FEDECRAIL
European Federation of Museum & Tourist Railways
UPDATE No. 73
April 2026

Photo: Fedecrail

Chair's Message

We have now successfully held our Annual General Meeting, marking an important step forward for our organisation. During the meeting, we adopted updates to our constitution, clarified roles and responsibilities, and agreed to establish a nomination committee. These changes are not only structural—they are about strengthening how we work together, ensuring transparency, and enabling long-term continuity in our governance.

However, structure alone does not define our future.

FEDECRAIL is, and will always be, shaped by its members. The direction we take, the priorities we set, and the impact we create across the heritage rail sector all depend on your engagement.

I want to take this opportunity to remind everyone of the importance of actively participating in our democratic processes. Your voice matters—not only at the AGM, but continuously throughout the year. Whether through working groups, discussions, contributions to our publications, or direct dialogue, your input is essential.

We are a diverse and growing network across Europe, representing a sector with significant cultural, social, and economic value. To continue developing and strengthening our position, we must ensure that all perspectives are heard and reflected in our work.

FEDECRAIL is not driven from the top—it is built together with you.

Let us continue to contribute, engage, and shape the future of our sector collectively.

Mimmi Mickelsen, FEDECRAIL President

INDEX

FEDECRAIL Conference 2026 – A Step Forward for the Sector

FEDECRAIL Annual General Meeting – Summary

Rolling Stock Session – What Should We Preserve?

FEDECRAIL Stands with Ukraine

FEDECRAIL's Future – Member Input and Direction

If We Want to Preserve – We Must Be Visible

We Need You – Strengthening the FEDECRAIL Team

Sharing What Works – Building a Best Practice Library Together

Do You Have a Success Story to Share?

Youth Upskill Workshop opened FEDECRAIL's Annual Conference

FEDECRAIL Workshop Marketing & Tourism

The Future of Coal : the "Black" Workshop

ERTMS and Mainline Operations: From Discussion to Action

HOG Meeting: Collaboration, Continuity and New Directions

WIMH: News Update

Women Power on Steam Locomotives – A Special Gathering

LBR: It all starts with the Junior Railway Club

CFBS: Motor Trolley towards a New Lease of Lfe

UPDATE No. 73

Content manager: Ingrid Schütte

Contributors: Melissa Boman, Colin Bowles, Philippe Dupont, Frauke Lehmann, Mimmi Mickelsen, Marieke Nauta, Geoffrey Nickson, Jenny Nunn, Peter Ovenstone, Michaela Quante, Pierluigi Scoizzato

Pictures: Chris Abblett, Lukas Bemsten, Geoffrey Nickson

Contact: schuette@fedecrail.org

The articles and photos published in this issue are the property of FEDECRAIL. Any use must be authorised in advance and references must always be given. In case of abuse FEDECRAIL reserves the right to take legal action to defend its copyright. We apologise for any errors or omissions. Please report them to the email address above.

Photo 27 March 2026: Fedecrail

FEDECRAIL Conference 2026 – A Step Forward for the Sector

The FEDECRAIL Conference 2026 marked a clear step forward for our organisation and the wider heritage rail sector.

Throughout the weekend, participation ranged from around 72 up to 115 attendees, with the highest number present during Saturday's dinner. The evening was opened with speeches and presentations from several leading politicians in Poland, underlining the importance of the sector not only from a cultural perspective, but also at a national and regional level.

This year's conference reflected the ongoing transformation within FEDECRAIL. We saw strong participation from younger members, including attendees from Ukraine, Switzerland, Sweden, France and the Netherlands. This is a clear indication of the direction we are heading—towards a more inclusive, forward-looking and sustainable organisation.

The conference format, with parallel sessions, created both challenges and opportunities. While it is not possible to attend everything, it allows participants to choose areas most relevant to their interests and work. To support continued development, a post-conference survey has been distributed, and we encourage all participants to contribute their feedback.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to our host in Wolsztyn, Parowozownia Wolsztyn, for their excellent organisation and for hosting Saturday's dinner. This conference has significantly strengthened our relationship with Poland—a country where we see strong potential for increased membership and collaboration in the future.

During the conference, we officially launched Youth Upskill, an important initiative aimed at engaging the next generation. We also addressed key topics including ERTMS, coal and the future of fuels, tourism, and the development of FEDECRAIL itself. The programme combined interactive workshops with presentations from both members and external contributors—an essential balance for a successful and relevant conference.

There was a clear sense that FEDECRAIL is now moving forward with greater momentum. The en-

UPDATE page 3

gagement of our members remains crucial in driving our work and shaping our future. Following the conference, we have already received expressions of interest from four new organisations wishing to join FEDECRAIL. Supporting these applications will be an important focus in the coming year.

Mimmi Mickelsen

FEDECRAIL

Annual General Meeting – Summary

The Annual General Meeting was conducted efficiently and completed in approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes.

We are pleased to welcome Balkan Romantic as a new member of FEDECRAIL.
The Annual Report, Economic Report, and Auditor's Report were all approved, and the Board was granted discharge from liability.

A minor adjustment to the membership fee was agreed, now set at €12.75 per point, with a minimum of €90. We would like to remind all members of the importance of keeping their membership data up to date, including both points and contact details.

Jean-Paul Lescat and Per Englund were re-elected as auditors for a one-year term.

