



European Federation of Museum & Tourist Railways

UPDATE No. 64

October 2024

Dear Members,

As autumn approaches, we are looking forward to gathering in Saint Quentin very soon. This is an important opportunity for many of our members to come together, share their insights, and contribute to ensuring that FEDECRAIL stays focused on the right priorities as we continue to move forward.

Over the summer, we witnessed the EU elections, and both new and familiar faces have now taken their places within the EU institutions. The political landscape continues to evolve, and we must remain mindful of how these changes might affect our work and the challenges we face in preserving and advancing Europe's *tramways* and *heritage railways*.

FEDECRAIL continues to refine its direction as the new board comes together. We are actively exploring ways to engage young people and establish policies that promote diversity, inclusion, and equality across all areas of our work. These are not just aspirations but essential pillars for ensuring the sustainability of our heritage sector.

Across Europe, our member organizations are still grappling with challenges. For *tramways*, key issues include access to infrastructure in urban areas and rising electricity prices. On the other hand, for *heritage railways*, the ongoing discussions about the future of fuel and the challenges related to the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) are major concerns. Preserving our living rail heritage in the face of these developments is of the utmost importance and remains at the core of what we do.

In addition to the challenges, there are also reasons for optimism. We are seeing significant growth in the East, with more organizations expressing interest in joining FEDECRAIL and collaborating with us. This expansion is a positive and exciting development that strengthens our collective voice and influence.

As we move forward, let us continue to build on these foundations and work together to ensure that our *tramways* and *heritage railways* thrive for future generations. I am confident that, with your ongoing support and dedication, we will achieve great things.

Thank you, and I look forward to seeing many of you in Saint Quentin.

Best Wishes/Vänliga Hälsningar

Mimmi Mickelsen
President FEDECRAIL

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10. October 2024 in Stockholm. Photo: Mimmi Mickelsen

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Women in mobile cultural heritage

Event in Stockholm

Promoting participation

On October 10th, the Swedish Tramway Society, in collaboration with the Tramway Museum in Stockholm, organized a women’s event aimed at highlighting the engagement of women in mobile heritage activities. Increasing inclusion and fostering more heterogeneous groups create a strong foundation for organizations to thrive. The purpose of this event was to showcase that women are indeed represented in transport heritage initiatives and to demonstrate ways in which more women can get involved.

As President of FFEDECRAIL, I participated in the event and delivered a speech encouraging women to discover how they can help shape the future of cultural heritage while having fun and connecting with like-minded individuals. Historically, mobile heritage—everything from cars and trains to boats and airplanes—has been dominated by men. But now is the time to spotlight and amplify women’s participation! By bringing women to the forefront of this field, we not only break stereotypes but also pave the way for a more inclusive and dynamic future.

Inclusion is crucial because diverse teams bring different perspectives and experiences that lead to innovation and problem-solving. This is especially important in heritage organizations, where varied viewpoints can help in preserving the past while ensuring relevance for future generations. Women’s involvement can inspire new approaches, strengthen community engagement, and make these initiatives more accessible and welcoming to all.

The event also included a presentation on the history of women in public transportation, as well as a panel discussion about the experiences of women working in public transport today. It was an im-

mensely successful event that garnered attention, and we at FFEDECRAIL are proud to have contributed to such an important cause.

The Tramway Museum in Stockholm, which is owned by Region Stockholm and recently reopened in a new location, also played a key role in the event. The museum focuses on the history of public transport in Stockholm, providing visitors with a fascinating look into the evolution of tramways and other forms of transportation in the city. Its new facilities offer a modern and interactive experience, making it a fantastic space for such discussions and gatherings.

By promoting inclusion in these settings, we are building a future where everyone, regardless of gender, feels welcome and empowered to take part in preserving and shaping our mobile heritage.

Mimmi Mickelsen



UKTram Summit 2024

Recognisable commitment to the tram sector

The UK Tram Summit 2024 in Birmingham was an insightful conference, addressing topics relevant both to modern tramways and heritage tramways. Mimmi Mickelsen, President of FEDECRAIL, attended the event on September 19th. UKTram impressed as an organization, clearly dedicated to the best interests of tramways. The themes covered were highly relevant for both modern and veteran tram operations. The event also featured a small exhibition alongside the conference. FEDECRAIL extends its gratitude to UKTram for the opportunity to participate in this important event.

