

Update No. 39

September 2020

To the members of FEDECRAIL.

You have now a new Update, number 39, the information sheet for the members of the European umbrella organisation for the museum and tourist rail sector. Update 38 was published on 18 March this year at about the beginning of the COVID-19 period. The fact that there was a longer period between the appearance of the Update can be explained mainly by the fact that in the CORONA period news only had and has a very short shelf life. Hardly anything has been announced in connection with COVID 19, or the changes are numerous. The travel restrictions differ from country to country because CORONA also applies differently. At the time of writing, in many countries in Europe, infections are on the increase again and measures - sometimes local - are being tightened up.

For many of our members, CORONA has shut down and sometimes resumed operations in a form that is sufficiently 'social distancing', but which severely limits the capacity of our supply. To sum up, our sector is struggling, as is the entire cultural and tourism sector. In some countries, governments have launched aid programmes to support our members, and our members themselves have tried to generate financial income through crowdfunding and donor recruitment with reasonable success. Perhaps the biggest problem at the moment is that no one can predict how long this CORONA crisis will last.

In the meantime, existing plans and schedules need to be adapted. For FEDECRAIL, the General Assembly, the congress and the study trip programme in and around Bilbao planned for the end of April 2020 had to be postponed because Spain had already declared a state of emergency. By royal decree, the Belgian government made it possible for our kind of organisation to postpone the General Assembly of Members, with the weekend of 5 September becoming the final deadline. We decided to hold that meeting in Brussels, to which you were invited on 24 July 2020, but on the basis of the more stringent travel advice and COVID-19 measures in Antwerp and Brussels, we had to decide to move this meeting to the Netherlands as well. We were able to make an appointment with the board of the Rotterdam Tram Museum ROMEO to hold our Annual General Meeting 2020 on 5 September 2020 in the museum tram depot of Rotterdam from 13.00 - 15.00 hrs. at the Kootsekade 19, 3051 PC Rotterdam. You will be informed separately about all further details for this meeting.

During the General Assembly, the board will propose to the members to drastically reduce the budget for the year 2020, in order to accommodate our members, who have a very difficult financial situation. This will be made possible because, as of March 2020, hardly any expenditure has been made. A lot of meetings were web-hosted. So did our board meetings. We have decided to keep this up at least for the rest of 2020. In consultation with the members, we also want to see how we can achieve (even) better results in the future with other forms of financing, with fewer contributions from the members.

In the meantime, there are, of course, developments, such as the ICOMOS European Heritage Green Paper. In this paper, the concepts of mobile heritage and rail heritage did not appear, and the central message to the European Commission was that making built monuments more sustainable would be of great help to the cultural sector, but also to the economy as a whole. I drafted a response on behalf of FEDECRAIL, which in particular urges us to make use of and support the many possibilities offered by the industrial and mobile heritage at work and, in so doing, to point out the many facets of the 'Plan Paris' which can make a salient contribution to its implementation. On 8 October next I will be the keynote speaker at the ERIH webinar "Keeping the Wheels Turning". This also fits in well with 2021, the 'Year of European Railways' announced by the European Commission.

Jaap Nieweg
President of FEDECRAIL

PANDEMIC DEVELOPMENTS - EARLY MONTHS SUMMARY

The pandemic has of course been having a major impact on our rail and tramway heritage colleagues throughout Europe (and indeed most of the rest of the world!), albeit in varying degrees partly reflecting different approaches taken by each national government in tackling the crisis. At a European level, the Tourism Task Force of the European Parliament Transport & Tourism Committee made a very well-argued case at an early stage for a specific ‘Tourism Sector Rescue Plan’ with earmarked funds from larger scale funding approved to address wider issues. Key points from the Committee’s appeal to the Commission include:- (1) adequate European level assistance to address the task of assessing the damage and needs of the travel and tourism sector; (2) to ensure effective support for businesses in the tourism sector and to help tackle unemployment in the sector; (3) establishing a crisis management mechanism for co-operation in the tourism sector; (4) provision of special assistance and direct financial aid for those regions and areas where the local economy is highly dependent on income from tourism.

