ERIH-UK Winter Meeting  14th February 2017, Cardiff

Reuse of abandoned railways lines for cycle routes

Best Practice Fen-Rail Cycle Route (Belgium/Germany)

Ernst Miglbauer, invent Büro OÖ (Austria)
Ernst Miglbauer  I  invent Büro OÖ, Linz (Austria)

• Consulting in cycle tourism since late ‘80s
• Key competencies
  – Strategies in cycle
  – Product development
  – Marketing & communication
  – Economic impact of cycling
  – Quality management
• Projects  I  Expertises  I  Studies (Austria, Germany, France, Belgium - Vennbahn)
• Presentations, lectures and workshops in European countries;
• Publications: travel magazines, scientific literature;
And: a passionate cyclist in person!
Fen Rail Cycle Route

Characteristic

• Aachen - Troisvierges
• Route: abandoned line of Vennbahn
• Length: 125 km / 78 miles;
• Gradient of the route max. 1,7 %;
• 3 countries, 15 border crossings (!!!), 5 exclaves
• Opened 2013
• Themes
  – Railway
  – borders / smuggling
  – landscape
Fen Rail Cycle Route

Industrial Heritage

Aachen Rothe Erde – A pace-maker in early industrialisation

Fire and steam mark Raerens history

The Fen Rail – Exchange of hard coal and...

Iron ores and raw iron from Luxembourg

„Smuggling“

Monschau – The rise and fall of the textile mills
Fen Rail Cycle Route - Marketing and Measures

Success and challenges

Mental Map

→ Route along fluvial topographies, rail cycle routes between prominent places (Aachen, Luxembourg)

Development Strategy of Product & Demand

→ Identifying of the right target group for the potential route

Developing of basic infrastructure and services

→ Innovative elements (storytelling)

Awards

→ Greenways Award 2013, Cycle Route of the Year 2014 – fietsenwandelbeurs etc.
Tourism before the Fen-Rail Route

→ Attractions: The Fen Rail – once the first shuttle for discovering the High Fen and the Eifel; High Fen Nature Park (hiking), picturesque Monschau, Eifel-Trail;

Length of the Fen-Rail-Tour
• 125 km – 2,5 days

Frequency
→ 212,000 bicycles (4 summer months)

Share cycle tourists – overnight stays
→ up to 25 % (hotels, pensions)
Fen Rail Cycle Route - Stimulated business through Cycle-Route

**Business and Services**

**Gastronomy & micro Tourism business**

→ ~ 50 Restaurants, Coffee Shops & Café
de Frites etc. – dishes, services … battery chargers (e-bikes);

**Accommodation**

→ 45 certified cycling friendly hotels and hostels

**Shuttle Service**

→ 1 bus service
→ 2 new private providers

**Cycle tour operators**

→ sales ~ 10 tour operators
Fen Rail Cycle Route - Factors in international Dimension

Success and challenges

Strong cross-border ties

→ Political commitment (central belt Aachen, East Belgium and Eifel tourism) followed by

Communication – 4 languages

→ Print- and digital media

Restrictions by nature conservation

→ Coordination of long-drawn-out procedures (bats/tunnel, black grouse, whincat)

Processing of financing and funding

→ Transnational programmes – challenging practice

Common understanding

→ Marketing and storytelling
Feasibility Study

European Route of Industrial Heritage by bike
Industrial Heritage South Wales + Ironbridge

European Dimension
Importance of South Wales

- Wales is generally recognized as the first industrial nation in the world
- sheer authenticity of industrial landscape
- Bleanavon Iron Works (World Heritage Site) – the best preserved ironworks of its period in the world!

Importance of Ironbridge

- the first major bridge in the world to be made of cast iron, greatly celebrated after construction owing to its use of the new material
- World Heritage Site