acts as the research and innovation coordination strand of the European Battery Alliance. It gathers battery experts from research and industry, as well as national and regional representatives, who together set short-term research priorities and a strategic research agenda. Batteries Europe ensures constant communication and coordination between different battery-related research networks, projects and initiatives within the EU and is currently preparing detailed research and innovation roadmaps for different segments of the battery value chain. A number of most urgent research and innovation needs are addressed by 2 multi-billion euro [Important Projects of Common European Interest](#) (IPCEIs) and involve 12 EU countries and tens of companies and research organisations across the EU.

### **EU funding through Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe.**

While most of research and innovation funding traditionally comes from corporate and national budgets, EU funding has often played an important catalyst role and created links between different actors across the EU. Under the [Horizon 2020](#) research framework programme, roughly 0.5 billion EURO were

allocated to batteries research. Since 2018, all Horizon 2020 battery calls are concentrated in a [single work programme](#). The programming of Horizon 2020 calls takes into account different needs of various transport sectors, different needs of the energy sector and different time horizons. Unlike battery IPCEIs, Horizon 2020 also tackles the longer-term perspective, notably through the [Battery 2030+](#) initiative. In addition to Horizon

2020 projects specifically focussed on batteries, there are a range of projects supporting innovative methods of battery integration in the energy and transport sector. For example, projects dedicated to smart energy systems involve batteries at generation, transmission, distribution and end-users' level and are clustered under the [BRIDGE initiative](#).

Although we are now in 2021, the benefits from Horizon 2020 will continue for a number of years, as many projects are still ongoing and numerous projects are yet to start. Moreover, [Horizon Europe](#), the new 7-year EU research and innovation framework programme (2021-2027) starts this year. Under the Climate, Energy and Mobility work-programme, it will provide even greater support to the EU's technological leadership in the field of batteries and battery applications.

In addition to open calls for proposals, EU contributes directly to battery-related research and innovation through its modern research laboratories in Petten (the Netherlands) and Ispra (Italy), both operated by the Commission's Joint Research Centre.

### **A sustainable battery chain.**

It is not possible to reap the full benefits of electrification unless the batteries value chain becomes more sustainable. In December 2020, the European Commission proposed to [modernise EU legislation on batteries](#), making the link with the circular economy. One important aim of these changes is to set new rules, ensuring that batteries are produced with the lowest possible environmental impact, using materials obtained in full respect of social and ecological standards. Batteries have to be long-lasting and safe, and at the end of their life should be repurposed, remanufactured or recycled, feeding valuable materials back into the economy. As a next step, the Commission is now preparing measures for reaching an updated greenhouse gas emissions reduction target for 2030 of net 55 % compared to 1990 levels. These measures are detailed in the [2030 EU Climate target plan](#) and will involve:

- a more ambitious renewable energy target for 2030.
- tighter CO2 norms for cars
- revision of legislation on alternative fuels infrastructure
- new rules on energy taxation.

This will further push demand for storage, in particular batteries. The Commission has also launched numerous initiatives related to [raw materials, skills and education](#).

### **Other solutions to energy storage.**

In addition to batteries, hydrogen is considered a key enabling technology for achieving carbon-neutrality by mid-century and has also become a focus of attention for the EU and European industry.

Hydrogen can power sectors that are not suitable for electrification, such as shipping or long-distance heavy goods vehicles, and provide long-term storage to balance variable renewable energy flows. In an integrated energy system, hydrogen can support the decarbonisation of industry, transport, power generation and buildings across Europe. The [EU Hydrogen Strategy](#), adopted in July 2020, offers perspective for how to transform this potential into reality, through investment, regulation, market creation and research and innovation. Under the Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe programmes, the EU is also providing support to other storage technologies, including pumped hydro storage and thermal storage.

When it comes to EU rules on renewable energy and electricity market design, they are technology-neutral and embrace all forms of storage (existing, emerging or not yet invented). This will hopefully encourage further research and deployment of other storage types, as super-capacitors, flywheels, liquid air energy storage, and compressed air energy storage.

The successful development of batteries and storage capacities in the EU brings together 2 important priorities for the EU: the European Green Deal (supporting the clean energy transition) and the digital transformation. The aim is to develop the best quality of storage design and the top quality user applications thanks to ongoing digitalisation.

## **EUROPEAN DAYS AND OTHER EVENTS**

**What appears below as proposed is all dependent on the progress made on defeating the Covid-19 virus and re-opening Europe to its citizens and visitors.**

### **Dates of European Events.**

**AEC European Days in Bulgaria (Sofia) 2022** organised by the Romanian section May or September 2022 Existing bookings stand or may be cancelled. For new bookings see detailed programme in the March edition of the Newsletter..This will be updated in our September edition. Final dates for booking will be advised later.