No nominations for the Board were received this year. The Board would like to emphasise that several mandates will expire next year. It is therefore essential that members begin identifying suitable candidates. Serving on the Board requires both commitment and the capacity to contribute actively to FEDECRAIL's work, while also acting as a link between the member organisation and FEDECRAIL.

The new constitution was formally adopted. It will now be officially translated and submitted to the Belgian authorities. The updated constitution introduces clearer roles and definitions, strengthens governance, increases flexibility, and establishes a nomination committee as part of a more structured and transparent organisational framework. The Annual Plan and Budget were also adopted.

Mimmi Mickelsen

Photo 28 March 2026: Fedecrail

UPDATE page 4

Rolling Stock Session – What Should We Preserve?

One of the most important sessions at the conference addressed a difficult but necessary question: we cannot preserve everything.

Together with experts and representatives from across Europe—Sweden, Norway, France, Poland, Ukraine and the Netherlands—we explored one of the core challenges facing the heritage rail sector: what should be preserved for the future, and what cannot be?

We heard very different national contexts. In countries such as Norway and France, structured models and national strategies guide preservation decisions. In Poland, preservation is often driven by dedicated individuals and organisations, frequently without strong state support. From Ukraine, we were reminded that preservation can take place even under the most extreme conditions, including during ongoing conflict.

Despite these differences, the challenges are widely shared:

– Limited funding and lack of facilities
– Increasing technical complexity of rolling stock
– A growing backlog of vehicles awaiting preservation
– The long-term damage caused by outdoor storage

The session made one thing clear: preservation today is not only about passion—it is about prioritisation.

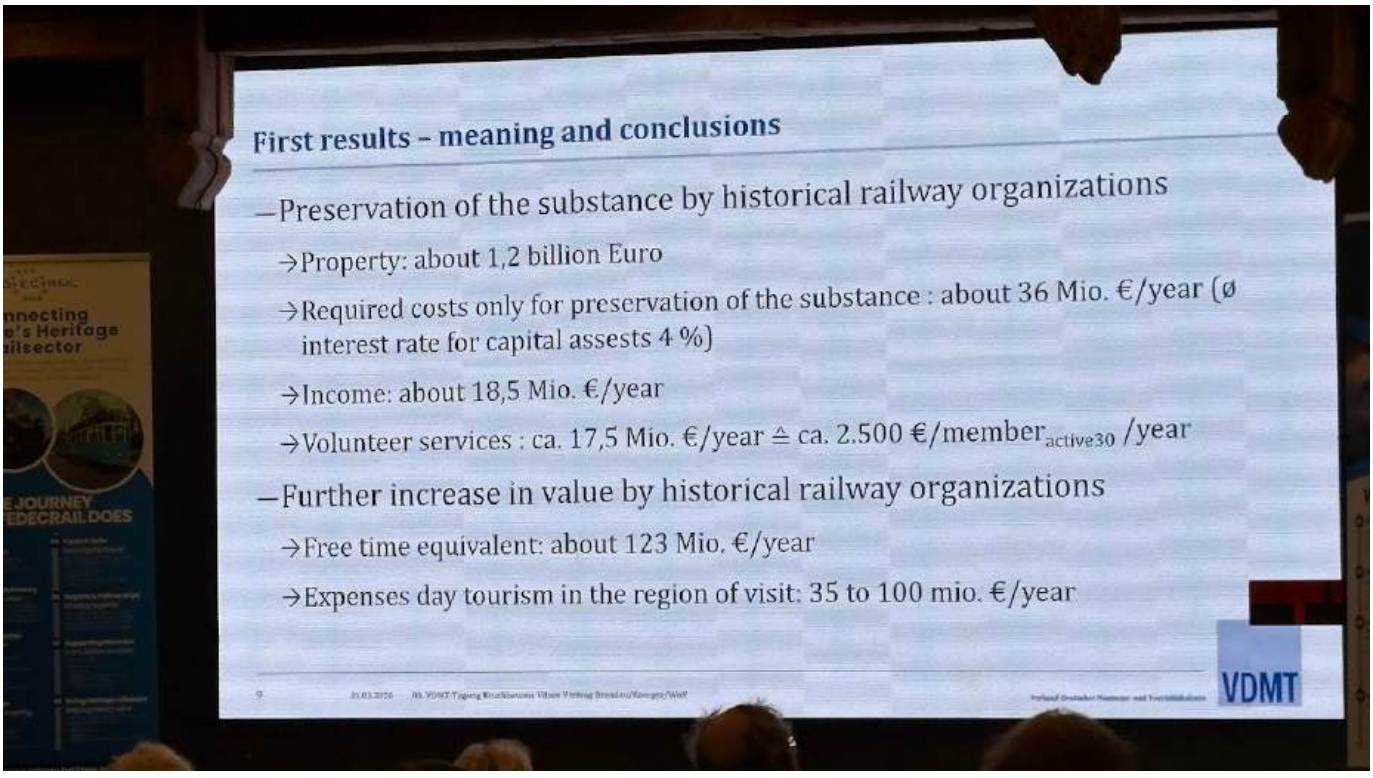
We must move from trying to save everything towards making conscious and strategic decisions about what truly matters for the future.

The session concluded with a strong panel discussion, demonstrating that while contexts differ across Europe, the responsibility is shared.