Although the initial response from the Commission to the specific detailed request was in effect “no”, the Transport & Tourism Committee have continued to lobby and press on these (and other) issues. Our colleagues have briefed some members of the Committee about concerns of the rail heritage sector to help ensure that these are on the ‘radar screen’ as well as those of national rail networks. A reminder too that we have asked for information and input from members to build up more robust data about the impact on our sector. This work will need to continue throughout the summer (and indeed beyond). Where appropriate, further input can be made to the Tourism Task Force and other members of the Committee and also to the Culture & Education Committee of the Parliament. Fedecrail has also maintained - via its Heritage Operating Group- its monitoring work on technical issues with various sub groups of the European Rail Agency and other bodies - like everywhere else, normal physical meetings have been replaced by virtual gatherings.

During the initial months, Fedecrail worked with heritage sector partners. In particular, with the pan heritage body *Europa Nostra* (which also co-ordinates a Europe wide ‘heritage alliance’ of now almost 40 other umbrella bodies). Echoing the strategy of the Transport & Tourism Committee, a joint letter was sent signed by 37 cultural heritage umbrella bodies and networks, including Fedecrail, to the European Commissioner for Culture & Education, Mariya Gabriel, urging the adoption in all European countries of emergency measures to support the sustainability of cultural and heritage bodies. The letter also included a specific plea that part of the general emergency funding package should be earmarked for the cultural and creative sectors. Lobbying by *Europa Nostra* and its related heritage alliance is of course continuing - and Fedecrail will continue to give strong support to such efforts as our united voices will always make a much greater impact than a ‘solo performance’ !

(This report covers features of developments during the period March - June)

*Peter Ovenstone - Council Member and Vice-President
PRO/29/6/20; Rev 28/08/20*

Fedecrail - Active Partner in UIC TopRail Group - News Update

The International Union of Railways (UIC) is an international professional association representing the railway sector with membership across six continents. Its mission focuses on promoting rail transport around the world with the aim to meet current and future challenges of mobility and sustainable development as well as supporting members and partners in their efforts to develop new business and new areas of activity.

To refresh memories, a reminder that Fedecrail took the major step of signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the UIC in 2017 and we actively joined the TopRail Group which has key objectives of:-

- Promotion of leisure trips by railway
- Increasing rail's share of the tourist market by identifying how railways can contribute to sustainability challenges.
- Facilitating the understanding of Heritage and Tourism by the rail market.
- Collaborating in the creation of a database of existing tourist trains and services regarding railway tourism.
- Undertaking studies in economic, social and technical aspects of tourism and leisure by rail.
- Providing forums for both public and private sectors to share their experiences as well as expertise in the various aspects related to tourism by rail.

More details of the TopRail work can be found at <https://toprail.org/about-us> where two useful publications can also be found and downloaded. These are the recently published "Guidelines on how to increase attractiveness for rail tourism" and an earlier "Guidelines on Sustainable Tourism by Rail". Both of these are commended as of value for HRA Members for your future business planning and strategies.

For the 2020-2022 UIC budget period additional full UIC member railways have joined the Group and new MoU have been signed with the European Tour Operators Association (ETOA) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) who will strengthen our work to promote rail tourism. The COVID-19 crisis has diverted attention towards helping UIC members to deal with the effects of the pandemic and planning recovery in conjunction with the UIC COVID-19 Task Force.

For the current budget period the UIC has joined with other partners for the RailtoLand Project www.railtoland.eu under the Erasmus+ programme. This will deliver an integrated package linking European Cultural Landscapes with Railway Heritage to enhance visitors' experience both before and during their railway journeys. Other tasks will include the benchmarking of new technologies for enhancing the digital passenger experience as well as re-designing the present TopRail prototype website to better promote the wide range of railway tourism and heritage products.

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Current information about the Achenseebahn

On 23 March 2020 Achenseebahn AG filed for insolvency, the insolvency proceedings were initiated by the Innsbruck Regional Court.

The board of directors and the management of the Achenseebahn (represented by attorney Dr. Christian Winder, Innsbruck) are working together with the liquidator Dr. Herbert Matzunski in a constructive and trustful manner. A unanimous government resolution of the Tyrolean state government has provided for support for the Achenseebahn in the amount of 3.4 million euros for the year 2020, but this should have been confirmed by the state parliament. However, one day before the vote of the Landtag on 4 July 2020, the Land government withdrew this item from the agenda without justification, so that the support could not be approved. Since then, the Land has been paying the monthly wage and salary payments, but otherwise only the absolutely necessary such as rent, electricity and telephone. The administrator in bankruptcy has to take care of covering other payments in detail.