The agenda included:

- A project on a victimless crime, utilizing virtual reality to increase young people’s understanding of the consequences of thoughtless actions, both for themselves and those around them.
- The crucial issue of inclusion, presented by a representative of Men in Inclusion, emphasized the need for collaboration between men and women. In technical fields often dominated by men, women are frequently told they need to be tougher. This was an important message, particularly for veteran operations, where greater openness and acceptance are required. It was also pointed out how men often “fake it” to progress, while women typically have to prove their competence to be taken seriously.
- Fatigue risk management, an increasingly relevant topic, was addressed in a session on risk management.
- Sustainability, security, and safety standards were also covered extensively, highlighting UKTram’s commitment to fos-

tering a safe and forward-thinking industry.

The conference provided valuable insights, and UKTram’s dedication to the future of the tram sector was evident throughout.

Mimmi Mickelsen



Lyduvėnai Bridge

Visit to Lithuania

Anniversary event and conference

Gottfried Aldrian and I were invited to join the 125 Years Anniversary of Aukštaitija Narrow-Gauge Railway in Lithuania by the railway’s director Dr. Darius Liutikas. Dr Liutikas has been to a number of Fedecrail conferences. The railway is based at Panevėžys, which is about in the middle of the country, half way between Vilnius and Riga. The

narrow-gauge railway is 68.4 km long, from Panevėžys to Rubikiai, passes through Taruškos, Rekstinas Forest, Raguvėlė, Surdegis, Troškūnai, Anykščiai, and Bičioniai. At Panevėžys the line starts near to the Russian gauge station.

We arrived on Wednesday 25th September by rail from Riga in Latvia on the sole cross border train each day. On Thursday we went by minibus to Lyduvėnai Bridge and Šiauliai Railway Museum. The bridge was originally built by the German Army in wood in 1916. It was later rebuilt in steel and then after being demolished by the Germans in 1944, it was rebuilt by the Soviets in 1951.

The conference day saw a number of speeches by the Lithuanian Minister of Transport, Marius Skuodis, the mayors of Panevėžys city Rytis Račkauskas and Panevėžys district Antanas Pocius, and Anykščiai district Kęstutis Tubis, and heads of Lithuanian cultural and tourism institutions, such as Vidmantas Bezaras (Director of the Department of Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture), Olga Gončarova (Director of the public institution "Travel Lithuania"), and Vija Platačiūtė (Head of the Railway Museum). We delivered a presentation on FEDECRAIL activities in Europe, while Stephen Wiggs and Osian Hughes presented on NERHT activities in the UK, highlighting exemplary



Banquet for the guests

cases of railway heritage preservation in Great Britain, with a particular focus on the activities of the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways. Afterward we travelled in the salon coach to Surdegis narrow-gauge railway station. Where the celebration dinner was held for the guests of the railway. We also met two representatives of the Ventspils outdoor museum railway in Latvia.



Panevėžys narrow-gauge railway station. Photos: Ian Leigh

On September 28, the annual Narrow-Gauge Railway Birthday Festival took place at the Surdegis narrow-gauge railway station complex (Anykščiai district), with trains bringing attendees from the Anykščiai and Panevėžys narrow-gauge railway stations. The festival featured a contest for ladies and gentlemen with hats, concerts, dance performances, and, of course, birthday cake. With lots of food and drinks.

The celebration in Anykščiai took place on September 29, organized in collaboration with the A. Baranauskas and A. Žukauskas Museum. The greetings from city leaders and guests were accompanied by a concert from the Eastern Aukštaitija Big Band. Panevėžys and Anykščiai residents were invited to take a free ride on the short narrow-gauge railway routes.

Ian Leigh

Focus on NARROW GAUGE

Next year will see the 200th anniversary of the first public railway coming into operation, which will certainly put the railway in general and also the museum and tourist railways more in the public eye. But there are also other anniversaries that are worthy of special emphasis and celebration.