This is not only about historic rolling stock. It is about the long-term future of the heritage rail sector and how we define its value.

The session also highlighted the importance of data and evidence. Dr. Heino Wolf from VDMT presented key statistics illustrating the scale and impact of the sector. Understanding and communicating these figures is essential if we are to strengthen our position and ensure that decision-makers recognise our importance.

Mimmi Mickelsen



UPDATE page 5

FEDECRAIL Stands with Ukraine

Since the Russian invasion, we have supported our Ukrainian members by waiving their membership fees. It is essential that they remain part of the European community, and that the Ukrainian heritage rail sector continues to be recognised as an important part of both national identity and transport history.
We are proud to have welcomed Ukrainian participants to our conferences over the years and to continue to see their representation within our network. At this year's conference, we had the opportunity to hear a presentation from Ukrainian Railways, providing valuable insight into their current situation and ongoing work. – **We warmly welcome more organisations from across Europe to join us and contribute to strengthening and preserving our shared railway heritage.**

Photo 28 March 2026: Fedecrail

Session:
FEDECRAIL's Future – Member Input and Direction

The Sunday session on FEDECRAIL's future gathered participants from across our membership and developed into a constructive discussion on the organisation's direction.

The session began with being cancelled to a small group but gradually grew to around 20 active participants. This reflects a clear willingness among members to engage and contribute to FEDECRAIL's development.

The discussion covered both immediate improvements and longer-term strategic questions. It also connected with ongoing input from groups such as the Heritage Operating Group (HOG) and the Tramway Group (TG), forming a broader picture of member expectations and needs.

A key message is that this input now needs to be taken forward. The Board will need to reflect on how to strengthen engagement, improve structures for participation, and ensure members feel involved and heard.

The conference should be seen as a starting point rather than an endpoint. Maintaining momentum and increasing activity, visibility, and member value will be important moving forward.

Feedback on communication and the website was clear. If members do not find the website functional, it is not fulfilling its purpose. As a central tool, it requires development. The fact that some participants were not aware of existing information, such as Board and contact details, highlights current accessibility challenges.

Key Points Raised

Members highlighted a number of areas for development:

– More accessible and flexible communication, including options for individuals to receive updates directly. The informations don't pour down to individuals.

UPDATE page 6

The FEDECRAIL Executive Board on Saturday, 28 March 2026 in Wolsztyn. Photo: Fedecrail

– A modern, user-friendly website that functions as a central platform for knowledge, exchange, and support

– Increased transparency around activities, priorities, and ongoing work

– Stronger visibility and engagement in working groups. Also new working groups should be established.

– Greater focus on tramways and narrow-gauge operations, not only on mainline problems

– Continued exchange between conferences through digital formats and regional meetings

– A clearer balance between AGM governance and conference content. Maybe move out the AGM from the conference to an online meeting so it focus on participation from members and conferences is broader

– Tools and structures to support membership growth and outreach

– The need for a defined long-term strategy with clear priorities

– Improved support for projects, advocacy, and practical member needs

– Continued European-level representation combined with tangible value at local and national level

Moving Forward

Some actions will take time, but it is important to demonstrate that member input is taken seriously.

FEDECRAIL's strength lies in its members. Continued engagement will be key to ensuring that the organisation remains relevant, active, and aligned with the needs of the sector.

Mimmi Mickelsen

If We Want to Preserve – We Must Be Visible

Preservation does not happen by intention alone.It requires recognition. And recognition requires visibility.

At the FEDECRAIL Conference and AGM 2026, the presentation by Heino Wolf, Jochen Brandau and Andreas Kaerger made one thing very clear: without data, we cannot demonstrate our value.

UPDATE page 7

And without demonstrating our value – we risk not being preserved.

Across the heritage rail sector, we carry an enormous cultural, technical and societal value. We attract millions of visitors, create regional economic impact, maintain infrastructure and vehicles, and preserve knowledge and skills that would otherwise be lost.

But too often, this value remains invisible where it matters most.

Knowing is not enough.

We must be able to show it.

If we say we have visitors – how many?

If we say we contribute to tourism – what is the impact?

If we say we preserve infrastructure – how much?

These are the questions that define how we are perceived.

Data is not administration.

It is strategy.

It allows us to:

- Strengthen our position in dialogue with authorities and stakeholders
- Demonstrate our economic and societal impact
- Support funding and political recognition
- Clarify our role within the wider rail ecosystem
- Address challenges with facts rather than assumptions

We therefore strongly encourage all FEDECRAIL members to actively start collecting and structuring their own data.

Even simple steps matter:

- Number of visitors
- Number of operating days and train runs
- Track length and infrastructure
- Volunteer hours
- Local economic impact

Every number contributes to a stronger collective voice.

However, this is not something FEDECRAIL can do alone.

We cannot collect this data without input from our members.

We cannot build a credible picture without your engagement.

And we cannot represent the sector if the sector iis not visible through data.

At the same time, it is clear that individual efforts are not enough.

Within FEDECRAIL, we see a clear need to establish a dedicated working group focusing on data and research.

This group must be built on broad representation from our members – reflecting different countries, sizes, operations and realities across the sector.

It should also connect with other organisations and partners working with similar questions, to ensure alignment, learning and stronger impact.