Scheduled traffic is currently suspended. Rail replacement services are offered via the parallel VVT bus line. This has also been agreed with the railway supervisory authority.

Depending on the weather, green cuttings and clean-up operations are carried out on the line by steam locomotive and freight wagons.

Some of the staff have been laid off, but the workshops are still working at a correspondingly reduced capacity. A steam locomotive (locomotive no. 3) was reconditioned and put back into operation on 30 April 2020. The other 3 locomotives have been dismantled and require various spare parts. The summer car no. 4 has been thoroughly inspected and put back into operation in its historical green colouring, so that now a historical green train set with closed passenger car no. 5 and summer car no. 4 is available again. The flat side freight wagon (new no. "Jn no. 9"), which was parked as a ruin for years, is currently undergoing a general inspection and is almost finished. The frame and chassis had to be extensively renewed, which was historically correct in rivet construction. The closed passenger car no. 6 is currently undergoing reconditioning, whereby the frame had to be partially renewed and the body largely renewed.

On August 17th, 2020 the body of the former Appenzell optional car Hack 103 was taken over in Hirschwang (Höllentalbahn Payerbach - Hirschwang) by the Achenseebahn-Förderverein "1000 Tausender", transferred to Jenbach by road low-loader and unloaded there on April 18th, 2020. This body was originally supposed to be taken over by the German museum railway "Alb-Bähnle" Amstetten - Oppingen (ex WEG line Amstetten - Laichingen), but was kindly left to the Achenseebahn, because as a summer car it would fit very well to the summer cars available here. A refurbishment is planned.

On 21 April 2020, the Federal Chancellery commissioned the expert Dr. Günter Dinhobl to draw up a brief expert report to clarify the extent to which the Achensee railway would be worthy of being listed as a historical monument or to apply to UNESCO for protection as a World Heritage Site. The expert was under the difficulties of the Corona period on 30 April 2020 at the Achensee railway, and on 12 May 2020 his report was circulated worldwide with the request for immediate protection. A few days later, letters of support were received from the world heritage protection associations ICOMOS and

TICCIH, and the Austrian Federal Monument Authority was requested to provide expert opinions on this matter. A project report by the Federal Monuments Office has now been submitted. However, this report does not initially call for the protection of the entire Achensee railway ensemble, but only of individual sections of the line (cogwheel line and adhesion line to the Maurach entrance) as well as individual plant sections and individual vehicles). The final report is not yet available.

In the meantime, the Austrian Federal President has also become involved in the matter, but the Tyrolean politicians are apparently not impressed by this.

The bankruptcy proceedings should be concluded by the end of September 2020. It is uncertain whether a buyer will be found by then. It is possible that the Land Tyrol will set up a rescue company. In order to discuss possible residual risks, an independent consultancy firm has been commissioned to prepare an expert opinion on the matter, which should be available by mid-September. The board of directors and the management of the Achenseebahn were involved to this extent. It remains to be seen what residual risks are likely to arise in this connection for a railway which has been in operation for 130 years without major problems.

As the daily newspaper "Salzburger Nachrichten" reports in its issue of 24 July 2020, a complaint is now also pending with the (corruption) public prosecutor's office against parts of the supervisory board of Achenseebahn AG. The role played by the mayors of the neighbouring communities of Jenbach, Eben-Maurach and Achenkirch as the majority shareholders of the Achenseebahn today must be questioned. According to testimonies given in court, in February 2015 they are said to have asked the responsible state councillor Ingrid Felipe (Greens, Deputy Governor) to freeze the subsidies for the Achenseebahn. It is a fact that they now refuse to continue to pay the costs of the legal representation of the Achenseebahn, so that these now have to be privately financed. The case "bankruptcy of the Achenseebahn" is slowly turning into a thriller!

Since the Achenseebahn constantly needs liquid funds for its currently rather meagre continued existence, the "Achenseebahn-Förderverein" calls for "1000 thousand" to support donations:

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