For example, two narrow-gauge railways celebrated significant birthdays in September.

One is the **Aukštaitijos siaurasis geležinkelis (Upper Lithuania Narrow Gauge Railway)** in Lithuania, which celebrated its 125th birthday with a four-day festival. This 750 mm railway is operated by a public company on the last 68 kilometres of the formerly extensive Lithuanian narrow-gauge network and provides an excellent example of how cooperation between railway enthusiasts, public institutions and the national railway can implement a tourism project that resonates strongly with the local population and can also form the nucleus of the tourism development of an entire region.

You can find a detailed report in this UPDATE on **page 7**.

The second ‘birthday child’ is the **Murtal railway**, which connects the Austrian federal states of Styria and Salzburg. While passenger and freight transport is operated by the Steiermarkbahn on the majority of this 760-mm line, which is 76 kilometres long in total, the railway is also known as the **Murtalbahn (see page 7)**.

The **Feistritzal railway** is a completely different story. To the east of the Styrian capital of Graz, this railway runs through an idyllic landscape, sometimes over spectacular viaducts. After regular operations on the line, which opened in 1911, were finally discontinued in December 2014, the U44 Club and the **Feistritzalbahn** operating company successfully ran a museum train service be-

fore this also came to a standstill due to the pandemic and external events.

Now the existence of the railway is acutely threatened. If the neighbouring communities have their way, it is to be sacrificed to a road project, which committed railway enthusiasts are trying to prevent (**see page 9**).

So it is very different events that bring the topic of ‘narrow gauge’ to the centre of attention. They range from the successful launch of a new project to a well-known international attraction and a railway in danger of closure. What all three have in common is the importance of cooperation and the exchange of experience at an international and European level, particularly with regard to the challenges of the future. This is where FEDECRAIL can contribute with its experts working in the working groups. In this context, reference should be made to the ‘Non Mainline’ working group, which is currently being set up, and active participation is encouraged.

Gottfried Aldrian



Great atmosphere at the birthday party

Upper Lithuania Narrow Gauge Railway

Combining tourism and historical heritage

The first train in Lithuania travelled from Daugavpils to Vilnius on 4 September 1860. By the end of the 19th century, a whole network of narrow-gauge railways had been established. In 1891, construction began on the 750 mm Švenčionėliai-Pastovai line, which was officially opened on 11 November 1895. The 70.4 km long line was extended in 1898-1899 and officially opened on 13 May 1901. In Panevėžys, the narrow-gauge railway had a connection to the Daugavpils-Radviliškis broad-gauge railway.

The narrow-gauge railway transported various goods and passengers for over 125 years. Today, the narrow-gauge railway is a national cultural heritage site. It is the only operating and longest historical 750 mm gauge narrow-gauge railway in the Baltic States and preserves valuable technical, urban, architectural, landscape and historical features. In 2001, the public institution 'Aukštaitija Narrow Gauge Railway' was established to manage the narrow gauge railway and its facilities between Panevėžys and Rubikiai. Since 2001, the preserved narrow-gauge railway in Aukštaitija has been used for cultural heritage research and leisure trips.

The mission of the employees on the route between Panevėžys and Rubikiai is to provide tourist services along the Aukštaitija narrow-gauge railway, combining historical heritage with innovation, cultural traditions with new travel experiences. The facility organises charter, scheduled, short, holiday, educational and sightseeing trips as well as various excursions. A special feature of the railway since 2022 has been the 'sauna train', in which passengers can travel in a carriage with a sauna and whirlpool.

In 2024, a book was published to mark the 125th anniversary of the narrow-gauge railway: 'The nar-

row-gauge railway in Lithuania: The Narrow Gauge Railway of Anykščiai and Panevėžys' (in Lithuanian), written by Dr Darius Liutikas.

In the near future, the Aukštaitija narrow-gauge railway is planning to restore a historic KP4-708 locomotive and install an augmented reality carriage. Further information on trips and activities can be found on the website www.siaurukas.eu.