Such a group could:

- Develop common indicators and methods
- Support members in data collection
- Build a shared European evidence base
- Strengthen our advocacy and visibility
- Connect research with operational reality

If we want to preserve our sector, we must first make it visible.

And visibility starts with you.

Mimmi Mickelsen

We Need You – Strengthening the FEDECRAIL Team

FEDECRAIL is built on commitment, passion and people.

To continue developing and strengthening our work across Europe, we need more active contributors who are willing to take on different roles within the organisation.

There are many ways to get involved:

- Social media and communication
- Administration and coordination
- Project work and development
- Supporting working groups and initiatives
- Acting as a local ambassador

As a local ambassador, you help:

- Share information about FEDECRAIL
- Strengthen communication with members in your region
- Increase understanding of our mission and work
- Create stronger connections across the sector

All work within FEDECRAIL is voluntary. Much of it is done remotely, from home, alongside everyday commitments.

But the impact is real.

We are working with an important mission:

to preserve, develop and make visible the heritage rail sector across Europe.

This comes with many tasks – and great opportunities to contribute, influence and be part of something meaningful.

Now we need to strengthen our team.

Do you want to contribute?

Do you have time, skills or ideas you would like to share?

Get involved – and help us build the future of our sector together.

Contact us: contact@fedecrail.org

Sharing What Works – Building a Best Practice Library Together

Across the heritage rail sector, there is an enormous amount of knowledge, experience and innovation.

Every day, our members solve challenges, find new ways to engage visitors, secure funding, manage technical issues and attract new volunteers.

But too often, these success stories stay local.

We believe it is time to change that.

Within FEDECRAIL, we want to start actively collecting and sharing best practices – both through our Updates and by building a structured library on our website.

The goal is simple:

to make it easier for all members to learn from each other.

We know that many of you are already doing great work.

Now we need to make that work visible.

We are therefore inviting all members to contribute with their own examples.

This could include:

- Successful funding applications
- Ways to attract and retain volunteers
- Technical solutions or maintenance approaches
- Visitor engagement and tourism development
- Events, campaigns or partnerships
- Organisational improvements or new working methods

No example is too small.

If it worked for you, it can inspire others.

By sharing what works, we strengthen the entire sector.

We also see this as a way to build a long-term knowledge base – a living library that supports both new and established organisations across Europe.

To make this happen, **we need your input.**

Can you **support us** by sharing your experiences?

Send us your best practices, short summaries or examples, and help us build a resource that benefits everyone.

Together, we can turn individual success into shared progress.

Mimmi Mickelsen

Do You Have a Success Story to Share?

We are currently looking for inspiring examples from across our sector.

Have you been involved in building up a preserved railway?

Are you part of a relatively young heritage operation that has successfully developed its activities?

We have received a request for a speaker who can share a real story – how it started, the challenges faced, and what made it work.

We are particularly interested in newer or recently developed museum or heritage railways that can showcase practical experience and results.

If this sounds like your organisation – or if you know a good example – we would love to hear from you.

Please get in touch:

mickelsen@fedecrail.org

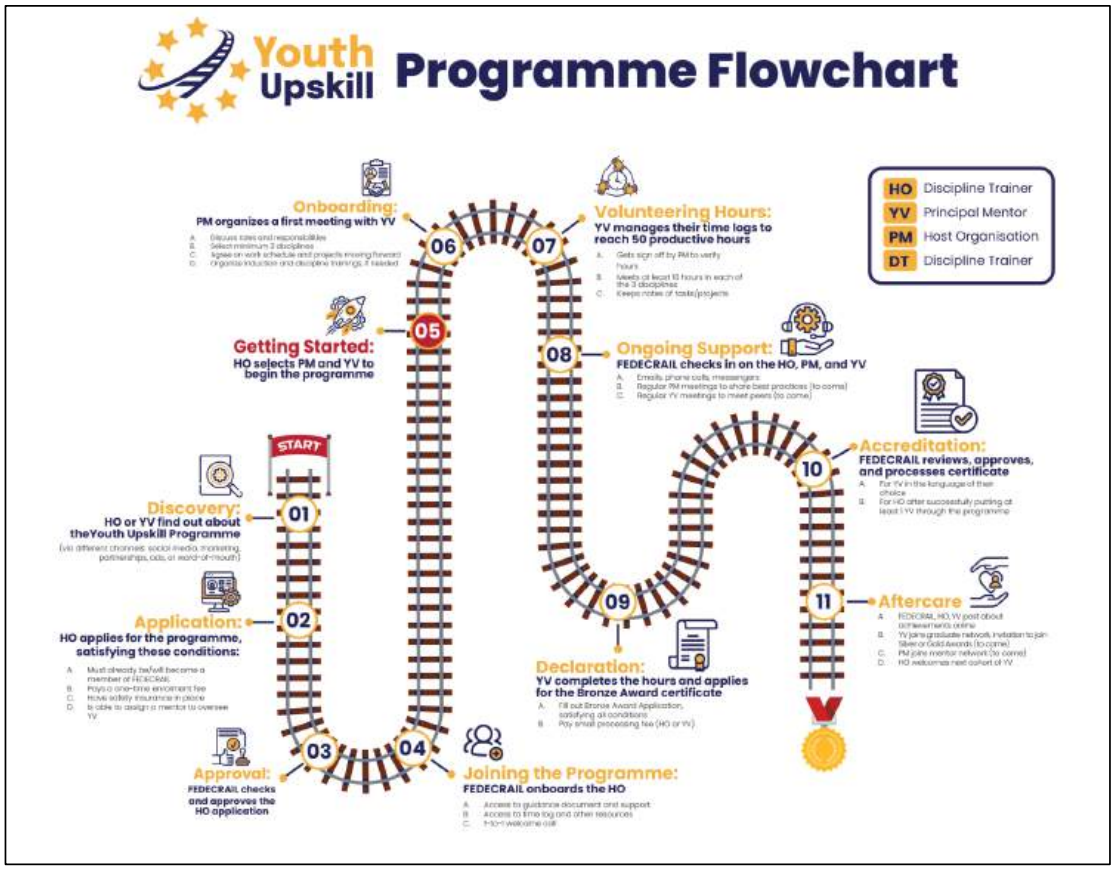
Help us highlight the future of preservation by sharing your story.