**The Spanish section proposed European Days in Madrid/Toledo and the Polish section for AEC European Days in Lublin, Poland.** These postponed events will need to be re-scheduled.

## **RECENT EVENTS...**

### **...AND THINGS TO COME**

#### **Monthly Reunions and Annual General Meeting.**

Since our last report, all meetings have been postponed until further notice. The Annual General Meeting will be held during the afternoon on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> October at the Elstead Hotel, Bournemouth, if it is safe to do so.

## **ASSOCIATION TIES AND BADGES.**

In common with other sections, the British section of the Association has a necktie and a badge. Our particular items are common to both the British and Belgian sections. We have produced the ties and the Belgian section, the badges. We are looking into the possibility of having a unisex T-shirt or sweatshirt.. What do you think?

Ties are available, at £4.50 plus postage, and badges are in stock in small numbers, at £1.50 each, including UK inland postage. These items are available from **Philip Worsfold**. Please contact him first by e-mail or phone to check availability (details at the top of page 2.)

## **CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORT (CILT)**

**Railway Study Forum:** The former Railway Study Association has merged with the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT) as the Railway Study Forum. Subscription rates have changed and no longer include a subscription to 'Modern Railways'. Each annual session of lectures, in London and Birmingham and other locations are, held on various evenings.

Full details of the changes and details of all activities can be found on the CILT website.

### **YOUNG BUFFERS ASSOCIATION.**

There is no subscription provided that you have an e-mail address; and no obligation to attend their events. If you would like further details, the Secretary is Larry Fullwood, tel. 01485 541599, e-mail [larry.fullwood@virgin.net](mailto:larry.fullwood@virgin.net) .

### **REPTA.**

The long standing Railway Employees' and Public Transport Association offers bargain price insurance through offers including competitive insurances through their brokers the Alan Boswell Group; and concessions and discounts at stores and attractions throughout the country. The 'Yearbook' gives full details, including the invaluable guide to staff travel facilities throughout the world. For details contact our Asst Secretary, Peter Davies (see page 2), who is also General Secretary of REPTA; or visit: [www.repta.co.uk](http://www.repta.co.uk)

### **FEANDC.**

FEANDC has similar social aims to AEC; and like AEC has sections in a number of European countries, including some which do not have AEC sections. More details and all other information about FEANDC are available from Peter Davies (address etc on Page 2).

### **AND FOR THE FUTURE???**

We shall endeavour to continue the production of these newsletters. I use a variety of sources for news of international interest and thank those members who send me information – but I continue with my plea for more from you. I hope I shall be able to keep my promise of more articles. So please, put pen to paper yourselves so that I can build up a library of articles. Please keep in touch and let us have your information, your views and your ideas. The next issue will be published for 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021

The copy deadline is **1<sup>st</sup> August 2021.**



## SUMMARY OF EVENTS

**The 2021 AGM will take place on the afternoon of Friday 8<sup>th</sup> October at the Elstead Hotel, 12-14 Knyveton Road, Bournemouth, BH1 3QP.** at a time to be arranged to suit travel arrangements; and subject to current covid19 restrictions..  
**To make this a social weekend**, we have reserved some rooms at the Elstead for both Friday and Saturday nights to enable us to visit some place or places of interest on the Saturday, before returning home on Sunday.

## A.E.C. BRITISH SECTION: MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Other\*..... Surname:.....Initials:.....

Forename:.....

Job Description:.....

Work Location (optional) .....

**ACTIVE / RETIRED \***

### General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

**I agree to the use of my postal address / e-mail address / telephone number(s)\* by the secretary / treasurer\* for the purposes of receiving communications from the association.**

**I authorise the editor of the newsletter to send it to me by post / e-mail attachment\***

Home Postal Address:.....

.....

Town/City:..... Postcode:.....

Telephone:.....

Mobile:.....

(\*delete as applicable)

Membership of the A.E.C. costs £10.00 per annum and is open to anyone in the railway industry without qualification. If you speak a foreign language and would like to let us know, it would be helpful to us.

I can speak the following language(s) (state how well, e.g. fluent, fair, a little)

.....

**I should like to join the Association Européenne des Cheminots.**

**Signature.....**

**Data supplied will be kept on secure computer databases held individually by the secretary, treasurer and newsletter editor as authorised above; and will be used only for the purposes authorised above. No information will be divulged to any person – including other members – without your express permission. A copy of your GDPR declaration will be kept by each of the officers concerned.**

**Please make cheques/PO's for £10.00 payable to: "Association Européenne des Cheminots"**

***Send this application to:***

**Nigel Hyde,**

**66 Halifax Road,**

**Brighouse, W. Yorkshire. HD6 2EP**

**Tel: +44(0)1484 400 646;**

**Mobile: +44(0)7484 810 735**

**E-mail: [nigel.hyde6@btinternet.com](mailto:nigel.hyde6@btinternet.com)**