

# **TRANSPORT ECONOMISTS GROUP**

## **Chairman's Report for 2005**

### **Meetings**

During the period of my Chairmanship (March 2005 – February 2006), the Group has held ten meetings, one more than in previous years. The rail topics covered were National Rail, London Rail, light rail, the Channel Tunnel and rail safety. The bus topics were competition in the bus industry and innovative long distance bus services. Speakers also covered research into national road pricing, container port development in the United Kingdom and the development of a national transport information portal.

The Group is very grateful to Arup for making their Headquarters available for Group Meetings since September 2005 and to Shirley Brooks for all her help in organising our meetings. The facilities have been excellent and the switch to this venue has assisted with ensuring that the Group's finances remain strong.

Average attendance at meetings over this period was 34, almost identical to the record average of 35 in 2004 - 2005. Total attendance for the year was a record as a result of the additional meeting being held.

The proportion of visitors to total attendees rose. 25% of attendees are now visitors, for whom no attendance or refreshments charge is made. This appears to be associated with the improved publicity for meetings. It tends to lead to a large number of visitors for popular topics and well known speakers.

Specialised subjects also draw a higher proportion of visitors, some of whom may be less likely to become members.

After a strong start after the summer break, attendance fell in mid winter with the exception of the highly topical Eurotunnel presentation. This may have been due in part to the changes in speakers resulting from absence abroad, illness and family illness, but it may also suggest that our overall programme is now slightly too long.

### **Publications**

Meetings and subsequent discussions continued to be reported in the Journal. Reporting duties are now shared amongst committee members, but the main editorial workload has been carried by Laurie Baker. He has carried out a review which should lead to an even more professional Journal next year. Laurie is standing down as Editor this year and we thank him for all his work over the years.

The move to PowerPoint computer presentations has also allowed us to distribute "Acrobat" .pdf versions of presentations which do not include confidential information to

members who have been unable to attend meetings. This has been appreciated by members who live far from London or abroad.

### **Membership and Finance**

Our Treasurer and Membership Secretary will be making a separate report, which shows that the Group is in a strong financial position and that recruitment has been strong over the last year. In the past we have relied heavily on a loyal group of long term members both to support our financial position and as contributors to discussion at our meetings. There are now signs that with increased size our membership turnover may be rising.

### **Future Programme**

A date has been fixed (28 March) for the newly appointed committee to agree responsibilities for the coming year and to discuss the programme for 2006 – 2007. A broad range of topics have been put forward and in addition, the speakers who were unable to come due to illness have expressed a wish to present to us next year.

We are also looking into the possibility of arranging a public half day seminar during the year with a panel of speakers with (we hope) a range of opinions and insights into a transport topic of current interest.

### **Retiring Committee Members**

After many years of service to the Committee both as a member and as the Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Don Box is standing down from the Committee. We would like to thank him for all he has done to support our Group and hope that he will continue to attend our meetings and add a practical railwayman's contribution to our discussions.

*Robert Cochrane*  
*Chairman*  
*22<sup>nd</sup> March 2006*