Youth Upskill Workshop opened FEDECRAIL's Annual Conference 2026

The 2026 Annual Conference in Poland opened with the introduction of **Youth Upskill**, FEDECRAIL's new initiative to tackle the sector's volunteer shortage and ageing demographic.

Co-founders Sam Burton-Smith and Josh Castree explained how this structured framework offers young volunteers (ages 16–30) a progression path through Bronze, Silver, and Gold levels to gain an internationally recognised certification. The programme aims to diversify skill sets beyond traditional engineering and driving by encouraging participation in underserved areas like IT, customer service, and marketing. Through the scheme, young volunteers can boost their career readiness while member associations increase their organisational capacity.

Programme leader Melissa Boman (Museibanornas Riksorganisation) then shared out initial findings from the pilot in Sweden. Research findings so far show a cultural gap where new members do not always feel welcome, a membership gap where the sector is perceived as being only for "train nerds", and a competency gap in non-train related areas. She then led an interactive **Gap Analysis workshop**, where delegates identified specific organisational challenges and developed realistic action plans to move from their "Current State" toward a more sustainable "Desired State".



Following a successful pilot in Sweden, the Youth Upskill Bronze framework is set to be trialled across Europe throughout 2027. We invite members to join the programme as we seek the partnerships and funding necessary to launch the Silver and Gold levels.

Learn more and get involved:
https://fedecrail.org/youth-upskill-programme/

Melissa Boman

UPDATE page 11

Workshop with Jenny Nunn. Photo: Fedecrail

FEDECRAIL Workshop Marketing & Tourism

The Marketing & Tourism session was led by Jenny Nunn, CEO of Seaton Tramway on the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site in the southwest of England, FEDECRAIL and Heritage Railway Association UK & Ireland board member. With 40 years' experience in the travel & tourism sector, Jenny was able to offer invaluable insights into marketing best practice and present ten top tips for running a successful heritage business.

These included pricing structures, inflationary increases, secondary spend mark-up and creating stand-out events et al. Diversification during economic hard times was also a key focus area with Jenny showcasing Jurassic Discovery, a new centre established next door to the Tramway, which now welcomes 50,000 additional visitors per annum on top of the existing 90,000-tramway ridership. Revenue from Jurassic Discovery helps sustain the high cost of maintaining aging infrastructure, rolling stock and buildings that we all have responsibility for.

There were additional highlights from Osian Hughes, Marketing Manager of the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways in Wales who presented ten top tips on digital marketing. One big take away from Osian's excellent overview was how AI is becoming increasingly important in the digital world, in fact generally in our daily lives, with over 40% of consumers worldwide using one of the AI platforms to plan their travel and search for things to do. Partnering and co-promotion with like-minded, local attractions and accommodation providers is also an essential ingredient in the competitive world of marketing a day out or visitor attraction. Osian also covered the importance of consistent branding across all media as well as the increasing importance of engaging with influencers.

With great audience participation and engagement throughout the workshop, the over-arching theme of all three presentations was the strong message that you have to make your railway stand out against all the other products vying for attention in a crowded market with potential visitors seeking something more than just a train ride from A to B; they are looking for memorable experiences. Examples given by the three presenters included various ideas for experiences, whether it be a

UPDATE page 12

sauna/hot tub on board a Lithuanian train, a Dinosaur Tram Safari or the 80-mile long Snowdonian journey, they all appeal to a much wider audience.

Jenny Nunn

The Future of Coal : the “Black” Workshop

The main purpose of "Coal, living heritage and responsibility" workshop was to assess the current situation regarding fuel availability for steam locomotives, providing participants with the most up-to-date picture possible. It is undeniable that conditions in the European coal market have changed markedly over the past five years, with significant consequences for Fedecrail members operating locomotives both on their own lines and on national networks.

The first contribution came from Arthur Emile (post-doctoral researcher, EPFL-Switzerland), who presented **"From coke to smoke"**, a study tracing the history of steam traction through the relationship between fuel and social acceptance. From the nineteenth-century origins — when the adoption of coke was imposed to reassure residents concerned about smoke — to the return to coal in the 1850s–60s and its severe urban consequences, the steam locomotive was long a source of pollution opposed by political campaigns and scientific studies. In the post-war period, the Great Smog of London in 1952 definitively accelerated the transition to electric and diesel traction. Paradoxically, the fight against smoke became a tool for promoting modernisation, while the locomotive was simultaneously reappraised as historical heritage and dissociated from the pollution it had caused, thus contributing to the environmentally friendly image of rail transport that persists today.