Dr Darius Liutikas, Director of the Aukštaitija narrow-gauge railway (text abridged)



Two special trains with class SŽD TY2 diesel locomotives travelled to the birthday celebrations. Photos: Dr Liutikas

Murtalbahn

A lifeline for 130 years

Steiermärkische Landesbahnen (StLB) and Steiermarkbahn (StB) celebrated the 130th anniversary of the Murtalbahn on 22 September 2024 with a festival around Murau station - the operational hub of this well-known and popular narrow-gauge railway. Young and old were on their feet to join in the celebrations, and officials from politics, civil society and the church also came together in the sunny, autumnal weather. A varied programme offered something of interest for everyone. In addition to food and drink, there was a look behind



Bh 1 (Krauss/Linz/1905 ex ÖBB 398.01) and U 40. Photo: Gunter Mackinger

the scenes of the railway workshop, a vehicle show, various souvenirs and, of course, a programme for the youngest visitors.

Only a few days separated the anniversary celebration from the opening day - on 7 October 1894, after a construction period of 316 (!) working days, the 76.2 km long narrow-gauge railway with a gauge of 760 mm between Unzmarkt on the Rudolfsbahn and Mauterndorf in Salzburg's Lungau region was opened. Then as now, the Murtal railway is the lifeline of the upper Murtal and the

Salzburg Lungau region. This fact was also confirmed by political representatives - it only remains to be hoped that the wishes for its continued existence and further modernisation will be followed by the necessary action. Club 760 - a friend of the Murtalbahn, which has been accompanying and supporting the Murtalbahn for 55 years - also joined in as a well-wisher and expressed its thanks for the good cooperation and often generous support for 55 years.

Gunter Mackinger, Club 760



A train with steam locomotive KH 101 on the Grub-viaduct. Photo: Daniel Maier

Feistritzalbahn

Resumption of transport operations and viable prospects for the future

Opened in 1911, the Feistritzal railway, which is still 24 km long today, looks back on a past that attests to its significant contribution to the economic and social upswing of the previously poorly developed pre-alpine valley. From the very beginning, the railway was also a plaything of changing interests. Founded as a private railway, owned by the Steiermärkische Landesbahnen and for some years now back in private hands with the Feistritzalbahn operating company, there have been repeated incidents in the recent past that have not been conducive to its continued existence. Intentional or sloppiness?

Clarifying this would require energy, which Club U44 and its supporters would rather invest in the ongoing renovation of the entire line to Weiz - because this is already one of the concrete visions for the future of the Feistritzalbahn. For example, regaining the licence for freight and passenger transport in accordance with the Railway Act, instead of currently operating the partially renovated line to Rosegg as a tourist attraction subject to the Events Act. Turning the railway into a 'hub', an interface for regional mobility, and integrating it into a new rail transport logistics system for Eastern Styria is another very concrete prospect for economically sustainable success.

One of the most urgent tasks in these weeks, however, is public and political persuasion. The great interest shown by the public, which has taken on almost affectionate proportions in the region, was to be expected. The tourism businesses also support the railway as an irreplaceable highlight of Eastern Styria; you can hear it from all 47 municipalities, only a handful of which are located directly on the railway line. However, it was precisely these five municipalities, above all Birkfeld, that

raised eyebrows in August 2024 ahead of the resumption of operations following the renovation of part of the line to Rosegg: A hastily convened municipal council meeting in Birkfeld resulted in a declaration of intent to sacrifice the railway to an extension of the B72 federal road, which crosses it four times, and in the same breath to turn the route into a 'combined cycle and walking path' following the demolition of the listed railway.

On closer inspection, this approach does not seem to have been thought through to the end, as a main road that also crosses local areas with railway crossings does not become a faster connection for private transport. A combined cycle path and footpath on this section of the railway line would - as an outdated concept in terms of modern traffic planning - require not only considerable demolition costs but also significantly higher adaptation costs, i.e. securing the site, tunnel lighting and much more. Serious alternative plans for closing the gap in the cycle path between Birkfeld and Koglhof have long been available.