Piotr Gerber, president of the Polish TICCIH committee and member of Europa Nostra (Industrial Heritage Committee), presented his project for the continued **operational maintenance of a coal mine** in the Polish region of Silesia, intended to supply almost exclusively the heritage sector. The closure of Poland's last coal mine is scheduled for 2049, but could occur even earlier. The issue has attracted the interest of the Polish Government, and an important conference is planned for October 2026 in Warsaw, under the patronage of PKP Polish Railways. As a further sign of political attention to the matter, a recorded greeting from Polish Member of the European Parliament Łukasz Kohut was also shared, expressing his active support for Gerber's project.

Tiddo Brester, chairman of the WIMH group (Working Industrial and Mobile Heritage)— of which FEDECRAIL is a co-founder together with FIVA — provided an overview of the alliances between the various sectors of mobile and industrial heritage, aimed at building effective lobbying efforts with the offices and committees of the European Union in Brussels.

Currently, the coal used in Europe for the heritage sector comes primarily from South America and Poland. With the implementation of European directives on the closure of extraction facilities and the progressive elimination of fossil fuels, the only

remaining alternative is importation from other continents, with significant economic and logistical consequences.

The topic addressed during the workshop represents a first serious approach to an issue that FEDECRAIL considers a priority. The discussion saw the active participation of many operators directly involved in the operation of locomotives, whose practical contributions proved invaluable in outlining the path to be taken in the immediate future. It is now clear to everyone that the issue of coal supply must go hand in hand with appropriate awareness-raising efforts directed at the relevant EU committees — in particular those for Culture and Transport, just as has been done over the past two years— in order to to ensure future support for the protection of the sector.

Monitoring these developments and regularly updating FEDECRAIL's membership data will be the responsibility of the Environment working group (in collaboration with our partners in the WIMH group), and we invite you to get involved in its work.

Pierluigi Scoizzato – Philippe Dupont

ERTMS and Mainline Operations: From Discussion to Action in Wolsztyn

During the Fedecrail Conference in Wolsztyn, Poland, one of the Friday afternoon workshops was dedicated to one of the most pressing topics for the heritage rail sector: ERTMS and its impact on mainline operations.

With many participating organisations already actively engaged in ERTMS-related discussions at national level, the session deliberately skipped a general introduction and moved straight into practical and technical exchange. The focus was clear: what does ERTMS mean in practice for operating heritage rolling stock on mainline infrastructure, and how can the sector respond collectively?

Heritage operations in practice: the Dutch example

The session opened with a presentation by Stichting Holland Spoor / Roestrijden.nl, delivered by Jeroen Mooij (the Netherlands).

His presentation demonstrated how Stichting Holland Spoor supports the Dutch railway sector by deploying historic rolling stock in a modern operational context. A key example is the use of so-called "rustbusting trains", which are operated after track maintenance to ensure that train detection systems function correctly and reliably.

In addition, these historic vehicles are used as a practical learning environment for education and professional development. By operating on the main line, they offer a unique opportunity to observe and hear real-time interaction between train drivers and railway traffic control, providing valuable insight into railway systems and operational processes.

Importantly, the net profits generated by these activities flow back into the heritage railway sector via the foundation. This creates an additional and sustainable source of financial support for Dutch heritage railway organisations.

This presentation clearly demonstrated that heritage rolling stock can play an active and relevant role within today's railway system, while also underlining the importance of maintaining access to mainline infrastructure in an ERTMS environment.

Practical insights and real hardware

A central element of the session was the contribution from The Signalling Company, who delivered a detailed presentation of their ERTMS onboard solution.

This hands-on approach enabled in-depth technical discussions on integration challenges, retrofit possibilities, and operational use in heritage rolling stock. The opportunity to directly engage with a supplier and ask detailed questions was widely appreciated by participants.

HOG meeting EMTRS. Photo: Fedecrail

The system had previously been demonstrated in the Netherlands to railway museums and infrastructure manager ProRail, where it was considered a promising development. It is currently being further explored by ProRail and Historisch Railvervoer Nederland (HRN).

National developments and shared challenges

Following the technical session, the programme moved into an interactive exchange on the current status of ERTMS across different countries.

Edwin Bottelier, representing the Dutch HRN railway safety group, opened the discussion with an overview of the latest developments in the Netherlands. This provided a valuable reference point for other participants.

Representatives from Sweden, Denmark, France and Norway then shared their national perspectives, highlighting both similarities and differences in approach, timelines, and regulatory frameworks. Despite these differences, common challenges clearly emerged, including approval and authorisation processes, technical integration of onboard equipment, cost implications, and regulatory uncertainties.

The exchange confirmed that while national contexts vary, the underlying issues are widely shared across the European heritage rail sector.

Continuing the discussion within Fedecrail

Due to the limited time available during the Friday session, it was not possible to fully define next steps or formal outcomes. However, the importance of continued coordination within the heritage sector was clearly recognised.

It was agreed to continue the discussion during the Sunday morning meeting of the Fedecrail Heritage Operations Group, where ERTMS will remain a key topic on the agenda.

A strong and inclusive sector voice

The session in Wolsztyn demonstrated that the heritage rail sector is ready to engage seriously with the challenges of ERTMS. By combining technical expertise, practical experience, and open exchange between countries, participants took important steps towards a shared understanding.

Notably, the session was also attended by several youth participants, who actively contributed to the discussion by asking questions and offering perspectives from a different generation. Their involvement clearly illustrated the added value of bringing generations together within the conference, enriching the dialogue and strengthening the sector for the future.

Marieke Nauta

Heritage Operations Group Meeting: Collaboration, Continuity and New Directions

On Sunday morning, 29 March, the Fedecrail Heritage Operations Group (HOG) met in Wolsztyn, Poland, bringing together members from across Europe for an active and forward-looking session.

New leadership and appreciation

The meeting opened with the introduction of the new HOG Chair, Marieke Nauta, and Secretary, Ian Leigh.

A moment was taken to express sincere thanks to Steve Wood for his long-standing commitment in establishing and leading the Heritage Operations Group, as well as to Gottfried Aldrian for his role as co-chair since 2020. While Gottfried will step down from the Fedecrail Board at the next AGM, it was noted with appreciation that he will remain involved in HOG until then as a valued advisor and source of knowledge.

Supporting members and addressing challenges

An important issue was raised by the Norwegian Railway Museum regarding ongoing challenges with their connection to the main line. The group agreed that Fedecrail will provide support by preparing and sending a formal letter following the conference.

This reflects the practical role of HOG as a platform not only for discussion, but also for mutual support between members facing operational and regulatory challenges.

Strengthening the European voice

The group was updated on recent interactions in Brussels, including meetings with Oana Gherghescu of the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA), and with Nicholas Shimpton, Secretary of the Group of Representative Bodies (GRB).

These discussions focused on how Fedecrail can strengthen its cooperation with European institutions and increase its influence on key topics affecting the heritage rail sector. A key next step will be to collect and prioritise these topics from Fedecrail members, forming the basis for one or more position papers to support coordinated engagement and advocacy at European level.

National perspectives: the Polish case

Piotr Nowicki from KSK Wroclaw shared insights into the current situation in Poland. Key challenges include limited funding and financial resources, as

HOG meeting group on technical suppliers. Photo: Fedecrail

UPDATE page 16

well as technical issues such as GSM-R implementation.

At the same time, positive developments were highlighted. Through active lobbying efforts, the Polish heritage sector has successfully contributed to new legislation allowing railway companies to donate historic rolling stock and materials to heritage railway foundations — an important step in preserving railway heritage.

Working sessions: from discussion to action

Following the coffee break, participants split into two groups for interactive working sessions.

One group continued the discussions on ERTMS initiated during the Friday workshop. This session proved highly productive, allowing participants to share knowledge, compare national developments, and further explore technical and operational implications. The work on ERTMS will continue during the next HOG online meeting on Tuesday 21 April.

The second group focused on a growing concern across the sector: the availability of technical suppliers and the increasing difficulty of sourcing materials and components for the maintenance and restoration of heritage vehicles. This topic will be taken forward during the HOG meeting scheduled for Wednesday 27 May.

A positive step towards more active collaboration

The meeting concluded with a roundtable reflection on this more interactive and workshop-based approach. The response from participants was very positive, with strong interest in continuing this way of working and actively contributing to future HOG activities.

The session in Wolsztyn demonstrated that the Heritage Operations Group is evolving into an increasingly dynamic platform — one that not only shares knowledge, but also actively supports members and develops collective responses to the challenges facing the heritage rail sector.

Marieke Nauta

WIMH:

NEWS UPDATE

Much of the current role and activities of the WIMH platform group will be mentioned in the summary report on the 'Coal - Future of Fossil Fuels' breakout session at Wolsztyn. A short report on some other WIMH developments over the last two months or so:-

Katowice Declaration - The revised version of the Declaration was approved at the February WIMH Working Group meeting. The new text includes a stronger statement on sustainability and general support for the European Green Deal. The text also provides a more detailed step by step approach to research into the Polish 'heritage colliery' project including an initial robust assessment of the actual demand for 'heritage coal; with a balanced analysis of costs and different options. The full text of the new version can be found on the 'News' section of our website (https://fedecrail.org/category/latest-news)

Supportive MEPs - We have now had two very useful replies to our appeal for new MEP contacts (France & Greece) for which many thanks. We are still looking for more and hopefully will receive some further responses over the next few months - please do provide details to the WIMH Group Secretary (email: ovenstone@fedecrail.org). A reminder that building up a group of good supporters in the European Parliament can help to both raise awareness and create support for our concerns.

Autumn Conference - A further conference is being organised in Warsaw this autumn Sun 18.10 - Tue 20.10 with the theme; *Industrial Heritage in Europe - Law and Practice in the Protection of Industrial Heritage in European Countries*. The event is being organised by the Poland branch of our WIMH partner TICCIH (The International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage) with support from the Polish Government, Ministry of Culture. Fedecrail members will be very welcome to take part - more details in the next issue of *Update*.