The aim of the Feistritz Valley railway operators? Effective and complementary cooperation as an overall infrastructure for transport, tourism and economic co-operation. All in all, the future of the Feistritzalbahn is bright, the ideas and concepts are sound and the popularity among the population and regional businesses remains high - a life-line since 1911 with a great future as a tangible contribution to the transport revolution.

Daniel Maier, Club 760

News in brief

Tramway group

Please take part in the survey

The Tramway Working Group is researching the challenges and opportunities facing Heritage tramways and tram museums as we approach

2025. Input of all tramway leaders and society members is highly valued and we kindly ask you to spare us five to ten minutes to inform FEDECRAIL's campaigns and policy. The survey can be accessed at: <https://forms.gle/s8kc8JnwRF3cbXwh9>

If you have the contact details of other heritage tramway leaders please forward this survey on. Thank you in advance for your time.

Sam Burton Smith

Recuiting new members in Eastern Europe

FEDECRAIL has been working with the New European Railway Heritage Trust to see if we can recruit new members in Eastern Europe. This is part of the reasons for visits to Bosnia and Poland. This work is on-going and will take time to progress in recruiting new members. But we are hopeful that we will be successful.

Ian Leigh

Railway Bicentenary 1825-2025

On 27 September 1825, George Stephenson's Locomotion No 1 carried 400+ passengers along the Stockton and Darlington railway in the north of England. This was the world's first passenger train!

Two centuries of rail development followed, with railway tracks now carrying trains on land and through tunnels; over bridges and viaducts and under water. Rail is finding new and urgent purpose in an age of growing public awareness of the perils of climate change.

To mark the Bicentenary, a year-long national programme of celebrations is planned in the UK, starting with a traditional *Whistle-Off* at noon on New Year's Day, January 1 2025. Many rail industry partners and others are collaborating in planning events great and small across the UK. Key websites are:(a) www.Railway.200.co.uk for the national programme of events; (b) for the nine



Leighton Buzzard Light Railway

In a double pack: Fully functional and a special highlight of the Leighton Buzzard Light Railway are the two locomotives shown here. They are probably the only surviving examples of 40 hp petrol-powered internal combustion engines manufactured by Motor Rail, Bedford, England, in 1918.

Photo: Chris Grimes

month long international Bicentenary Festival in the north of England - home of the historic Stockton and Darlington railway - www.sdr200.co.uk

Ruth Annison

TRAIN can unite our many nations and different cultures to support the common cause of preserving the history and heritage of railways. I look forward to working with my colleagues to bring us closer despite distance and geographical boundaries. Our dedication to our cause will no doubt reinforce the phrase: it's a small world. Indeed!"

Peter Lewis

WATTRAIN

Bob LaPrelle new president

WATTRAIN recently enjoyed a successful Conference in July in Italy, under the guidance of Stefano Benazzo (President WATTRAIN). The President's baton has now been passed on to Bob LaPrelle. Bob has been Vice-President and Director of WATTRAIN since March 2012. CEO of the Museum of the American Railroad and a Board member of the Heritage Rail Alliance (N. America) (which he led



as President in recent years.) and a former President of the Association of Tourist Railroads & Railway Museums.

Bob says: I am honored and proud to assume the role of president at WATTRAIN. I do so with a debt of gratitude to our

previous president Stefano Benazzo who guided us through challenging times. WATTRAIN is stronger now, and uniquely positioned to advance the cause of heritage rail worldwide. WAT-



The FEDECRAIL Team

John Fuller FCILT: I have been an Officer of FEDECRAIL in various roles for over 20 years and at present represent our members' interests at the UIC (Union Internationale des Chemins de fer) to promote and develop

rail tourism. My UK professional railway career included Operating as well as Management positions and was completed by retirement as one of Eurostar's Project Managers. After retirement I carried out Consultancy for Speedwing rail projects in Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur as well as for narrow gauge projects in Ukraine and Poland. I have also continued as a Trustee Director for the Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Railway here in Kent that has occupied me for over 50 years. In the past I have also held voluntary positions in the Heritage Railway Association of UK and Ireland and NERHT.



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Deadline for text and photos is December 8th

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