Peter Ovenstone - Secretary, WIMH Working Industrial & Mobile Heritage platform

Women Power on Steam Locomotives – A Special Gathering

In March, Braunschweig became the scene of a very special railway event: At the so-called "Ladies' Steam" meeting, on March 14th and 15th, dedicated women who share a passion that is still considered extraordinary – working on steam locomotives – met. It was all the more remarkable that three female steam locomotive drivers, three female firemen, and other female railway enthusiasts – including daughters of the female locomotive crew – gathered at the Verein Braunschweiger Verkehrsfreunde (Braunschweig Transport Enthusiasts Association VBV) in the old Braunschweig railway workshop.

The event began with the firing up and preparation of the recently overhauled VBV 102, a 0-6-0 tender locomotive of the legendary "Pudel" type. From the club grounds, the special train - driven exclusively by women - departed via the Braunschweig shunting yard and main station, continuing to Peine and finally via the infrastructure of the Peine-Salzgitter transport company (VPS) to Salzgitter-Bad and Beddingen, before returning to Braunschweig.

The female participants are united not only by their passion for railways, but also by their enjoyment of technology and the preservation of our living railway history. The organizers hope to awaken enthusiasm for steam locomotives, craftsmanship, and teamwork in a broad audience and to dispel any apprehension people may have about these topics.

The meetings, normally held once a year under the motto "Ladies' Steam," are supported by the Association of German Museum and Tourist Railways (VDMT). After Bruchhausen-Vilsen, Essen-Kupferdreh, and Frankfurt am Main, Braunschweig was the fourth location for this successful event. The next meeting is already being planned and will likely take place at the railway heritage site in Lengerich.

Michaela Quante/Frauke Lehmann

"Women Power 2026" meeting
Photos: Lukas Benstem

UPDATE page 18

Leighton Buzzard Railway:

It all starts with the Junior Railway Club

Season opening on Mother's Day / New steam engine driver and train attendant

"Gertrude" and "Dole". Photo: Chris Abblett

The Leighton Buzzard Railway opened its 2026 season on Mothering Sunday, 15 March. More than 300 people attended the event to mark the start of the new season, and the entirely volunteer-run railway put on two steam train services, hauled by Andrew Barclay 0-6-0T 'Doll' of 1919, and her sister locomotive Gertrude' 0-6-0T also by Andrew Barclay & Co. No. 1578 of 1918.
With five departures throughout the day. Mums were treated to a free family photo and a potted plant gift, whilst all families and visitors could explore the historic Stonehenge Works site and learned about the history of sand quarrying and transport throughout the town. One local mum told the railway: "we have lived here for nearly 20 years and yet this was our first visit! We had a great time, and we will definitely be back."

In this first day of the season the railway was also celebrating the achievements of Esker Saward who was passed out as a Passenger Train Guard and Jamie Randall who after several years as a Fireman has passed as a fully qualified Steam Engine Driver.

Jamie started helping at the railway when he was a very young lad and has worked his way through to this, achieving his dream of driving Steam Trains. Our recently formed Junior Railway Club helps foster youngster's enthusiasm from the age of ten, giving them the chance to learn about the operation of railways and join in as far as possible until they are old enough to become full working members.

Of course, if anyone would like to join our Volunteer Team in these or any other role then you will be very welcome at 'England's friendly little line'. For more information, please use the volunteering option of thecontact form on our website, phone us on 01525 373888 or come along any Sunday to Page's Park Station.

The railway's season continues now every Sunday (and Bank Holiday Mondays) including some weekdays during school holidays, all the way through to Hallowe'en, including diesel and steam galas, visits by 'Bluey', and 'Chase from Paw Patrol'. A beer festival, Dinosaurs, Pirates and much more. Further details can be found at www.Buzzrail.UK

Colin Bowles

UPDATE page 19

CFBS:

Motor Trolley towards a New Lease of Life

Built in 1923 and fitted with a Ballot 4-cylinder, valveless petrol engine, CFBS motor-trolley N° D1 was always a great success at the railway's Steam Galas. It would offer rides to visitors, thrilled to run up and down the few hundred metres of a siding on the two hard wooden benches of the machine. The public also enjoyed watching demonstrations of the on-board turntable carried on the motor-trolley, which allowed it to be parked on a pair of rails perpendicular to the track. As well as the motor being crank-started by hand…

In 2015, however, after the August 15th *fête* at Cayeux station, the motor-trolley (or *« draisine »* to give it its French name) had to be withdrawn: one of its wheels was cracked and it was deemed dangerous to run the machine any further. The wooden body, on the other hand, remained in good condition.

The motor-trolley was placed in safe storage, other restoration projects having priority. Later in 2015, and the following year, however, the railway did have a set of four new wheels cast.

By late 2024, a group of volunteers had become increasingly vocal about wanting to restore the motor-trolley to working order. By the end of the following year, there was enough space where the machine was stored to begin work on it at long last.

In the autumn of 2025, the motor-trolley was jacked up and the wheelsets removed (picture 1). Together with the newly-cast wheels, they were shipped to an engineering company in eastern France, where the new wheels will be machined to the right profile and fitted back to the original axles.

Motor trolley being dismantled.
Photo: Geoffrey Nickson

Meanwhile, the side panels, floorboards, steps and transmission chains have also been dismantled, providing access to the gearbox and motor.

One question remains : will the motor-trolley be ready in time for the April 2026 CFBS Steam Gala?

Geoffrey Nickson

! ! !
UPDATE Nr. 74
will be published in the end of June 2026
Deadline for text and photos is June 8th
contact: schuette@fedecrail.org